



# *To Return People* *to* GOD

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His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI's joy that he expressed at the opening of his homily in celebrating the Eucharist sacrifice, "a mystery that was the centre of Padre Pio's whole life," in this place where everything speaks of his life and holiness made clear in an unmistakable way the significance of his Pastoral visit. However, his profound prayer before the Saint's mortal remains was also very revealing. The Holy Father with his example and words warned us against the risk of "neglecting the only truly necessary thing: that is listening to Christ in order to do God's will," when taken up by "the thousands of tasks demanded by the service to pilgrims or to the sick in the hospital."

The Pontiff, in fact, recalled to us that the most "important lesson that we can learn from Padre Pio's life" is the "value of and need for prayer," as he "prayed always and everywhere with humility, trust and perseverance" and he made very clear that this is "a key point not only for the spirituality of the priest

but also for that of every Christian."

"One may sometimes," Benedict XVI confided, "be overcome by a certain discouragement at the weakening or even the abandonment of faith which is recorded in our secularised societies." However, like a father, he invited his children, before these difficulties, "to turn to the original source" of our faith, "to Jesus Christ" and, looking to the example of Padre Pio, he instructed us that "only a soul united with the Crucified One succeeds in communicating the joy and riches of the Gospel."

The Holy Father came as a "pilgrim," but his visit to San Giovanni Rotondo was a lesson in Christian life, because he again made evident the principle goal that inspires his Pontificate, that is to return people to God. The same goal that inspired Padre Pio, to the extent that he would offer himself as a victim for the salvation of his "brothers and sisters in exile" and for the purification of the souls in purgatory. The same goal that must inspire every believer.

In this light we can also interpret the concise but very significant words of the Pope before he blessed the new mosaic work of Fr. Marko Rupnik that adorns the crypt of the new church of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina and the corridor that leads to it: "Not only are they very beautiful," he said, "but they are also a lesson in theology." Words that give due merit to the artist but which at the same time reveal Benedict XVI's appreciation for our fraternity's concrete and anticipated response to his invitation that he expressed earlier, that it was very necessary: "to find new channels for communicating the Gospel truth to the men and women of our time."

Thank you Your Holiness for your kind words of encouragement.

We, on our part, assure you that we will continue to do our best to persevere "faithfully in the mission inherited from the beloved Padre." ■