

# “Le *joli mois*”

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We are once more, this year too, in the “*joli mois de mai... le plus beau de l’année*” (“the lovely month of May... the most beautiful in the year”). This is what Padre Pio wrote in French on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 99 years ago, in answer to Father Agostino’s letter written in part also in French to verify if his student could understand and speak this language that he had never studied.

But why does the writer of the letter describe the month of May as “*joli*”, that is “lovely and beautiful?” Because the Church, in this month, invites us, her children, to consider the limitless love that this “blessed mother” has for each one of us. A love that our venerated fellow friar experienced in a singular way: receiving from her “innumerable benefits,” finding her always ready to receive the “painful anxieties that troubled my heart,” showing him such care as to even accompany him “to the altar,” filling “his whole heart with sentiments of holy love,” even making him feel “a mysterious consuming fire” in his heart that he could not fathom.

Reading the letter no. 76 in the first volume of his Letters, and

from which we have taken a few citations, we might be tempted to think that his relationship with Our Lady is something so intimate and profound that it is reserved to only a few select souls, gifted with special charisms.

But nothing could be further from the truth!

In the lives of the saints, of all the saints, even those who have not had mystical experiences, even those still awaiting the recognition of the Church, the tender and caring presence of the Mother of God has never been lacking to them and to whom they continuously looked up to with unlimited confidence.

Among them are included our dear and recently grieved bishop whose cause of Beatification and Canonisation in the Vatican is underway and who, with his pen has often raised hymns of praise and love to the woman whom we invoke as the “Cause of our joy.”

In a memorable prayer Mgr. Tonino Bello invoked her with these words that seem to us today even more relevant: “Holy Mary, Virgin of the night, we implore you to stay close to us when suffering comes, when the trial assails us, and the wind of desolation blows, and

the black sky of turmoil envelops us, or the bitter cold of our illusions, or the cruel grip of death. Free us from this harsh darkness. In the hour of our Calvary, you who have seen the sun eclipsed, extend your mantle over us, so that wrapped in your protection, the long wait for our liberation will be easier to endure. Lighten with your motherly caresses the suffering of the sick... Do not abandon us and leave us alone in the night intoning our fears. Truly, stay close to us in this time of darkness and tell us gently how you too, the Virgin of Advent, await the light, as we wait together for the awakening of dawn, and the tears of our sorrows are wiped away from our countenances.”

She listened to the heartfelt petition of the Bishop of Molfetta, appearing to him, on the wall of his room, at the moment of his last breath. Just as she did with Padre Pio who, on the point of death, saw “two mothers”: his biological mother and his celestial mother. And just as she will do with each one of us, if we turn to her as children to their Mother.



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