September 23rd: Memorial of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina, Priest

Gospel text (*Mt* 11:25-30): At that time Jesus said in reply, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

“Learn from me… and you will find rest for your selves”

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain)

Today we listen with pleasure to these words of Jesus so opportune for our times: “Come to me all (...) and I will give you rest” (Mt 11,28). How much need we have for this rest! From a very young age Padre Pio experienced the desire to "rest in the Lord." In 1903, at sixteen, he made his wish by entering the order of the Capuchins.

Jesus' rest surprises us in the beginning: He speaks of “his yoke” and “his burden” (cf. Mt 11,30). What yoke and what burden are those? It is love! Yes, the Love that God manifests to us to the extreme, to the end ... giving Himself at the Cross. And we ask ourselves: was it necessary to reach the Cross? The only sure answer is that, in fact, the Lord wanted to reach the cross, fulfilling his prophecy: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15,13). With his dedication to the end, Jesus Christ makes it clear that one cannot love without effort. St. Augustine said that "My weight is my love." This is the way things are: "weightless" love is not love and, at the same time, loveless weight is unbearable. The Son of God did not come to take away from us the sufferings; rather, he came to "educate us" in suffering ... in love.

On September 20, 1918, Padre Pio experienced a unique gift: he received the stigmas of Christ. Saint Pio of Pietrelcina bore those wounds for 50 years not as a misfortune, but quite the opposite: as a grace from God, then, he said, “In order to succeed in reaching our ultimate end we must follow the divine Head, who does not wish to lead the chosen soul on any way other than the one he followed; by that, I say, of

abnegation and the Cross.”

His lifestyle was adjusted to that reality: Padre Pio became a servant of the sacrament of Penance - a task to which he dedicated many hours - and of the Sacrifice of the altar - a task he always carried out carefully: “It is easier for the earth to exist without the sun, than without the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.”