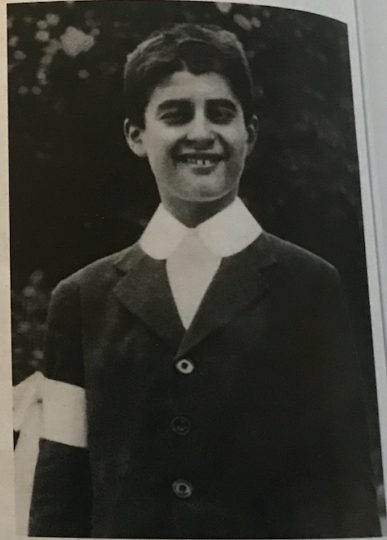


## **Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925)**

Pier Giorgio was born in Turin to a wealthy family. His father was the owner and publisher of an Italian newspaper. He was well known in the community and was an agnostic, doubting the existence of God. Pier Giorgio's mother was a Catholic.



Pier Giorgio's parents did not get on well together and that was a real suffering for him. His father wanted him to excel at school but he, like some other students, wanted to have fun and found it difficult to study for exams. He had a bad habit of turning around in class to make a face, chat or laugh with his friends. He was very daring and was even described as a 'volcano of happiness'. He loved music, art, drama and photography.

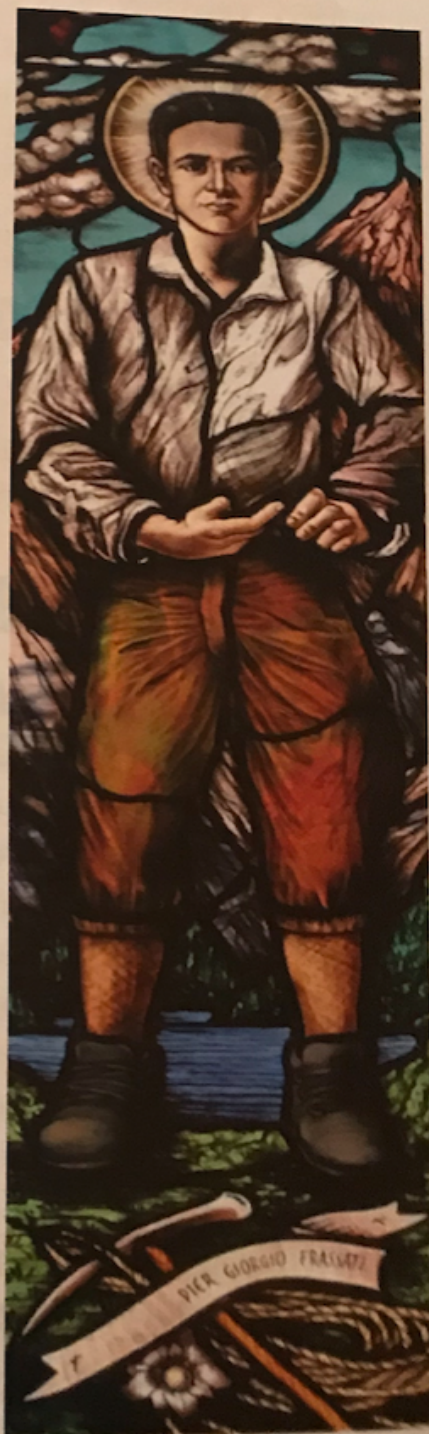
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His friends knew that he had a deep spiritual life and great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary. He openly shared his faith with them. He carried a rosary in his pocket and would take it out at any time to pray. Almost every morning, while the rest of the family were still asleep, Pier Giorgio would slip out of the house to go to the nearby church for Mass. Jesus was the closest person in his life. In the presence of Jesus, he felt stronger, safer, more secure and even happier. No matter how busy he was, he found time to pray.

When he left school, Pier Giorgio went to study mining engineering. His aim was to become an engineer so that he could work with miners and help to improve the appalling conditions in which these people were living and working. One of Pier Giorgio's friends recalled meeting him. Pier Giorgio was carrying a very large parcel and his friend asked where he was going. He was invited to come along. He was taken to a most awful, gloomy refuge where people were living in appalling conditions. Pier Giorgio was using his own money to bring material comfort and joy to these people. He never told them who he was - just that he belonged to the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

When Pier Giorgio completed his university studies, as a graduation gift, his father offered him a new car or the value of the car in cash. This was a very large sum of money. Pier Giorgio did not hesitate; he chose the cash so that he could discreetly use it to help the poor. He saved everything for the poor and kept nothing for himself. One bitterly cold day, a friend met him in the street wearing only a very light jacket. He asked him if he was cold and received the answer, "You know I'm a mountaineer!" But this light hearted remark hid the fact that he had just given his coat to a freezing beggar.





Pier Giorgio firmly believed that in serving the homeless, the naked, the hungry, he was serving Jesus who said, "Truly I tell you, just as you did this to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me" (Matt 25:40). He used to say, "Jesus comes to me every day in Holy Communion, and I repay him in a very small way by visiting the poor".

When he was only 24, he contracted polio, a very severe illness. His family did not realise how ill he was and after six days of intense suffering, he died on the 4 July 1925. On 6 July 1925, an enormous crowd gathered for Pier Giorgio's funeral, politicians, journalists, miners and workers from all types of industry. However, most of all, there were the unemployed, the homeless, those who lived underneath bridges and on park benches. Outside the church stood a multitude of nameless faces, the have-nots, those that Pier Giorgio helped and loved. His family were struck with grief as only now did they realise that their son was a saint.

Your first task:

1. Pier Giorgio is sometimes called the boy of the eight beatitudes.
  - a) Why do you think he gets this name?
  - b) Explain in detail which beatitudes you think he lived out in his life. (Use the template to add in examples from his life that show he lived out the beatitudes).

Scroll down for the rest of the text↓

## Pope Benedict reminds us:

"We live in a celebrity culture, and young people are often encouraged to model themselves on figures from the world of sport or entertainment. My question for you is this: what are the qualities you see in others that you would most like to have yourselves? What kind of person would you really like to be?" Having money makes it possible to be generous and to do good in the world, but on its own, it is not enough to make us happy. Being highly skilled in some activity or profession is good, but it will not satisfy us unless we aim for something greater still. It might make us famous, but it will not make us happy. Happiness is something we all want, but one of the



great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, **but in God. Only He can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.**"

Your next tasks:

2. What are the qualities you see in others that you would most like to have yourself?

- Name the people.
- Mention the qualities.
- Say why you would like to have them.

3. What do you think Pope Benedict XVI means by saying that true happiness is to be found in God?