

## PIER GIORGIO FRASSATI – GROUP ACTIVITY

*\*These notes gathered from a Lighthouse Catholic Media audio CD about Pier Giorgio Frassati*

### Group #1

**Instructions:** Go through each of these stories/facts about Pier Giorgio Frassati. Prepare to come up to the front of the class and give a short summary of each of them. Each person in your group should share *at least* once – ideally without having to look at this sheet.

1. Pier Giorgio's father was the youngest senator in Italy at the time and owner of a gigantic newspaper (which still exists) called *La Stampa* (means "The Press") – It's still on the newsstands in Rome.
2. All in all, his father had a LOT of money. They had a number of homes and Pier Giorgio grew up in a life of maids, butlers, chauffeurs, and cooks.
3. Father was an atheist
4. Mother was supposedly a Catholic but never practiced her faith
5. Family never said prayers at home (not even a blessing before meals)
6. He thought of becoming a priest but his mother essentially said, "I'd rather have you dead"
7. Brought a girlfriend home one time but his parents said he couldn't marry her because she was too poor
8. The family did not fast or anything during Lent, didn't have any saint pictures on the wall, didn't pray the Rosary, etc.

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9. Started to go to daily Mass on his own (very early in the morning), without his parents finding out.
10. When at his parents country home, he would have the gardener come and wake him in the middle of the night to go to Mass. Pier Giorgio would tie a rope to a table in his room and the gardener would come and pull on the rope, which would move the table and wake him up. Eventually when Pier Giorgio was really tired one morning the gardener pulled until the table fell over and the whole family woke up and found out.
11. Would go on weekend skiing trips and would always make sure that it was near a church. If not, he would pay for a priest to come out and say Mass for them on the train (there are supposedly a lot of photographs of the outdoor Masses they had). If they couldn't get a priest, he wouldn't go on the trip.
12. Friends remember how he was the only one who fasted (didn't eat or drink anything) before communion (from midnight until Mass the next morning).
13. Most of his friends didn't go to Mass. They said, "Our parents couldn't get us to go to church, our priest couldn't get us to go to church, but Pier Giorgio would bring us to church" (basically Pier Giorgio was able to bring a lot of friends to Jesus)
14. Never made a fuss about not praying before meals. Family would hear him running down the stairs, sliding down the banister, coming down the hall, and then he would stop and say his own silent grace just outside the dining room doors. He didn't do it in front of his family to shame them but he didn't omit doing it either.

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15. He would wake up and go up a mountain (it took the author/speaker 3 hours but Pier Giorgio did it in 45 minutes), go to Mass, come back home, pray a Rosary by his bed, sometimes falling asleep on the floor and his dad would come in thinking he had fallen asleep there the night before.
16. His parents didn't know he was going to daily Mass and holy hours and that he sometimes spent whole nights in adoration.
17. He would sometimes go to the pool hall where he would bet his friends: If you win I'll pay you some money, if I win you come to the holy hour with me at the cathedral. People remember Pier Giorgio coming to the cathedral with a group of friends. Pier Giorgio would kneel as still as a rock while his friends fell asleep in the pews behind him.
18. Pier Giorgio knelt in such deep prayer that one time a candle was dripping hot wax onto him and the priest who came to move the candle saw that he hadn't even noticed because he was so focused on the Eucharist.

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19. Pier Giorgio very handsome and a great athlete. He was a championship skier and mountain climber and swimmer. He rode horseback, drove a car, went to parties, etc.
20. When climbing mountains or at the top of a ski hill and resting he would say, “Let’s all say a Rosary together” or “Let’s pray the Psalms”, etc. He led them in prayer – never in a nagging way, but with leadership and his personality he would get them to pray.
21. When climbing mountains he would pretend that he was tired or had twisted his ankle and would lag back to walk with the slowest of the group (even though Pier Giorgio was the strongest of the group). He would also help others carry their bags up the mountain. He never made fun of the others who couldn’t keep up.
22. His friends said they never saw him get drunk. In fact, they said that they never even saw him drink more than a glass of wine. Friends never heard him curse. Friends never saw him laugh at a dirty joke. Pier Giorgio was one of them, but also separate from them.
23. He had a terrible voice (his friends would make him stand away from them when he sang) but he loved to sing and wasn’t ashamed to belt it out. Sometimes while on the bus if they passed a church he would just start singing.
24. He joined about 15 different Catholic organizations

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25. When Pier Giorgio was 4 he went with his grandpa to donate some money to a soup kitchen. Pier Giorgio saw a kid eating all by himself. The kid had a skin disease and was being quarantined in a sense but he went over and ate with him.
26. Poor people would go to the Frassati's door. The house staff would reject them, but Pier Giorgio would run after them, bring them back, and order that they be taken care of.
27. Father gave Pier Giorgio money to take the tram/train to school everyday. Pier Giorgio would pocket the money and ride his bike to school instead. He purchased loaves of day old Italian bread with his money and went through the poor sections of the city giving the bread to poor children.
28. When his father gave him a car for his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday he sold it that day and gave  $\frac{1}{2}$  the money to the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the other  $\frac{1}{2}$  to families that he knew.
29. By the time he was 21, Pier Giorgio was supporting over 125 families all by himself (paying for rent, food, clothing, tuition for kids, etc.).

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30. He visited the sick EVERY DAY after school. Except on Fridays he wanted to do more (because Jesus had died on a Friday). On these days he would visit the sick and bring them food, bathe them, run errands for them, read the newspaper/Bible to them, etc. He walked *hundreds* of miles each year just visiting the poor.
31. A friend once asked him, “How can you stand going to the homes of those poor people? They’re disgusting, filthy, and smelly!” Pier Giorgio responded, “Jesus comes to me every morning in Holy Communion and I repay him in my very small way by visiting the poor”.
32. When on trips with friends: If someone from their group couldn’t afford a cabin or hotel room with heat he would give up his room so that someone else could have it and he would take the coldest one. His mother once heard about this and said, “I don’t know why I bother giving money for you to travel first class, etc.” and Pier Giorgio said, “Well it’s not money wasted on someone else because it’s given to Jesus”.
33. Pier Giorgio did all of his work anonymously because his father was so popular and everyone would know him. He did not tell the people he helped that his name was Frassati (even today this is one of the 3 most important families in Italy) but that his name was “Brother Jerome”, which was a name he picked when he became a lay Dominican brother.

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34. 10,000 people came to his funeral
35. His friends said, “We never realized he was a saint when he was with us, but the moment he died, we knew”
36. His parents were so stunned that so many people came to Pier Giorgio’s funeral that they decided to stay together (they were going to get a divorce which back then was unheard of). They also converted their lives and then worked for the canonization of their son.
37. Miracle shortly after Pier Giorgio’s death: Atheist lay dying, wouldn’t let a priest come in, doctors said he’d be dead the next morning. Woman laid a holy card with a piece of the bed sheet from Pier Giorgio’s deathbed. She put it on him and said a prayer and he was immediately well. He got up, got dressed, went to the parish church in the middle of the night, banged on the door, woke up the parish priest, and made his confession. This was Pier Giorgio’s beatification miracle.
38. Newspaper headline on the day of his beatification: “The Most Beautiful Saint in Heaven”
39. Took body out 54 years after his death. People weren’t expected to find anything, but he was there and perfectly intact. Eyes were open and clear and shiny. Clothing was all wet and wooden crucifix had rotted with the metal Jesus rusted, his Rosary had fallen apart but his body was completely intact.