



# Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry



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*"I believe that Padre Pio received the grace and the burden not merely of renewing in a mystical manner the Sacrifice of the Cross but of living over again, in his heart and in his body, the tragedy of the Passion."*

— Most Rev. Mgr. Giuseppe Petralia,  
Bishop of Agrigento (Sicily) Aug 10, 1975

## The Transverberation of Padre Pio's Heart

Padre Pio was ordained to the priesthood on August 10, 1910, in Benevento, Italy. He was twenty-three years old. He wrote the following sentiment which was inscribed on his ordination card, "Jesus, my breath and my life, today, trembling, I elevate You in a mystery of love. With You let me be for the world, the way, the truth and the life and for You a holy priest, a perfect victim."

The reference to "victim" would appear again and again in his thoughts and writings. In a letter to his spiritual director, Padre Benedetto Nardella, Padre Pio asked permission to renew the offering of himself as a victim, "For some time past I have felt the need to offer myself to the Lord as a victim for poor sinners and for the souls in Purgatory. This desire has been growing continually in my heart so that it has now become what I would call a strong passion. I have in fact made this offering to the Lord several times, beseeching him to pour out upon me the punishments prepared for sinners and for the souls in a state of purgation, even increasing them a hundredfold for me...but I should now like to make this offering to the Lord in obedience to you. It seems to me that Jesus really wants this."

Padre Benedetto understood the desire of Padre Pio's heart and gave the permission that he requested to offer his life to the Lord. It seemed that heaven too heard Padre Pio's prayers and was watching, waiting, and preparing him day by day for the great mission that was a part of God's plan for his life.

On Aug 5, 1918, Padre Pio received the mystical wound of love known as the *transverberation* or transfixion of the heart. The transverberation is a rare mystical gift of sanctifying grace, experienced by a small number of chosen souls in the history of Christianity. It is described in mystical theology as the extraordinary phenomenon in which a celestial being such as an angel or seraph is seen and pierces the heart or side with a lance.



*A photograph of Padre Pio taken in 1919.*

Although the pain is extreme, it is also accompanied by a joy that words cannot describe. St. Teresa of Avila, Doctor of the Church, experienced the phenomenon and wrote about it in her autobiography. St. John of the Cross, the Spanish reformer of the Carmelite order, Doctor of the Church and mystical theologian, further explained this phenomenon in his treatise "Living Flame of Love." St. John said, "It can happen, that the soul inflamed with love of God...will feel overpowered by a Seraphim with a dart or arrow of fiery love...If God sometimes allows it to appear to the external senses, there will appear a mark that corresponds to the internal wound."

On August 21, 1918, sixteen days after receiving the extraordinary grace of the transverberation, Padre Pio wrote to Padre Benedetto and described the experience:

"By virtue of obedience, I have made up my mind to reveal to you what happened to me on the evening of the 5th and for the entire day of the 6th of this month.

I am quite unable to convey to you what occurred during the period of utter torment. While I was hearing the boys' confessions on the evening of the 5th, (Padre Pio was spiritual director of the minor seminary from 1916 to 1932) I was suddenly terrorized by the sight of a celestial person who presented himself to my mind's eye. He had in his hand a sort of weapon like a very long sharp-pointed steel blade, which seemed to emit fire. At the very instant that I saw all this, I saw the person hurl the weapon into my soul with all his might. I cried out with difficulty and felt I was dying. I asked the boy to leave because I felt ill and no longer had the strength to continue.

This agony lasted uninterruptedly until the morning of the 7th. I cannot tell you how much I suffered during this period of anguish. Even my internal organs were torn and ruptured by the weapon, and nothing was spared. From that day on I have been mortally wounded. I feel in the depths of my soul a wound that is always open and which causes me continual agony."

In his letter to Padre Benedetto, Padre Pio was not speaking metaphorically. He had been physically wounded with an opening in his side into his heart that would bleed for the rest of his life. After the transverberation, due to extreme pain and weakness, he remained in bed for three days.

In reply to the letter, Padre Benedetto, a master of the spiritual life and a gifted director of souls, wrote back and said, "All that is happening to you is the effect of love. It is a trial, a call to co-redemption and hence a source of glory...The Lord is with you. He Himself, patient, suffering Love, filled with eager longing, His heart and His inmost being crushed and trampled upon, heartbroken, in the shadows of night and even more so in the desolation of Gethsemane. He is associated with your suffering and associates you with His. This is all...Your trial is not a purgation but a painful union. The fact of the wound completes your passion just as it completed that of the Beloved on the Cross. Will the light and joy of the Resurrection follow? I hope so, if this is according to His will. Kiss the hand which has pierced you through and cherish tenderly this wound which is the seal of love."

It is significant the Padre Pio received the transverberation on the eve of the Feast of the Transfiguration. It is also significant that he received the grace when he was hearing confessions, the sacrament that was to play such an important part in his mission and ministry to souls.

Padre Pio lived his entire life in loving conformity with Christ. The culmination of this life with Christ was for Padre Pio, to be crucified with Christ. The prodigy of the stigmata occurred on September 20, 1918, a little over a month after the transverberation. The marks

would be a confirmation of Padre Pio's interior likeness to the Savior. Padre Pio, 31 years old, was the first priest in the history of the Church to receive the stigmata.

## Memories of Padre Pio

**Padre Carmelo of Sessano** was the Father Guardian at San Giovanni Rotondo between 1953 and 1959. He said:

"At the end of 1954, I was the Superior of the religious community that included Padre Pio. With the aim of gathering information on the Padre's first years in San Giovanni Rotondo, I decided to question the Padre's first spiritual children and I organized some meetings.

I plucked up my courage and decided to question the Padre himself. Perhaps some of you might wonder why I said, "plucked up my courage," as if I was afraid. If so, you certainly have not had the grace or the difficulty of living with an authentic saint.

Saints (and I have reflected on this so often) are like the sensitive mimosa flower which as soon as it is touched, closes in on itself. More than once in fact, I noticed when I questioned the dear Padre on personal matters that it was a great effort for him to answer. In fact, once when we were alone in his cell, I asked him outright, "Padre Pio, I would like to see the wounds on your feet and side." And completely taken aback and mortified, he looked at me with two imploring tearful eyes, like those of a child and said, "But you don't really mean that?" I immediately felt sorry and said, "No, Padre, don't worry. I didn't mean it." And everything ended there. But how often after that did I regret what I had done."

**One of the friars** who for a long time had the desire to embrace Padre Pio, finally did so. He felt at that moment what he described as a "great warmth" coming from the wound in Padre Pio's chest. Another one of the friars always kissed Padre Pio's hand after confession. He experienced a heat that he described as being like a flame which came from Padre Pio's hand and engulfed him from head to foot.

**Padre Eusebio Notte** lived with Padre Pio for five years and was his personal assistant. He said:

"I was one of those privileged people, who, because of the office I performed, was close to the person of Padre Pio. I assure you that it will never be erased from my memory, that hand covered with blood, the wound. Neither will I ever forget his gashed chest.

The wounds Padre Pio had were real, deep and resistant to every therapy. In the hands, the wounds went right through the entire thickness from the back to the palm. For fifty years they were present – fresh, beautiful and emanating a perfume."

**Luigina Sinapi**, a woman of great personal holiness, was a spiritual daughter of Padre Pio.

Once when Luigina was in the church in San Giovanni Rotondo, she saw a beam of fire coming out

of Padre Pio's heart and then projected onto the tabernacle. Padre Pio was in the gallery of the church at the time. Luigina wondered about the meaning and the Lord spoke to her heart and said, "It is Padre Pio's love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament."

**Padre Paolino of Casacalenda** who saw the side wound on a number of occasions and was a witness during the medical examinations, wrote:

"I must say that what has impressed me the most in seeing the wounds was the form of the side wound which is revealed to be over the heart and not on the other side of the chest, as I have heard many people say. It is almost the shape of an X...The other thing that impressed me was that this wound has the appearance of a severe burn and that it is not superficial but goes deep into the chest."

**Brother Modestino** on a number of occasions was privileged to serve Padre Pio's Mass. He was very fortunate in that it was Padre Pio himself who taught him the correct way to serve at the altar.

"I always tried to observe Padre Pio closely, following him with my eyes from the moment he left his cell at dawn to celebrate Mass...As soon as he arrived at the sacristy to put on the sacred vestments, I had the impression that already he was no longer aware of what went on around him. He was absorbed and deeply aware of what he was about to live. If anyone asked him anything, he shook himself and replied in monosyllables. His face which was of normal color became frighteningly pale at the moment he put on the amice (priestly vestment). From that moment he paid no more attention to anyone...Having put on the vestments, he set off for the altar. Even though I preceded him for that short distance, I noticed that his gait became more dragging, his face sorrowful. He was more bent down nearly every time. I had the impression he was crushed by the weight of an enormous invisible cross."

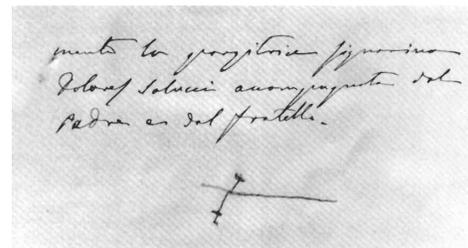
**Padre Costantino Capobianco**

"I was very close to Padre Pio and one day I saw Padre Pio genuflect. It was a genuflection I have never seen before and have never seen again. I thought of how Jesus fell under the cross. Forty years have passed and I have not forgotten."

## The Medical Viewpoints

Padre Pio was very reluctant to speak about himself or the mystical favors he had received from God. He always made the greatest effort to conceal his wounds as they were a source of embarrassment to him. Many of the friars who lived side by side with him, were never privileged to see them. But whenever his Superiors requested that he receive a medical examination of the wounds, Padre Pio cooperated.

On July 15 and 16, 1920, Dr. Giorgio Festa and Dr. Luigi Romanelli made a trip together to San Giovanni Rotondo to examine Padre Pio's wounds. Dr. Romanelli was head physician of the civilian hospital of Barletta and Dr. Festa was doctor to the Capuchins of the Curia in Rome. Padre Pio, who was known for his good sense of humor remarked on one occasion, "It is better to be a mouse between two cats than Padre Pio between two doctors."



The shape of the side wound as drawn by Padre Pio.

Dr. Festa and Dr. Romanelli described the side wound as being in the shape of an oblique cross (a cross on its side), one crossbar wider, the other narrower. The doctors removed a cloth that Padre Pio had placed over the wound on the previous day. It was soaked with blood. Dr. Romanelli described the appearance of the wound as a gash and noted that it looked like it had been caused by a stab wound.

The fact that the wounds never healed, that they never became infected, that they never widened or changed in depth and never changed into scars but kept their symmetry, led the two doctors to conclude that an explanation for the phenomenon was beyond the realms of medical science and that the cause was supernatural.

Six years later, on October 5, 1925, Dr. Festa visited Padre Pio again and verified that the wounds had the same characteristics as previously. On October 5, he noticed what he described as evident signs of a "luminous radiation" (rays of light) were emanating from the borders of the wound on the left side under the heart.

## Padre Pio's Words of Faith

"I should like to bare my chest for a moment to show you the wound which our tender Jesus has lovingly opened in this heart of mine. My heart has found at last a Lover so attached to me that I am incapable of hurting Him anymore.

You already know this Lover. He is one who is never angry with those who offend Him. My heart keeps within itself an infinite number of His mercies. It knows that it doesn't have anything of value with which to glorify itself before Him. He has loved me and preferred me to many others....

He is so much in love with my heart that He makes me burn with His divine fire, with the fire of His love. What is this fire that pervades my whole being? Dear Father, if Jesus makes us so happy on earth, what will heaven be like?...

I cannot help abandoning myself to this tenderness, this happiness...

I realize that all this has really been the work of His infinite love. He has never refused me anything and indeed I must say that he has given me more than I asked."

*Letters 1*

## The Healing of a Child's Heart

My daughter Margaret, who was born in 1950, had always been ill and taking weak turns. I had her with several doctors, but all said it was weakness and she would grow out of it. A doctor came to her school and sent me a letter, stating that I should take her to a heart specialist at the Royal Belfast. She was about eleven years old at the time. When she was examined and x-rayed, I was told that she had a hole in her heart and that the valves that were going into and out of her heart were small. She would have to have an operation but as she was so weak she was sent home and given medicine to help build her up. Margaret said she would write to Padre Pio. A short time later a nice letter came back to Margaret from him. He told her not to worry but to go to the hospital and she would be all right. When we went to Belfast again the doctor took another x-ray and came and asked me what I had done to her. Nothing, I told him. He showed me both of the x-rays. One had a large hole and the other showed the hole as almost completely closed. She did not have to go for the heart operation.

*Mary Cunningham*

## Padre Pio and His Friends From California



*Fr. Richard Hopkins today.*

*A note from the editors: Father Richard Hopkins who recently celebrated sixty-one years in the priesthood, serves six months of each year in San Diego at Our Mother of Confidence parish and the other six months at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Billings, Montana. We recently spoke to Fr. Hopkins about his meeting with Padre Pio:*

*"In 1954, I was in Rome attending the canonization of St. Pius X. A priest in Rome invited me to go*

*to San Giovanni Rotondo to see Padre Pio. Although I knew little about Padre Pio, I agreed to go.*

*We arrived at the friary for the weekday morning Mass which was held in the old church of Our Lady of Grace. There were only about fifteen people present and Padre Pio celebrated his Mass at the side altar of St. Francis of Assisi. We gathered at the side altar and stood for the entire Mass. I stood right beside Padre Pio.*

*The Mass of Padre Pio, and his profound participation in Christ's Passion as I observed, was very impressive. Padre Pio's bearing was serious and solemn. Four or five times during the Holy Sacrifice he stopped abruptly*

*and remained completely still and silent with his eyes closed. During those long pauses, I observed that he was in ecstasy.*

*I noticed that when he genuflected during the Mass, it was very, very difficult for him to get back up to a standing position. It reminded me of Jesus bowed down under the cross.*

*Even though there was no homily and no singing, the Mass was long. Afterward, I was able to greet Padre Pio. We spoke together in Latin. His manner was cordial yet serious and reserved. He seemed spiritually centered in Christ even as we conversed.*

*Being present at Padre Pio's Mass gave me a renewed appreciation for the Holy Sacrifice and for my own vocation as a priest. I have never forgotten it."*

## From our Spiritual Director

*(continued from last issue)*



The high temperatures of Padre Pio are equated with the phenomenon known in mystical life as "The Fire of Love." It passes through different stages from a simple burning heat of the heart

to the physical burning of very high fevers. Padre Paolino explains, "In considering the illness that struck Padre Pio during my stay with him in San Giovanni Rotondo, I must accept what a number of serious-minded people who knew Padre Pio well, told me. The crisis of health that Padre Pio experienced was more often caused for moral reasons, for example the conversion of a sinner, the cure of someone seriously ill, etc., which would then be taken out on him so that he would be physically tormented, sometimes in unimaginable ways."

Padre Pio himself confirmed that his fevers were those of the "fire of love" when he wrote to Padre Benedetto, "I confess in the first place that for me it is a great misfortune to be unable to express and pour out this ever-active volcano which burns me up and which Jesus has placed in this very small heart. It can all be summed up as follows, I am consumed by love for God and love for my neighbor."

*— Fr. Louis Solcia, C.R.S.P.*

### PADRE PIO DEVOTIONS

Padre Pio Devotions are every 1st Monday of the month at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church at the corner of Date St. and State St. in San Diego. Rosary begins at 6:35 pm and Mass begins at 7 o'clock. Benediction and prayers follow. For more information call (619) 697-5958.

*To receive more information about St. Padre Pio and a copy of the prayers he said daily – send 4 stamps and your address to:*

**D. Allen • P.O. Box 191545 • San Diego, CA 92159**

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