

“Jesus, who is infinitely merciful, will not fail to give you now and then a respite from the trial He has sent you. He is so good that He will never allow you to give in. The trial is a very hard one, but the Lord who is so very, very good will not fail to lighten the Cross from time to time.”

— **St. Pio of Pietrelcina**

A note from the editor: Gloria Plank of San Diego, California, recently shared her story with us regarding her meeting with Padre Pio in November, 1965. Gloria’s gentleness and kindness recalled to our minds the extremely apt word Padre Pio used when he called her “Bellissima” (beautiful one).



Gloria Plank

In 1965, **Gloria Plank and her father, Dulio Piazzai** made a trip to Rome to visit relatives. While there Gloria asked her father if he would take her to San Giovanni Rotondo to see Padre Pio. Dulio had no interest in Padre Pio. He had heard the stories about his stigmata but did not believe any of them. He declined his daughter’s request. However, Gloria persisted and her father finally relented and agreed to go.

They arrived at the monastery at 4:30 a.m. and already a huge crowd had gathered, waiting for the doors to open for Padre Pio’s 5:00 a.m. Mass. While waiting, she and her father became acquainted with two seminarians from England. When the doors of the church finally opened, Gloria, Dulio and the two seminarians locked arms so that they would not be separated. The unruly crowd began pushing and shoving and Gloria lost her shoes in the process. The seminarians lifted Gloria up over the step as the press of the people rushed forward, everyone hoping to get a seat close to the altar.

When Padre Pio entered the church, a momentous silence fell upon the crowd. He was aided to the altar by two friars, one on either side. He seemed extremely weak and the suffering Gloria observed on his face filled her heart with pity. She began to cry. The Mass was beautiful, reverent, and holy. At the consecration, Padre Pio lifted his eyes toward Heaven and became completely still, wrapped in ecstasy. Everywhere, Gloria felt the presence of Jesus.

After the Mass, the men in the congregation were allowed to go into the sacristy to greet Padre Pio. Gloria asked her father to take her religious articles there and have them blessed. A few moments later, she saw the two seminarians, one on either side, carrying her father out of the sacristy. They told Gloria that as Padre Pio was leaving the sacristy he stopped in front of her father. In a gesture of respect, Dulio kissed Padre Pio’s hand. When Padre Pio raised his stigmatized hand to bless him, he fainted.

Gloria asked if she could go to confession to Padre Pio but was told by one of the Capuchins that it would not be possible; there was not time. Instead she was directed to a small chapel and told to wait. A few moments later Padre Pio came in. He walked over to her and touching her cheek very gently, he said to her, “Bellissima” (beautiful one). “I saw the gentleness of his penetrating eyes and

my heart was filled with joy,” Gloria said. Describing Padre Pio later she said, “He was a father. That was the predominant quality I saw in him. More than anything else, that is how I think of him, as a father. I have had almost forty years since to think about my trip to San Giovanni Rotondo. Meeting Padre Pio is an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life.”

Several years later, while staying in Rome, Dulio was assaulted. He was robbed and beaten so severely that he suffered brain damage. As a result, his memory was impaired. He no longer recognized his family. The only person he spoke of and remembered was Padre Pio.

“For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our infirmity.”

— *Romans 8:24-26*

From our Spiritual Director



The word “transverberation” means a wounding of love. We know that Padre Pio experienced this wound. He had a great devotion to St. Teresa of Avila and also to St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus (St. Thérèse of Lisieux). We know that St. Teresa of Avila also received the transverberation of her heart.

One of the most beautiful of the sculptures of Bernini shows St. Teresa of Avila in ecstasy. Beside her is an angel with a most beautiful smile, ready to pierce her heart with an arrow. In a deposition made in February 1967, a part of the document said that a visible, physical wound in Padre Pio’s side resulted from the experience of the transverberation of the heart. Padre Benedetto, Padre Pio’s spiritual director, (Padre Pio had two spiritual directors in his life) once said to him, “Everything that is happening to you is the effect of Love. It is a trial, a calling to co-redeem, and it is a fountain of glory.”

At each Mass we hear these beautiful words, “Make us grow in love.” Love grows only through prayer, adoration and offering ourselves to God each moment of our lives. Let us make progress in love as Padre Pio did.”

— *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 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 Padre Pio and a copy of the prayers he said daily – send 3 stamps and your address to:

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

Find Padre Pio information and newsletters online at **www.saintpio.org**



Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry



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Editors: Ron & Diane Allen

"Padre Pio's whole life can best be described as a Way of the Cross. He was fully aware that he had been chosen by God to be a collaborator in Christ's redemptive work and that this collaboration would not be achieved unless he shouldered the cross with Jesus."

— Mary Ingoldsby

"Jesus knows that my entire life has been consecrated to Him and to His sufferings."

— St. Pio of Pietrelcina

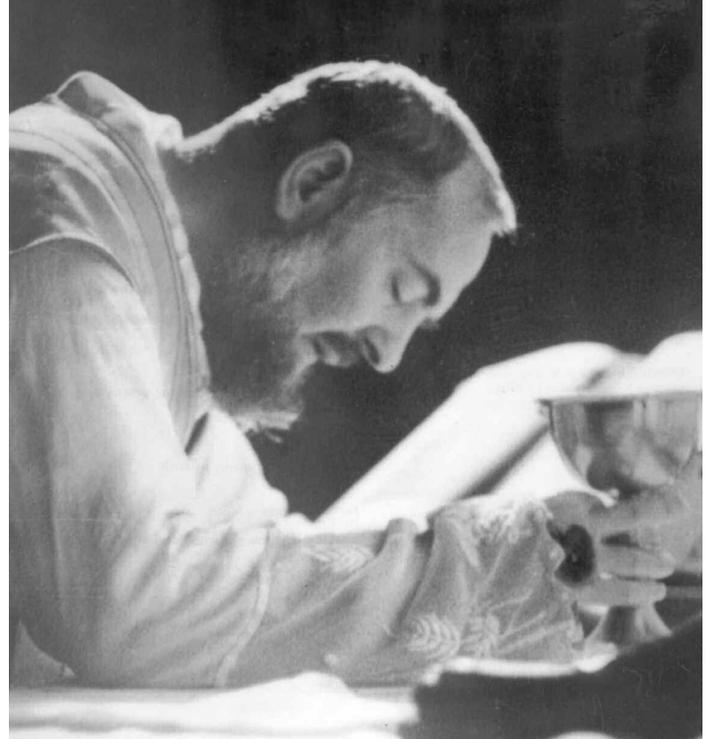
Padre Pio's Way of the Cross

Padre Pio shared and lived the whole Passion of Jesus. The first indication of the stigmata appeared in 1910, shortly after his ordination to the priesthood. Although the visible signs disappeared for a time, the extreme pain of the wounds remained. Later, he suffered the crowning of thorns, the scourging, the shoulder wound, the transverberation of his heart, and the visible Passion wounds in his hands and feet. Added to this was a chain of illnesses which began in his youth and ended only with his death. Doctors were never able to successfully diagnose the many mysterious illnesses that plagued his body. He experienced many moral and spiritual sufferings as well.

Valuable information as to the complete state of victimhood which Padre Pio experienced is contained in his correspondence with **Padre Agostino** of San Marco in Lamis (Padre Agostino Daniele). Padre Agostino, one of two spiritual directors that Padre Pio was to have, had been his former theology professor and he exercised a deep influence on Padre Pio's life. He comforted him in his spiritual trials and was always near him in the many vicissitudes which characterized his life. Padre Pio loved him like a father and the relationship of mutual esteem continued for over fifty years.

In a letter to Padre Agostino dated January 1912, six years before the permanent stigmatization, Padre Pio wrote, "From Thursday evening until Saturday is a time of suffering, of great suffering. The whole scene of the Passion is presented to me and imagine if any consolation can exist in the midst of all this."

On October 10, 1915, in a long and touching letter, Padre Pio wrote a reply to a number of questions that had been asked of him by Padre Agostino regarding the



Padre Pio at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

invisible stigmata and the crowning with thorns. Padre Pio wrote:

"You ask if the Lord granted this soul the ineffable gift of the holy stigmata. To this the reply must be in the affirmative and the first time Jesus deigned to grant this favor the signs were visible. This soul was greatly terrified by the phenomenon and asked the Lord to withdraw the visible signs. Since then, the signs have no longer been seen. However, though the wounds have disappeared, the intense pain has not ceased on this account and it continues especially in certain circumstances and on certain days. By your last question you want to know if the Lord made this soul experience his crowning with thorns and his scourging and how many times. The reply to this question must also be affirmative. As regards the number of times, I am unable to specify this. All I can say is that this soul has suffered these things for several years, almost every week."

Capuchin Brother Modestino of Pietrelcina was close to Padre Pio for many years and was an eyewitness to his many sufferings. He left this testimony:

"In January of 1945, when still not many people came to San Giovanni Rotondo, I used to serve Padre Pio's Mass at dawn, with about twenty people present. In those times, Padre Pio's Mass would last one hour to one hour and a half. Tired from remaining on my knees, I would move to the side of the altar to continue assisting at the Holy Sacrifice while standing. From that position I was able to follow carefully the gestures, movements, tears, sighs and profound recollection of Padre Pio.

When my eyes fell on his forehead and the nape of his neck, I noticed that his skin would seem blistered and on his forehead were marks similar to pricks made by thorns.

With the middle finger of his right hand, Padre Pio frequently seemed to want to remove something bothering him around his temples. In the end, I noticed imprinted on his forehead a small cross of about three centimeters. I was assisting at the crowning of thorns of Padre Pio."

A precious relic that has been preserved is a cloth that was used by Padre Pio to wipe his forehead. It is stained with blood. To one of his spiritual children who asked him if he suffered the crowning with thorns, Padre Pio responded affirmatively and said, "Otherwise the immolation would be incomplete." The thorns, he assured, were "all around his head," and during Mass there were many as well as before and after Mass.

Padre Pio also relived in his body and soul the painful scourging that Jesus suffered in His Passion. When someone inquired whether he was alone or in company during the experience of the scourging, Padre Pio replied, "The Holy Virgin assists me and all paradise is present."

Another insight into Padre Pio's participation in the Passion is related by **Padre Alberto D'Apolito**:

"In 1950, a young university student, Bruno G. Di Lucera, who had a low regard for religion and who did not believe Padre Pio to be a saint but an impostor and a charlatan, was persuaded by his fiancée to go to San Giovanni Rotondo to see for himself.

The first morning, out of curiosity he went to attend Padre Pio's Mass. All of a sudden, at the moment of Consecration, he became pale. He had witnessed something extraordinary. On Padre Pio's head he saw a triple crown of thorns and his face was covered in blood like the Ecce Homo (Jesus crowned with thorns). Believing it to be a hallucination or a trick of the eyes, he said nothing to his fiancée nor to anyone else.

The second morning, the same thing happened. And again for fear of being thought a fanatic he told no one. However, he began to reflect and change his opinion about Padre Pio.

The third morning, the final blow came. At the moment of Consecration, he saw Padre Pio suspended from a cross. His face was like the face of Jesus and on his head was a triple crown of thorns. Seeing this, he burst into tears."

Cleonice Morcaldi, one of Padre Pio's spiritual children, heard about Bruno's experience of seeing Padre Pio crowned with thorns. She heard that on seeing the serene and beautiful expression on Padre Pio's face, Bruno was moved to tears. She also heard that Padre Pio told him not to say a word to anyone about the

experience but to go home and thank God.

Cleonice wanted to know if the story was true and so she asked Padre Pio directly. He answered her, "Do you have any doubt? You are like St. Thomas. You don't believe." His reply seemed so evasive that she wanted to ask him a second time but was reluctant. She prayed to the Virgin Mary, "Madonna, please let Padre Pio tell me if it is true that he wears the crown of thorns." Time passed and one day while she was making her confession to Padre Pio, she asked him again and said, "Father, do you wear the crown of thorns in all your Masses?" Padre Pio answered, "How many things you want to know! Yes, I wear it before and even after the Mass because I can never take off that diadem which is the crown of thorns that God has put on me. I wear it before Mass, during Mass, day and night."

Another spiritual child of Padre Pio, **Professor Gerardo De Caro**, in a conference held in Pavia, Italy on May 25, 1983, shed further light on Padre Pio's painful way of the cross. Professor De Caro said:

"One evening as I was standing by his cell, I saw Padre Pio return from the choir, walking with his shoulders bent over and with his chest almost touching his knees. His sandals shuffled across the ground as he dragged himself along like one carrying the cross.

He must have been in great pain walking. He rested his weight on the edges of his feet and his heels so as not to press on the wounds of his feet. I looked at him and he looked at me. Immediately, and with great effort he straightened himself.

For an instant I saw him like Jesus under the cross. After confession I said to him, 'Padre, you are like Jesus.' And Padre Pio tried to reprove me."

These were the sufferings which constituted Padre Pio's calvary and which caused him to be in a state of great pain his entire life.

"Padre Pio prays and suffers; he suffers and prays."

— **Padre Agostino of San Marco in Lamis**

Padre Pio's Calvary

It was with Jesus, you would mourn
I saw the crown of thorns.
In darkness, you would plead with God
I saw the sweat of blood.
A sharing in the Savior's loss
Each station of the cross.
I saw the wounds Love would impart
I saw the Sacred Heart.

— *D. Allen*

"I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect."

Romans 12:1-2

"We are bidden by St. Paul to join our sufferings to supplement the sufferings of Christ for the redemption of the world."

— *Father John Hardon, S.J.*

Padre Pio and his California Friends

A note from the editor: We spoke to Emelio and Evelyn Noriega at their home in Los Angeles, California regarding their visit to San Giovanni Rotondo and their meeting with Padre Pio in 1966.

Emelio Noriega, although raised a Catholic, had become indifferent to his faith and to the spiritual dimension of his life. His attitude changed completely when he read a book on Padre Pio. He found the book so interesting that he read it four times. Emelio had assumed Padre Pio had passed away. When he found out that he was still living in San Giovanni Rotondo, although elderly and in very poor health, he decided that he needed to go immediately to Italy and meet him.

When Emelio's employer told him that he could not allow him to take the time off from work, he arranged for his brother to substitute at his job until his return. Securing a loan from the bank proved to be a greater obstacle. "So you want a loan to take a vacation," the loan officer said. "No, not at all," Emelio answered him. "This is not for a vacation. It is a necessity. I have got to get to Italy as fast as I can. I am going to see a priest." Unfortunately he did not qualify for any type of loan. He had not worked for his current employer long enough and he had no letter of recommendation and reference. The loan officer reviewed with him, each paper in his file. He was sorry but nothing could be done. Something told Emelio not to leave the bank but to try one more time. "Surely there must be something that can be done," Emelio said. "No, there is nothing," the bank employee replied. To prove it, he picked up Emelio's file to show him again and there in the papers was the letter that was needed, a letter that Emelio had never requested and knew nothing about. It was from the Social Security Department and although unsigned, it was accepted.

Emelio was full of anticipation when he and his wife Evelyn and their two little children touched down in Italy in June, 1966. When they arrived at the monastery in San Giovanni Rotondo, the first person they met was Padre Pio Maria, Padre Pio's assistant. With a big smile on his face he greeted Emelio and said, "Oh, I see you have arrived. We have been expecting you." The words seemed very mysterious to Emelio for he had told no one he was coming to this remote monastery in Southern Italy.

The next day, Padre Pio Maria asked Emelio if he would like to serve at the altar at Padre Pio's Mass. Emelio had been away from the sacraments for a long time and could not remember the duties of the altar server. He told the priest that if he would let him carefully observe the altar server that morning, he would be able to remember and could assist the following day. Padre Pio Maria agreed.

The morning that Emelio served Padre Pio's Mass, he felt confident. At the appointed time, he took the Book of



Emelio holding his son for Padre Pio's blessing.

the Gospels to Padre Pio for the scripture reading. When the time came to take the chalice to Padre Pio, Emelio looked at it but could not pick it up. There on Padre Pio's chalice he saw the face of Christ, bleeding and crowned with thorns. He looked up to see if it might be a reflection on the wall but it was not. Another person had to step forward and take the chalice to Padre Pio.

After the Mass, Padre Pio went to the sacristy to make his thanksgiving in front of a statue of Our Lady of Fatima. Padre Pio Maria directed Emelio to kneel behind him. With his eyes lifted up to Heaven and with his face bathed in tears, Padre Pio whispered, "Tata, Perché?" (Father, why?) over and over. Emelio said to him, "Let me help you." "You don't know what you are asking," Padre Pio replied.

Later Padre Pio blessed Emelio's family. He told them to pray the Rosary every day. Emelio was holding his four-year-old son in his arms when Padre Pio said, "Your son is going to meet with much suffering in his life. I ask you to never, never abandon your child." The words frightened Emelio and Evelyn who loved their little son so much. The words also proved to be prophetic. As their son grew to adulthood, he experienced many sufferings – physical, mental and spiritual. He has been supported through his many trials by his parents' love and prayers.

The visit to San Giovanni Rotondo proved to be a turning point in Emelio's life. His faith in God and his love for the Catholic Church, which had laid dormant for many years, began to grow and to be rekindled in his heart. When he returned to his home in California, he shared the message of Padre Pio with friends and neighbors and was instrumental in starting many Padre Pio prayer groups in the Los Angeles area. He is still spreading the message today.

Padre Pio's Words of Faith

Remember, our suffering is brief, but our reward eternal. You must remain calm, or at least resigned, but always convinced of the voice of authority. You must confide in it, without fearing the rages of the storm, because the vessel of your soul will never be submerged. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of God, that assures the one who obeys it will find victory, will never pass away and will always remain fixed in indelible script in the Book of Life: 'I will exist forever.'

— St. Pio of Pietrelcina