



"Pray, Hope and Don't Worry"



St. Padre Pio Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 18

Editors: Ron & Diane Allen

"By his life given wholly to prayer and to listening to his brothers and sisters, Padre Pio, this humble Capuchin friar, astonished the world." - Pope John Paul II

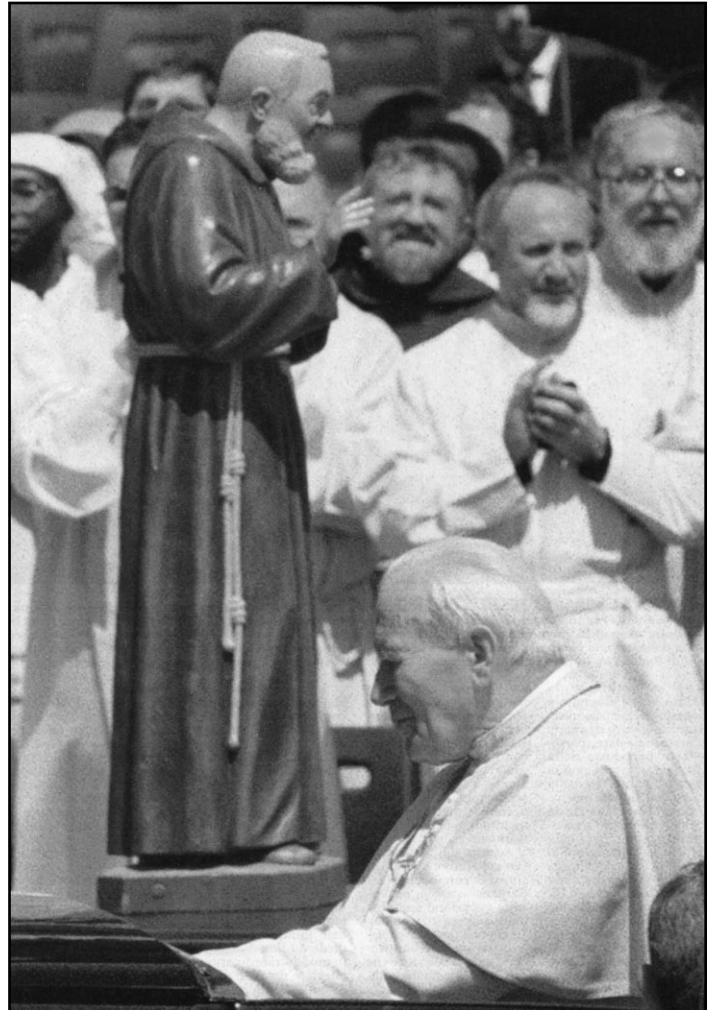
Padre Pio and his Friends Pope John Paul II

Among Padre Pio's spiritual children were people from all places and from all walks of life. Gerardo De Caro, an Italian legislator said of Padre Pio to his fellow legislators in the Italian Parliament in 1947, "I tell you that the light of the world is hidden today in the cell of an old friary on the Gargano... where there lives a gentle being, who bears in his body the stigmata of St. Francis; he teaches us to listen in the depth of our being to the language of God." By 1947 the fame of Padre Pio was spreading rapidly and the shrine of Our Lady of Grace was quickly becoming an international place of pilgrimage.

It was in the spring of 1947 that Pope John Paul II (Fr. Karol Wojtyla) made a trip to San Giovanni Rotondo to visit Padre Pio. At that time, Padre Pio had already had the stigmata for thirty years.

As a newly ordained priest, Fr. Karol Wojtyla was sent from Cracow, Poland to Rome and enrolled at the Angelicum University where he was to complete his post- ordination studies in theology. During his Easter vacation in 1947, twenty-seven year old Fr. Wojtyla went to San Giovanni Rotondo. He attended Padre Pio's early morning Mass, recited the Angelus with him at noon, made his confession to Padre Pio, and attended the benediction service in the evening.

In 1962, as a newly ordained bishop, Karol Wojtyla, attended the Vatican Council II in Rome. He received word that a friend, Wanda Poltawska M.D., was dying of cancer. Dr. Poltawska used to collaborate in the pastoral work of the bishop and had been a great help to the diocese in Cracow. For many years Bishop Wojtyla had been a friend of the family. He wrote a letter to Padre Pio asking for his prayers. He asked Angelo Battisti, a Vatican worker who often went to San Giovanni Rotondo to see Padre Pio, to deliver the letter. In the letter which he wrote in Latin, he said, "Venerable Father, I ask that you pray for a 40 year old mother of four little girls, in Cracow, Poland, who during the last war spent five years in a concentration camp in Germany and who is now in very grave danger related to her health and possibly may die because of cancer that God may extend His mercy to this woman and her family in the presence of the Most Blessed Virgin. Most obligated in Christ, Karol Wojtyla." When Angelo Battisti gave Padre Pio the letter, he read it and remarked, "We cannot refuse him."



"I wish to thank the Lord for having given us dear Padre Pio, for having given him to our generation in this very tormented century. In his love for God and for his neighbor, he is a sign of great hope." - Pope John Paul II

Dr. Wanda Poltawska was hospitalized in November, 1962 with an intestinal tumor. She was informed that there was a five percent chance that the tumor was not malignant. However, the doctors were convinced that the growth was cancerous and that surgery would give her at the most eighteen months to live. The surgery was scheduled on a Friday, and on Saturday, Bishop Wojtyla telephoned Wanda's husband to inquire about the outcome. Mr. Poltawska told the bishop that Wanda did not have the surgery but instead was sent home. "My wife should have been operated on yesterday, but the doctors found that there was nothing more to operate on. The doctors are

confronted with a mystery. The physicians determined that Wanda's tumor, whether benign or malignant, had completely disappeared."

Ten days after the first letter, the future pope wrote a second letter to Padre Pio to say that the tumor had inexplicably disappeared. He wrote, "Venerable Father, the woman living in Cracow, Poland, mother of four young girls, on November 21, just before a surgical operation, suddenly recovered her health. Thanks be to God. Also to you, venerable Father, I give the greatest thanks in the name of the husband and all the family. In Christ, Karol Wojtyla."

After Padre Pio had received the second letter he said to Angelo Battisti, "Angelo, save these letters because one day they will become important." This is an indication that Padre Pio was aware of what lay in the future for Bishop Wojtyla. Today the two letters are safely kept in the archives at San Giovanni Rotondo.

In 1974, as Cardinal Archbishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyla's personal devotion to Padre Pio led him to return to San Giovanni Rotondo once again. He celebrated Mass near the tomb of Padre Pio and during the Mass, Cardinal Wojtyla said, "This ancient church is the place where I first met the Servant of God, Padre Pio. And after almost twenty seven years I have before my eyes his person, his presence, his words, the Mass celebrated by him at a side altar, and then this confessional" .. Keeping with the theme of that day's liturgy which was, "The living man is the glory of God," Cardinal Wojtyla added, "After almost twenty seven years I see this truth which is proclaimed in the liturgy, made incarnate in Padre Pio — Padre Pio is the glory of the living God."

On May 23, 1987, he returned a third time to San Giovanni Rotondo, now as Pope John Paul II, to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of Padre Pio's birthday. He was the first pope to visit the area in seven centuries. In the huge crowd that attended Mass that day was Wanda Poltawska — grateful to God, grateful to Pope John Paul II, grateful to Padre Pio.

On June 16, 2002 in one of the largest liturgies in the Vatican's history, Pope John Paul II canonized Padre Pio before a crowd of 300,000 people. During his homily he recalled how, in 1947, as a young priest he made a pilgrimage to San Giovanni Rotondo to make his confession to Padre Pio. "I, too," said the Pope, "had the privilege in my younger days, of taking advantage of his availability in penance."



The reliquary containing dried blood from the stigmata of Padre Pio was placed beside the Papal Altar during the Canonization Mass, June 16, 2002.

Pope John Paul II concluded his homily at the canonization of Padre Pio, with this beautiful prayer:

Teach us also, we pray, humility of heart, so that we may be among the humble to whom the Father in the Gospel promised to reveal the mysteries of His Kingdom. Obtain for us the eyes of faith that will help us to recognize in the poor and suffering, the very face of Jesus. Support us in our hours of trouble and trial and should we fall, let us experience the joy of the sacrament of forgiveness. Teach us tender devotion to Mary, mother of Jesus and our Mother. Accompany us on our earthly pilgrimage toward the blessed Homeland, where we too, hope to arrive to contemplate forever the glory of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Testimony of Dr. Wanda Poltawska

"... It is my personal conviction that Padre Pio... is an extraordinary and holy man. I use the word 'is' purposely because it is part of his uniqueness that he is still present in the world. People feel his presence. Many are aware of his intervention in an extraordinary way. To some this may seem impossible, but the lives of the saints are full of unusual events.

In 1962, I was to undergo surgery for what was presumed to be a tumorous growth. However, I was told just before surgery that I was healthy and could go home. I was ready to think that what the surgeons had stated, namely that there was a five percent chance that the growth was merely an inflammation, turned out to be the case.

I had no idea that two letters in Latin had been written on my behalf to Padre Pio by the Archbishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyla, the first with a request and the second with thanks. I did not know then of the existence of Padre Pio since information about him already well known elsewhere in the world, had not yet penetrated into Poland, as far as I knew.

But even when I learned about the letters, I did not want to reflect on what had happened. It seemed too difficult to comprehend a supernatural intervention. A doctor tends to see natural explanations. Therefore, in some sense I laid this question aside without trying to understand it. However, information concerning Padre Pio and his intervention in people's lives began to reach me from many sources. And then when Archbishop Karol Wojtyla returned to Cracow, I learned of the exchange of letters and who this Padre Pio is.

In 1967, I went to San Giovanni Rotondo. I arrived toward evening, hoping to participate at Holy Mass the next morning. However I was told that there were always huge crowds and that it would be almost impossible to enter and be close to the altar.

I was standing in the little square in front of the church when I saw a Capuchin priest coming from a side gate. I approached him and told him that I would love to participate in Padre Pio's Mass, but I was afraid it would be impossible, that I came from far away Poland and that I might not be able to get

another passport to make the trip in the future. He said, "Come to this gate tomorrow at 5 a.m. and I will let you in" and that's what happened. The next morning he led me through the sacristy and I was able to sit near the altar. I could observe Padre Pio from a short distance. He was an old man at the time and walked very slowly. He celebrated Holy Mass with

incredible intensity and with an expression of suffering on his face. It is impossible to find adequate words to describe this Mass. This sacrifice was truly the representation of the Passion of Christ. Even people of deep faith hardly ever can perceive this reality on the altar as a representation of



Dr. Wanda Poltawska at San Giovanni Rotondo.

Calvary. Here the reality of His Passion, which is beyond our understanding, seemed to be reflected in the Holy Mass celebrated by this old man. Perspiration from Padre Pio's forehead ran down his face. The agony of the man was visible.

The church, full of people, was silent, unusually silent for Italy, only interrupted now and then by a sob. The Mass lasted a long time, and when it was over, Padre Pio slowly made his way back to the sacristy with short steps. As he was passing by, I happened to be near him. He stopped for a minute, looking around at the people, then looked directly at me. I shall never forget his glance. Smiling, he came even closer to me, patting me on the head, and said, "Adesso, va bene?" (Now, are you all right?) I did not answer. I had no time.

But precisely in this moment, I knew he recognized me. I also knew that it wasn't because of a wrong diagnosis that I had found myself suddenly well several years earlier, but because this monk had come into my life in such an extraordinary way because the Archbishop of Cracow had asked for it.

Many years later, when the Archbishop of Cracow had become Pope, I learned from the man who had handed the Archbishop's first letter to Padre Pio, that Padre Pio had said, "I cannot say no to this request."

From then on I put many difficult problems into Padre Pio's hands. I feel I am one of his spiritual children, even though I have only seen him once. He died a year later. I know for certain that he has helped me. Besides, our Catholic faith gives us the certainty of the communion of saints. We can ask the saints to intercede for us. I have Padre Pio, a Capuchin monk whom I have met only once in my life, to help me."

"Padre Pio, look down from Heaven upon all of us. Intercede for all those in every part of the world who raise their prayers to you. Come to the help of everyone. Give peace and consolation to every heart. Amen."

Pope John Paul II Padre Pio's Love for the Church

It can be said that Padre Pio had three great loves; Christ, the Church and Our Lady. These three loves were so closely joined that they could be considered as different aspects of one devotion. His love for the Church was best expressed in his love and loyalty to the pope. For Padre Pio, the pope was the visible representative of Jesus Christ on earth. Once when the Bishop of Manfredonia was going to visit the pope, Padre Pio said to him, "Tell the Pope that for me, after Jesus, there is no one but him."

Although Padre Pio visited Rome only once, in 1917, when his sister was about to become a Brigitine nun, his thoughts went frequently to the home of Christ's Vicar on earth. It was to Pope St. Pius X that his thoughts of reverence and devotion were often directed. He loved this pope with a great love. He described Pope Pius X as "a truly noble and holy soul whose equal has never been seen by Rome." He was deeply saddened by the death of Pope Pius X and said, "I believe that his holy soul has no need of our intercessory prayers, but let us pray for his eternal rest just the same, since our prayers will never go to waste."

It was during the reign of Benedict XV, that Padre Pio received the stigmata, and this was the first pope to take an interest in him. Pope Benedict XV had a high regard for Padre Pio and said, "Padre Pio is indeed one of those extraordinary men whom God, from time to time sends upon the earth to convert hearts." Pope Benedict XV also said, "I find that Padre Pio leads souls to God. As long as this is his mission, I must stand by him."

Pope Pius XII, who called Padre Pio "the confessor of Europe," frequently asked Padre Pio for his prayers. In February 1949, the pope asked him to say Mass "for a special intention of mine." Pope Pius XII also sent a niece and nephew of his to receive their first communion from Padre Pio's hands rather than his own.

"There is no holiness without the grace of God and this grace can be obtained by our prayers."

- Pope St. Pius X

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 INFO. CALL (619) 697-5958.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE INFORMATION ABOUT ST. 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**

THE INFORMATION WILL BE SENT TO YOU IN A SPECIAL ENVELOPE.



Some pictures in the cell of Padre Pio including Our Lady of Lourdes, Padre Pio's parents, Pope Paul VI and St. Michael the Archangel.

pope "whom I love in my love for Jesus." Padre Pio would not listen to even the most innocent joke about the pope's authority or the authority of any superior.

Padre Pio's first prayer in the morning was for the reigning pope. Padre Pellegrino Funicelli, assistant to Padre Pio for many years, recalled how Padre Pio's alarm would sound at 2 o'clock in the morning as he rose to prepare for Mass by several hours of prayer and meditation. By the side of his bed he kept three pictures St. Michael the Archangel, the Virgin Mary, and the pope. The lamp in his room had to be draped because the light would bother his eyes. Nevertheless, the drape had to be parted so that the first light of day would fall on the pope's picture. That was how he would begin his day praying for the Holy Father.

Once during a religious discussion when some were upholding certain ideas not sanctioned by the Church, Padre Pio abruptly interrupted the conversation and remarked, "You can say what you want but I stand with the Church and that is enough."

There was a young friar who from time to time would argue with Padre Pio regarding the severity of the Church in certain situations. Padre Pio said, "The severity of the Church is always necessary in order to clarify our ideas, otherwise there would be chaos. There are many reasons for loving the Church, but in my opinion the mere fact that her severity down through the centuries has kept intact for us, at least in substance, the word of God and the Eucharist, ought to be sufficient to make us love her more than a mother." On another occasion Padre Pio said, "For me the severity of the Church has been a refuge."

He used to call the Church "our tender Mother" and he gave proof of his devotion by making out his last will and

Once when Padre Pio learned that Pope Pius XII was ill, he sent a message to him through Professor Enrico Amedi, "Enrico, tell the pope that I am ready to offer my life for him with immense joy." On another occasion when Professor Amedi asked Padre Pio if he had a message for the pope (this time Pope Paul VI) on his return to Rome, Padre Pio replied, "Tell him that I offer myself as a sacrifice for him and pray continually that the Lord may preserve him for a long time for his Church." He asked people to pray for the

testament in which he left his hospital "Home for the Relief of Suffering" to the Holy See. Padre Pio said, "Notice that I made a will leaving everything to the Church for I am a son of the Church. And when I no longer manage anything, my Mother will have to answer for all the offerings, even the coins, that souls from all over the world donate to the "Home for the Relief of Suffering."

One of the last acts of Padre Pio's life was to write a letter to Pope Paul VI in which he said, "I offer you my prayers and my daily sufferings as a small but sincere contribution on the part of the least of your sons, in order that God may comfort you with His grace to follow the straight and painful way in defense of eternal truth, which does not change with the passing of the years." Eleven days later Padre Pio passed away.

"May the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom Padre Pio called by the beautiful name of "Our Lady of Grace" help us to follow in the footsteps of this religious who is so beloved by the people." - Pope John Paul II

From Our Spiritual Director

Fr. Louis Solcia, CRSP, our spiritual director, asked Bishop Erba, a fellow classmate, to write about his work in the cause of Canonization of Padre Pio. This is a continuation from the last issue.

"... All of this work(in the cause of Canonization of Padre Pio) was done by examining Padre Pio's writings and the sworn depositions of the numerous witnesses cross-examined by the Church Tribunals. From the study of the documents and the testimonies, I reached the conviction that Padre Pio is an exceptional man who escapes our classifications; that our judging criteria are inadequate to understand the "mystery" of this man. How is it possible to judge a person who speaks with the angels and then comes to blows with the devil; a mystic that first receives the transverberation of the heart and then the stigmata on his hands, feet, and side with the wounds open and bleeding for fifty years?

All of the mystical phenomena that were a part of Padre Pio's life ecstasies, prophecies, bilocations, healings, reading of hearts, etc. have been declared authentic and scientifically inexplicable. No other saint in Church history had these in such a great number and in such a striking way."

(to be continued)

Andrea Maria Erba, CRSP
Bishop of Velletri Segni

THROUGH THE GENEROSITY OF THOSE WHO ATTENDED ST. PIO'S FEAST DAY MASS ON SEPTEMBER 28, 2003, WE WERE ABLE TO SEND \$3,770.00 TO PADRE PIO'S HOSPITAL "HOME FOR THE RELIEF OF SUFFERING" AND \$600.00 TO THE NEW CHURCH AND SHRINE IN SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO. THANK YOU TO ALL.