



# *“Pray, Hope and Don’t Worry”*



Padre Pio Newsletter

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## Words of Pope Paul VI on Padre Pio

"What fame he had. How many followers from around the world. Why? Was it because he was a philosopher, a scholar, or because he had means at his disposal? No, it was because he said Mass humbly, heard confessions from morning until night and was a marked representative of the stigmata of Our Lord. He was truly a man of prayer and suffering." – Pope Paul VI

The following story of the healing of Giovanni Savino is one of the most famous as well as one of the best documented of the many miracles of Padre Pio. Father Dominic Meyer, Padre Pio's secretary for twelve years, wrote a detailed account of Giovanni's cure in July, 1949. When the story was first publicized, it attracted great numbers of pilgrims to San Giovanni Rotondo.

## **The Healing of Giovanni Savino**

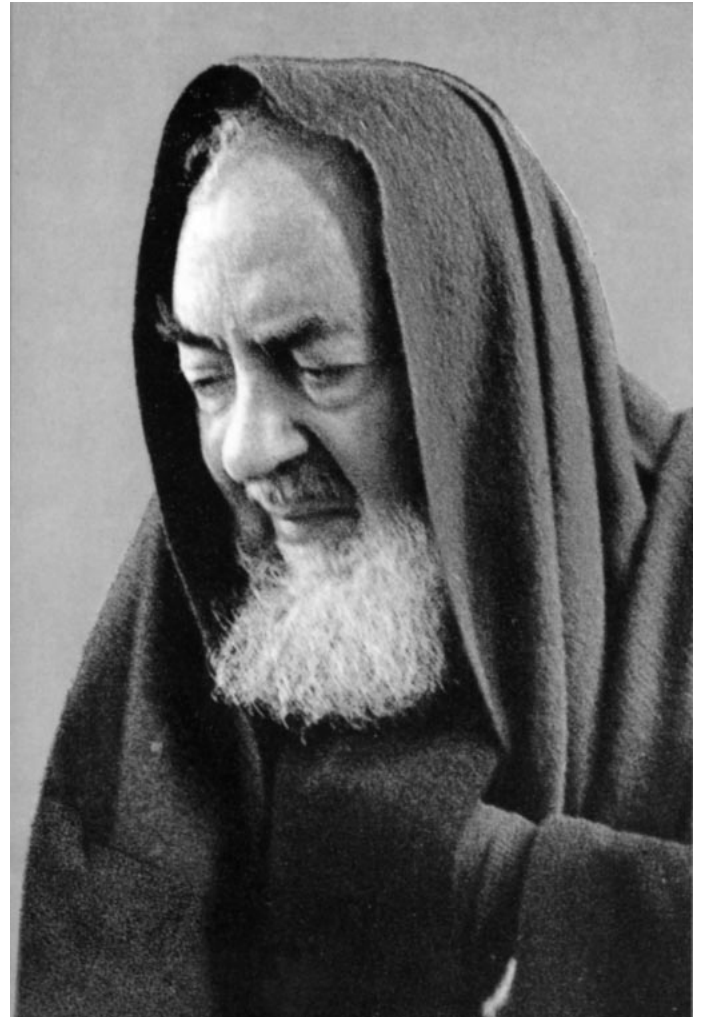
Giovanni Savino, a construction worker and a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, was a devoted spiritual son of Padre Pio. In February, 1949, Giovanni was working at Padre Pio's friary, completing the construction of an annex to the monastery. The workers were leveling the ground and were getting ready to blast a huge boulder.

It was Giovanni's custom to attend Padre Pio's Mass every morning before going to work. After the Mass, he would wait in the sacristy to receive a blessing from Padre Pio. Every day Padre Pio would place his hands on Giovanni's head and pray for him.

One morning, Padre Pio deviated from the regular routine. When Giovanni asked for a blessing, Padre Pio gave him a big hug and said, "Courage! I am praying to the Lord that you will not die." Giovanni was terribly upset by this statement. He began to cry. "Padre Pio, what is going to happen to me?" Giovanni asked. But Padre Pio was silent.

The next three mornings as Giovanni asked for a blessing, Padre Pio embraced him and repeated the same disturbing words. When he repeated the same remarks on the fourth day, Giovanni told some of the construction workers, "I'm afraid something is going to go wrong. Maybe we should not work today." But the crew decided to proceed with the job of blasting and leveling the ground.

That afternoon, Giovanni and another worker placed a charge of dynamite under a huge boulder. Giovanni lit the



fuse but it failed to detonate. After a few minutes, he went over to check the charge. Just as he bent over, the dynamite exploded in his face. A shower of rocks hit Giovanni. The rock that he had been standing on fell on top of him and he lost consciousness. His face was badly burned and much of the skin was torn off. His left eye was filled with rocks and gravel. His right eye was completely gone. There was only a bit of raw flesh left in the empty socket.

Giovanni was rushed to the hospital. His left eye was operated on but nothing could be done for his right eye. The doctor told Giovanni's wife that both of her husband's eyes had been destroyed. Padre Pio was informed about the accident and told that Giovanni had been blinded. "That is not for certain yet," Padre Pio replied.

It was three days before Giovanni regained consciousness. His entire head and face were bandaged. He was told that there was a possibility that his left eye might be saved. But as for his right eye, there was no hope.

Meanwhile, Padre Pio was asking everyone to pray for Giovanni. He exposed the Blessed Sacrament and was heard to say, "Lord, I offer You one of my eyes for Giovanni, because he's the father of a family."

One evening, after ten nights in the hospital, while Giovanni was praying the Rosary, he smelled "the aroma of paradise." It was a beautiful, heavenly smell. It was the sign that announced Padre Pio's invisible presence. Giovanni felt a gentle slap on his right eye, the one that had been blown out of its socket. "Who touched me?" Giovanni said. But no one was there. He felt a tightness of the bedclothes caused by someone standing against the bed. He then realized that Padre Pio was with him. "Give me back my sight, Padre Pio, or let me die," Giovanni said. "I cannot live like this."

In the morning, when the doctor took the bandages off, he discovered that Giovanni's face was healed and covered with new skin. He then examined his eyes. "I can see you!" exclaimed the injured man. "I can see you with my right eye. The doctor insisted that he was seeing out of the left eye, as the right was totally destroyed. After further examination, it was clear that Giovanni was speaking the truth. He was not able to see with the eye in which the shrapnel had been removed, but he was seeing perfectly from the eye that had been shattered to a bloody jelly."

The doctor was astonished and said, "Well, now, who is the saint behind this? Who is your protector?" Giovanni replied, "I have been praying to Padre Pio and he has been taking care of me." The doctor, who had been an atheist said, "Now I believe, too. I believe because this has happened right in front of me."

When Giovanni was released from the hospital, he went to the friary to thank Padre Pio for the prayers said on his behalf. Padre Pio said to him "Let us thank God that you did not get killed. And later he said to Giovanni, "If only you knew what this cost me!"

In thanksgiving for the miracle, Giovanni and his wife offered to the Lord the child she was then carrying. Padre



**Giovanni Savino and his son Francesco**

Pio named him Francesco, and he grew up to become a Capuchin priest.

Pietro Cugino, who used to visit Padre Pio's monastery, said that one day, in the garden, while talking to some of the friars, Padre Pio suddenly said, "I'm blind. I cannot see anything." After a time, Padre Pio's eyesight returned. While we may not fully understand the meaning of this incident, we do know that Padre Pio was offering many prayers and sacrifices on Giovanni's behalf and encouraging others to do the same.

Padre Raffaele, one of the friars at San Giovanni Rotondo, suggested that Giovanni go to Rome to see another eye doctor for treatment of his left eye. Giovanni asked Padre Pio his thoughts on the matter. "No," Padre Pio said, "we have already obtained the grace which we have asked for. Even if you go to Rome you will not get any better

than you are right now."

Giovanni was not the only family member to be the beneficiary of graces through Padre Pio's prayers. His children also received help in times of crisis. Giovanni's young daughter, Lina, was on her way to a birthday party when she was struck down by a moped. This was before Padre Pio's hospital had been built, so Lina was taken unconscious to a first aid station. She was in a coma and found to be suffering from a trauma to her head and severe internal bleeding.

Giovanni and his wife rushed to the friary and told Padre Pio. As they described it, "He looked up to heaven as if he saw another reality," and said, "Let's pray and we'll leave everything in Our Lord's hands." Afterward, Lina made a rapid and complete recovery.

Even when people were cured through the intercessory prayers of Padre Pio, as in the healing of Giovanni Savino, Padre Pio always gave God the credit. He would say: "Nothing is due to me. I am not a miracle worker. Left to my own devices, I can do nothing but sin." When people came to thank Padre Pio for his prayers he would reply, "Do not thank me, thank Our Lord and Our Lady. They are responsible for your healing."

"God is for us a refuge and strength ... So we shall not fear though the earth should rock, though the mountains fall into the depths of the sea." Psalm 46: 1,2

## A Letter from Padre Pio to Pope Paul VI

Padre Pio had a great devotion to the Pope. Every day Padre Pio would rise at two o'clock in the morning and begin his prayers. His lamp had to be draped because the light would bother his eyes. But the drape had to be open so that a ray of light could hit the Pope's picture which was always on his desk. Until the ray of light hit the Pope's picture, he was never satisfied. That is how Padre Pio would begin his day – praying for the Holy Father.

A short time before his death, Padre Pio wrote the following letter to Pope Paul VI. His words remain especially relevant today.

Your Holiness,

... In a spirit of faith, love, and obedience to the greatness of Him whom you represent on earth, I offer my respectful homage to your August Person...

I know that your heart suffers much these days on account of the happenings in the Church; for peace in the world, for the great needs of its peoples; but above all, for the lack of obedience of some... to the lofty teachings which you, assisted by the Holy Spirit and in the name of God, have given us. I offer Your Holiness my daily prayers and sufferings... asking the Lord to comfort you with His grace to continue along the direct yet often burdensome way – in defense of those eternal truths which can never change with the times.

May God grant the triumph to the truth, peace to His Church... so that when these disturbing clouds pass over, the Reign of God may triumph in all hearts, through the apostolic works of the Supreme Shepherd of all Christians.

Prostrate at your feet, I beg you to bless me, my brothers in religion, my spiritual children, the "Prayer Groups", all the sick – that we may faithfully fulfill the good works done in the name of Jesus and under your protection.

Your Holiness' most humble servant,

Padre Pio, Capuchin

San Giovanni Rotondo, September 12, 1968

### 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 THE PRAYERS SAID AT THE DEVOTIONS, SEND 3 STAMPS TO:

**D. ALLEN**

**P.O. BOX 191545**

**SAN DIEGO, CA 92159**

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

## Padre Pio and His Friends

Pauline Bongiovanni of San Diego shared her testimony at one of our Padre Pio devotions, regarding the grace her family received through the intercession of Padre Pio. Her story was so powerful and inspiring that we wanted to include it here.

In 1972, Pauline and Joseph Bongiovanni's ten year old son, Ignazio (Zino) Bongiovanni, was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, one of the deadliest and most aggressive forms of bone cancer. It was already in a very advanced state and Zino was given three months to live. The doctor said that nothing could be done for Zino. The Bongiovanni's took Zino to another doctor in order to obtain a second opinion. The second doctor came to the very same conclusion. Pauline asked the second doctor if there wasn't something that could be done for her son. The doctor said that he could amputate Zino's leg but he did not recommend it because even if this measure was taken, his chance of survival would be only five percent. The doctor said that perhaps it would be better to let Zino live according to the time that was left to him without having to undergo the trauma of an amputation.

Pauline and her husband had a big decision to make regarding their son's medical treatment. One day, in a great state of anxiety, Pauline went into the hospital chapel and knelt to pray, asking for guidance.

A few moments later a man entered the chapel. He touched Pauline gently on the shoulder and asked if there was something he might do to help her. Pauline was embarrassed by her tears so she did not turn around to look at the stranger. She shook her head to indicate that she did not care to talk. A few moments later, the man tapped her on the shoulder again and said: "Please let me help you. Maybe I can give you some advice." Pauline was startled by these words because at that very moment she had been praying to the Blessed Mother, asking for advice. She once again declined to talk to the man. A few moments later, the man touched her shoulder for the third time and Pauline finally turned around to look at this man who was so persistent. Pauline was very, very surprised. "I can't believe it," she said to herself. "It's St. Joseph." Of course she realized that the stranger was not actually St. Joseph but he reminded her of him. His eyes were large and beautiful. He had a beard. He manifested a great love and concern. She told him about her son and the decision that had to be made soon.

The man said to her: "I want to give you some advice. Go ahead with the operation. A five percent chance is better than no chance at all. When I was younger, the doctors gave up on me too, but look, I am still here today." As the



kindly man spoke, Pauline felt that his words were filling her with renewed hope and courage to face whatever lay ahead. She left the chapel to tell the doctors she had decided in favor of the operation and when she went back to the chapel to thank the man, he was gone. She asked many people in the hospital but no one had seen him.

Pauline thought about the man many times through the years. For a reason she did not quite understand, he had made a tremendous impression on her. She would never forget him. How she wished she could have thanked him for what he had done for her. She wished she could tell him that her son did indeed beat the odds, and was alive and healthy.

Twelve years later, Pauline and her husband Joseph were driving back to California from New York. Their sister in law was making the trip with them and had been experiencing serious symptoms related to a heart condition. Pauline and Joseph were beside themselves with anxiety. They were afraid she might have a heart attack on the long trip back home. Pauline related her fears to a close friend and the friend told her, "Pauline, don't worry. I am going to give you a photo of a very powerful saint. You can put it right on your dashboard. He will protect your sister in law and get you all home safely."

When Pauline looked at the photo, she couldn't believe it. It was the kindly man she had thought about so many times through the years, the man who had reminded her of St. Joseph. It was the man who came into the chapel at the hospital during the darkest time of her life, whose words had filled her with hope and courage. It was Padre Pio.



**Joseph, Zino and Pauline Bongiovanni still grateful today for Padre Pio's intercession.**

"Blessed are those who persevere under trial, because when they have been approved, they will receive the crown of life, that You have promised to those who love You." – James 1:12

## From the Spiritual Director

### Saints Are....

Some people feel that the saints are born saints and that God gave them graces that He did not give to others. They do not strive for holiness because of this attitude. But Padre Pio by his effort and will added to the grace of God, made himself a saint.

Some people feel that saints are in such an exalted state that they are impossible to imitate. But Mark 5:48 says, "You must become perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." Padre Pio understood this scripture and he became a saint.

Some people find it hard to identify with the saints. They look at their lives of penance, sacrifice, and at times, even martyrdom. They see them as somehow "strange" and so they do not study their lives.

Padre Pio said: "I will stand at the gates of Heaven until all of my spiritual children are with me." Nevertheless, Padre Pio wanted us to do our part, to do our "homework." Some people feel that we will never be able to measure up to the lives of the saints. St. Paul said, "It is not I that live, but Christ who lives in me."

Padre Pio showed, during his Mass, that Jesus was present, real and living in him. Jesus must live in us too. How?

#### St. Pio practiced in a heroic way what he preached

1. Pray, hope and do not worry.
2. Without the Mass our lives are empty.
3. We leave concern for the future to the providence of God.
4. We must obey the Pope.
5. Begin to form prayer groups in your community.
6. Recognize Jesus in the person who is sick.
7. Avoid gossip at all costs.
8. Criticize only yourself, not others.
9. There are many souls to be saved.
10. Raise your voice a little bit to defend God.

Fr. Louis Solcia, C.R.S.P.

"Do not anticipate the problems of this life with apprehension, but rather, with a perfect hope that God, to whom you belong, will free you from them accordingly. He has defended you up to now. Simply hold on tightly to the hand of His divine providence and He will help you in all events, and when you are unable to walk, He will lead you.

Do not think about tomorrow because the same Heavenly Father who takes care of you today will do the same tomorrow and forever." – St. Padre Pio