Padre Pio Newsletter Editors, Ron & Diane Allen

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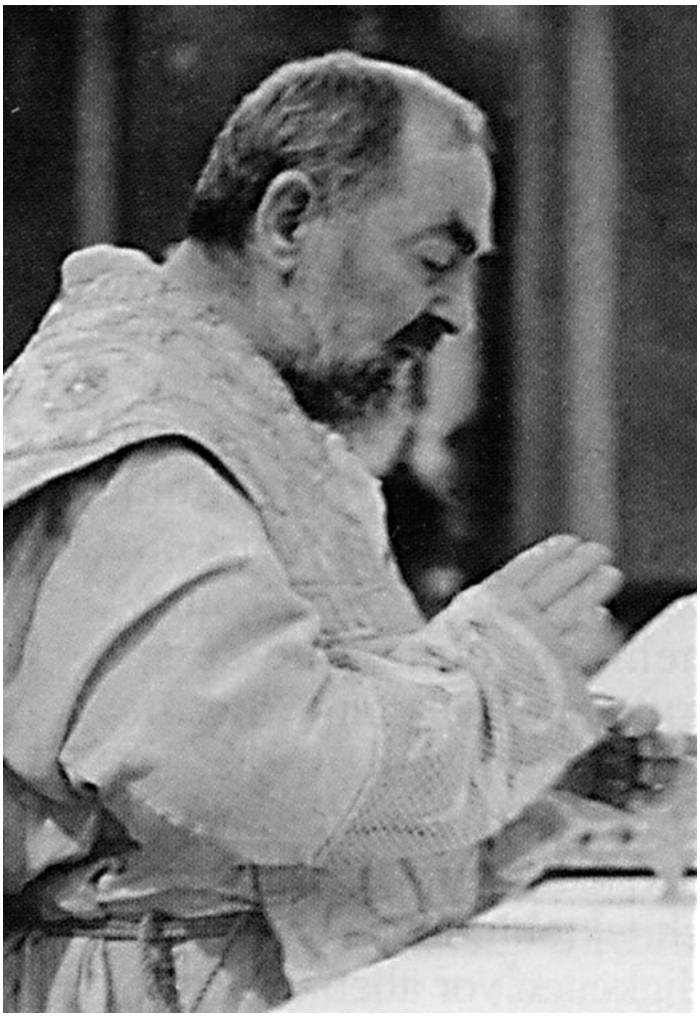


"The life and mission of Padre Pio give testimony that difficulty and suffering, if accepted with love, transform themselves into a privileged path of sanctity, opening toward a larger good that is known only to the Lord." - Pope John Paul II

Padre Pio is for Everybody

Padre Pio once said, "From the time of my birth, God favored me in a most special manner. He showed me that He would not only be my Savior and supreme benefactor, but my devoted, sincere and faithful friend, the friend of my heart, my infinite love and consolation, my joy and comfort, my entire wealth."

Padre Pio was privileged to receive exceptional gifts of grace throughout his entire life. He was destined to fulfill a great mission, a mission given to him by God. He was the first stigmatized priest in the history of the Church. His life was a total gift for the salvation of others. He gave his time, his prayers, his sufferings for this intention. On the fiftieth anniversary of his priesthood he said, "The only thing I desire is to love and to suffer another fifty years for my brothers and sisters. Do not pray for me but pray for souls so that they may be saved." His desire to save souls was a powerful force always burning in his heart and in his great love and concern for others, no one was excluded. He once said, "Padre Pio is for everybody." He made Christianity real to thousands of people. There is no doubt about it, he changed peoples lives. And while his life was filled with events that sometimes seem strange and even incredible, Padre Pio was a real human being with real emotions, real joys and real sorrows. As one of his friends, Father Peter Villani once said, "He was a man of God; you could feel it."

Padre Pio and His Friends

Day by day Padre Pio used the forum of the confessional to cultivate in people a sense of sin — a sense of the malice of venial sin. Sometimes his therapy with his penitents was traumatic, as described in the following testimony by Andre Mandato.

(From "A Padre Pio Profile" by Fr. John Schug)

I had been going to church every Sunday but I had no strong belief in Confession. I went very seldom. I started to believe in Confession only after I went to Padre Pio.

The first time I confessed to him, he told me what sins I had committed. He told me, "You swear." I said, "Yes, Father." "Then you ask God to forgive you. That's not enough," he said. This shocked me. As soon as I left the confessional (and this I can't forget as long as I live) I felt inside of myself something crushing me. I started to cry, cry — I couldn't hold my tears. For the first time I really understood what it means to offend God. I do not swear anymore. This is a grace I got from Padre Pio. Never again will I sin and then close my eyes and do nothing more than say, "God forgives me."

Priests today give you a penance of a Hail Mary or an Our Father. Padre Pio would make you do penance for thirty days! The sins I confessed were not big, but he gave me one month! It was a good lesson for me not to offend God anymore. That was his purpose — to make me understand.

I first visited Padre Pio when I was eighteen or nineteen, along with my friend. He impressed us. My friend said to him, "I don't believe in God. I'm not sure that there is a God." Padre Pio looked at him and said, "You're crazy."

At that time there wasn't much of a crowd at the friary, because it was hard for people to get there. We could go into the little garden, where there were maybe ten people, and we visited with him. He was jovial, in good humor. He told jokes. When you were by yourself you would say, "He is a saint." But when he talked with you, you didn't see the saint. You saw a human being like everybody else, smiling, joking. I could touch him. I'd talk with him just as I talk with you.

I had been a tailor in Bologna. In 1961 I decided to come to the United States and Padre Pio helped me. One night I dreamed of him. With great clarity he made me understand that my application for admission to the United States had been rejected. I told him that it meant a lot to me to come and he told me to try again — that I should submit my petition again with a new sponsor and that all would go well.

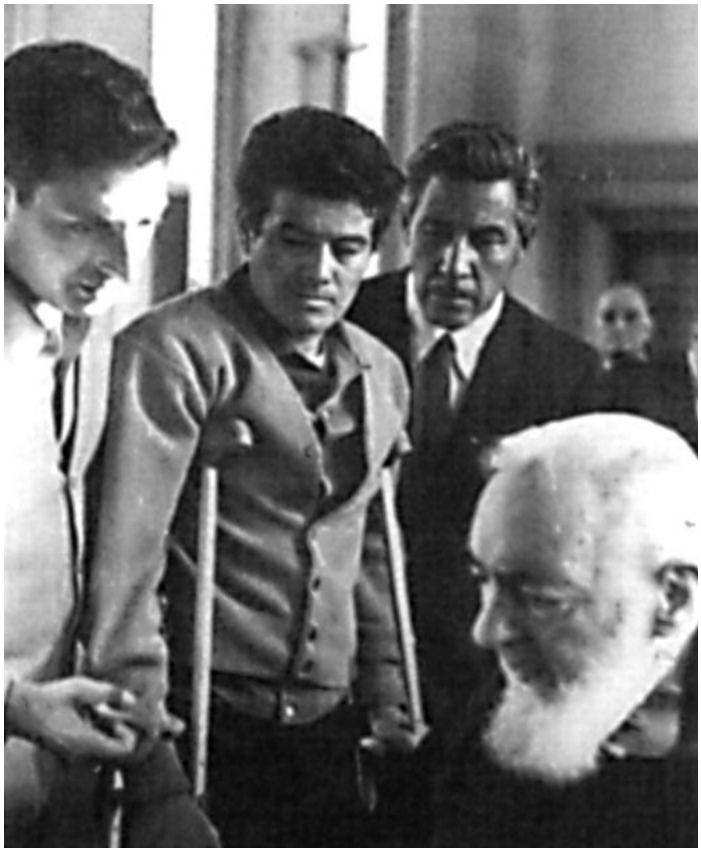
When I awoke, I did not know whether or not to believe this dream. But the suspense was not long. That afternoon I learned that my request to emigrate had been rejected. Soon afterwards I applied again and was given a visa for myself and all my family.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Your decrees are my delight, they are my counselors. You are near, O Lord, and all your commandments are true."

– Psalm 119:105, 24, 151

Romeo Gutierres traveled from Mexico to California to be treated for bone cancer. He was twenty two years old. He decided to join some friends who were making a pilgrimage to Lourdes and also to Padre Pio's |friary in San Giovanni Rotondo. Romeo's friends agreed to help him on this journey. He had an open wound that needed to be cared for. Sometimes he was able to walk with the aid of crutches but other times he had to be carried on a stretcher.

The day after the group's arrival in San Giovanni Rotondo, Romeo waited in the sacristy to meet Padre Pio. Padre Pio had a look of sadness on his face when he saw Romeo. He gave him a blessing. One of the members of the group asked Padre Pio if Romeo could hope for a miracle. Padre Pio answered this question in one word, "Paradiso!" (Paradise) In other words, Padre Pio was telling them that Romeo would soon be leaving his earthly life to begin his eternal life in Paradise. Romeo said that when Padre Pio, frail and suffering, stood in front of him and blessed him, he lost all fear of dying. This meeting with Padre Pio occurred on September 22, 1968, just one day before Padre Pio's death.



Romeo Gutierres (on crutches) with Padre Pio on Sept. 22, 1968.

Romeo returned to Mexico and realized that he had received a great spiritual healing. He was given an amazing deepening of faith and renewed strength and courage. He asked his friends not to feel sorry for him for in his own words he said, "Don't be sad. Soon I will be with Padre Pio." Romeo died three months later.

"The Lord is my strength and my might; He has become my salvation. On the day I called, You answered me. You built up strength within me. You have been a fortress for me and a refuge in the day of my distress."

– Psalm 118:14, 138:3, 59:16

"Remember the words the divine Master spoke one day to the Apostles and which he says to you today — "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Yes, let not your heart be troubled in the hour of trial because Jesus promised his real assistance to those who follow him." – St. Padre Pio

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 p.m., Mass begins at 7 o'clock p.m. Benediction and prayers follow. For more 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.

A note from the editors: We visited Padre Pio's friary in Italy in the summer of 2002. We attended an English Mass on a weekday afternoon and an American priest (with 15 priests concelebrating) told the following story in his homily that day of his meeting with Padre Pio.

An Encounter with Padre Pio

It was in 1964 when the priest, then a young man in his 20's, accompanied his grandfather on a trip to Italy to visit relatives. The grandfather insisted that they make a stop in San Giovanni Rotondo so that they could visit Padre Pio but his grandson did not want to. The young man had heard that Padre Pio had the stigmata and the idea in simple terms was repulsive to him. It conjured up all sorts of dark and frightening images in his mind. He didn't want any part of it. Although he had stopped going to Mass, he was enjoying what he considered to be the "good life" which involved many worldly pursuits. Things were going smoothly. He did not need God and he certainly did not need Padre Pio. But he could not convince his grandfather to cancel the trip. They arrived at Padre Pio's monastery and were told to stand in the sacristy and soon Padre Pio would come in to greet them. Grandfather and grandson stood together in the appointed place and when Padre Pio walked through the doorway the young man was shocked to see the extent to which Padre Pio was suffering. He couldn't believe it. His heart was profoundly moved and filled with pity. Padre Pio walked up to him and said, "It's true, your life is going very smoothly right now. Everything seems to be fine." " I can't believe it," the young man said to himself, "he's reading my mind." Then Padre Pio continued, "All that is going to change about the time you are ordained to the priesthood. Then God will send many trials into your life." "Ordained to the Priesthood?" the young man said to himself, "Is he crazy? I'm not interested in the priesthood. I'm not even sure I believe in God!" As he was saying these things to himself Padre Pio blessed him and he kissed Padre Pio's gloved hand. At once he became aware of a most heavenly fragrance. Shortly after this encounter, the disposition of this young man's heart changed completely and he began to return to his faith. It was not long before he entered the priesthood and it was shortly afterward that many trials came to him, just like Padre Pio predicted. His esteem for Padre Pio has steadily increased through the years and although he has had many crosses to bear, he feels blessed by God for his vocation.

"The Lord lifted me out of the pit. He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God." Psalm 40:1-3

Padre Pio's Words of Hope

God enriches the soul which empties itself of everything.

Charity is the measure by which Our Lord judges all things.

The sacred gift of prayer is in the right hand of Our Savior and He will begin to give this gift to you in the same measure in which you become free and empty of self, namely of the love of your senses and your own will, and in the measure that you become well grounded in humility.

Let us climb Calvary without getting tired, carrying our Cross and know for certain that the climb will lead us to the beatific vision of our dear Savior.

Joe Florentino Passes Away

It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Joe Florentino on Dec. 5, 2002. Joe and his wife, Celina, started the Padre Pio Devotions here in San Diego almost 15 years ago. A small group of 8 or 9 in the beginning has now blossomed to a "full house" at Our Lady of the Rosary parish with standing room only.

We will always remember Joe's great devotion to Padre Pio. Joe had the habit of carrying 3rd class relic prayer cards of Padre Pio in his shirt pocket. Through this powerful means of evangelization, he passed out hundreds and hundreds of these prayer cards through the years–to storekeepers, neighbors, friends, merchants, strangers, those who were down on their luck–in short–to anyone he happened to meet. Joe will be greatly missed by all.

MAY HE REST IN PEACE.

"I am only one but still I am one. I cannot do everything but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do."

Maria Brunetto, a member of "Our Lady of the Rosary" Padre Pio devotions in San Diego believes in the great efficacy of Padre Pio's prayers. In September 1998 Maria was diagnosed with colon cancer and in January of 1999 she was diagnosed with liver cancer. The doctors could give Maria very little hope for her chances of surviving due to the type and extent of the cancer. It was during this very serious health crisis that one of Maria's friends told her about Padre Pio and suggested that she pray to him. She was blessed with one of Padre Pio's gloves and also with a pillow that had belonged to him. Maria said, "It was when I touched the relics of Padre Pio and began to pray for his intercession that I knew there was hope for me." Sometimes she would smell the fragrance of roses about her but at the time she did not know that was a sign of Padre Pio's presence.

Around this same time Maria discovered a photograph of Padre Pio in her wallet. Many years ago her mother had given her the photograph and told her to keep it with her – as if to say, "Someday you may need his help." Maria had never known the name of the saint whose photo she always had with her. She had been carrying Padre Pio's photo in her wallet at her mother's request for 36 years.

Maria's doctor decided on surgery but made it perfectly clear that the prognosis was so poor that whether she had surgery or not really didn't matter very much. She was not going to live. But by this time Maria had great confidence in Padre Pio. She put his photograph under her pillow during the 10 hour operation in which 70 percent of her liver was removed. Today, four years later, Maria is in good health with no trace of cancer. Her friends now call her "un miraculo" – a miracle. Not long ago she made a trip to San Giovanni Rotondo to visit Padre Pio's tomb and thank him for her very special miracle.

Maria Brunettto and her husband carrying a picture of St. Padre Pio in the procession at his Feast Day Mass and Celebration at Our Lady of the Rosary parish.

"I will exalt You, O Lord, for You lifted me out of the depth. …I called to you for help and You healed me. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever."

Psalm 30: 1,2,12

From our Spiritual Director

The Year of the Rosary and Padre Pio

Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, designated the 12 months from October 2002 - September 2003 as the year of the Rosary. At the same time he added to the traditional mysteries, the five new Luminous Mysteries, which shed light on the life and ministry of Our Lord before His passion. We must now imitate Saint Padre Pio who spent so much of his time praying the Rosary. Like our Pope and Mother Teresa, Padre Pio lived the teaching of Jesus to 'pray always.'

As a SPECIAL INTENTION that will help us to imitate those three 'saints', and as a good New Year's resolution to help us accomplish our role in the mission of the Church, I invite you all to join me in praying three Rosaries a day. With the 'weapon' of the Rosary and the courage of Padre Pio, we must defend the Faith by our own obedience, and by clearly proclaiming, with love, the teaching of the Church. We must clearly teach that:

1.) The 10 Commandments are God's law for us.
2.) It is against God's law to neglect Mass on Sunday.
3.) It is against God's law to live together as man and wife before getting married.
4.) Catholics must not get married outside the Church.
5.) To marry someone who is divorced from a valid marriage is an act of adultery, so I will not attend that wedding.
6.) Homosexual attraction must be overcome through prayer and self-control.
7.) Abstinence and self-control must be practiced by all outside the Sacrament of Marriage.
8.) Purgatory exists. The reality is that if we do not follow Jesus' teaching, we will suffer until we have paid all that we owe (Mt 18:34-35).
9.) We are here to make the world a better place.
10.) We must strive to be perfect (Mt 5:48).

Padre Pio from San Giovanni fought "the good fight".

- Fr. Louis M. Solcia