



## **PADRE PIO Pamphlet**

## INTRODUCTION

I will tell of my nine visits to Father Pio. As I spent nine months there I can relate a great many. My report is the report of an eye and ear witness only. Whoever has the opportunity to go there may judge by his eyes and convince himself of the truth.

In order to understand me quite accurately now you will do best leaving all earthly thoughts to see merely with the eyes of your mind. Are there any miracles at all? Oh yes there are. If we travel across the world with open eyes we see that miracles do exist. But we are too cowardly to acknowledge them. We ascribe them to good luck or to chance. No such thing, however, exists before God, as Father Pio says. Do we need wonders? Yes, very urgently indeed. The greatest evil in the world is the great impiety. And how severely mankind suffers from innumerable sorts of diseases! If we look at Lourdes, however, we see that more than 5000 wonderful cures, which have been acknowledged, have been gained there (taken from the book on Lourdes by Alfred Hoppe). We must imagine: from 5000 incurable persons all earthly pain was extinguished in a moment. How many tears have been dried; how many hearts have found comfort; and if the confessionals could speak we should stand in awe of the great miracles that God has wrought in the souls. If a man has some incurable person who has been suddenly cured by a miracle among his family he is sure to refuse the saying: we do not need wonders, but he will gladly thank God for it. Nevertheless there are men, I am sorry to say, often good Catholics who fight against all these wonders saying: we do not need them. May they rejoice of the recovery of the incurable and the salvation of those souls that have become converted by those extraordinary happenings, which is the most important thing, For God works the wonders of the body for the conversion, commotion and awakening of the souls.

Already in Old Testament times God sent his prophets according to circumstances. How awful must our present time be, as we have Lourdes, where the Mother of God has three times called out to mankind to make amends, But her voice does not seem to have been heard, for once again she appeared at Fatima (Portugal) and said sadly people should stop offending God, who has already been offended beyond measure. But again her children failed to listen to her voice, If a mother warns and asks her children to be good and honest and if all that is in vain, she will quietly weep. So did the Mother of God. In Syracuse Italy) she wept over her children for four days and nights. This is the most shocking language that stones will sooner soften than the hearts of men. Father Pio himself says we must pray very much, otherwise there would not be room enough for men in hell. How shocking for all mankind are such words, considering the infinite mercy of God, especially at our time which is richer in wonders than any other time that the world has seen before. We must realize that God is eternal wisdom and allows all that to pass, and as the Church has acknowledged the apparitions so far, is there any reason why we should doubt them? After all St. Paul himself was converted by some astonishing miracle. How can one say one loves Jesus and the Mother of God and yet pass over all these happenings unheedingly?

The holy Gospel ought to suffice for us, but unfortunately it does not suffice for men any more, Faith is a supernatural thing, and with Father Pio heaven is closer to earth than anywhere else. At the eleventh hour therefore God offers us some opportunity of finding our way back to our eternal aim, that is heaven, by means of all these places of apparitions. Even learned men and scientists who have studied extensively came to Father Pio where physical laws became invalid instantly and the wonders of God prevailed. Where science comes to an end there faith begins, for the wisdom of this world is folly to God.

Today we often hearsay that men seek wonders: no, they are not, they have become afraid of wonders. Men deny wonders for no other reason than that they do not want to change their way of living. If they admitted the truth of wonders they would also have to acknowledge the one that accomplishes them-God. Every wonder is stained with the blood of our Saviour.

Finally, I want to remark: for him who believes no explanation is needed, and for him who does not believe no explanation is possible.





LIFE

In our imagination we will travel to South Italy. On May 25th, 1887, Father Pio was born at Pietrelcina. Even as a child, he was already favored with extraordinary gifts. His Christian name was Francis. Already in the early years of his boyhood he did great penance voluntarily as did the children of Fatima. He never played with a toy. While his brothers and sisters played he prayed in some corner. At school he studied diligently and was very religious. His greatest hunger was for Jesus in Holy Communion. When he was 13 years of age already wonderful things occurred to him. The following example will prove that. A woman (whose sister I know in person) came to him. Father Pio asked her: "Say, did you know me first or did I know you first? " She

said: "I did, Father Pio." Then he smiled and modestly said: "No, I knew you first. See, when I was 13 years of age God already showed me all the souls that would eventually come to see me. Among those persons there you were too." For those souls he was somehow responsible before God. The six books on Father Pio, which are written in German, give proof of that as well as many events that I have witnessed there. Let us hear another report of the same year. A woman used to send him little presents. Once she sent him a bag of chestnuts. When she got the empty bag back, she made up her simple mind never to wash it as she looked upon it as a future relic. One Saturday evening she entered her barn, where she had something to do, and with a burning candle she passed a barrel of gunpowder, which her husband, a stone-mason, had stored there. A spark dropped on the powder and there was a terrible explosion. The woman fainted. The house stood in a lonely region, and the woman was alone at home. After some time, when she recovered consciousness she summoned up her energies and, stained with blood and experiencing great pain, she dragged herself on all fours to the kitchen. There she remembered that she had the bag. With her last effort she searched for it, found it, pressed it to her wound and was instantly cured. That was the first wonderful occurrence that God wrought through Father Pio when he was yet a child of 13. Whether he himself knew of it is not known.

At the age of 15 Father Pio entered the convent of the Capuchins. He took that great sacrifice upon himself in spite of his bad health. He often prayed half the night, for he knew: no cross, no crown: everything great has grown from self-denial. Moreover: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must take up his daily cross," says the Lord. But that was not enough for him. In addition, Father Pio voluntarily took upon himself even more sacrifices. He was generous, but God does not allow Himself to be surpassed. The devil harassed him, too, as can be seen in various books (as was the case with the holy Pastor of Ars.) But to strengthen his mind, so that he might resist, he was favored with heavenly apparitions. One day he perceived a voice coming from the tabernacle: "You will be scourged, crowned with thorns and nailed to the cross like St. Francis" (taken from a book on Father Pio). One day he was shaken with high fever. The doctor had to be called. When he tried to take his temperature, the thermometer broke. Quite horrified he took another one, it broke too. In his embarrassment he took the bathing thermometer; the temperature showed 48.5 ( 119.3 F). That has occurred frequently during his life. The best scientists have found no explanation for it. In his modesty Father Pio did not say a word about it. But now we have to know the reason. At that time he mysteriously suffered the pains of crucifixion with Christ for the first time.

One day Father Pio stopped eating. His superiors expected his death day after day, but 36 days had passed, they informed his parents and asked them to come, for their son was dying. When the father came and saw his son he said: "I do not want my child to die here; if he must die he shall die at home. I will take my son home with me." Father Guardian refused that, as he was in the order. Finally Father Superior gave his permission. Father and son went home by train. When they arrived at the town of Benevento, they had to change and wait for the next train. Unexpectedly Father Pio asked his father: "Daddy, please buy me some lemonade. I am thirsty." His father bought it. Father Pio emptied the glass and exclaimed: "Now I am strong and healthy again; please buy a postcard. I should like to write and tell Father Superior that I am cured." Father Pio, continued to eat so little

that not even a child one year old could have lived on it. Often he forgot eating at all for days.

In 1910 Father Pio was ordained a priest. He was also in the army and had much to suffer there. On September 20th, 1915, he received the invisible wounds of Christ. Exactly three years later on September 20th, 1918, he received the visible wounds. He had always been the first at church and the last to leave. When on that day he prayed with his arms outstretched before the cross in the choir, the tabernacle suddenly shone in a wonderful light. Christ as a radiant young man in eternal infinite beauty moved towards Father Pio. Rays of marvelous light coming from the Saviour's wounds transferred themselves to Father Pio. His confreres found him on the floor of the choir. They took him to his cell and became aware of the large wounds in his hands and feet as well as at the left side of his chest. One of the friars, driven by curiosity, wanted to examine the wounds more closely, when a glance from Father Pio implored him to respect his secret. In spite of that, the news of the wonderful occurrence spread like wildfire over all the country, and today all the world knows of it. From far and near the faithful hurried to come and see the father and speak with him.

Since then the wounds of Father Pio never ceased bleeding, and never altered in the least. Let us have a closer look at these wounds. On his hands and feet they are more than two centimeters (1 inch) in diameter throughout, large enough to put a thumb through them. The wound of the heart is 7 cm by 5 (2,8 in. by 2) formed like an inverted cross perforating all the tissues and reaching immediately to the heart. One of the most famous doctors, Dr. Festa, who at that time was still a freethinker, after thorough examination made the following statement: "The wounds of this favored priest are exactly like the cruel wounds of our Divine Savior. They cannot be explained in a natural way as they contradict all natural laws, for every wound either heals or gets inflamed." With Father Pio, neither has occurred in spite of the greatest endeavors of scientists. From the point of view of science there is no explanation for the fact that a wound neither heals nor expands. Though the sore spots on the hands are regularly washed with soap of inferior quality in ordinary water and are in constant touch with woolen gloves, they never get infected nor are they cured either. On the other hand, Father Pio was operated on the chest in 1925. The wound of the operation healed up quite normally without any complication, but the wounds of the crucifixion have bled incessantly. During the nights, Father Pio wore gloves of white cotton. In the morning they were soaked with blood and he washed them himself in his room. The wound on his side also bled violently. The daily quantity of blood equaled the content of a teacup. Father Pio always wore a strip of linen wrapped round his chest. Once a woman asked Father Pio whether the wounds ached. He replied: "Do you think the Lord gave them to me as a decoration?" Another woman asked: "Father Pio how do they ache?" He answered: "Just as though you took a nail, drove it into the hand and turned it round." From that we may judge what Father Pio suffered. But during mass and passion tide his suffering was even more painful. What did these wounds mean to Father Pio? For him they were the highest distinction that God gives to man, and we must realize that he was a priest. What do those wounds mean to us? They are a loving exhortation and admonition of Christ, our Savior. Because men have forgotten the crucified Jesus, Christ made himself visible again in his servant Father Pio, so that men might understand at what high price Christ has redeemed our souls. Father Pio could say like St. Paul: "It is not I that live, but Christ lives in me." What did Father Pio say about his great pain, which he

suffered daily? He uses these beautiful words that we can hardly comprehend: "These are flames of divine love: I suffer gladly." He knew that he could save many souls by his suffering. He carried sinners in his heart. Father Pio suffered very much for the conversion of sinners. He was also a great client of the Mother of God. By his prayers he obtained innumerable favors from her every day. He himself however was a model of modesty. His character was simple and candid, and he tried to avoid anything sensational.

That people were desirous of coming to him in their sorrows and troubles, especially in diseases and mental distress was proved by the innumerable number of pilgrims who took refuge in Father Pio who was God's favorite and an intercessor for all of us. He knew human distress, therefore his kind heart often moved that of his Divine Master, as the innumerable demonstrations of thanks so well prove. So we need not wonder that he received from 800 to 1000 letters through the mail every day. The letter, however, brought by the pilgrims numbered up to 10,000 on some days. Father Pio could not read all these letters, but he frequently knew what was written in them, as facts have proved. You could write to him in your own language, and get an answer in it. There were secretaries who translated these letters into the different languages. Letters of importance were laid before Father Pio and he answered them. Letters of less importance were taken to his cell. Sometimes they were piled up there like wood. Father Pio prayed before them at night, and he often saw all these requests. Everybody got a reply.

The journey to San Giovanni Rotondo goes from Vienna via Villach-Tarvis- Venice-Bologna-Ancona' (along the Adriatic Sea) -escara-Foggia. From there the village is still some 40 km (25 miles) away. San Giovanni Rotondo stands in the spur of Italy, 600 meters (656 yds.) above sea level. Once it was the most solitary place in the world just like Lourdes and Fatima. Today it has become the goal of innumerable pilgrims. The town has 22,000 inhabitants. There one finds almond trees, olive trees, large cactuses and other plants which are not found in our regions. The cloister itself is simple and plain like all Capuchin cloisters.

Let us look into the church. It has a wonderful image of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Grace (Madonna della Grazia), and four altars along the sides. Not a single work of art is exhibited in that church, and nevertheless it had a saintly priest. The old church has long since become too small. Therefore a new big church has been erected which is already finished. From spring to autumn Father Pio celebrated mass in the open air, so that the great masses of people might be able to take part in it. At the right side of the convent, there stands the lifework of Father Pio, a new hospital, which is the most beautiful and modern hospital in Italy today. Around the convent many hotel restaurants, private houses, shops, and cottages have risen up so that many pilgrims may be lodged and taken care of. A little village has grown up there now.

### **THE HOLY MASS OF FATHER PIO**

Every day, whether in winter or in summer, Father Pio said mass at five o'clock in the morning. At the early hour of 1 o'clock in the morning people already stood before the doors of the church and waited there praying and singing, until the doors were opened. I have often seen that. By four o'clock large crowds had already gathered there. You could hear them pray and sing in various languages. They came from afar and did not mind the sacrifice of getting up at such an early hour to be nearer to the altar of Father Pio. At half past 4 the church was opened. Instantly it overflowed with enthusiastic pilgrims. Father

Pio, too, made a 3 hours' preparation for holy mass every day. I have often witnessed it. At a quarter to 5 he came staggering and tottering, racked with pain, into the sacristy. At that time he experienced the pain of Christ on Mount Olivet in a mysterious way, day after day. He knew no rest. Many priests and high dignitaries, men of all ranks waited for him and submitted their requests to him. He proceeded a few steps, knelt down and prayed. Some minutes later he got up, newly strengthened, walked to the vesting table, puts on the holy vestments, and prepared to renew the unbloody sacrifice of Christ. He often had tears in his eyes. When asked why, he replied in a sobbing voice: "I am not worthy to celebrate holy mass. I am the most unworthy priest." At five o'clock sharp he walked to the altar, an irksome task through the impetuous crowd. You could see that every step, every movement, every action caused him great torture. He said mass at the main altar. That was of great advantage to the pilgrims, as they could see it from three sides. With great composure and devotion, he said the Introit. You could see that the wounds ached from the lengthy standing. Sometimes he touched his forehead, as if to loosen the crown of thorns. Then he walked up to the altar, tried to kiss it, but unspeakable pain impeded him. Immediately afterwards he went into ecstasy for the first time. He suffered and atoned for the dreadful sins which God placed before his eyes again and again. At the Gloria as well as at the Credo he was in ecstasy occasionally and you had the impression that he saw everything he said. Whatever Father' Pio prayed was reflected on his countenance. Most of the time that was great pain; seldom joy. When the sacristan carried the mass book to the Gospel side, Father Pio went to the middle of the altar, bowed and prayed, and again fell into ecstasy. Then for the first time you could clearly see and hear Father Pio sob and weep. He had a special handkerchief lying on the altar called the tear cloth. With that he dried his tears. Recovering from ecstasy he read the holy gospel with great devotion and love. At the Offertory when lifting the paten, Father Pio went into ecstasy again. He often spoke in a low voice with someone that we could not see. He seemed to put the many requests of the people, which had been written or given to him, on the paten, and for a while he remained in ecstasy. At the second part of the Offertory the same thing occurred again. When at the Dominus Vobiscum, Father Pio turned to the people, you could see his reddened perforated hand quite distinctly. His pain steadily increased because of the long standing on his feet. After the Sanctus, high fever often flashed through Father Pio's body. He felt burning, stinging, searing pains. His eyes were deep in their holes, his features changed like those of our dying Saviour on the cross, according to the priests who served at the altar and witnessed it. When the bell indicated the moment of the Consecration and Father Pio said the words of the Consecration, the pangs of death shook his body. He struggled and writhed with the most frightful pain. At the same time, fresh blood trickled from the wounds of his hands. Father Pio did not contemplate Christ's passion. No, he suffered it in his own body in a mysterious way. People screamed, sobbed and cried, My Jesus, mercy! They were afraid, that he might die. Especially during Holy Week, you could observe that most clearly. What was most impressive: Father Pio, when renewing the unbloody sacrifice of Christ, gave everything he had; his own heart's blood, to make it acceptable. His blood streamed from all over his body. That is what moved people most. You could often hear some voice suffocated with tears from the crowd of pilgrims: "I believe! " Did Father Pio suffer, expiate and offer himself for these souls beforehand, that they might be converted? Even many people of different faiths have been converted at such moments. The consecration lasted 5 minutes.

After this he gets a little easier, but the pain did not cease. Often he fell into ecstasy again. Then Father Pio prayed the Pater Noster with great devotion. At last came the moment of his own Holy Communion. When he beat his breast and said: "Lord, I am not worthy ... ", you could notice his voice falter. There were tears in his eyes, and soon he beat his breast the second and a third time. Finally, he received the Sacred Host. At that time Father Pio fell into ecstasy once again. Now, you might say he looked radiant. He enjoyed the joy and glory of heaven in abundance; in so far as that is possible for mortal man. At this time he somehow received the reward for the burden that he carried and, also new vigor and strength to perform the difficult task which awaited him every day. For a long while he remained in this state. Still deeply recollected he said the Post communion and was led back to the sacristy with great difficulty through the large crowd.

There he took off his vestments and put on his woolen gloves, which covered his holy wounds absorbing the blood and protecting him from the gaze of curious onlookers. Next he walked to the cloister, and made his thanksgiving. Outside, in front of the altar, one could often see pilgrims, who had come from afar, with tears of emotion in their eyes. They have been converted, and though still in the church, they often give way to their Italian temperament and call out in an undertone: "Alas, I have recognized you so late, O God! I sought for peace and found no rest." Here they found peace and rest for their souls. Later they went to the confessional and repented. We must realize how deeply the mass, which usually lasted for an hour, moved the assistants. Among the many priests who came, one declared he could not stand another mass by Father Pio. The result was that he said his own mass more beautifully and with greater devotion than before.

## **IMPRESSIVE EVENTS**

Here are some other impressive events. Everybody has friends and foes. Father Pio had many foes too. What evil did he do? None at all, yet he was hated, persecuted, and the malice of men nailed him to the cross. Father Pio walked upon this earth doing good, and nevertheless he was persecuted and hated because he was a bitter reproach to many people, who did not live as they ought to and therefore wanted to put him to death. One day a car passed the highroad at the spot where one gets a good view of the new hospital and other buildings on the hill. The gentleman in the car asked the driver: "Please, tell me, what are those big buildings there on the hill? " The reply was: "That is the convent of Father Pio." Amazed the atheist replied: "Do the Capuchins have the money to build such a big hospital? " The driver replied: "That is a different matter, sir." There, above in that convent, lives Father Pio, who bears (he wounds of the cross just like Our Lord Himself. People say he is a saint. There above in that church and all over the world wonders are wrought by his intercession. Father Pio is quite unselfish and does not accept anything. But when we arrive at the town, you will see the numerous buses which have come here from all parts of the world, and you will also hear many different languages spoken by the pilgrims. Again and again they come to thank and to beg for new favors. Alms have been donated, though, and Father Pio has used them to build up that new hospital. Father Pio is not selfish; he does not want to keep anything for himself. In the world he is quite unique in his great love for God and his fellow men." Thereupon the atheist got angry and in his fury he uttered malicious words against Father Pio. He mocked, swore, and at last he cursed him. After a little pause, as they approached the town, he laughed again scornfully and said scoffingly to the driver: "Within a few days a great feast will be celebrated here."



"What feast? " The driver inquired. Insolently, he answered: "Within a few days we shall celebrate Father Pio's burial, and then there will be an end to this matter." At the same moment they had arrived at the restaurant. The car stopped, the speaker got out (he was about 30 years old), fell down and died on the spot. There was confusion. "What has happened? " At once a crowd gathered with people coming and going. "This man must have had a fit of apoplexy. Was he excited! Did you quarrel?" "No, we spoke about Father Pio," and the driver told about his conversation, with the man. An eyewitness, who had seen and heard everything promptly went to Father Pio in the convent. He was admitted at once, and wanted to tell Father Pio about the occurrence, but Father Pio modestly replied: "You need not tell me that; I know it." Then he pronounced these amazing words: "At that moment, when the man swore at me and made a curse for my death, I was all in God. The curse could not do me any harm, it was deflected, to the man himself. Thus they will celebrate his burial in a few days." The effect of that event can be imagined. From that example we learn that God does not allow Himself, his saints, or saintly people to be mocked at, and that we should never curse anybody, for our curse might bounce back on ourselves.

Just one more incident. A man "who hated church stood before the convent, clenched his fists, and cried: "Down with Father Pio, down with him! " Immediately he sank down, and became lame. God granted him the favor of being converted later on. All the foes of Father Pio, who have died already, have experienced a terrible death. Hence we see that God is with Father Pio. There are many more events that could be told; you may read them in the books. God interfered in a fearful manner in cases in which men tried to kill Father Pio. One day a blind girl was led to Father Pio's confessional. The girl knelt down and confessed her sins. After confession she said: "Father Pio, I am blind, but have four more sisters who are blind too. Please pray for me that I may see. But I do not want to bother you. May God's will be fulfilled." Father Pio was evidently moved by her very humble resignation, and said to her: "Let us pray together! "The girl folded her hands, and the Father covered her hands with his own perforated hands. They recited an Ave Maria together. At the last request: "Pray for us sinners", the girl, shaken by her emotion and her heavy sobbing cried out: "Father, I see the people, the altar, etc." At the same moment, people cried, sobbed and wept: "I believe, I believe in God! " For they had seen how the blind girl had been led by someone to the confessional, and then had left the confessional alone after recovering her sight. Some people were converted on the spot. Is it not a pity that there are still people who say: We need no prodigies! I think, if the girl had been an acquaintance of theirs, they would have spoken differently. How heartless people can be. You can hardly imagine the enthusiasm of the crowd that wept joyfully with the girl, who had been cured so wonderfully. Father Pio, however, modestly retired to the convent as usual. Blind from birth, the girl had known things only by name or by touching them. So she now experienced the visible world with the sight of her eyes so recently restored. One day a man who had been blind for several years, was brought to Father Pio. His friends asked the Capuchin to cure him. He looked at the blind man and said: "Choose for yourself! If you want to be happy on earth, you cannot be happy in heaven." The man thus addressed underwent a dreadful mental conflict, but after a short pause he had made up his mind. With a voice choked with tears he said: "Father, Father, I prefer to be happy in the other world." And the kind Father lovingly comforted him, blessed him and caressed him and dismissed him, with his soul strengthened to take up his heavy cross. Through the

Father's intercession, he got the permission to live near the favored Capuchin. At mass, the blind man could be seen near the Father.

The Father's own nephew, who has been epileptic for many years and even today is often seized by this awful illness when at church, has not been cured. Remarkable in our opinion is what the Father said to the invalid: "God would grant me the favor of your cure, if I asked him for it, but I would not be able to answer for it before the Lord. You would love the world too much and thus go astray, and your soul would be lost." From these two cases mentioned, it appears clearly why all the sick are not cured, just as at the great shrines like Lourdes, Fatima, Syracuse and similar holy places. An old proverb indeed affirms: All that God our Father does will turn out to be good for us. Father Pio says himself: "What better thing can we offer our Lord than our own distress, and our distress is a favor." Distress is a holy angel, and by this favor men have been helped more than by all the pleasures of the world.

On September 6th, 1956, after mass, which had been celebrated in the open air, a girl, who had suffered from atrophy of the bones for some years, was seen being carried on a chair by her parents. After holy mass when Father Pio went back to church with his attendants, the parents called out from the crowd to Father Pio: "Father Pio, Father Pio, have mercy on our sick child! " At that moment the Father stopped and gave a blessing in their direction. At this same instant the girl jumped up, sobbed, and cried: "Father Pio, Father Pio, I can run! " and she ran towards him and kissed his perforated hands. That sudden cure caused great emotion.

In July, 1957, I met a lady from Hamburg. She was a teacher and suffered from vertebral atrophy; her whole chest was plastered. Incurably ill she had learned Italian and wished to go to Father Pio, so that she might at least once confess to him. When after a long period of waiting she had finally succeeded in getting into the confessional and had confessed her sins, the Father surprised her by telling her: "You need not go to the doctor any more nor take any medicines; I will take all your pain and torture away from you at once." At the same instant she felt well. For three weeks I met her every day. Again and again she said: "I am healthy. I am cured."

A dying child was brought to Father Pio. Its mother carried it in her arms. She came from Pescara. The child was about 4 or 5 years old. It was already at the point of death. When the woman came into the church, she wept and called out in a loud voice: "Father Pio, help! My child is dying in my arms, or maybe it is already dead! " Then she added: "If you do not help me, I will leave the child with you! "In the meantime she had approached the confessional. Father Pio blessed the child and gave it back to its mother with the words: "I think you are the mother: here is your child! " At once she left the church with the child. It moved, tossed about, and wanted to get to the floor. It could walk and cried: "Mother, mother, give me something to eat, I am hungry! " Everybody was weeping and sobbing. The dying child had been cured.

In addition to his priestly kindness and even sternness, Father Pio possessed a good sense of humor, as may be seen from the following event: A woman who had visited the Father and suffered from a severe headache, put a picture of the Father under her pillow hoping that her pain would be cured. But as she always had to move the picture from her bed when making it every day as this became annoying to her in time particularly since her pains did not seem to go away, she lost control of her southern temper one day. Infuriated, she put the picture into the straw mattress calling: "You do not help me anyway: why should I put

you hither and thither. Here have a rest! " One and a half year later, she again went to Father Pio to confess to him. With great difficulty she finally succeeded in getting into the confessional. But alas! When Father Pio opened the little door and saw her, he slammed it in her face. The woman, not a little astonished at this unkind treatment, remained on her knees hoping that the Father would turn to her again and hear her confession. Right! Again the window opened, and Father Pio appeared. "But Father, why did you bang the door in my face?" the good woman asked. Smiling the Father replied: "You didn't like it when I slammed the door in your face, did you? Do you think I was pleased when you put my picture in the mattress?"

There is a report of a Lady from Grenoble, (France), about events in September, 1956. A woman had a dream: she saw Father Pio, that is, a Father she did not know and of whom she had never heard, who told her that she would give birth to a child that would have crippled feet. "But do not let that distress you too much. Come to Italy, and there you will be told what to do." The dream was fulfilled the family and all their relatives and friends were in great distress. Medical help failed. About three months later the husband heard of a famous doctor in Milan. He sent his wife and child to him. At the Italian frontier the woman had to change trains and when she was seated again in the new train, she fell asleep. When she woke up, she asked where she was and learned that the next station was Foggia. She had taken the wrong train. At that she was very excited, but one of the travelers comforted her and told her she might as well go with them to Father Pio. When she heard that he was a priest, she said: "What shall I do with a priest, I want a specialist! " After much persuasion, however, she decided to go to San Giovanni Rotondo. She joined the people, and when they entered the church where Father Pio was just saying mass, she was startled at his sight. This was the Father, who had prophesied to her in her dream. Perhaps he would help her. After mass she wanted to talk to him, but learned that women had to wait 35 days before being admitted to confession. Men can more easily meet him in the sacristy. The gentleman who had been with her in train and to whom she had told her misery, now offered to take the child with him to the sacristy. So sooner said than done. When Father Pio came, the gentleman asked him to bless the sick child. "What is the name of this child? ""I do not know; it is not my child. answered the gentleman. Father Pio replied: "Take the child out, it has no name. It is already 3 months old and has not been christened yet." When the gentleman brought the child to its mother, it appeared that the husband had refused to have the child christened. Weeping, the woman left the church and cabled her husband about the christening. The answer arrived. He consented to baptism. Father Pio christened the child. When he spoke the last words of baptism, suddenly a sound was heard as if something had broken apart, and as the woman set the child's legs free, it was noticed that the splints on its legs were broken and that the legs were straight. Then Father Pio modestly added: "This child will become a great saint." Everybody wept and sobbed with awe and joy.

### **HOLY CONFESSION**

"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John 20, 23)

All these facts concerning confession that you will hear now were not told by Father Pio, but by the penitents themselves for Father Pio respected the secret of the confessional. He fulfilled his priestly duties with heroic zeal and instinctive love. He was the good shepherd

as was his divine master, and his efforts and charity knew no limits when the salvation of souls was concerned.

Father Pio became a martyr of the confessional. The difficult duty of a Father Confessor took as many as 18 hours of his time on some feast days. No man, even with the strongest nerves, can endure this heavy strain of body and soul for long. Father Pio however was a rare exception thanks to the grace of God. There were times when the police had to interfere in order to control the impetuous crowd. Father Pio tells of those happenings in his own words in a letter he sent to a teacher named Cacaro in 1919: "I am well, but I am busy day and night hearing hundreds of confessions daily. I have not a minute left but praise be to Christ, who powerfully assists me in my work! "

Let us look into the church! There stands the confessional in which Father Pio hears the women's confessions. The confessional has no decorations. It is simple, as in most Capuchin churches. In the sacristy is the men's confessional. It is still more simple than that of the women, consisting of a hassock for the penitents and a chair for the Father. That confessing facility stands in a corner surrounded by a curtain and so is hidden from curious glances. Each of the penitents, however, must be ready for its real test of patience. That is why this convent has been called the "House of Patience," in which even the most impatient men learn how to wait patiently. The period of waiting for confession goes from 5 to 18 days for men and 8 to 35 days for women, according to the season. Father Pio treats every penitent in a different way. Some he receives with open arms and welcomes with great affection. With Father Pio, social rank is of no importance; what matters is the soul only, which he sees in the light of God. To sincere and open souls, Father Pio behaves with touching meekness and with a "Go, Jesus loves you," dismisses the person. But sometimes Father Pio must use tough, hard, and shocking language. Still others he refuses at first, sure that he will see them again later when they are sufficiently prepared for absolution. His kind, winning smile, and also his frown, meets the scientist, the person of high rank as well as the simple uneducated pilgrim. Often Father Pio treats the serious but more repentant sinner, whose partial ignorance of divine laws he takes into account, in a better way than the pseudo Christian who seems to be convinced of his perfection. Here are some examples. Father Pio was said to be nearly always enlightened when in the confessional, or elsewhere: God partly granted him to partake of his omniscience. Had a penitent the misfortune to hide or to diminish a sin in false shame, he failed to deceive Father Pio. The soul stood bare before the favored Father's eyes, and he sternly scolded the confused person: "There are sacrilegious words on your tongue! " he warned. Absence from mass he did not pass over in silence either. Toward habitual sinners, who live an evil life, as do incorrigible drunkards or people who sin habitually against purity, Father Pio was very severe. In those cases he did not grant absolution at once, but seriously urged them on to improvement first. He gave them a time of probation, in which they had to behave properly. Without true repentance and a firm resolution to give up their sinful habits, they could not count on Father Pio's subsequent absolution. Father Pio was greatly annoyed when women in indecent clothes got in his way. If that happened in church, he ordered them out of the holy place at once. Women and men were only allowed to enter the church with three quarter sleeves. Boys and men had to wear long trousers in church, if they did not want to be shown out of the church as well.

On all those occasions, when Father Pio refused to absolve his penitents and, so to speak, closed the door in their faces, some people slightly reproachfully asked him why he had



treated his penitents so sternly. But the Father, so kind at other times, replied in a choked voice: "Do you know the pain it caused me to shut the door on anybody? But the Lord has forced me to do so. I do not call anyone, nor do I refuse anybody either. There is someone else who calls and refuses them whose useless tool I am."

### **Example of Daily Conversation of "THE GOOD SHEPHERD WITH HIS LAMBS"**

One day a young man went to the Father in the sacristy which was crowded with male penitents. "Please, Father, I want to go to confession!" he said; Father Pio turned to him, looked at him with penetrating eyes, and in a loud voice pronounced this amazing word: "Porco! "(in English: Hog! ), an expression the sensitive, kind Father had never used before. Aghast and deeply embarrassed, the man thus humiliated before everybody, left the vestry. A monk who followed Father Pio everywhere asked him, quite taken aback: "Father, why did you say that dreadful word? " The Father answered significantly: "Had I not thrust that word in his face, he would have been condemned forever, for he was living in concubinage and this is a horrible, dreadful abomination before the Lord; but that humiliation has been beneficial to him. He will come back in a few days. In the confessional it would not have been proper to say those words, and so he would have entered the confessional without repentance and firm resolve of amendment and would have had to leave it without absolution." Indeed, some days later the man who had been so sharply rebuked, came to the sacristy again, as the Father has predicted. That severe public humiliation must have hit home and awakened his conscience. While he was away, God worked the wonder of his full conversion, so that the man, formerly so frivolous and neglectful of all moral law , now knelt at the Father's feet, weeping like a child. With a tender smile and open arms, the Father embraced the "prodigal son." who had come home again. "See, my son, now our Savior takes great delight in you," he said. Did the Father know that the young man had neither eaten nor drunk, that he was moved to his very depths, and how difficult it had been for him to tear himself from the clutches of illicit intercourse, which had lasted for several years? No doubt the Father knew it, otherwise he would not have shown such paternal kindness. Beaming with joy, the young man left the confessional firmly resolved to reform his life.

Other penitents Father Pio simply refused with the words: "First go and arrange your affairs." The prophetic Father knew that the refused persons would return and would break away from the scandal of illicit intercourse to seek absolution and peace of heart. That has been proven by innumerable examples.

A man affirmed that Father Pio had opened his eyes to the enmity he had with his neighbor, and had warned him to make his peace with him as soon as possible, so that God might forgive him himself. The man was deeply affected by the fact that Father Pio knew of his hostility, though he had never been with Father Pio.

A man from Modena was asked by Father Pio whether he remembered when he had cleaned his car, the wrench had dropped from his hands and he had uttered a dreadful blasphemy. God had noticed it. The man was pale and confounded that Father Pio knew about this as though he had stood at his side. To a woman who did not know what else to say at confession, Father Pio said: "Hurry down to the pond, look in the water, and then come back again. In the pond she saw her baby which she had murdered and thrust into a pond 19 years before. All aghast, she confessed her great guilt to him.

A murderer, whose conscience did not leave him at ease, arrived one, day at the Father's confessional, hoping to regain his peace of mind by his absolution. He confessed several sins of his life, but in spite of his good intentions he could not find the courage to confess the awful crime, the murder. After his imperfect confession he was silent, and so was Father Pio. Both knew of the grave guilt. After a while Father Pio left the confessional, took the penitent by the arm and led him along a row of seats immediately beside his confessional, where men were sitting. Suddenly the man uttered a penetrating scream and for several minutes lost consciousness! When he recovered the Father took him back to the confessional. After some time the man received absolution and with a radiant face he stepped out of the confessional. Afterwards he told some people that by his prayer the Father had won him the favor of seeing the murdered man sitting there on a seat with 'an apparent body, just as souls from purgatory and saints appear. That sight had brought the atrocity of his deed to his mind so vividly, that he had found the courage to confess his grave crime.

A girl came into the confessional (in February, 1956). After holy confession she asked the Father to help her so that she could take the veil. But imagine the foreigner's surprise, when the Father knew the exact circumstance of her case which no one had told him. "First go back to your employer in whose service you are! They will go to the seashore on vacation. You will be with them again. Afterwards come back here, and then we will talk again about your taking the veil." With these words Father Pio closed the door. Happy and amazed at the words of the Father, who had predicted her such a delightful surprise, the girl told all her acquaintances of that occurrence. Delighted, she then went home to her employer as the Father had told her. Some months later she returned to Father Pio. After having waited 28 days, which seemed endless to her, she succeeded in going to confession to the Father. After confession, she said with her heart beating fast: Father, Father, I do not want to take the veil any longer. I have come to know a young man while on vacation at the seashore, and we are going to get married. Then the Father smiled: "You see, I told you: go first to the seashore on vacation, and afterwards we shall talk about your taking the veil." And thus what the Father had foreseen, happened. The would-be nun became a good wife.

A man stepped into the confessional and sorrowfully confessed his sins. To this surprise, Father Pio asked him: "And the matter of the stolen purse, you do not want to confess?" Quite surprised, the man asked: "What purse?" The Father answered: "You do not seem to remember it any more. Do you recall, it was in the French campaign; you entered a house and found a purse. There were 75,000 francs in it. You were in no distress and had no right to the purse." The man replied: "I did not know to whom the purse belonged." "Strange." the Father replied. "You did not know to whom the house belonged either, why didn't you take it, too?" The man could not give an answer. The Father ordered him to give alms little by little for the amount in the purse, "for you are in a position to do so." But the man said: "I do not want to do that, Father!" "Then I will not absolve you." The man left the confessional without having received absolution. Some days later he returned repentant and promised to atone for the damage. Only then did he get absolution.

Many young people from Vienna had also been with Father Pio and asked him questions about their vocations. Some of these may be told. A lad asked Father Pio: "Am I to become a doctor?" "That is a beautiful profession." The same question he answered differently

with another boy, drawing his attention to some other profession. A lad said to Father Pio: "I should like to become a priest." The Father answered:

"Yes, the Lord has called you. Do as you desire but you will not become a secular priest, but a priest of some religious order." Indeed, the lad had previously had the intention of entering some order. A young man in doubt, entered the confessional and asked: "Father, shall I marry or become a priest?" "Marry," was the reply, "for it is better not to be. a priest than to be a bad priest." To a girl who wanted to take the veil, he said: "You have the grace for that vocation, you must go." She replied: "But my mother will not let me (her father had already died long before)." "She must let you go, for the Lord is calling you," said the Father. "I shall pray for you." When the girl returned home, her mother was still of the same mind. Half a year later the mother died, and the girl was able to take the veil. Was the mother's death the answer of heaven? From numerous cases which happened with Father Pio, we learn that we never ought to impede a person whom God calls. Often the parents or the child died, in such cases.

Some women determined to make a journey to Father Pio. A man who was passing by and knew them heard of their intention and mocked it. They answered he could go with them and judge for himself. "For such a thing I will not spend a single penny!" Then a woman said: "I will pay the cost of the journey for you." The man refused to accept the proposal. He was too cowardly. But when they took him by his pride, he agreed to go if everything was paid to him. They arrived at the convent at five o'clock, just when Father Pio was celebrating mass. After the moving mass, the man said: "What was there special about that? Nothing at all I would rather go and cut wood in the forest than stand here for nothing. I shall return home again." After much persuasion, he remained though. During the afternoon he went to church. He saw many intelligent and simple men and heard them speak of all the wonderful things and of the favored priest. Then he went to the sacristy with them. When Father Pio came to hear confessions, he glanced at him. The kindness and love that radiated from the Father's eyes hit home. Next day he got up at half past two of his own free will and went up to the church. After mass, he entered the sacristy as Father Pio came for confessions. The Father went up to him, and jokingly said: "Hello, your soul is quite dirty," and he took the surprised man with him. The man left the confessional full of peace and joy. He declared: "In the confessional the Father said to me: 'Tell me all your sins!' I confessed them and remained silent. Then he said to me, searchingly: 'Think, you have forgotten one thing.' I was silent. Then Father Pio said once more: 'Just think there is one thing you did not tell yet.' I was silent again. Then with an impressive voice, he said the following words: 'Oh, do you remember? Do you recall how you once took off your shoes at home in the kitchen and in a fury flung one against the cross? Do you remember? That you did not tell yet' I could only sob and weep. Suddenly I asked: 'Father Pio, can the Lord, our God, forgive me that?' The Father answered: 'God's mercy is infinite.' Deeply impressed, I cried out: 'Father Pio, can I atone for that?' 'Oh yes," he said, "by converting your friends. I have now restored your faith, and you will give it to others." Victoriously and full of joy, the woman return with the man. Her sacrifice was rewarded. Indeed, some weeks later a woman of the same village came to Father Pio' (she was a teacher) and broke the news that that man had already converted many others. How wonderful are the ways of God! The same woman also came into the confessional and complained of being distracted when praying. The Father answered: "Voluntarily, you

must not be distracted. But if the distractions are not voluntary, go on praying in peace. You have great merit for our Savior knows that you are not an angel but a poor woman.

### **FATHER PIO LOOKS INTO THE OTHER WORLD**

Father Pio not only looked into souls, but often also looked into the other world, as the following event will prove. When I myself was in the confessional once, I asked the Father whether he would tell me where my brother was, who had been killed in the war. Suddenly his eyes became radiant and smiling he answered: "He is already above in heaven with Our Lord." This news was of course very pleasant.

But once a young lawyer went into the confessional, and after confession he asked about his late grandfather, who had died four years before. To his surprise Father Pio told him: "Your grandfather was a surgeon and because of his many charitable works, which he performed during his professional life, he is already in heaven enjoying the eternal vision of God." Then the man decided to ask about his second grand-father, who had died fifteen years before. But so that you may understand this, I must give you the following explanation which the young man gave me: "My grandfather," so he said, "was an indifferent man. Why should I go to mass on Sundays? I prefer going out into nature and praying in the open air or at home! (But people who speak like this seldom do it). Why should I go to confession, I did not steal anything. I did not kill anybody." With a trembling voice and quite excited, Father Pio said these dreadful words: "I cannot even look at him, he is so dreadfully ugly. He wallows in the eternal flames."

A man had left his wife and two children and had lived with another woman for three years. He became ill with cancer and was at the point of death. He urgently requested and received the last sacraments and then died. When his wife received the news of his death, she asked Father Pio in the confessional where his soul was. He grew pale, began to tremble and to weep, and said: "I will tell you, as I know that you can bear it. Your husband's soul is condemned forever. When receiving the last sacraments he concealed many sins, had neither repentance nor resolve. He also sinned against God's mercy. He always said: "Now I want to have my share in the good things of life. When I grow old, I will have time to be converted to God." (Not only Father Pio, but also the children of Fatima and many saints have seen the condemned and hell.)

Of the three crosses that stood on Calvary we must choose one; either we will die innocent with Jesus, or with the repenting sinner, or with the condemned robber. We must choose our self, eternal happiness or eternal condemnation!

A woman I know went into the confessional and asked about her late sister, but the Father did not answer. Three weeks later, she came to the confessional again and Father Pio volunteered this information:

"Your sister is already in heaven." "Father Pio, did you perhaps pray or even suffer for my sister? You suffer such dreadful pain every day." He was silent. Then the woman said: "Father Pio, please pray for me that I may obtain this favor. I should like to suffer for my sister what you suffered for her." Then he answered in a serious voice: "My dear woman, if you had to endure that pain, you would die."

Father Pio often said jokingly: "I am not a heavenly intelligence office." An inquisitive woman went to confession with a whole list and wanted to know where her deceased were. The Father said to her smiling: "If you are so curious, then make a trip to the other side and you will see who is there."



## **HOLY COMMUNION**

During holy mass Father Pio administered Holy Communion only to first communicants, who were seen there all year, coming from all parts of the world. At half past nine a.m. he administered communion to the crowd at the main altar. Father Pio was said to be enlightened even when administering Holy Communion. A gentleman said to Father Pio: "Father, I am not worthy to go to Holy Communion!" He answered: "What do you say about being worthy? Who is worthy? Nobody! Everything is grace and mercy," We must consider the immense love of God Father Pio had. In the nine months of my stay there I sometimes experienced this: When he held the Host in his hand and prayed: "Lord, I am not worthy," he had a radiant expression and seemed to see the Lord revealing himself to him. What if he tells us? "How people will be surprised when the same Saviour who hides so simply in the Sacred Host comes to judge the living and the dead! "O Lord, defend your cause; be not unmindful of the voices of those who ask you.

## **BENEDICTION OF FATHER PIO WITH HOLY SACRAMENT**

At 4:30 p.m., Father Pio usually gave Benediction, when his health permitted. The church was crowded again. At half past four, Father Pio came to the altar. Suddenly we saw his eyes become radiant; he seemed to see Jesus. One could also see tears in his eyes and an imploring expression on his face, and one heard him speak in an undertone. When saying the prescribed prayers, especially at the moment when they prayed for the conversion of sinners, Father Pio sobbed and his voice faltered. Sometimes he burst into loud weeping. The same could be noticed when he addressed the Mother of Mercy. What moved me to the heart was this: When in July, 1957, I knelt by Father Pio's side and he said the prayer of grace and mercy for our last hour, he burst out into loud weeping: We must realize: Father Pio was afraid of his last hour, and he sobbed and wept. When he incensed the Holy of Holies, he bowed his head down to the steps of the altar. We must understand: Father Pio, who has often seen the Lord, knows that we are nothing before him. With great difficulty he walked on his perforated feet up the steps of the altar. He had a penetrating look, his countenance bore an imploring and suffering expression. When he took the Monstrance in his hands, we saw that tears flowed from his eyes and he talked to our Saviour in an undertone. During Benediction, when Father Pio brought all the spoken and written requests before the Lord, sometimes wonderful things happened in the church or also far away in the world. As Father Pio was a special favorite of God, and his Lord immensely rich, he could draw from his abundant heart, the source of graces. He is sure not to use them sparingly; he is not thrifty, he dispenses them with full hands. Therefore it was not surprising if strange things and wonderful granting of graces occurred through his intercession. Benediction with the monstrance took almost a minute, as Father Pio gave it so reverently and slowly. After Benediction, he said the final prayers, and when he left the altar, we could often see the radiance in his eyes as he looked again at the Saviour, whom he loved so dearly. All the people who experienced Benediction with Father Pio were deeply impressed.

## **THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS**

We all know that the church venerates the holy angels. It has even set up special feasts for them. Father Pio was a great client of the holy angels, especially of St. Michael, the archangel. Father Pio said to have seen his guardian angel (as occurred with many saints)

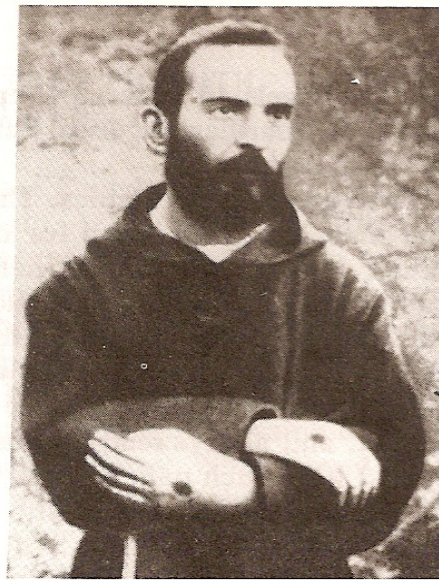
and even other people's angels. In letters of reply, some were told that they should send their guardian angels to Father Pio and bring their requests to him by this means. Here are some examples. They brought a blind man to Father Pio (the man had been blind for only a few years) and asked the good Father to pray for him to help him from always falling down and stumbling (his sense of touch had not yet been developed well enough.) The Father kindly replied: "Henceforth you shall no longer fall and stumble, for the Lord has allowed me to give you two more guardian angels. They will direct, guide and lead you. The angels are quick, perfect, and always ready," Then the Father continued: 'You know, when I have such pain at mass that I can hardly turn the pages of the mass book, there are angels who help me with it.'

A teacher and his wife, who both taught at some school, one day went home from school and found their child with fever. They tried all their household medicines, but without result. It was already midnight. Then the man said to his wife: "We must go to bed now for tomorrow we have to go to school again! Sleep here with the child. I shall go to bed into the other room. But before going to bed, he remembered having read in books on Father Pio that one could send one's guardian angel to him. This he did. It was just five to one in the morning. At three he woke up. His first thought was how is the child? He went to look and found the child healthy in its bed! " With joy, he awakened his wife and said: "This child is healthy! " The latter answered: "I know why. Before going to bed, I sent my guardian angel to Father Pio." So it turned out that both had done the same! Grateful, the man drove to Father Pio, some weeks later, to thank him in person. As he went into the Sacristy, Father Pio was surrounded by a crowd of men, but when he saw the man, he said humorously, pointing his finger at him: "With you, one can't have peace even at night." Astonished, the teacher begged his pardon, but the Father kindly replied: "Why do you beg my pardon? I am always pleased when guardian angels come, even if it happens at night." The man wanted to thank him." Go to the tabernacle or to Our Lady! "was the reply. But the man, abashed and timid (as everybody looked at him) added: "Father Pio, may I ask whose guardian angel was with you first, my wife's angel or mine? "Smiling, Father Pio answered:" Your guardian angel was with me at five minutes to one, your wife, a little later."



Lord, I offer my past to Your mercy,  
my present to Your love,  
my future to Your Providence.

(Saying of Padre Pio)



Father Pio ,  
With the holy wounds in the year 1918 .  
(Photographed through holy obedience)





## **SOME WONDERFUL EVENTS**

From all countries, even across the ocean, people came to Father Pio to thank him for favors granted. A married couple came from Switzerland. The wife told me that she had been seriously ill with a malady of the spine that specialists could not even diagnose. Her pain was intense. She had to sleep on boards for months and could only lie on one side and always in the same position. Her pain was unspeakable, and her husband was in a dreadful condition. Unexpectedly, an acquaintance lent them a book on Father Pio. They had never heard of him before. Full of hope, they immediately wrote to Father Pio. Soon the answer came simple, and plain. Father Pio is praying for your request and he blesses you. A few days later (it was five o'clock in the morning), so the cured woman told me, she had the sensation somebody was present there in her room. She had suddenly perceived a wonderful perfume (that is the sign of Father Pio's invisible presence, as it has been described in books.) Then she felt an immense pain in her spine, it felt as if somebody straightened it. The woman wanted to shout, but her voice was suffocated in her throat. Immediately afterwards she saw a hand before her, in which several small stones, like gallstones, could be seen. The hand disappeared, and the woman felt well. She jumped up and cried: "I am cured, I am cured!" Her husband awoke. Indeed, she was cured. Who had done it? A big question! But they guessed. It was Father Pio. So they set out to visit him. Unfortunately the woman could not speak to Father Pio on account of the large crowd. But her husband succeeded in getting into the confessional after 16 days. After confession he said inquiringly: "Father Pio, may I ask you: Did you cure my wife?" Father Pio humbly answered: "Why, didn't I do it right?" And to the man's surprise he added: "Now go back to Switzerland, happy and contented!" The man was more astonished than ever. Father Pio knew that they had come from Switzerland.

A famous doctor from Rome brought his wife in the last stage of cancer to Father Pio. When the woman had been lodged in a room, the doctor went to Father Pio into the sacristy and said to him: "Father Pio, I am a doctor myself, but human art has failed with my wife and she is on the verge of death. Please help with your prayer! I will not leave here before she has been cured. Because of his modesty Father Pio did not reply. When I was with Father Pio in July 1957, I saw the woman strong and healthy.

One day. Dr. Sanguinetti, who had made the plan for the new hospital with Father Pio, came to him in the evening. Father Pio said to him: "See that you have the documents of the hospital in order!" Next day the gentleman came to tell him that everything was in order. But before saying good-bye, Father Pio said sadly, "Alas, this awful night!" The doctor thought that Father Pio was in great pain and gladly offered to help him. Then Father Pio said: "You want to stay here just to help me? But you go home!" At one in the morning, the convent was alarmed. That doctor had had a stroke and was dying. A Capuchin Father was just coming down. He administered the last sacraments to him. Immediately afterwards the doctor died. Father Pio had known that he would die that night and wept for him very much. I was present at the burial, myself.

In the sacristy a man who was taken seriously ill asked Father Pio to pray for him that he might recover. Father Pio answered: "Do not let yourself be operated on. I shall pray for you that you get well again." But when the man came home and informed his wife, she replied: "Do not wait till Father Pio prays that you get well. Get operated on. That will be quicker." Indeed, it was quicker. The man obeyed his wife and died in the operation, because he had not heeded Father Pio's words.



I can only say this. I was with Father Pio for nine months. I spoke with many pilgrims and always heard that everything that Father Pio predicted came true.

With difficulty, a woman came to Father Pio and said: "Tell me, Father Pio, why am I ill? I have been ill for 30 years. It is true, I can do my housekeeping, but with great pain only." Then he replied: "That is a great favor. The Lord has chosen you to suffer. You have two brothers. They lead a very bad life. Your other relatives are not much better. For the salvation of their souls you will atone two more years and then you will be cured. Then you will have saved all those souls.

Every suffering is a favor, though we do not understand it." Therefore we always ought to pray: "Lord, your will be done. Wherever I go and I stand, Lord, your will be done, though I do not understand." For what better thing can we offer the Lord than enduring our troubles with love and patience. With that we can save many souls and our own, too.

The report which I now submit may serve to increase the glory of God, to thank Father Pio, and maybe to strengthen your faith. In 1953, I was on the verge of death myself, on account of my long captivity in Siberia. I came home seriously ill and in 1953, I suffered a bad relapse. I had severe atrophy of the lungs with temporary severe hemorrhage of fibrous structure, but the heart was still worse, as the doctor said very severe disease of the heart muscles. In addition, both kidneys, the liver, the gall bladder and all the glands were affected. Following a bad hemorrhage, after which I could hardly speak in a loud voice, I was at the point of death, I received the Last Sacraments and was prepared to die. Then I suddenly had a dream. I saw Father Pio. He gave me to understand that I ought to come and see him. When I awoke, I thought: yes, that's right; There once lived a holy pastor of Ars, a saint Francis and similar saints. If we read about them in books today, we envy the men who made a pilgrimage and were lucky enough to see and to talk to these men. And now there is a priest who bears the wounds of Christ, and we pass by him without paying attention to him. In the meantime, innumerable pilgrims have already received favors through his intercession, and we that ignore him go away empty-handed. Previously, I only knew that there was a Father Pio, who bore the wounds of Christ, but I knew nothing of all the reports I have told you about. However, I felt an ardent desire, now to see him before my death. With that thought I wanted to go to him. As by a miracle, everything came to pass so that I could set out on my journey though I was deadly sick. It was all the same to me whether I died in Vienna or in Italy. The journey cost me much sacrifice, but at last I arrived at Father Pio's. When I saw him, I was moved. I was advised to go to confess to him, though I was a poor hand at Italian. I obeyed, and after a long wait I went into the confessional. After confession, Father Pio, sad and full of compassion said to me: "You are incurably ill. There is no help for you. You must die." And so that I could understand him correctly, he showed me all the ailing parts of my body. I was so deeply impressed by the fact that Father Pio knew all that. Who had told him? There was a long pause. Then he said: "No you will not die," and once more he made a sign to me with his hand and added: "I shall take all your pain and troubles to myself, and you will get well again." I was so speechless, that I could not even say "Thank you" or "may God reward you." He got up and went out of the confessional, for I had been his last penitent. For a long time I remained dumbfounded from that event. The following night, I had a dream in which I saw two men carrying Father Pio on a bier. There Father Pio lay in dreadful pain. In the agony of death, he looked at me sadly and yet kindly, and made me understand as though he said:

Look here, that dreadful pain which I am suffering now, death, as it were, for I am dying, - all that I must slowly take over from you. In short, I am healthy again .

I will relate another impressive occurrence. It may be a comfort for those who lost someone in the war, or who lost someone (some dear acquaintance) through death. One day (it happened in the cloister there), when the friars had gone to their cells, and only fathers remained in the visitors room (the cloister had been lock long before), they heard a voice beneath on the corridor of the cloister, where people use to come and go all day long, and ask in languages: "Where is Father Pio? Where can I talk to him?" etc. Then they heard a vehement, joyful shouting, an impatient stamping of feet, a clapping of hands, and voices calling out: "Long live Father Pio! " Quite amazed at that unexpected scene they asked each other, what the matter was Father Guardian inquired whether the door had been locked. Everything is all right!" was the answer. A priest was sent out to see who was there, whether the friars had made the noise. Shuddering with awe the man came back: He had not found anybody, nor had he heard anything either, he reported. As they had already experienced many strange things in the cloister, they determined to ask Father Pio. It was very unpleasant for him, because of his great humility, to explain such things. But when they insisted, he said: "Then let us consider the corridor! " At that moment he had a vision and pronounced the following words: "You should know, my dear brother, there has just been a large group of soldiers who fell in the last war, and as I have prayed for them a great deal during the last days, they have just come to me to say thanks, before going to heaven." He also said that on that road which leads up to him (it is a new highway) more dead (souls in Purgatory) than living men came up. So we can see that in his great love of God and men Father Pio is indeed unrivalled in the entire world. Not only the thousands upon thousands who wandered up the road, begged him for help, but even souls in Purgatory, because the Lord allowed them to come.

One last small occurrence. In the cloister were also novices, who played in the garden in their free time. Suddenly they saw a bird which could not fly well yet. They wanted to help it, but it slipped into a pile of wood. Quickly they set to work to save it. In the middle of their work the bell rang, and they had to assemble for common prayer. Afterwards Father Pio met these novices in the corridor, stopped three of them, and smilingly said he: "Your thoughts centered around the bird in the garden during common prayer. "

Father Pio showed concern not only for Italians, but he prayed for all: everybody was his brother and sister in Christ, as he said himself. As a good Father he also had his special spiritual children. I have been told there were more than 2 million of them. And Father Pio loved them all prayed for them and blessed them. He made the beautiful statement: "If it were possible I would prefer not to go to heaven before all my children are definitely there. Many people of different faith have found the true faith through him.

Father Pio was a faithful son of the church. I should almost say a visible pillar of the Church, for many have come back to it through him. He did all that the Church demands. He was a great devotee of the Mother of God. He venerated the angels, prayed much for the souls in Purgatory, and administered the sacraments with great love. But one thing is sure, this I must say: Father Pio lived like a saint, and Christ himself said: By their fruit you may know them. This fruit we have just seen. The wonders were not wrought by Father Pio, as he himself said: I am an unworthy tool. God worked wonders through him. Therefore we must thank God for all those favors, especially for the many conversions. It would be good also if we prayed for Father Pio. He would certainly reward us.

So we see that even in our times wonders occur, to move men, and to awaken them from their earthly apathy. Father Pio himself said: "It is human and natural that man be attracted by wonders, for by these wonders he may better know God's majesty and glory."

Padre Pio, 'our beloved Spiritual Father, stands before us as a singular shining ideal, expressing heroic love of God of neighbor.

Humble and obedient, praying and atoning, suffering painfully and voluntarily, marked with the Holy Stigmata, which were, to him, flames of Divine Love, he spent the days of his life for the greater honor of God and the salvation of immortal souls.

September 6, 1968, the First Friday of the month, Padre Pio offered his life in reparation to Almighty God. He heard of the protest movements of the "Katholikentag" (General Assembly of Catholics) in Essen (Germany) where so many Catholics denied obedience to Pope Paul VI.

At that time, once again Padre Pio wrote to the Holy Father "I know that you suffer great heartache in behalf of the Church, but you are especially grieved because of the lack of obedience in regard to the Supreme Teaching Office which you exercise with the assistance of the Holy Spirit and in the name of God. I am offering you my prayers and my suffering as a small but sincere contribution rendered to you by the least of your sons that the Lord may console you with His grace and that you may continue on the straight and difficult way of defending the eternal truth: that changeless truth in the ever changing times. I thank you for the clear and decisive word you said in that last Encyclical 'Humanae Vitae' in particular; I renew my faith" my unconditional obedience with regard to your enlightening advice May the Lord help that truth triumph!

Padre Pio, born May 25, 1887 in Pietralcina in Southern Italy, entered the Capuchin Order and was ordained a priest on May 10, 1910. By a special favor of God, he received the five sacred stigmata on September 20, 1918. In 1968, on September 20, he was able to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of this marvelous event. Sunday, September 22, 1968, Padre Pio sang a High Mass with extreme effort. Previously he had announced that this would be his last Holy Mass. A few days before he had blessed his grave and spoken about various matters. Monday, September 23, 1968, his most beloved Lord and Master whom he was often deigned to see during his lifetime, took him to his eternal glory, unexpectedly for us. With tender love he had yet blessed his loved children scattered all over the world. Raising his hand in blessing he had said these last words: "I am going to the Father in Heaven." Padre Pio had voluntarily offered his life in reparation for the many Catholics refusing obedience to church authorities.

September 26, 1968, a great number of clerics and an immense crowd of pilgrims accompanied his mortal remains to the crypt of the new monastery church at San Giovanni Rotondo.

The following paragraphs are excerpts from the newspaper 'La Gazzetta' Bari:

Padre Pio is dead. His heart stopped at 2:30 A.M. on account of unforeseen cardiac complications and respiratory weakness. He was 81 years old. The day before, he had still attended in the choir loft above the main altar, the Vespers which were held for his spiritual children all over the world. He was more pale than usual. From early morning on, as he celebrated his Golden Stigmata Jubilee Mass, he already suffered a great deal. Padre Pio, who had always preached kindness and mercy, fell asleep in death as he had lived, blessing everybody, his brethren and his personal physician, Dr. Giuseppe Sala, who knelt near the armchair in his cell, and all his spiritual children.

From the tower of the monastery, the bell announced the sad news and called the people who loved their Padre so much, to pray and. to mourn.

Following are reports on the last moments in the life of Padre Pio, the signs of the crisis and the last efforts of the physicians up to the last breath of the dying Padre.

I :05 A.M.:

Accompanied by Father Pellegrino, the night's attendant, Padre Pio, reaches the Veranda where he rests for a few minutes.

1 : 10 A.M. :

A great weakness assails him. In the wheelchair, Father Pellegrino returns him to his cell and makes him sit down in the armchair.

I : 1 5 A.M.:

A strange pallor is spreading over his face.

I :20 A.M.:'

Dr: Giuseppe Sala is called by phone; he arrives quickly, Father Paolo, the Superior of the monastery begins to administer the Holy Unction as the Friars gather around their confrere.

I :35 A.M.:

The doctor starts oxygen therapy; the emergency apparatus was left in an adjacent room since September 21, after a light crisis of respiratory asthma had developed.

1 :40 A.M.:

Breathing is very irregular. 2:10A.M.:

Heartbeat and breathing become very faint; two specialists are called in to assist Dr. Sala.

2:15 A.M.:

Breathing and heartbeat are restored, but not the reflexes of the pupil.

2:30 A.M.:

The reviving specialist tries to re-animate the patient, but without success. With a faint sigh; Padre Pio expires.

Early in the morning, Padre Pio is laid out in the coffin in the church. Thousands of pilgrims pass their friend and benefactor praying and weeping. Day and night, until the hour of his funeral, special airplanes, arrive from all over the world.

Thursday, September 26 1968, at 3:00 P.M. the funeral ceremonies started; Padre Pio's earthly remains were carried from the church through the streets of San Giovanni Rotondo and back to the church. This walk alone lasted about four hours - 3000 priests and 100,000 pilgrims took part in it. The newspaper wrote -Farewell, dear holy Padre of Gargano's mountain! "Padre Pio was put to rest in the lower church. A sea of flowers surrounded him, the last visible sign of his beloved spiritual children.

But the pilgrimage had already begun to Padre's tomb at the crypt of Santa Maria delle Grazie in San Giovanni Rotondo. We could see priests and pilgrims praying at the grave of the stigmatized Padre; there was a continuous coming and going. This veneration .was increased by two sudden cures on the day of his funeral.

Thus far the reports of the newspapers.

The world became poorer for a saintly priest, and we trust, Heaven became richer with a great saint. His reward and his glory will be great. He now can enjoy abundant heavenly bliss and abide with his beloved Lord and Master, as well as with his heavenly Mama, as he used to call the Immaculate Virgin, the Blessed Mother of God.



For fifty long years, Padre Pio has borne untold sufferings and his daily martyrdom; he experienced at his Mass with unlimited sacrificial love. We hope and trust that he is now one of the great in Heaven.

But surely Padre Pio did not abandon us here below; he is nearer to us than ever before. He left us, he preceded us in order to be an ever more powerful intercessor at the throne of God. We, however, are to continue in loving him as our very friend by living, like him, an exemplary Christian life that we, too, may again be united with him forever in Heaven, praising and adoring God Almighty for all eternity.









