

«THE DEAR FATHER»

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Translated from the italian << Il Caro Padre >>

by Bianca Lanci

(Complimentary copy – sale prohibited)

Introduction

This booklet contains one of the many conversations held by Padre Guglielmo on the life and spirituality of Padre Pio.

It is a very useful subsidy for the Groups of Prayer that live the charisma of Padre Pio and spread it into the church.

The rich content and the lively and convincing language invite us to the reading and spreading of it in a world wanting spirituality and hope.

The spiritual children of Padre Pio, well aware of their mission, share with joy their experience and make themselves the carrier of this joyful message to the many other fellows.

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PADRE PIO'S BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1887 (May 25th)	He was born in Pietrelcina a suburb of Benevento
1887 (May 26th)	He is babtized and given the name of Francesco
1892	When he is five years he decides to consecrate himself to Jesus
1899 (September 27th)	Confirmation at Saint Anne's
1903 (January 1st)	Enters the Monastery in Morcone a suburb of Benevento
1903 (January 22nd)	He wears the novitiate frock and takes the name of Fra Pio (Brother Pio)
1904 (January 22nd)	He takes the simple vows
1907 (January 27th)	In Saint'Elia a Pianisi (near Campobasso) he takes the Solemn vows
1908 (December 19th)	He is in Benevento in the Monastery of the Franciscans of the Minor Order
1909	He stays in Pietrelcina because of his bad health
1910 (August 10th)	He is ordained Priest in the Dome of Benevento
1910 (August 14th)	He celebrates his first Solemn Mass in Pietrelcina
1911 (September 8th)	In a letter to his Spiritual father: he mentions the "painful signs" that have tormented him for a year
1911 (October)	At Venafro, for 21 days he has taken nothing to eat but the Eucharist
1911 (December 7th)	He comes back to Pietrelcina and all of a sudden he recovers
1916 (February 17th)	He is sent to the Monastery of Saint Anne in Foggia
1916 (July 28th)	He is in San Giovanni Rotondo and becomes Director of the Seraphic Seminar

1918 (March 16th)	He is declared unfit for military service
1918 (August 5th)	Transverberation of the heart
1918 (September 2nd)	On Friday: the visible stigmata
1931 (June 9th)	He is suspended from the priestly ministry by the Vatican
1933 (July 16th)	He can celebrate the mass in the Church
1947 (May 19th)	The building up of the Hospital "Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza" (House for the Relief of Suffering) was started
1956 (May 5th)	The newly built Hospital is inaugurated
1959 (July 2nd)	The New Church of S. Maria delle Grazie (Our Lady of Grace) is consecrated
1959 (August 5th)	Our Lady of Fatima comes to S. Giovanni Rotondo
1959 (August 6th)	Our Lady leaves and P. Pio recovers
1966 (May 5th)	1st National Convention of the Groups of Prayer
1968 (September 22nd)	His last Mass and blessing of the crowd
1968 (September 23rd)	2.30 a.m.: Padre Pio dies
1968 (September 26th)	His body is deposited in the tomb
1969 (November 4th)	The Beatification Process is started
1973 (January 16th)	All the documents are given to the "Sacred Congregation of the Saints Process" in order to start the proceeding
1982 (November 29th)	The Pope gives the start to the Beatification Proceeding
1983 (March 2nd)	The Proceeding is officially opened
1990 (January 21st)	The Diocesan Proceeding is closed in S. Giovanni Rotondo
1990 (February 12th)	Opening of the canonization proceeding
1999 (May 2nd)	Pope John Paul II proclaimed him "beatus"
2002 (June 16th)	Pope John Paul II proclaimed him "Saint"
2008 (March 2nd)	The body exhumation of Padre Pio
2016 (February 6th)	His body is exhibited in the Vatican on the occasion of the 2016 Jubilee of Mercy
2016 (February 11th)	His body is taken to Pietrelcina after 100 years
2016 (February 14th)	Padre Pio is back to San Giovanni Rotondo

Chapter I

The father

Wherever a saint has left his footprints, in the house where he works and breaths, on those he beloved, God turns His loving care and gives His Holy Blessing.

This is the benediction that from heaven poured on Pietrelcina the land where Padre Pio was born.

It is the same benediction that alighted on San Giovanni Rotondo the land where Padre Pio lived, loved and suffered for many years.

He was born on May 25th, 1887, in Vico Storto Valle, a quarter of Pietrelcina, from Grazio Forgione and Maria Giuseppa Di Nunzio, his mother.

He was baptized the day after his birth and given the name of Francesco.

During all his eighty one years he devoted his life to the salvation of anyone's souls who happened to meet him, it is for this reason that the power of the darkness stirs a fierce battle up against him.

Every night when he was only a few months old he seemed to be caught by a persistent crying.

One evening, Grazio his father, rather tired for the hard work in the field and almost exasperated by the crying, took the baby and throwing him on the bed exclaimed:

«Why a little devil has come into my house instead of a baby!».

Many years later Padre Pio will reveal that he had been tormented by monstrous figures ever since, but from that night on he stopped crying.

God lets satan attack His heroes.

Their lives are as the lent of Jesus in the desert, assailed by the devil, surrounded by the wild beasts, served by the angels and rewarded with victory.

During a vision, Jesus invites Padre Pio to face a gigantic figure and granting him His help but warning him that the figure would attack him over and over again.

His spiritual guides will eventually read in his letters the narration of terrible assaults of the finest and cunning tricks played by the "cosaccio" (the terrible thing), to turn him away from the prayer, to prevent him from answering the many letters from his beloved children and finally to create obstacles and difficulties of the worst kind along his way towards his self-sacrifice and great apostolate.

But Heaven steadily keeps Its loving watch on him.

The guardian Angel is his playfellow, his faithful friend, the steady help, the precious adviser and even his master and collaborator with foreign languages in his epistular correspondence.

Chapter II

«A great mission»

(Ep. III, page 1009)

Jesus opens His heart to him, shares His thirst for souls and attracts his heart towards self sacrifice.

Francesco consecrates himself to God when he was only five years old.

Inside St. Anne's church, the Sacred Heart of Jesus nods to him, gets him closer to the altar and gently putting his hands on his head, shows His appreciation of his offering.

The boy is soon led and trained to gradually understand God's secrets.

It is in these secrets that he deeps the roots of his thirst for sharing Jesus agony.

His mother caught him sleeping on the naked floor using a stone as a pillow or while whipping himself with iron chains.

«My son, why are you doing that?» used his mother to ask him - «I want to make my shoulders bleed as the Judeans did with Jesus» - was his answer.

Jesus committed to him a very great mission:

«Santificate yourself and santificate your fellows». (Ep. III, page 1010)

If only the stones along the way to Piana Romana

could speak! How many and wonderful bursts of love would talk about!

Or if "my big chair", that's the way in which he called the big stone he used to sit on, could tell his mystical dialogues with Jesus, or how about that elm that witnessed his first crucifixion on September 7th, 1910!

Each corner of his village was ready to become a glimpse of Paradise.

Later in the year he will reveal:

«Jesus came to Pietrelcina... Everything happened there».

He shares with all his fellows villagers the deep devotion to the Saint Patron of Pietrelcina "La Madonna della Libera" whom he calls la Madunnella nostra (our cute Madonna).

He will, anyway, ever use loving appellations when turning to the Holy Mother; one of the most famous is dear Mummy.

He would say in his Epistolario:

« Poor Mummy! How much She loves me! I newly realized that at the beginning of this beautiful month. How careful She has been this morning taking me to the altar! I had the neat impression that she was caring about me and filling my heart with saint affections as if I were the only fellow to care about. I felt a mysterious fire on the side of my heart which I could not understand, I felt I had to put some ice on it to extinguish it which is consuming me.

I wish I had a voice so loud so that the sinners of all the world could hear my invitation to love the Holy Mary...». (Ep. I, page 276-277)



«Pietrelcina has been the Bethlehem of Padre Pio».

Chapter III

The priest

When Francesco (this is the christian name of Padre Pio) makes it manifest his wish to become a friar with the beard, he finds his parents ready to any sacrifice.

His father emigrates twice to America.

On January 6th, 1903, Francesco enters the friary of Morcone (a little village in the province of Benevento), and on 22nd of the same month he is given the traditional brown robes of the franciscan order, so starting his novitiate and taking the name of Fra Pio.

He moves from the friary of Saint Elia a Pianisi to that of Saint Marco la Catola, from that of Serra Capriola to that of Montefusco and Gesualdo.

On December 19th, 1908, he receives the Minor orders.

His health is getting worse.

On May 1909 his Superiors sent him to Pietrelcina hoping that the native air could result of some benefit to his health.

On August 10th, 1910 he was ordained priest at Benevento.

The following Sunday, 14th, he celebrates his first solemn mass at Pietrelcina, at the feet of the "Madonna

delle Libera".

Padre Pio's health is not very good.

His own body in very need of nursery cure, he will be the nurse to cure the spirit of millions of souls.

An apparently ordinary life will result a trumpet blare to all humanity.

Padre Agostino da San Marco in Lamis will say, in the speech he delivered during the celebration of the first mass of Padre Pio, that he doesn't see him fit for preaching, on account of his poor health and wishes him to be the confessor of the century.

This wish turned into a prophecy.

Padre Pio's stay in Pietrelcina will last six more years. Useless will be his superior's attempts to take him back to the friary.

Every time they call him back his health gets so bad that he cannot even get up from the bed.

During his stay in the friary of Venafro he had not taken anything to eat for twenty days but the Holy Communion.

In a celestial vision Padre Pio asks Jesus:

«Why are You keeping me in Pietrelcina, outside the Garden of Saint Francis, the friary?».

The answer has been kept in his heart.

His superiors are seriously thinking of decreeing Padre Pio' s secularization, but for the intervention of the Almighty God.

Padre Pio is asked to go to Foggia to assist his spiritual daughter, the noble woman Raffaolina Cerase in the last days of her life.

In a very short time throng of thirsty souls seeking Jesus would gather around him.

They were so pressing to make it difficult for him to handle them and were so many he had no time left for himself. (Ep. I, p. 805)

The very heat in Foggia isn't at all good to Padre Pio's health, his superiors decide to send him to San Giovanni Rotondo friary, only for some days. The climate of San Giovanni Rotondo seems to be of some benefit to his health, so in July 1916 he was to be assigned definitely to the convent.

If Pietrelcina was the Bethlehem of Padre Pio, San Giovanni Rotondo will be his Jerusalem of the Palms and Calvary, of the altar and resurrection.

To him on the Mount Gargano as to Moses on the Mount Sinai, God will give a strength of unlimited astonishment.

There on the Mount Gargano Jesus crucified is waiting for him.

The very first impulse from Padre Pio's heart is to take the nails off Jesus body; impossible.

So he decides to make himself crucified with Christ.

This is the only way to turn his Calvary into his Paradise.

San Giovanni Rotondo becomes the credo and witness of his long martyrdom.

A mule track led from San Giovanni Rotondo to the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie at that time.

For centuries it had been like that; long time before the good giant San Camillo de Lellis, from the generous Abruzzi, stepped through it to the monastery. The very place where, on the day of purification in 1575, he had his conversion

Now:.. *«A new giant, God
has sent, Padre Pio,
who made the mule track wider
through blood and prayer».*

(P. G. Alimonti - La mulattiera - «Orma sulla roccia» p. 12)

San Giovanni Rotondo has become the pole of attraction and a call to all the world, the sign of hope, relief for the multitude.



«S. Giovanni Rotondo was his Jerusalem of the Palms and Calvary, of the altar and resurrection».

Pope John Paul II came here on May 23rd, 1987 to pray; speaking about Padre Pio in the sanctuary, he said:

«The humble religious man ... particularly devoted himself ... to the spiritual direction, doing all he could in helping the souls to discover and give value to the gift and charism that God grants however and whenever in his mysterious liberality... an example to many priests to undertake and improve a "service to the brothers", so tied to their specific mission that has always been and still nowadays should ever be rich with spiritual fruits for the whole population of God, to promote sanctity and sacred vocations».

In the convent of San Giovanni Rotondo Padre Pio was given the cell (room) number five.

In it he wrote the majority of his letters.

Number "five" turned to be a prophetic sign, it, infact, seems to appear mysteriously all along Padre Pio's life.

At the beginning of his stay in San Giovanni Rotondo he had the duty of vice Director of the Seraphic seminary; later he was asked to be the spiritual director.

Saint Paul calls «His pride and crown» (1 Is 2,19-20) all the souls he brought to Christ.

The students of the seraphic seminary, who grew up under the guidance and the example of such a teacher as Padre Pio, can consider themselves particularly graced from God; they are not only pride and crown of Jesus but also of his faithful servant Padre Pio.

His name spreads out of the convent.

The first souls who accurred to him, came to have their confession heard, to gain his spiritual direction and to listen to the catechesys given by Padre Pio to the lay franciscan fraternity.

Chapter IV

The victim

The spirit is growing like a giant, while his soul is living through the dramatic nightmare of the wreck.

And sometimes the ocean of water turns into an ocean of fire.

He yells all his ardent desire of God and in the meantime he feels he is submitted to the strictness of His justice.

The faith is his only support. No other consolation.

The answer from God comes through a stormy series of events we may easily list but hardly understand.

It was on the evening of August 5th, 1918, the father is in his cell hearing the confessions of the "fratini" (the

novices), when all of a sudden a most exalted heavenly person appears to him.

He is holding in his hand a long and iron spear with a well sharpened point.

It seems that fire shoots out from this point.

In a no time the spear is violently plunged into Padre Pio' s soul, leaving him in agony.

It is the mystic gift of the transverberation.

We would like to ask Padre Pio to let us be not only spiritual spectators of this prodigious event, but also imitators of his great offer of love to God and his brothers.



«The Crucifix in the Choir of the old Chapel of the convent»

On September 20th, the same year, it was on Friday, after the celebration of the mass, Padre Pio is making the thanksgiving in the choir.

The mysterious personage appears again, this time in form of crucifix:

*«He gazed at him, his hands and feet
by nails transfixed,
He looked at him, his heart
by a sword slashed in.*

*He took his sight in,
of heaven all darkness,
the soul of the speechless
in contemplation deep,
violently flooded.*

*Misteriously by fire
the father is shot.
The time its pace has stopped,
Heaven from him retires.*

*On the ground he finds himself,
with him his only self
It runs from five sores
the blood inside the choir».*

(P. G. Alimonti: Nel coro - from «Orma sulla roccia» p. 45)

The stigmatization is the fire stamp which Christ our Saviour prints in the flesh of His faithful servant to seal this union of love and sorrow with him.

The prayer and charity of Padre Pio reach far borders of the earth but he remains on the Gargano, crucified.

At his school he teaches how to starve for the bread of love and the mercy of God.

The love that Padre Pio transmits to his spiritual children turns into perpetual prayer filled with faith and hope in the final victory.

The daily gathering of hearts around Padre Pio shows what humanity is in most need of; whatever the man is seeking it will be found inside the walls of a church, in the deep look, in the enlightened advice and comforting benediction of a man filled with God.

Chapter V

«The two poles of his life»

(Pope John Paul II, May 23rd 1987)

Christ has stamped his wounds on Padre Pio, the priest whose main concern and mission was to gather and rescue men from whatever shores and take them to God, or restore the faith in them.

His deep sight pierced the souls of the atheist who facing him soon became aware of the emptiness of his interior life while the stubborn sinner finally gave up under the power of the grace.

Whoever arrived to him, sooner or later, but always, felt he had found the great master, a friend, the brother to walk beside, toward the end of the journey and hopefully knock together at the door of Heaven.

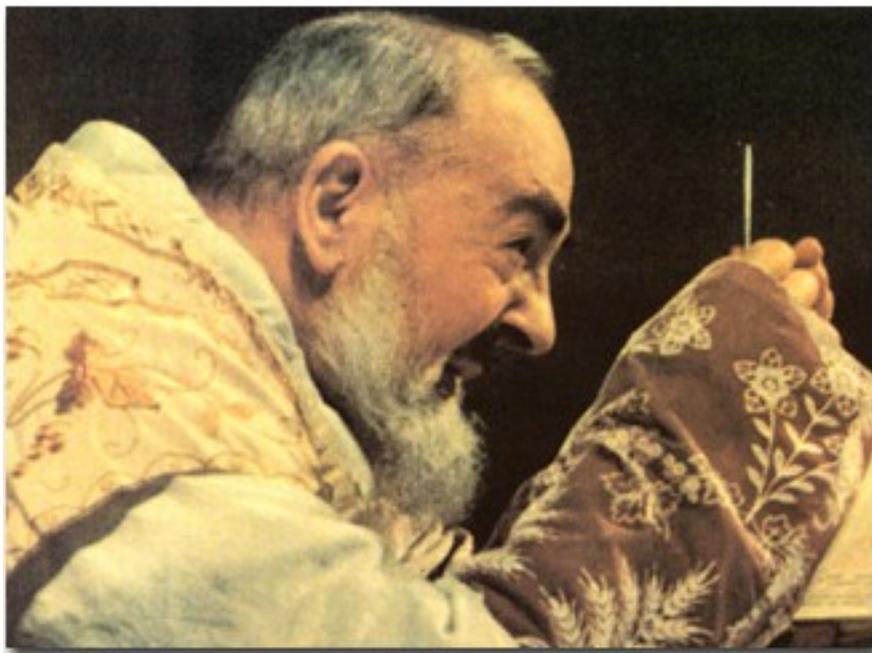
The altar and the confessional have been the two poles of his life.

The mass was the visible and touchable sign of his spirituality and mission.

During the mass he celebrated, you experienced the impression that time and space distance from the calvary to that altar has shortened to nothing.

Such sight, usually, deeply impressed even those who only had gone out of curiosity.

His mass has been a providential gift, the time of mercy and Grace for the whole mankind.



«The Holy Host, elevated by those perforated hands, made it more perceptible to the eyes of the bystanders, the mystic union of the offering priest to the supreme and eternal Priest Jesus Christ».

Pope John Paul II said of him:

«An essential feature of the sacred ministry made visible by Padre Pio' s own life, is the offering that the priest makes of himself, in Christ and with Christ, as a victim to expiate the sins of mankind...»

Such offering should reach its utmost expression in the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Who does not remember the fervour of Padre Pio repacing during the mass the passion of Jesus Christ?

He had in great consideration the mass, which he called "a tremendous mistery".

He regarded it as the crucial moment for the salvation and santification of man through the participation to the same sufferings of the Crucified.

"In the mass - he used to say - there is the Calvary". The mass was for him the spring and the peak, the pivot and heart of all his life and mission.

Such an intimate and passionate participation to the Sacrifice of Christ produced in Padre Pio, dedication and availability to the souls, especially to those entangled in the laces of the sin and the troubles of human misery». (23-5-87) Padre Pio condemned and hated sin without exception; He guided and loved the souls of his children without limitation of mercy.



«The confession at his feet always became a conversion which unfailingly led to the way of the resurrection».

Based on such spiritual stand his word as a confessor was not at all languishing nor acquiescent never yielding.

His word, though brief, should penetrate the secret corners of souls so that it could shake, uproot and clear, in order to build up the new man.

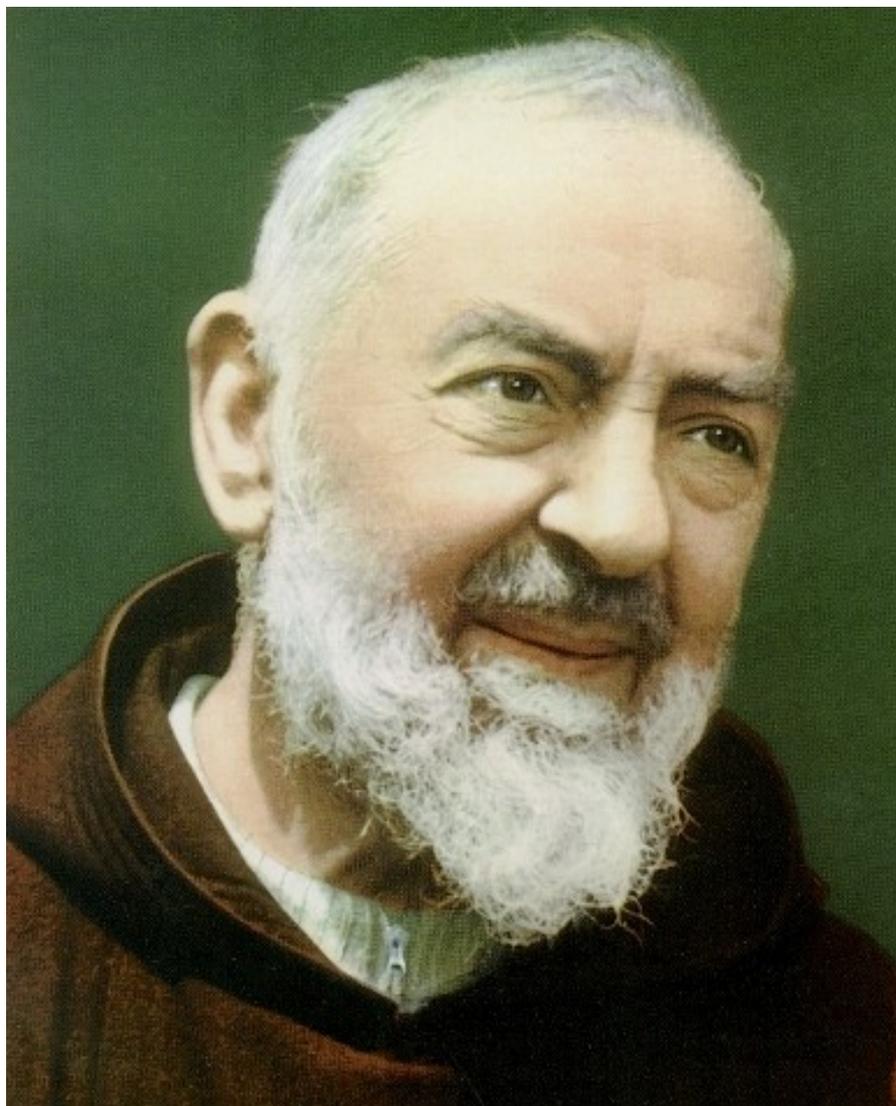
*«Inside that narrow your confessional
You sounded, Father, a judge so strict.
You perceived, as the Almighty Lord's eye,
from the greatest to the lightest of the sins
which so much the souls inside damage.*

*... Great was the desire but the panic too,
to kneel down and bear that sight.
To find one self at his feet,
is a gift not to waste.
The peace that smoothly flows inside the soul
of the Paradise sweet the penitent gave a taste».*

(P. G. Alimonti: Come reo - «Orma sulla roccia» - p.79)

The confession at his feet always became a conversion which unfailingly led to the way of the resurrection.

A journey started anew whose destination was, this time, Christ and no turning back.





*«The «Dear Mummy».
Madonna delle Grazie mosaic
in the church in San Giovanni Rotondo*

Chapter VI

His works

1 - The hospital "Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza"
(The House for the Relief of Suffering).



(The «Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza». Temple of science and mercy.)

Ready to help not only with the spiritual needs, Padre Pio, wanted to build up a Hospital, which should be a temple of science and mercy.

He used to say: «the sick is Christ»

The technical plan of the hospital did not come from the ability of an engineer, but from the fantasy of Angelo

Lupi, a bricklayer from Pescara.

The solid and more than sufficient capital on which the hospital relied on, came out from the charity of Padre Pio and his spiritual children.

When charity puts no limit to the offering, God unlimitedly grants his grace.

The House for the Relief of Suffering, opened on May 5th, 1956, was a concrete sign of this twofold truth:

The great heart of Padre Pio wanted it; God will keep it on.

2 - The groups of prayer



(May 21st, 1978 Pilgrimage of Padre Pio Groups of Prayer from Abruzzi, to San Giovanni Rotondo)

Any creature is a sign of God's love who created us in order to dominate and maintain the order in the world.

Man should always lift his eyes up and breath that love poured out by God and so he becomes astonishingly like Him as it had happened in Padre Pio.

The strength of Samson was in his hair, the strength of the faithful is in the prayer. From such a hearth the Groups of prayer were naturally born.

What are the Groups of prayer?

«They are hands, so many before God praying.

They are hearts, so great open to the heart of man.

They are the secret strength of the church.

*They are the winning proof of the hope
that love will finally win on hate...*

Oh! Thousand and thousand Groups of prayer!

You live on Christ Eucharist.

It ... will pour on you Grace and Humility.

*You sculptured in the hearts, through Padre Pio,
the name of the Virgin Mother Mary».*

(P. G. Alimonti: Tua cattedrale-From «Orma sulla roccia» p. 115)

3 - The new Sanctuary

The new church of "Santa Maria delle Grazie" (Our Lady of Grace) was consecrated by His Excellency Paolo Carta, Bishop of Foggia, on July 1st 1959.

It was a joyful target for many benefactors, the friars and Padre Pio himself.

At the ceremony of the consecration Padre Pio does not appear; his poor health worse than usual that day, forces him in bed.

The following day, July 2nd, Cardinal Tedeschi puts the crown on the head of Our Lady, the picture at the top of the altar; before leaving he pays a visit to Padre Pio, in the hospital.

*«The Cardinal goes
with brotherly charity
and visits the sick.
His eyes enchanted stand
on the man of sorrows thosand».*

(P. G. Alimonti: Conduce a Dio-from «Orma sulla roccia» p.123)

And leaving the room the Cardinal exclaims: «Padre Pio leads to God».

Chapter VII

Farewell

September 20th, 1968, it is exactly 50 years since Padre Pio had first the stigmata.

His spiritual children come from all over the world to take part at the international Convention of the Groups of prayer.

On Sunday, September 22nd, Padre Pio celebrates a solemn mass: His last mass.

That night, at 2,30 a.m. Padre Pio falls asleep in God.

The nurse of God has accomplished his mission.

The wounds of the world, Oh! yes, they still are in need of his care.

Padre Pio suffered and still suffers.

He loved and still loves. From the Cross He said: «I leave Our Lady to you».

The Virgin Mary as the spiritual testament, as the way to go straight to God.

He thus commits the so beloved Mother to the love of his children and his children to the love of Mary.

Precious Testament!

He left us as a consignment the rosary, the weapon with which he himself fought.

It was that weapon that gained him his victory; the same weapon will gain the victory to the Groups of prayer and to anyone who takes inspiration from Padre Pio.

His life was a run whose target was loving and suffering with Christ.

From Christ he will be crowned as apostle and martyr.

Together with Saint Paul he can say:

«I fought the good battle ... God, the right Judge, will have the crown». (2 Tm. 4, 7-8)

Padre Pio watches his children, he protects them, he embraces them and comforts them.

He will be, continuously and generously, for any one in sickness the good Samaritan; all of us are sick either physically or psychologically.

*

Oh! Padre Pio, though sister death has pinned the beats of your heart on the target of time, we will always be in search of you and always will call you «Padre» (father).

"Father!...

It is the password of the children

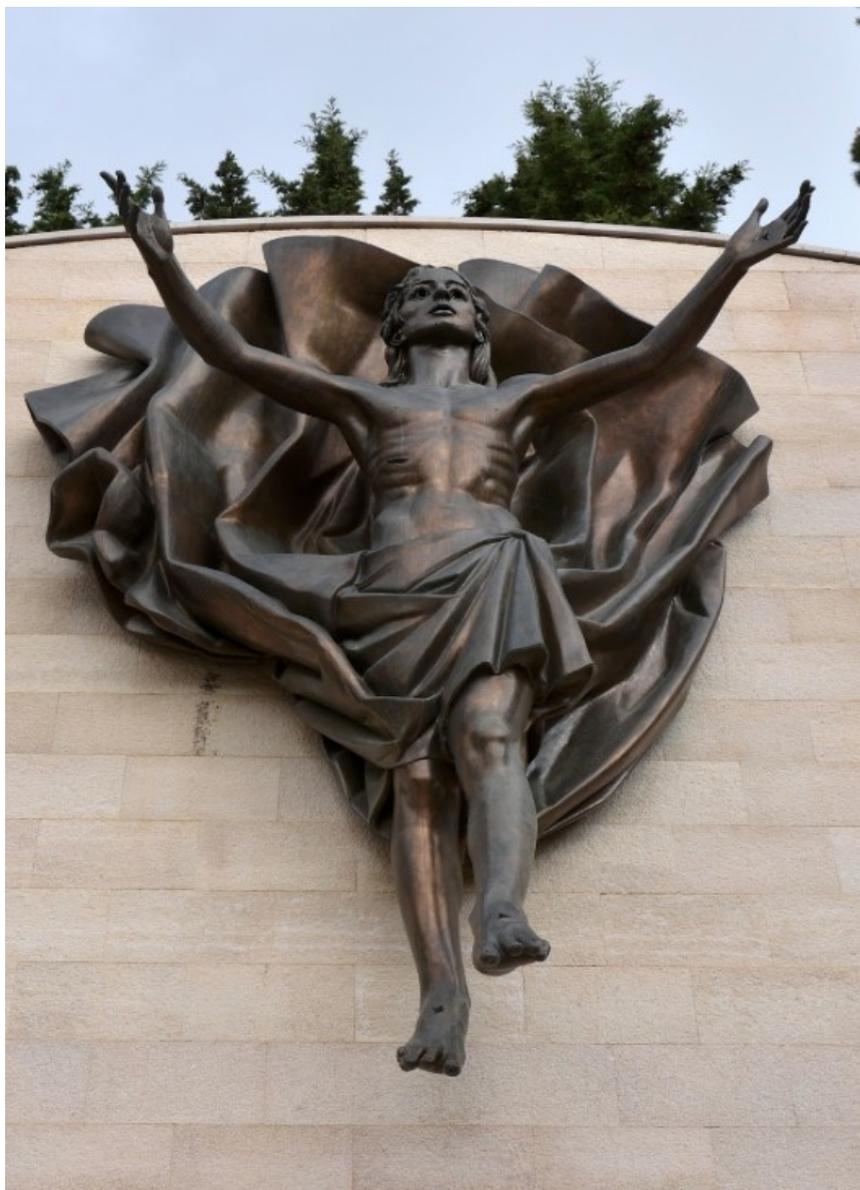
It is the saint word of here below

It is the eternal word of high there".

(P. G. Alimonti: Padre - from «Orma sulla roccia» p. 175)

Dear Father, the hospital "Casa Sollievo", the church of Madonna delle Grazie, the thousand of your spiritual children, the Groups of prayer are the creatures that you generated and loved. They are the creatures you will love and bless forever.

Thank You Father.



«San Giovanni Rotondo has become the focus of attention and a call to the world, the sign of hope to the multitude».

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<<...In the silence of the night
in the retirement of my cell
many times I raised highly my hand
and blessed all of you ... >>

(Padre Pio Ep. III, p. 1079)

*“Together with you
I want to thank Our Lord
For giving us
THE DEAR FATHER”*

(John Paul II – May 23nd 1987)