



*St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, O.F.M. Cap.*

*[May 25, 1887 - September 23, 1968]*

*(Feast Day: September 23)*

*“Pray, Hope and Don’t Worry!”*

**Who was he?** Francesco, named in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, was born to Giuseppa and Grazio Forgione, peasant farmers, in the small Italian village of Pietrelcina on May 25, 1887. From his childhood, it was evident that he was a special child of God. Francesco was very devout even as a child, and at an early age felt drawn to the priesthood. He became a Capuchin Franciscan novice at the age of sixteen and received the habit in 1903. Francesco was ordained to the priesthood in 1910 after seven years of study and became known as Padre Pio. In 1917, he was assigned to the Capuchin friary in San Giovanni Rotondo where he spent the rest of his life.

On September 20, 1918, Padre Pio was kneeling in front of a large crucifix when he received the visible marks of the crucifixion, making him the first stigmatized priest in the history of the Church. He bore the pain and suffering of these marks for the rest of his life. The doctor who examined Padre Pio could not find any natural cause for the wounds. Upon his death in 1968, the wounds were no longer visible. In fact, there was no scarring and the skin was completely renewed. He had predicted 50 years prior that upon his death the wounds would heal. In 1924 and again in 1931, the authenticity of the stigmata was questioned. During these times, Padre Pio was not permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or to hear confessions. He did not complain of these decisions (which were soon reversed), but submitted to the will of his superiors in perfect obedience. He was able to see his personal sufferings as a response to his call to follow the Gospel.

The wounds of the stigmata were not the only mystical phenomenon experienced by Padre Pio. The blood from the stigmata had an odor described by many as similar to that of perfume or flowers, and the gift of bilocation was attributed to him. Padre Pio had a special devotion to his Guardian Angel. He was much sought after as a spiritual advisor, confessor and intercessor. He had the ability to read the hearts of the penitents who flocked to him for confession which he heard for ten or twelve hours per day. Padre Pio used the confessional to bring both sinners and devout souls closer to God; he would know just the right word of counsel or encouragement that was needed.

Padre Pio’s life of complete devotion to the Eucharist and to prayer led him to develop a keen concern for the poor and the sick. He founded a special hospital on Mount Gargano to serve the needs of people too poor to afford medical care. Today this hospital called the *Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza* – the House for the Alleviation of Suffering – treats over 60,000 patients a year. He once said, “Rising above selfishness, we must bow down to the suffering and the wounds of our fellowmen. In every sick person, it is Jesus in Person who is suffering; in every poor person, it is Jesus Himself who is languishing; in every person who is both sick and poor, Jesus is doubly visible.” He also started a series of prayer groups which continue in existence today with over 400,000 members worldwide.

Even before his death, people spoke to Padre Pio about his possible canonization. He died on September 23, 1968 at the age of eighty-one. About 100,000 people attended his funeral. On June 16, 2002, over 500,000 Padre Pio devotees gathered in Rome to witness Pope John Paul II [now Pope St. John Paul II] proclaim Padre Pio, Saint Pio of Pietrelcina. At that time, the Holy Father also announced Padre Pio's inclusion in the General Roman Calendar as an obligatory memorial to be celebrated on September 23<sup>rd</sup> each year, the anniversary of his death.



***How did Padre Pio pray?*** Here is his prayer for trust and confidence:

“O Lord, we ask for a boundless confidence and trust in Your divine mercy, and the courage to accept the crosses and sufferings which bring immense goodness to our souls and that of Your Church.

Help us to love you with a pure and contrite heart, and to humble ourselves beneath Your cross as we climb the mountain of holiness, carrying our cross that leads to heavenly glory. May we receive You with great faith and love in Holy Communion, and allow You to act in us, as You desire, for Your greater glory.

O Jesus, most adorable heart and eternal fountain of Divine Love, may our prayer find favor before the Divine Majesty of Your Heavenly Father. Amen!”

*A Prayer Asking for the Intercession of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina*

Most blessed and beloved Saint Pio, you were chosen to glorify the crucified Jesus Christ through the visible wounds of His passion and cross that you bore for fifty years. And like our Lord Jesus, you demonstrate your great love by sharing the many gifts bestowed upon you, especially the gift of intercession. Because of your great friendship with the Lord, He responds to your requests and blesses those who honor you.

We now add our own prayer to the many prayers offered to you every day by those who seek your help to obtain healings and consolations, earthly and spiritual blessings, and peace for body, mind and soul. In your loving kindness, please bless our loved ones and us, and intercede for this special request... *(here bring to mind your petition)*



In your great love, Saint Pio, please continue to pray with us and for us. Help us to imitate your example of prayerful holiness and compassion, so that we too may faithfully follow the Lord Jesus and one day come to rejoice in the Kingdom, united with you and our Risen Lord forever. Amen.