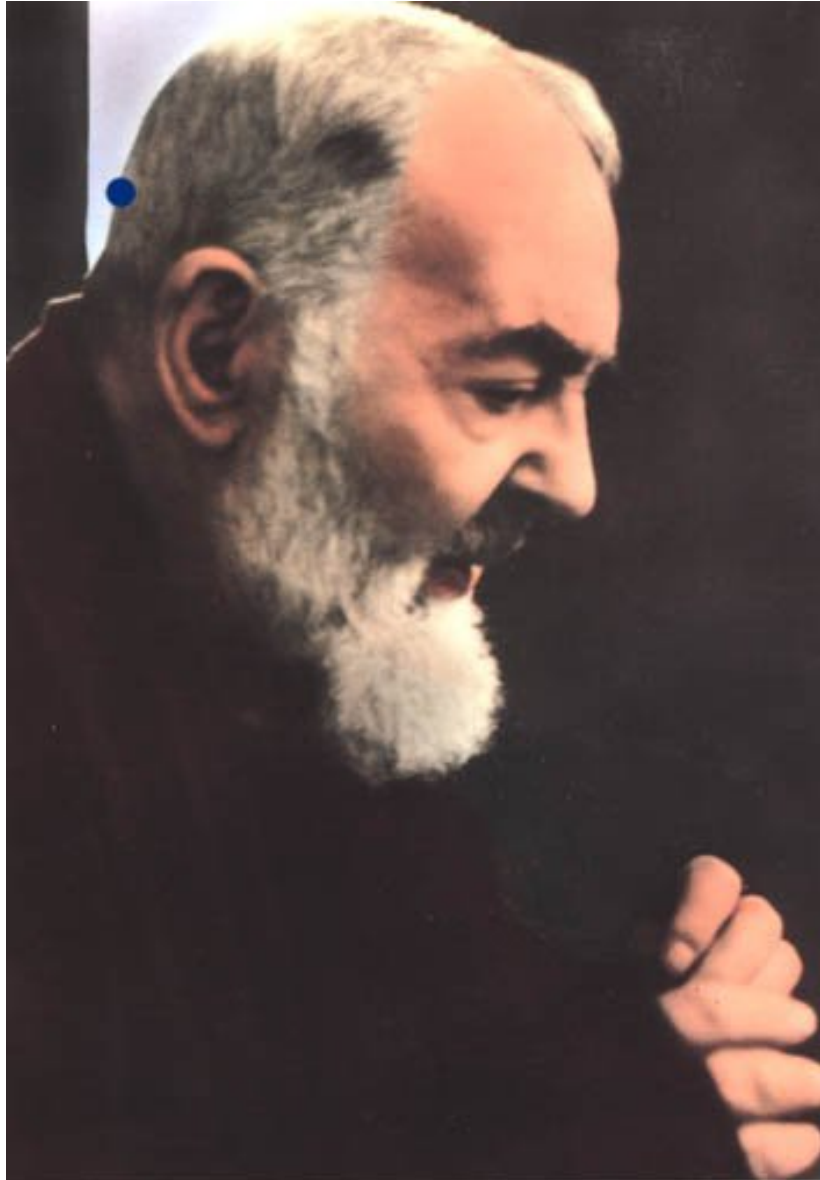


Rewritten extract of  
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*The great Franciscan mystic and saint,  
Padre Pio of Pietrelcina.*

## **Padre Pio – God's man**

*by Bente Wolf.*

In the summer of 2006 I travelled as a lightserver to the South of Italy with some Danish friends. The first stop was **San Giovanni Rotondo**, the small town in Puglia by the Adriatic Sea, where Padre Pio served for more than 50 years. Next stop was the most beautiful stretch of coast of Italy, the lush Amalfi Coast by the Mediterranean south of Naples. For a long time both places have clearly had the special attention of the Kingdom of God and the emanation of divine light, love and power was a specially perceptible and beautiful experience. By the Amalfi Coast it felt as if countless hosts of angels and devas perpetually settled in a divine co work of subtle, life-giving and soft vibrations of love and inner life making the countryside incredibly lush and varied with coniferous trees, deciduous trees, citrus- and orange trees, vines and a fantastic amount of flowers in white, red, pink and blue colours growing against all odds on the rocky mountain slopes down

towards the sea. Additionally the coast is blessed with many beautiful, small villages dating back to Roman times, and especially Amalfi, Ravello, Maiori, Minori and Positano are perfect for a healing vacation by the refreshing, life-giving water in that abundant and lush nature.

In the town of Amalfi the first disciple of Jesus, the fisherman and apostle Andrew, is buried. According to the tradition Andrew was crucified and buried in the town of Patras in Greece and later his bodily remains were transferred to Constantinople, today known as the town of Istanbul in Turkey. Under the 4<sup>th</sup> crusade in the year 1208 Andrew was transferred to the town of Amalfi, where he now rests in the cathedral dedicated to his honour. Since the death of Andrew every year on the anniversary of his passing over a miracle has occurred by his tomb. In Amalfi this miracle has also been repeated for about 800 years. It is described like this: *“A crystal ampoule is placed on the grave and in the evening of the anniversary of the saint or on other special occasions “Manna” is received. This means a thick liquid always occurring on the grave of the apostle in Petra and in Constantinople too, as a sign always bringing forth intense spiritual feelings within the observers present”*.



*The cathedral of Amalfi in which the apostle Andrew is buried*

In the radiant village of San Giovanni Rotondo situated in the desolate, mountainous and barren countryside of Puglia by the Adriatic Sea the compassionate love of God was present in a depth equivalent to the compassionate love of *“The Spirit of Assisi”*. Both in the village of San Giovanni Rotondo and in the town of Amalfi we were “engaged” in connecting meditatively the town of Assisi and the two others villages 500 kilometres further south in Italy into an inner, luminous triangle. Subsequently it was shown to us how a luminous triangle expanding from Assisi covers an area of about 500 kilometres towards the south and with an inner distance of about 350 Kilometres between the two southern focal points, and from now on some of the inner work descending from Assisi will also help the process of further intensifying this triangle and the divine work, which especially needs to be intensified in the village of San Giovanni Rotondo.

As I experience that the village of San Giovanni Rotondo is a very important holy place and a focus of descending divine energy, and as the life and example of Padre Pio is a source of great

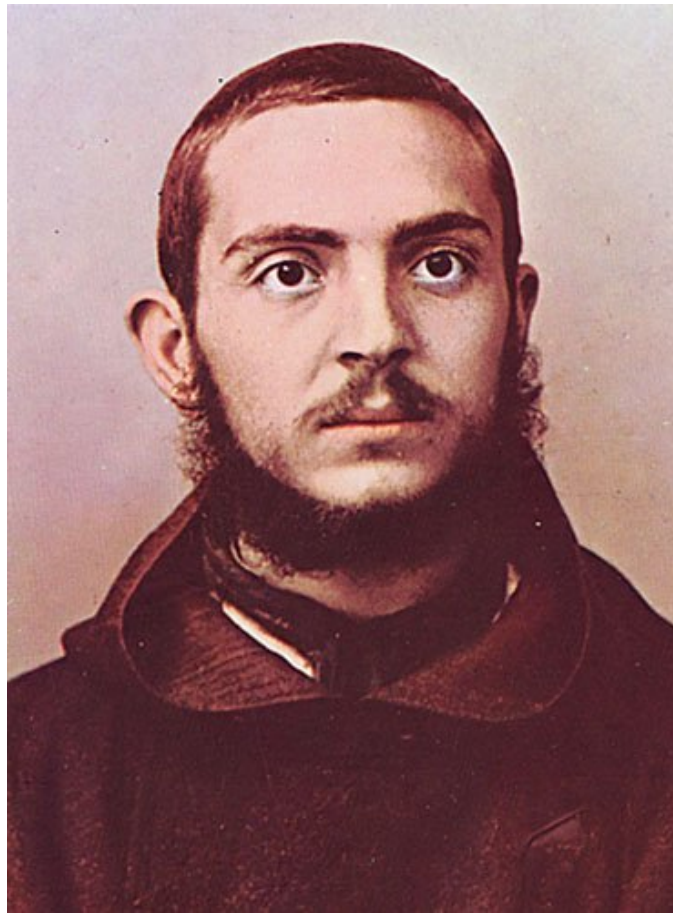
inspiration and teaching to all of us and not at least us, who - maybe more or less consciously – are connected into an invisible work as divine servers of the Second Coming of Christ in our hearts – the following chapters are an attempt to describe the most important aspects of the great Franciscan mystic and saint, **Padre Pio**, to describe his inner task and the inspiration and help we can receive from him.

### Padre Pio of Pietrelcina

Padre Pio is known by most spiritually searching people whether practising within the church, within newer Christian religious and spiritual movements or within other religions or traditions. It seems as if everybody can be inspired and helped by this great mystic and servant of God. A countless number of books are written about Padre Pio. He has left an extensive correspondence behind him and since he lived long enough to share the spreading of news through the media of our time, he is immortalized through programs in radio and television too, and through the documentary programmes and films made about him.

**Padre Pio, or Francesco Forgione**, as he was baptized like St. Francis before him, was born in the year of 1887 in a small village, Pietrelcina, in the South of Italy in a flock of 8 children in a poor, hard working family in the countryside. Already at the age of 5 he receives his first spiritual experiences through a contact with the Kingdom of God and it is succeeded by so many intense ecstasies and spiritual appearances throughout his childhood, that the boy believes this to be something that normally happens to all individuals. For the rest of his life Padre Pio had these spiritual experiences every day, and it was continuously difficult for him to believe this it was something special. One day shortly before his death he asked the Italian journalist and writer Renzo Allegri, who later on wrote one of many biographies about him: *“Don’t you see Virgin Mary present here with us?”* When Renzo Allegri answered that he didn’t, Padre Pio replied: *“You only say so out of humbleness”<sup>1</sup>*.

Already as a child Padre Pio had an experience of St. Francis calling him to live his life as a poor, praying monk, and at the age of 14 he entered The First Franciscan Order: Frati Minori Cappuccini, or the Capuchins as they are also called in English. This branch of the Franciscan Order has traditionally kept very radical and severe observance. He was given the religious name Pio and he passed through the difficult training period of a novice characterized by extreme poverty, renunciation, penance, long periods of fasting, silence and day-long meditations and hourly prayers. Even during the night the novices get up to pray and meditate for hours both summer and winter in their unheated monastery. He continues the severe training period in the Capuchin Order with studies to become a priest, and in the year of 1910 he is ordained. In 1916 he enters the small Franciscan monastery in the village of San Giovanni Rotondo, where he serves as a priest for the rest of his life only interrupted by a couple of short unsuccessful military service during the First World War and by a short visit to Rome with his sister, who enters the Order of St. Brigid. Padre Pio dies in the year of 1968 at the age of 81 having been physically present in the village of San Giovanni Rotondo for as long as 52 years.



*Padre Pio as a young Franciscan monk*

Pope John Paul II, who in 1947 and as yet a young and yet unknown Catholic priest named Karol Wojtola, paid a visit in San Giovanni Rotondo to Padre Pio, who is said to have prophesied that Wojtola would become a pope and be exposed to assassination attempt in 1990, opens the process of beatification of Padre Pio. In 1999 he is beatified and in 2002 - at one of the biggest ceremonies ever performed at St. Peter's Square in Rome with more than 300,000 participants - he is canonized. After the canonization in 2002 a relic of Padre Pio is conveyed through Italy. In full Franciscan churches thanksgiving masses are celebrated for his life as a great mystic and faithful servant of God. His relic was brought to Assisi too, and I participated in the very moving and powerful mass celebrated in his honour in the Basilica of St. Francis. Today in the valley behind the Sacro Convento we have a small memorial place with a statue of Padre Pio. The memorial place is very well visited, and there are always a large amount of candles, flowers and letters with prayers and requests for the help and intervention of Padre Pio.

Padre Pio is now buried in the village of San Giovanni Rotondo in the crypt of the church inaugurated in 1959, as the very beautiful old church inaugurated in 1676 to "*Our Lady of Grace*" had become too small to contain the many pilgrims crowding round Padre Pio. Today an even larger, magnificent and modern church "*The Church of Saint Pio*" capable of holding more than 7,000 visitors is built, and at the beautiful square in front of the church with its fountains and olive trees encircled by oak- and pine trees as well as by fragrant lavender more than 30,000 people can be present at the same time.



*The church inaugurated in 1959 in which Padre Pio is buried  
To the left hand side you see the old church from 1676 "Our Lady of Grace",  
in which Padre Pio served and which still contains his confessional*

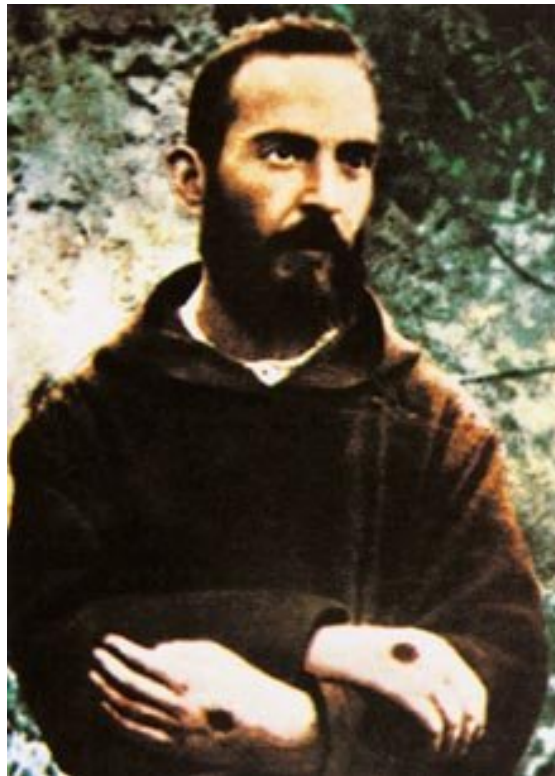
Pilgrims still arrive in San Giovanni Rotondo in a number today exceeding 7,000.000 a year. This makes San Giovanni Rotondo one of the most visited places of pilgrimage in Europe even surpassing Lourdes and Assisi. But still, primarily Italian Catholics visit San Giovanni Rotondo, whereas Assisi is the place visited by pilgrims from all over the World and from all religions and traditions.

### **The deep connection of Padre Pio with the suffering of Christ**

When you concentrate upon the study of the life of Padre Pio you get the impression of incomprehensible and unbearable physical, emotional and mental sufferings and spiritual trials. Already as a very young man the many inexplicable and painful sicknesses started which followed Padre Pio throughout his entire life and which were inexplicable to doctors. He often had such a high temperature that the thermometers of those days burst and according to medical reports only by means of special bathing thermometers temperature up to 48°C were measured. He shivered with fever, vomited constantly, felt pain all over his body including attacks of severe headaches. Often doctors estimated his health so fragile that he might die soon, but every time Padre Pio recovered miraculously and he reached the age of 81 years!

Already in 1910 at the age of 23 and as a newly ordained priest his pains caused by the stigmata received in 1918 started. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1918 after the Holy Mass in the beautiful old church in the village of San Giovanni Rotondo Padre Pio as usual sat down in the choir of the monks meditating and praying in front of a very life-like crucifix of the crucified Jesus. He experienced a peace beyond words filling him, a light radiating from the crucifix and a person with bleeding feet and hands appeared before him. Padre Pio lost consciousness. When he recovered, he had bleeding wounds on his hands, feet and in the side of his body – now he had also received the visible wounds of Christ which he was to carry until his death 50 years later as the first priest in history. He knew throughout his life that he had to carry these signs walking in the footsteps of Christ for exactly 50 years and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1968 – 50 years and 2 days after the

stigmatization – Padre Pio died. Just as unexpected and inexplicably the stigmata appeared, just as inexplicably they disappeared from the body at the time of his transition. On the very day before his death the stigmata was still bleeding, but the next morning the wounds disappeared from the dead body, and his skin had not even the smallest trace of a scar.



*Padre Pio as a young Franciscan priest shortly after he received the stigmata*

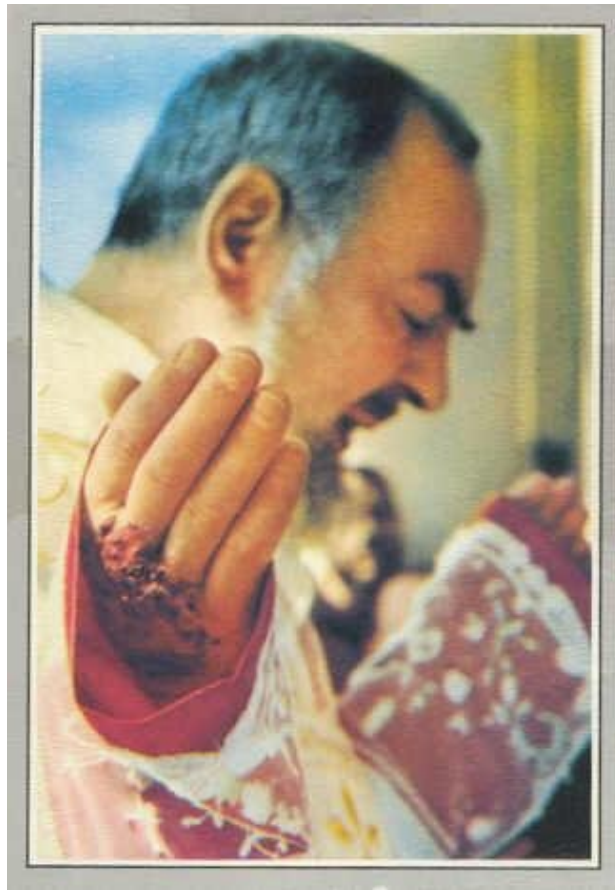
The eminent doctors examining Padre Pio after the stigmatization described the wounds as holes of a diameter of 1,5 to 2 centimetres piercing his feet and palms, so that light could penetrate them. The stigmatization of the side of his chest measured 7 centimetres without any damage to bones or inflammation of the constantly bleeding wounds. Every day for the rest of his life Padre Pio lost a cup of blood and especially from Thursday afternoon until Saturday the stigmata bled especially much. The blood from the stigmata was fragrant and often described as having an extremely beautiful smell of flowers or perfume, with Padre Pio “radiating” it wherever needed and leaving it behind him everywhere he stayed – including his bilocations. In addition to the rest of his physical sufferings and to the very painful stigmata, which Padre Pio tried to hide behind half-sized brown gloves almost always worn by him, he once in a while was unable to walk and had to be pushed in a wheelchair. He was constantly in pain and sometimes also signs like those of the crown of thorns and of the flogging of Jesus occurred on his body.

Naturally it created a big sensation, hope, faith and joy among the thousands of people who from 1919 began to flock to the home in the South of Italy of the humble, praying, stigmatized priest, who even performed miracles. The Order of the Capuchins as well as The Catholic Church led by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith started numerous investigations mostly stating that the stigmata could neither be explained from a scientific point of view nor be explained as self suggestion or hysteria, and due to this they were of a character inexplicable to medical science - and as such of a supernatural character. Still a small number of clerical leaders remained sceptical and critical and led by the local bishop of that time as well as by a highly estimated Franciscan priest and doctor an 11 year long and very difficult period of criticism, slander, humiliations and accusations towards Padre Pio began resulting in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ordering various admonitions to the faithful and in 1931 a total prohibition was issued. Padre Pio

was banned from practising any kind of clerical services. For more than 7 years Padre Pio was kept isolated and completely deprived of the right to practise as a priest, except to celebrate holy mass all alone in a remote chapel of the monastery. He was furthermore prevented from having correspondence with anyone at all, not even with his family and with his spiritual instructor and confessor. He was kept totally isolated in his cell at the monastery. Padre Pio, who loved his fellow human beings, later told a close friend how difficult and sorrowful this period was to him, but he admitted that Jesus always took care that he was kept busy. Before the period of isolation he was very busy meeting the crowds and listening to their confessions; in the isolation period he was very busy praying all the time.

The harsh restrictions of the Vatican were given up in 1938 – probably mostly because of the enormous resistance against them from the ordinary people and their support of Padre Pio – and he was once again allowed to serve as a priest, but it didn't mean that the time of trials in relation to clerical authorities was over. What some people refer to as the second persecution started in 1960 as a very “delicate” affair including secret recording for 4 months in the very confessional of Padre Pio, an act normally leading to excommunication of the persons performing it. Simultaneously a very critical but never fully published report made by an official representative of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith inspired the Congregation to send a letter concerning “the frequent violations against religious laws” made by Padre Pio imposing new restrictions on his clerical services. The restrictions were maintained until 1964, when they were given up due to much criticism in the press of the leadership of the Church and of the Order. During his lifetime Padre Pio was never fully rehabilitated from the persecutions and accusations he had been charged with. Not until 1978 did the newly elected Pope John Paul II order an investigation concerning all the serious charges like faked stigmata, improper relations with women and economical malpractices aimed at Padre Pio and finally in 1997 – 29 years after his death – he was officially cleared when Pope John Paul II signed a decree stating that Padre Pio had lived a life characterized by “heroic virtue”, i.e. that the church officially stated that all available documentation showed that he had lived the life of a saint.

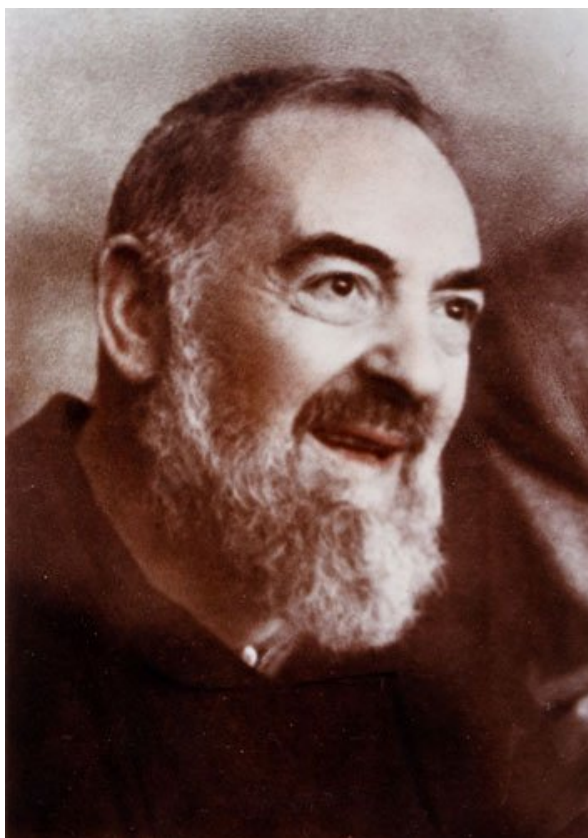
Neither in public nor officially Padre Pio did ever reply to the monstrous accusations, enormous humiliations and the persecutions he suffered from. One of his fellow brothers reports that if he or any of the other brothers happened to start criticizing the way in which the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith treated Padre Pio, he instantly interrupted the conversation, rose and walked away retiring to his cell. Like Jesus from the capture in the garden of Gethsemane until the crucifixion he humbly stepped back accepting all the restrictions put upon him, probably because he was fully conscious of the higher purpose. No-one ever heard an expression of bitterness or anger towards his persecutors – like in the words of Jesus on the cross according to Luke **“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do”** (Luke 23, 34). Padre Pio remained in a state of deep harmony with that wisdom and compassionate love. The only commentary concerning his stigmata was the following well-known words: *“It is a mystery to me too, but my talents are to be used to help other people”*. Often he said: *“My only wish is to live the life of a poor monk praying”*. Wherever he was staying and whatever he was doing, Padre Pio was always wrapped in prayers. Also during the night in his cell after a few hours of sleep he went back to his chair – praying and meditating.



*Padre Pio celebrating a mass. The stigmata is easily seen.*

Like other great mystics – in spite of all sufferings – Padre Pio was often happy and smiling and he had a great sense of humor, it is said. He is described as a soft-hearted man with an incredible aura and ability for love, compassion and affection, but on the other hand he might appear blunt and brusque dismissing people who demonstrated pride, hardness, hypocrisy and dishonesty. Many people experienced this brusque conduct – also during confessions – to be exactly what was needed to soften the defence of the individual and to allow a deeper healing and transformation process to begin. In this way he demonstrated his insight into the psychology and mentality of any person consulting him, and so he knew intuitively how to behave towards any individual for their own good. One of the brothers once complained about this and Padre Pio answered: *“Looking at people’s sufferings makes me cry and I couldn’t continue my mission if I allowed myself to be overwhelmed by grief.”* Padre Pio often cried in public, deeply moved by any suffering he listened to in his confessional and during masses too. His tears were considered to contribute to the miraculous healings and redemptions taking place around him. Also when a close friend, a loyal supporter or a member of his family died, Padre Pio burst into deep sorrow. When Renzo Allegri met Padre Pio at the end of his life he describes his impressions like this: *“It was hard for me to watch him walking in the sacristy or in the corridors of the monastery, bent over, dragging his swollen feet, and holding on to the walls so that he would not fall down. His suffering was tremendous, but he bore it without complaining as he continued to give himself to those who needed him. When he would lift his head and look around, his big eyes looked as if they were burning, not from pain but from a goodness that he could not contain<sup>2</sup>”.*





### **The mission of Padre Pio and his spiritual gifts to humanity.**

Padre Pio practised his spiritual gifts during the whole of his incarnation. Besides the *stigmata*, Padre Pio was well-known for his *bilocations* (the ability to be present at more than one location at a time), for his *levitations*, for his *premonitions* and *ability to predict the future by looking into and reading the path of the soul and the struggles of the personality* keeping the person from a deeper surrender as well as for countless *miraculous healings* of individuals concerning both bodies and souls. The fellow brothers of the convent in San Giovanni Rotondo have registered more than 1,000 miraculous healings.

The talents or deep insights into the spiritual world behind time and space were primarily used by Padre Pio in his practice as a **confessor and a spiritual director**. People flocked to the place of the stigmatized, charismatic priest, and sometimes they queued up for weeks to have the possibility of confessing to him. It is estimated that more than 600.000 people managed to confess to Padre Pio in his 52 years of practice in the village of San Giovanni Rotondo, and to this number an extensive correspondence with thousands of people from all over the world is to be added. He was busy for hours in the confessional receiving the individuals one by one. Often he started the confession himself telling the person who wanted to confess about his/hers struggles and sins and when the crying faithful received absolution (forgiveness of sins), he/she often left Padre Pio redeemed, transformed and deeply healed. Padre Pio said that “*his mission was to lead people to Christ through the Sacraments*” and that happened also during the masses which he – except during the isolation period – celebrated every day for the crowds flocking to him. Normally a Catholic mass lasts from half an hour up to one hour, but when Padre Pio was the main celebrant the masses often lasted much longer because he surrendered to such a deep inner work – especially during the Eucharistic, the transformation of the bread and of wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and during intercessory prayers – that everybody forgot all about time and place allowing themselves to be absorbed into the magic happening during the mass.



*The Convent and the Church of “Our Lady of Grace” in San Giovanni Rotondo, where Padre Pio worked as a confessor and spiritual director for 52 years*

### **Bilocations**

Padre Pio is said sometimes to have been a little absent when performing his duties in San Giovanni Rotondo. Then he made one of his many “trips” out into the world – or bilocations, i.e. being present at two places at one time – in the service of people in need of his help. There are many testimonies about Padre Pio stating that while he was physically in San Giovanni Rotondo, he appeared to another person in a completely different place of the world. He always carried a beautiful fragrance when bilocating. On most occasions the people involved didn’t recognize the monk appearing to them, but later on when they had become aware of San Giovanni Rotondo and paid a visit to Padre Pio, they recognized him as the very monk, who had helped them in the most critical and crucial moment of their lives. Padre Pio often started the conversation with such a person with a remark showing his awareness of their former meeting. About his ability of bilocating Padre Pio wrote the following lines in a letter to his confessor: *“I don’t know if the body is carrying the soul or the soul is carrying the body, but I am conscious of a process moving myself to another place and of being present in two places at one time”*<sup>3</sup>.

He also used his ability to bilocate for more collective reasons. During The Second World War German troops had military installations close to the village of San Giovanni Rotondo, but when the pilots of the Allied Forces - including British, Americans, Poles, Palestinians and Italians and thus including Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Jews and Muslims - passed San Giovanni Rotondo to bomb the German positions and arms reserves a monk appeared in the sky. The frightened pilots returned as they simply couldn’t manoeuvre because of this mysterious monk in the sky. They all asked who this monk might be and it wasn’t revealed until the end of the War. The leader of the Italian air force Division, General Bernardo Rosini, who had personally been leading one of the fruitless bombing raids, visited the monastery, and the general recognized at once the mysterious monk as being Padre Pio. Before he had the opportunity of saying anything, Padre Pio put his hand

on the general's shoulders and said smiling: *"So you are the one wanting to bomb all of us"*. The general fell on his knees and became one of the most loyal supporters of Padre Pio.

### **The struggle against the forces of Darkness**

In addition to all the physical and mental sufferings of Padre Pio as described above already from his youth and during the rest of his entire life he daily fought an inner battle against Evil or the forces of Darkness. It is said that the attacks by the negative forces especially during the night could be of such physical extent that the family and later on the fellow brothers sometime heard loud noises like that of physical fighting coming from Padre Pio's cell, and in the morning after such a night of fighting and with no sleep he often showed physical signs on his body. To my understanding this is a very essential part of Padre Pio's mission, which he was already introduced to at an early age in the form of a spiritual experience. He describes it himself like this:

Padre Pio (or Francesco as he was still called at that time) sees a man of majestic beauty taking him by his hand and saying: *"Come with me, for you must fight like a valiant warrior"*. In a large field he sees a large number of men, divided into two groups. One of the groups consists of very beautiful men – all dressed in snow-white clothes. The other group looks terrible – all dressed in black clothes and looking like dark shadows. Francesco tries to avoid this struggle against darkness but is urged by the majestic leader saying: *"Every resistance is in vain. You must fight the dark monsters. Take heart and enter confidently into the battle. I will be at your side. I will help you and I won't let them kill you."* Francesco is shown how aggressive the battle is going to be. He is shown how his resistance against the struggle will be overcome, and how that majestic and bright man will stay by his side during all the harsh struggles. This man, whom Francesco describes as more bright and shining than the sun, puts a crown of the most rare and indescribable beauty on the head of Francesco. But the bright man took the crown off saying: *"I have an even more beautiful crown set aside for you. Know that you are able to fight the good fight with the being, you have just fought. He will come back to attack you... Fight valiantly and don't doubt my help... Don't be afraid of him, don't be frightened by his formidable might.... I'll be with you. I will always help you, so that you will always succeed in conquering him"*. Shortly after that Francesco received a new vision of Christ and Maria, who encouraged him and assured him of their protection<sup>4</sup>.

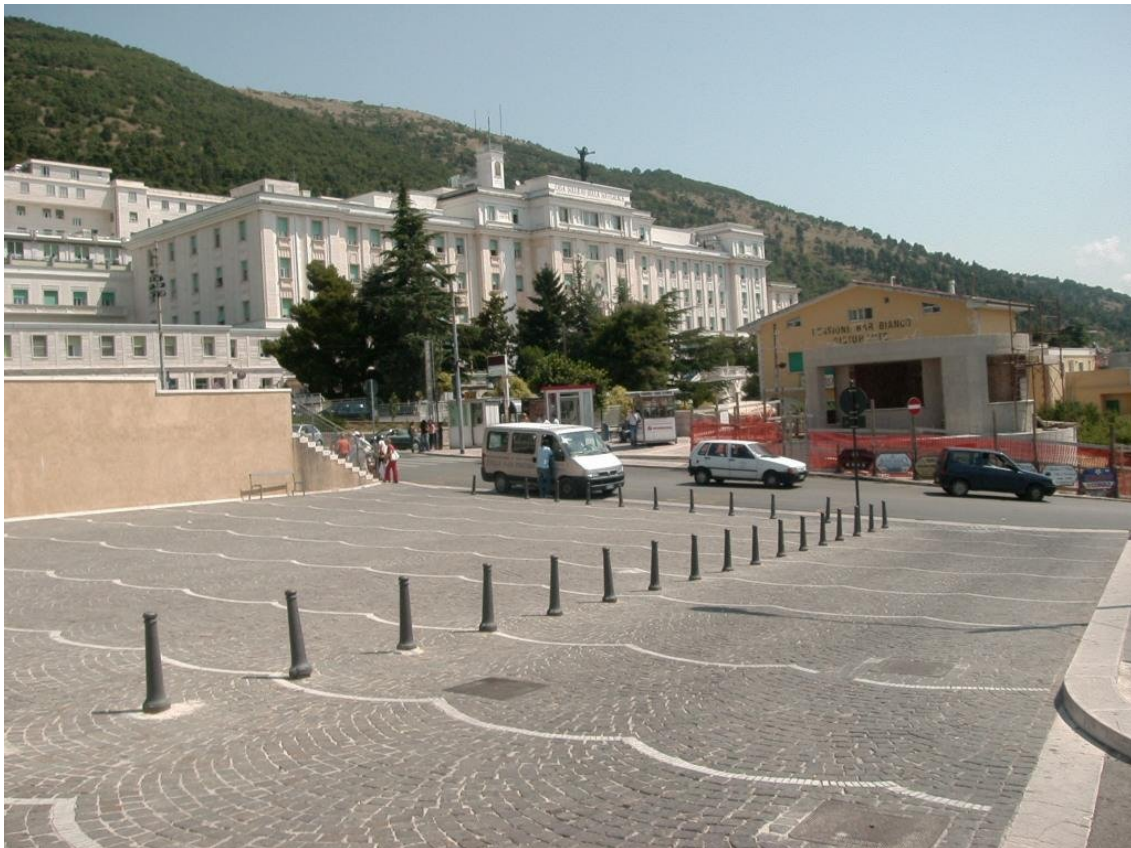
We can read about Padre Pio's life long struggles against darkness in his many letters, especially in the letters to his spiritual director Padre Agostino, who wrote a diary about his correspondence with Padre Pio. Padre Pio was convinced that all his sufferings and struggles were a help to people in need of the gift of Faith and a deep spiritual transformation process. He didn't suffer only for the sake of suffering but he was convinced that his participation in the sufferings of Christ would benefit other incarnated human beings and souls needing help and intercession. He paid the price for every single human soul and if it failed, he knew he hadn't offered enough. He was just as convinced that through the very cross he was so connected to Christ that all the miracles for which he was so well-known took place, and which are still going on after his death. As he said to many of his spiritual children while he was still alive: *"I am going to be able to do more for you when I am in Heaven than here"*. After his death many people continue to tell of unexpected recovering and healing after having seen Padre Pio in a vision or in a dream. Many of these testimonies are well-documented and two of them became the documentation of two miraculous healings among many others taking place after the death of Padre Pio, which among others are the criteria for a sanctification within The Catholic Church.

### **The hospital – the apple of Padre Pio's eye**

Due to his insight into the spiritual worlds beyond time and space Padre Pio was fully aware that he could not heal everyone applying to him for help. Already as a young man he wished to open a hospital especially to ease the sufferings of poor people, and it is said that in a vision Jesus himself inspired him to do so. In Padre Pio's time Puglia and San Giovanni Rotondo were a very underdeveloped and poor area in the South of Italy, but already in 1920 he succeeded in opening a

small hospital managed on a voluntary basis. Together with the rush of pilgrims a flow of donations were given to Padre Pio, and he started the prolonged and difficult work of realizing his plans to create a large hospital in this remote village with no water and electricity and without any railway connection. Everything had to be transported on roads which had first to be made: Electricity, water, drains, all kind of material, trees, flowers etc. As it was soon seen, the praying monk also had administrative skills, a practical sense, an ability to choose the right supporters for the project and little by little to provide the necessary financial resources. In 1940 he founded a fund and gave the future hospital the name of "**Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza**" (the house for the relief of sufferings). During The Second World War the plans to create the hospital had to come to a halt, but the project was restarted after the end of the war. It took 10 years to finish the construction of it because it was stopped temporarily when there was not enough money. Everything was realized by means of voluntary donations. Padre Pio refused any offer of a loan from a bank always replying: "*This is God's project. When God has no money available, the work stops*". The problem of being a monk subject to a vow of poverty was solved by the Vatican giving Padre Pio a dispensation from this vow as far as his involvement in the hospital was concerned.

In 1956 the most beautiful, most modern and most advanced hospital in Italy and the whole of Europe was opened with a ceremony lead by Padre Pio himself with 15,000 participants among them high representatives of the church and of the government. Only very few people believed in a future for a hospital in that desolate, poor and depopulated place, but in the inauguration speech Padre Pio said: "*Today "Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza" is a small seed but it will grow up to become a big oak tree as a hospital forming a small city and a centre for scientific studies of international importance*". Since 1956 the hospital has been extended several times. Today it has more than 1,200 beds and with its 2,500 employees it is unique of its kind in all of Italy. Even though hidden in a small provincial city on a desolate mountain the hospital is so beautiful, famous and advanced and has such a good reputation that it attracts the most esteemed doctors and scientists and it is said that all the employees from top to bottom of the organization radiate the love, Padre Pio wanted to characterize this place. He himself estimated his involvement in the hospital as one of his most important missions. He called it: "*The apple of my eye*" and definitely his visions were very ambitious and original at the time of its opening. He wished the hospital to lead in all new technology and knowledge containing an international centre of studies, a hospice for old people as well as a centre for spiritual practice with daily scheduled periods for prayers and science. Naturally there are also beautiful churches within the hospital. When I read the webpage of the "**Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza**", the heritage of Padre Pio is clear. Understandings about Padre Pio's continued love and prayers for the apple of his eye are repeated again and again, and it seems that a pioneer work and a beautiful bridge building are going on between spiritual and scientific understandings.



*“Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza” seen from the square in front of the big, new church*

Padre Pio, who was legally through the donations given to him as the founder of the fund, the owner of the hospital, left in 1964 everything he owned in his will to The Holy See. Today the Catholic Church is also the legal owner of this house which relieves sufferings.

In 1947 Padre Pio took the initiative in forming some prayer groups both in Italy and abroad having amongst other tasks prayers for the hospital. Today several hundred thousands people are participating in these groups inspired by his teaching and by his example.

### Padre Pio inspiring light workers’ inner work

Now and then I have been asked the question: *“Why didn’t Padre Pio heal himself, since he was capable of performing all the miracles he did?”* I don’t claim my answer to be a fulfilling one, but it is my main understanding that it would have been totally out of harmony with Padre Pio’s mission in life, and thus of no interest of all to him and to Christ as his great model and helper on the inner levels. As Padre Pio described it himself, he knew that his sufferings and struggles with darkness were a great help for people and souls, who had and also today have the need of transformation and redemption, and his participation in the suffering of Christ was the deepest help for further collective transformation that he might possibly offer. To my understanding he was like an open door connecting Heaven and Earth and through his great offer, through his physical body and deep personal sufferings he was connected so deeply into the collective suffering, collective distortions and collective darkness that through his heart and body, which were offered to Christ as transparent instruments, the stream of deeply redeeming love of Christ could flow. Just as through Jesus on the cross such a deep frequency of the compassionate love of Christ could flow through Padre Pio (and through St. Francis) that it was literally the same stream bleeding into the collective layers of the Earth through Padre Pio’s stigmata (and those of St. Francis). This deep compassionate stream of love is softening rigidity, distortion and darkness and opens up these heavy layers to the more burning, ecstatic and expansive vibrations of resurrection finally transforming and raising the more heavily vibrating matter.

When about two weeks ago I was sitting close to Padre Pio's old confessional in the beautiful old church of San Giovanni Rotondo I experienced a divine presence with a very beautiful smell and realized it to be the awareness of Padre Pio from the inner planes and I realized the possibility of having a dialogue with it. Furthermore I had the experience that some of Padre Pio's awareness and aura is still encircling all of San Giovanni Rotondo as well as an area around the city, and that the compassionate love of Christ was present as if in a large chalice or grail through which these beautiful vibrations of love continuously flow to everybody staying at this holy place, offering experiences of peace, quietness and fulfilment of the longings of their hearts. I felt it as if Padre Pio through his presence, example and teaching spoke the following words: *"Surrender to God, surrender to your mission. I tried to show you the path, which you are also called to walk. Endure your own personal pain and know that it forms part of the sufferings of Christ redeeming and transforming humanity and leading every soul into Paradise"*.

Later in an inner experience I was shown that some of the pain which we as light workers are experiencing in our heart centres is the remains of the collective pain, which have not been fully transformed by the divine attention present at a deeply sacred place like Assisi. It was shown like small pieces of coal being sucked into the hearts for final transformation. That is the reason why we as inner helpers are always feeling a pain in our heart centres and maybe a constantly burning in the heart and in the body too. In this way some of us are able to make the biggest difference as one of the invisible instruments of Christ. Furthermore it was shown to be the case concerning Padre Pio. Undoubtedly he was a great co-helper of Christ in His mission to redeem the World through all the pain he felt - physically caused by illnesses and all over his body by his stigmata as well as through the many struggles with Evil during the night. Throughout the last years I have become deeply absorbed in the studies of several of the great Franciscan mystics, not least St. Francis and St. Clare of course, but also more of those mystics living their lives at the same period as St. Francis and later on. As far as all these saints are concerned I have observed very difficult and painful incarnations, and they all suffered from painful physical illnesses. This observation only seems to confirm the theory of the ability and mission of certain people to become great healers and redeemers of larger areas through deep connection into the collective suffering by their own personal suffering. Furthermore Padre Pio is considered to be the greatest Christian mystic of our time. Since his life and mission was unfolded in the last century, he is to be regarded as one of the very great Christian mystics speaking from and to our time of history about the spirit of self-sacrifice, love, personal humility and transparency, perseverance, endurance, courage and strength.

When on our individual paths towards a still deeper surrender to our mission of service to God we experience our personal physical, emotional and mental pains being too great to bear, we may turn ourselves towards Padre Pio to look for help. Partly we have the choice of becoming absorbed in the story of his life and mission as a source of deeper understanding of the path of imitation of Christ – also in our time of history – partly we can pray to him to support us in our mission being "mini-Padre Pios", an attention and support I am sure we will receive. Naturally we can also ask for Padre Pio's help for the purpose of healing and transforming all individual heaviness and darkness ready and willing to become transformed. That means in areas where the necessary consciousness-raising has been achieved but also in those areas where a miracle may be performed as an expression of the mercy of God. In my opinion this kind of help is offered too, especially as the more unselfish our motive is, the more divine regularities generally make even greater or deeper help possible

## San Giovanni Rotondo

Many inhabitants of San Giovanni Rotondo probably consider Padre Pio's greatest miracle to be the transformation which has been going on in that small and very poor village which only had 2,000 inhabitants, when he arrived in 1916. It is situated in the dry, bare landscape on a mountain in Puglia and the poor inhabitants of those days lived almost entirely from growing olives which together with cactuses seem to be the only plants capable of growing in the dry, barren soil. Today it is undoubtedly the brightest town of Puglia with about 26,000 inhabitants making a living by

means of means of flourishing trade, and the stream of pilgrims especially generates an income for the many hotels, restaurants and souvenir shops crowned by the infinitely beautiful hospital, monastery and big church complex lying like a shining diamond above the city. Next to the hospital and over the big church complex a monumental Way of the Cross up the mountains is constructed with a statue of Padre Pio at the bottom of it, marble steps to a statue of Holy Mary with baby Jesus and leading further up the mountain to symbols of the different steps of the path of Calvary. The path of Calvary ends at the top of the mountain with a powerful statue of the risen Christ. Padre Pio, who dearly wanted this monument, laid the foundation stone himself and afterwards he said: *“My work is finished. I can leave now”*. On the next day he quietly died with the words *“Jesus, Mary”* on his lips repeating them again and again.



*Chiesa di San Pio.*

*The new big Church capable of holding 7,500 persons in the church itself and 30,000 on the square in front of it.*

I was happy to see that to see that aesthetics and beauty were essential to the building activities of the many new, very beautiful residential properties too, built and still spreading on the mountain and innumerable trees, bushes and flowers have been planted to vitalize the otherwise barren mountain landscape.

As mentioned before each year about 7.5 million pilgrims come to San Giovanni Rotondo and also because of that a continuous and intensive divine co-operation is important to help all the pilgrims to open up their hearts and to surrender, offering them healing and redemption. That the *“the Spirit of San Giovanni Rotondo and Padre Pio”* according to God’s plan now seems to spread even further and with the help of *“the Spirit of Assisi”* to heal and uplift an even bigger area of the more underdeveloped part of the South of Italy and later on an even greater area, is naturally yet another reason for God to give priority to providing the resources to strengthen the beautiful, powerful and deep streams and vibrations of God for which Padre Pio was such a profound instrument during his incarnation and which he so to speak also bled into the heavy matter.

If you want to become absorbed in a further study of Padre Pio, many books, film, videos, DVD’s and web pages are available for inspiration. Literature and sources especially crucial to my understandings and to the description given in this article are mentioned below:

**Literature:**

Inge Stoltenberg: *Pater Pio – en af vor tids største mystikere*. Sankt Ansgars Forlag. 1997.

Niels Christian Hvidt: *Mirakler – Møder mellem Himmel og Jord*. Gyldendal. 2002.

*Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, Italy*. Taken from his writings and Lectures. Counsels Exhortations (not for sale any more).

Renzo Allegri: *Padre Pio – A Man of Hope*. Servant Books, USA. 2000.

*Padre Pio Guide Book*. Our Lady of Grace Capuchin Friary. 2005.

*The Holy Rosary according to the Spirituality of St. Pio of Pietrelcina*. The Capuchin Friars Minor Sanctuary of Our Lady of Grace. 2003.

*Secrets of a Soul. Padre Pio's Letters to His Spiritual Directors*. Pauline Books and Media. 2002.

**Webpages:**

[www.padrepio.it](http://www.padrepio.it) – Capuchin Priests Official Portal in the Religious Province of "Saint' Angelo e Padre Pio".

[www.conventopadrepio.com](http://www.conventopadrepio.com) – The Official Site of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina.

[www.vocedipadrepio.com](http://www.vocedipadrepio.com) – Official Site of the Periodical Review of the Minor Capuchin Friars of San Giovanni Rotondo.

[www.operapadrepio.it/it/](http://www.operapadrepio.it/it/) - The hospital of Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza, m.v.

**DVD:**

*Padre Pio Sanctus. Voce di Padre Pio*. A documentary program about Padre Pio with interviews of persons knowing him and with snapshots from the last years of his life.

**Video:**

Padre Pio – Man of God. Capuchin Friars of Foggia. NOVA-T.

Bente Wolf

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<sup>1</sup> Renzo Allegri: Padre Pio – A Man of Hope

<sup>2</sup> Renzo Allegri: Padre Pio – A Man of Hope

<sup>3</sup> Niels Christian Hvidt: *Mirakler – Møder mellem himmel og jord* (Miracles – Meetings between Heaven and Earth)

<sup>4</sup> Renzo Allegri: Padre Pio – A Man of Hope

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