

The Padre Pio Prayer Chain
and
Padre Pio (St. Pius) of Pietrelcina
A Saint of our Time

Padre Pios' Early Life

Padre Pio was born Francesco Forgione on May 25, 1887. His parents, Orazio and Giuseppa Forgione, were poor country people. They brought eight children into the world, three of whom died in infancy and two of whom became religious, Francesco and his sister Grazia (who later became a Brigidtine Nun). The Forgiones lived in the little farming village of Pietrelcina, in the Province of Benevento, Campania, a few miles from Naples. They were god-fearing people who attended Holy Mass and prayed the Rosary daily.



Francesco Forgione at 14 yrs old

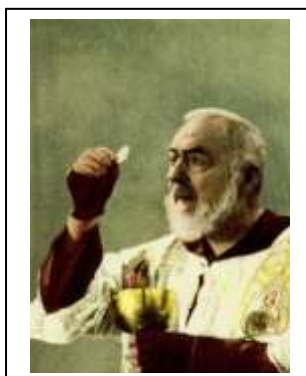


Padre Pio as a Capuchin novice

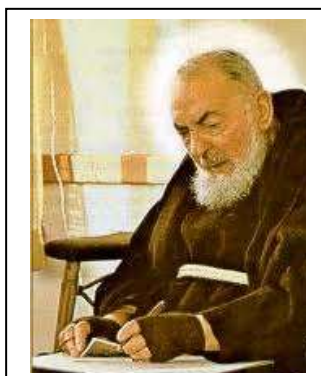
Francesco suffered poor health during his youthful years, but proved to be deeply religious. At the age of 5 he decided to dedicate his life to God and showed a love of nature and for the things of God. Up to the age of 10 he worked on the land looking after a small flock of sheep owned by the family. At school, he learned diligently and possessed a lively intelligence but his parents were told that he needed to be better educated to become a Priest so his father went to the USA to find work to fund his private tuition.

Finally, in 1903, he began his novitiate with the Friars Minor Capuchin in Morcone, a community 13 miles from Pietrelcina. He received the Franciscan habit, and was given the religious name of Fra Pio (Brother Pius, in English). Despite struggling with persistent health problems he made his Solemn Profession in January 1907 and three years later was ordained on August 10, 1910 at the age of 23. Because of his continued delicate health, he was permitted to practice his ministry for several years in his parochial church at Pietrelcina. Two years later, during 1912, he intermittently and silently received the invisible stigmata. Christ's sacred wounds were invisibly imprinted on his hands, feet and side such that the wounds could not be seen, but he was conscious of them and experienced pain and swelling. In 1916, his health was precarious so his superiors sent him to the Friary in San Giovanni Rotondo, where he lived for the rest of his life.

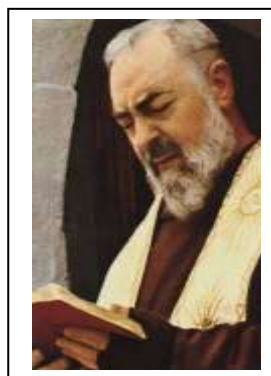
In spite of his disabilities, after the start of World War 1 Padre Pio was drafted into war service in the Italian Army in November 1915 and assigned to the 10th Medical Corps in Naples, but poor health frequently interrupted his service and he was finally declared unfit and discharged in 1918. In all he only served 182 days.



Padre Pio Celebrating Mass



Padre Pio at Work



The Stigmata

His Life with the Stigmata

In September 1918, whilst hearing confessions after Holy Mass, he cried out in pain. The Friars attended him and found he had experienced visible signs of the stigmata; the bleeding and pain of the five crucifixion wounds of Christ. The blood smelled of perfume or flowers, a phenomenon mentioned in the life stories of several saints and often referred to as "*the odour of sanctity*". As a stigmata was regarded as evidence of holiness, Padre Pio was embarrassed about it, so he preferred to suffer in secret and usually kept his hands covered in fingerless mittens, but news of the stigmata soon spread in the secular world. His wounds never became infected; they were examined by many renowned Physicians, who could not explain them, and X Rays found no abnormality in his bone structure. His pain and suffering with the stigmata continued for 50 years.

In addition to the stigmata, he possessed many astonishing gifts; of fragrance, of healing, of conversion, of bi-location, of levitation, of prophecy, of miracles, and of the ability to read hearts. Like many a Saint, he was fiercely attacked by the devil on numerous occasions. During his long life, Padre Pio accomplished many deeds that were far beyond the scope of ordinary mortals. His greatest achievement and memorial is the Padre Pio Hospital for the Relief of Suffering in San Giovanni Rotondo, opened in 1956. It has over a thousand beds with the most efficient up-to-date equipment, staffed by a large congregation of Sisters.

His day consisted of Holy Mass at 5 AM, confessions all day long, and constant prayer, usually the Rosary. He found time, with his Secretaries, to respond to the hundreds of items of mail each day. Most of the letters were requests for prayers, cures or advice, many of which he answered personally. He never took breakfast or supper; Dinner at noon consisted of nibbling his food, but never more than 500 calories a day.

He died a holy death on September 23rd 1968 at 2:30 AM with the words "Jesus and Mary" on his lips and his rosary in his hands. The stigmata disappeared at the time of his death and his body appeared unwounded with no signs of scarring. His funeral rites were a triumph. It is estimated that over 100,000 viewed his body and participated in the funeral rites. Padre Pio was Beatified in May 1999 and Canonised as St Pius of Pietrelcina by Pope John Paul 11 in Rome on June 16, 2002 with over 500,000 people in attendance. His Feast day is celebrated on the 23rd September.

The Padre Pio Prayer Chain

Most people know about Prayer Groups, but what on earth is a Prayer Chain? Well, I don't know the origin but it probably came about because disabled or sick parishioners who were stuck at home contributed to Parish life by passing prayers to each other for those who needed support. The easiest way to do this was to pass the details of a prayer request (an Intention) to each other by phone – or email these days.

So a Prayer Chain consists of a group of Catholics who provide urgent prayers for those in need, irrespective of their faith. Membership best suits those who are housebound, especially the sick and disabled, who are at home most of the day. Workers can also contribute during their time off. The only requirements are to have easy access to a phone and be able to sit in a quiet corner for a few minutes of daily prayer.

The Clergy, or members of the public, phone the Prayer Chain Leader with an Intention request, who, after passing it on to the first Member of the Prayer Chain, prays for the Intention. Each Member then receives it in turn, passes it to each following Member to the end of the chain, praying for it then and daily thereafter.

The Prayer Chain in Jersey, dedicated to Padre Pio, was established in 2009 since when it has had the continued support of our Parish Priests - we have already been blessed with several cases of unexplained healing. If you have a few minutes to spare for prayer each day you could join us as a Member to help those in desperate need, or contact me if your loved ones need prayerful support. Padre Pio said that for a successful life we should "Pray, hope and don't worry". We are all here to help each other.

Your Prayers will make a difference.

Lorraine Baylee (Leader) 06 Oct 21