

He was a true son of St Francis and refused a heater in his cell even though he was so cold. Covered in large scarves and mantle, he would often and willingly be drawn by the warmth of the communal hearth. In the evening, he happily participated in the time of "communal life" and recounted short tales and yams with the impersonation of a great actor. He was pleased when a joke of his provoked smiles and hilarity from those who were listening.

He was kind, obliging and fatherly with the boys who were preparing for the religious life and who at college suffered from the separation from their family, the solitude and sometimes hunger, but at the same time was severe and never lowered himself to compromise with sin, even if venial.

He cried without reserve, to the point of fainting, when he saw his mother die!

He preserved his baptismal innocence, as his spiritual director would affirm, and yet he felt himself to be "the greatest sinner in the world" and did not know why the habit of St Francis did not run away from him.

He lived by the heart and noted that this way of life was a nasty thing, because "it means living at every moment a death that never kills, or experiencing a living death and a dying life" (Letters I).

Even if he loved suffering for the spiritual fruit it brought, he could also say, "I can take no more!" especially when he realized that he had been betrayed by everyone.

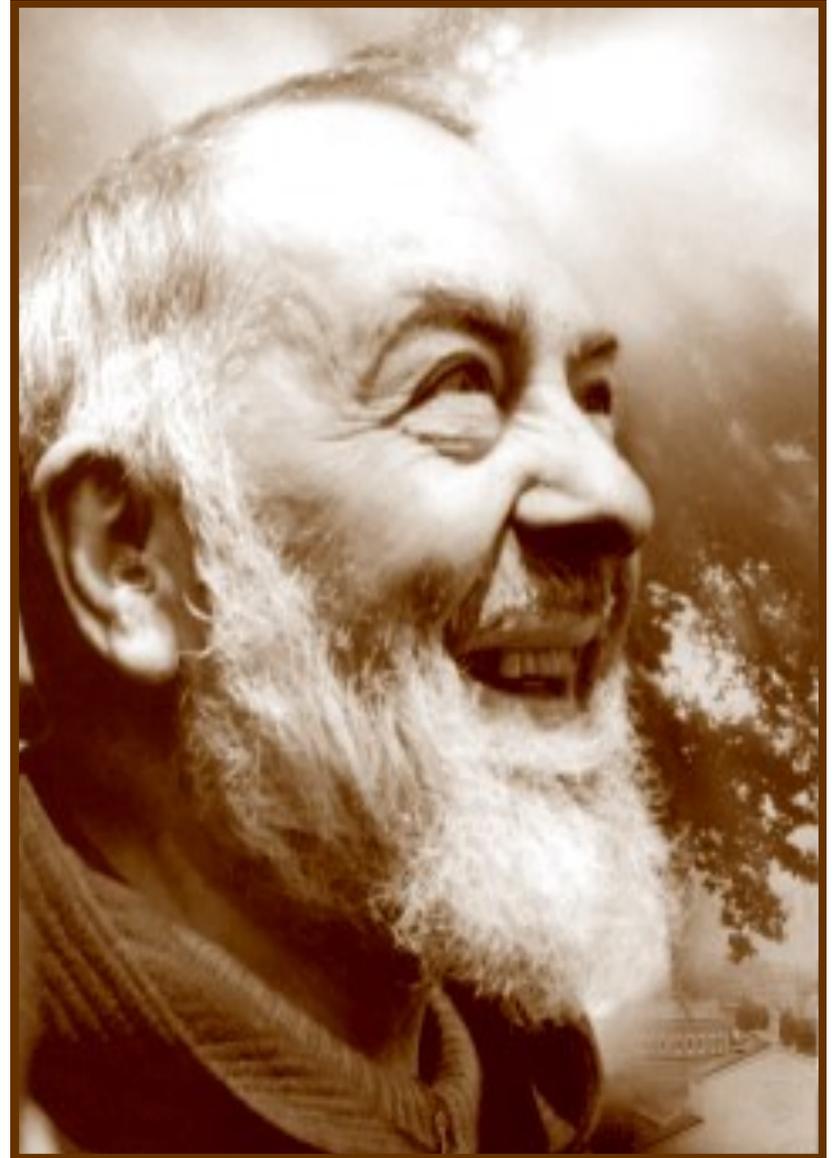
He saw and knew everything and despite everything he was able to embrace his Judas, he was still able to call him "my son!"

Padre Pio, with his mind and heart centered on heaven, regarded attentively and with concern the happenings of the world. He observed the world of politics and when necessary made his strong voice heard by those in the political world, appealing always and specifically to the message of the Gospel.

Here is the man Padre Pio! A man who when he realized that his spiritual children, full of a new found fervor with their eyes focused only on heaven, also knew how to remind them to keep their eyes on the ground. A man who had the gift of counsel for others, but who required counsel for himself so as to proceed briskly in the ways of the spirit; who suffered isolation and abandonment; who felt the need to demonstrate with tears his suffering in order to have a word of comfort, a little understanding. "Look, they have even done this!" he told a fellow friar as he showed him the wires, by his bedside, of a tape recorder that he had just severed with a knife. A man who was unfailing in the fulfillment of his priestly ministry, in the practice of virtue, in doing good even in difficult and trying circumstances. In this human dimension there is space and fertile ground for the spiritual dimension of Padre Pio.

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## The Human Personality of Padre Pio



# The Human Personality of Padre Pio

by Gennaro Prezioso

Padre Pio had an extraordinarily rich personality and many pages would be necessary to give justice to its diversity and exceptionality. Because of limits imposed I must restrict my consideration to only three aspects: the human, the spiritual and the social.

## The Human Aspect of Padre Pio

The human aspect of Padre Pio embraces many elements: his personality, his character, his natural disposition, his receptiveness, his intelligence, his will, his great capacity to love, work and suffer, his need for affection and sincerity.

Padre Pio's moral rectitude and goodness impressed all those who met him. He combined an open and spontaneous nature with a strong and resolute will. A solid determination that was reflected in the severe landscape of his childhood and youth: nature in its essence, its humblest and poorest. An agricultural land of bare rock, barren soil, harsh climate, tied to traditions, to hard work, sacrifice, prayer and holy fear of God. This all influenced Padre Pio so that he was naturally drawn to reflection. And his inquiring mind combined with his uncommon receptiveness determined in him a precocious maturity.

When as a boy he saw his mother blow out the lamp on the mantelpiece, after the evening prayer and the frugal meal, he would stare into the dark of his little room and see again the peasants bent double over their work in the fields, his father who had crossed the ocean in search of fortune, his friends, his teacher, the parish priest and Bro. Camillo.

His desire for solitude was not from misanthropy, but from an impelling need to nourish with prayer a strong religious calling that he felt growing always more within himself. All this made him brisk. He did not want to waste time!

Then there came God's call!

The interior torment "lived," before his final answer, his separation from his mother and those persons dear to him, his noviciate year, his time of formation and self-mortification to assimilate himself to Jesus, worked in him and definitively formed his character and personality. And here is the man Padre Pio!

The man who was predisposed and was always ready to obey, who underlined his right to life to the Father Provincial when the latter, despite his state of health, invited him to leave his hometown and re-enter definitively the friary.

The man whose reserve prevailed over everything so that he did not reveal to anyone the reason why our Lord wanted him to remain in Pietrelcina, because if he did so, "he would lack in charity."

The man disposed to sacrifice, but who did not renounce what was owed to him. In fact, called up to do his military service, he did not hesitate to ask the intervention even of persons of authority to obtain for him, in recognition of the illness he suffered, the exoneration owed him.

The man who in a law suit on his behalf, spoke in defense of the opposition and surprised the judges by asking for clemency and absolution for the opposition, only because it was a priest, a minister of God.

Padre Pio, was gifted with a remarkable intelligence, and able to discern immediately the thoughts and feelings of others and assumed a position that revealed in every circumstance his moral soundness and unexceptionable behavior.

He did not know how to adapt himself to what went on around him and he was afraid of the anonymous crowds. He was saddened by the display of idolatry and paganism at which he had to often assist. Only out of self defense did he use gestures and manners that appeared rough, that kept the prying, the fanatics and the novelty seekers at a distance.

Padre Pio was no ordinary friar who lived however in the most complete ordinariness. He bore in his body the stigmata of our Lord, but these wounds were for him a source of confusion and embarrassment.

He lived immersed in the supernatural and did not permit himself to be seen in ascetic postures or in mystical stances. "But these people, what do they want from me?" he asked a friend at his side, with such unaffected and child-like simplicity, while trying to keep the crowds from pressing against his painful wounds.

He understood the art of kindness and was capable of most sensitive considerations, he knew how to ask for forgiveness, if by accident tactlessly, in an excess of haste and ardour, he offended the feelings of a fellow friar.

He was touched by a gesture of courtesy or if he came to know that someone was praying for him. He cherished every kindness and enjoyed the pleasure of conversation and friendship.

He required a little company. When Pietruccio was forbidden to go up to his cell, he remarked "Even a poor blind man they take from me! Not one friend have they left me!"