

OUR LADY OF FATIMA VISITS PADRE PIO

***Towards the end of April 1959 a statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary that had come specially from Fatima was traveling all over Italy by helicopter, stopping at the provincial capitals. But San Giovanni Rotondo is not a provincial capital. The statue would visit Foggia, where a reception was planned for Our Lady. Padre Pio could not go to visit because just when the statue arrived in Italy, Padre Pio was struck down by a bad attack of pleurisy, that made it impossible for him to even celebrate Mass from 5 May onwards. And the illness continued so that he was still prostrate when our Lady arrived in Puglia.

But could the Mother with an Immaculate Heart so sensitive and delicate not visit her dearest son, Padre Pio? And the extraordinary exception, the change of schedule was granted!

The arrival of the Marian statue was fixed for 5 August. The people had to be prepared to receive our Lady with great fervor, with immense joy, with filial love and abundant spiritual fruits.

During the morning of 6 August, the Padre was able to go down to the church. He stopped in front of the statue of our Lady—but had to sit down because he was exhausted—and he gave her a gold rosary. The statue was lowered before his face and he was able to kiss her. It was a most affectionate gesture. Between two and three in the afternoon, the helicopter carrying the statue of our Lady rose from the terrace of the Home for Relief of Suffering headed for Sicily. It did three turns over the crowd and flew away.

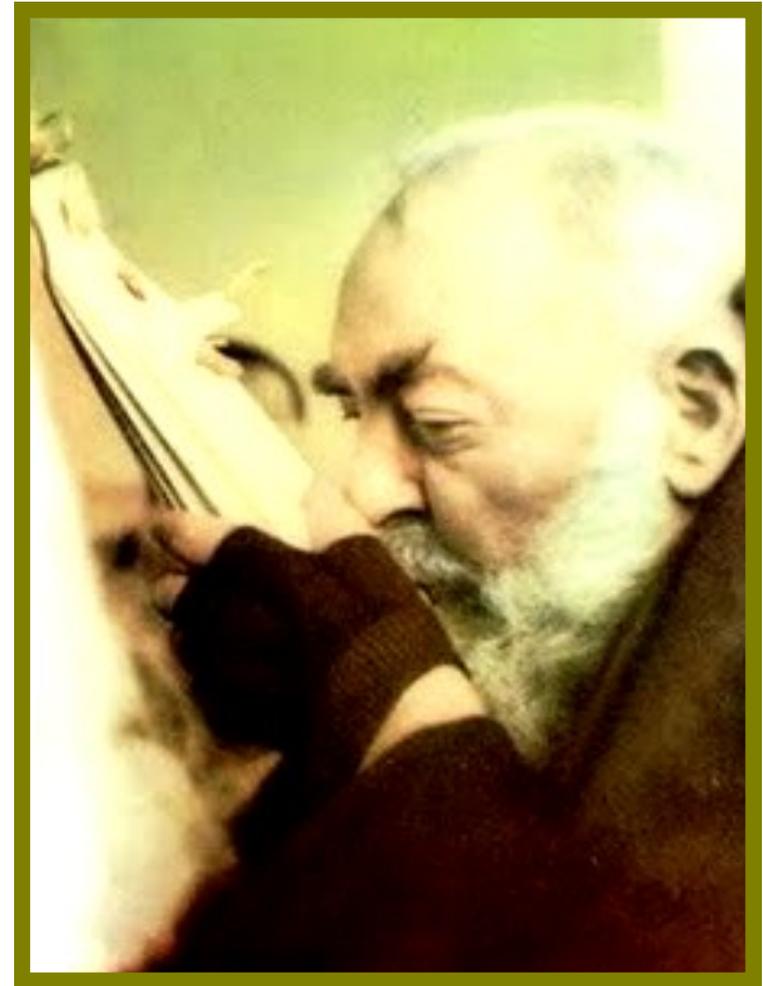
From a window Padre Pio watched the helicopter fly away with eyes filled with tears. To our Lady in flight Padre Pio lamented with a confidence that was all his own: "My Lady, my Mother, you came to Italy and I got sick, now you are going away and you leave me still ill."

At that instant he felt a shudder in all his person, that as long as he lived he repeated: "In that very instant I felt a sort of shudder in my bones which cured me immediately." His Spiritual Father confirmed it saying: "In that moment the Padre felt a mysterious force in his body and said to his confreres: 'I am cured'." He was healthy and strong as never before in his life.

Informed about an article that appeared in Foggia, which asked why Our Lady of Fatima had gone to San Giovanni Rotondo **and not** the shrine of Saint Michael at Monte Sant'Angelo, Padre Pio explained with enchanting simplicity: **"Our Lady came here because she wanted to cure Padre Pio."** ***(excerpted from: *The Voice of Padre Pio*)

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OUR LADY AND PADRE PIO



The statue of Padre Pio's dear Lady was lowered before his face and he was able to kiss her. It was a most affectionate gesture.

(Look at the statue of Our Lady, it's as if she is reaching out her hand in blessing to Padre Pio)

OUR LADY IN PADRE PIO'S LIFE

by Brother Francis Mary, F.I.

*Every canonized Saint bears witness to an important fact: holiness is intimately connected with devotion to Mary, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost who is the Sanctifier. How could it be otherwise considering all graces come to us through the Mother of God and the Mother of the Church. According to St. Louis Mary De Montfort in his classic Marian work, *True Devotion to Mary*, assaults by Satan will be most fierce and intense in the latter times.

In speaking of the great saints and apostles of the latter times who will eventually triumph over Satan and his followers he gives what seems to be a pen sketch of Padre Pio, "They shall be true disciples of Jesus Christ, walking in the footsteps of His poverty, humility, and contempt of the world...They shall carry on their shoulders the bloody standard of the cross, the crucifix in their right hand and the rosary in their left and the sacred names of Jesus and Mary in their hearts..." (these were the last words on the lips of the dying Padre Pio).

Padre Pio's Marian devotion was a profound part of him from infancy to old age. He related later in life how as a boy he went to the shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Pompeii, near Naples, without permission, knowing that his mother would not give him the permission. He visited her shrine frequently when he was stationed in Naples as a soldier. Nothing could stand in his way when inspired to give Mary his love. The particular area of Italy where Padre Pio was born, Pietrelcina, had as a special patroness, Our Lady of Liberty. However, his devotion to her was expressed more in action than in words.

Though he wrote a brief meditation on her Immaculate Conception, and there are scattered references to her in his early letters (later on he was forbidden to write letters by the Holy See and as a result his written testimonies on Mary are few), yet, throughout his priestly life the most beautiful and effective "sermon" in her honor, was the Rosary which he prayed constantly. It was this chain of hope that linked him with heaven and the supernatural, that world which is unexplainable to the rationalist, and materialist.

Similar to another great Franciscan Marian Saint of our times, Saint Maximilian Kolbe, Our Lady appeared to Padre Pio as well. Upon being asked twenty years later why he had kept this and other supernatural visits a secret he replied in all sincerity that he thought everyone saw our Lady. His spiritual director, Padre Agostino of San Marco, relates: "One day he ingenuously asked me 'Don't you see our Lady?' At my negative reply he answered, 'You are just saying that out of holy humility!'..."

*-Brother Francis Mary is a member of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate. He is the editor of numerous books under Saints and Shrines Series published by the Academy of the Immaculate. This article was taken from the recent book he edited entitled: *Padre Pio - The Wonder Worker*.

LOVE AND TRUST OF PADRE PIO FOR OUR LADY

**To understand the love and trust Padre Pio had for our Lady, it would be enough to tell you to look around you! The whole of Padre Pio's life was lit up with the gentle light of our Lady.

In a letter of 6 May 1913, he gave vent to a delicate filial gentleness, writing: "Here we are at last in the month of our beautiful Mother once again...This dear Mother continues to lavish her maternal care upon me, especially during the present month. She takes care of me to an exceeding degree...I am all aflame although there is no fire. I feel myself held fast and bound to the Son by means of this Mother... I'd like to fly off to invite all creatures to love Jesus and Mary."

The Council and Pope Paul VI proclaimed and acclaimed Mary as Mother of the Church and Padre Pio will continue to repeat for centuries to the faithful who flock to Italy from all the Churches scattered in the world that they must grow in the love of the Mother of the Church.

** (excerpted from: www.ewtn.com/padrepio)