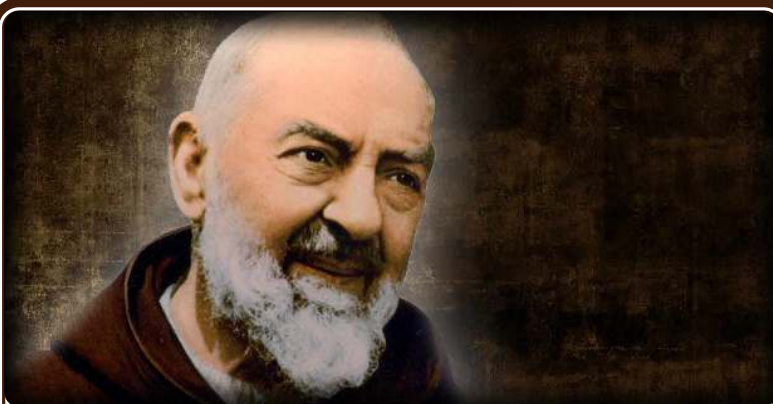




Saint Padre Pio

(May 25th 1887 - Sept. 23rd 1968)

St. Padre Pio was born Francesco Forgione, on May 25, 1887, in Pietrelcina, Italy. His parents were peasant farmers. As a child, he was very religious and by the age of five he made the decision to dedicate his life to God. Francisco served as an altar boy at his local parish. Francisco was known for taking on penances and his mother once scolded him for sleeping on a stone floor.

From this tender age, Francisco had a peculiar ability. He could see guardian angels, spoke with Jesus and the Virgin Mary. This was not something taught to him, but occurred so naturally that he assumed other people could see them too. He spent many years as a child tending to a small flock of sheep owned by his family. In 1897, after three years of schooling, Francisco expressed to his parents that he wanted to become a friar.

To prepare Francesco, his parents decided to hire a private tutor. To pay the cost of the tutor, Francesco's father travelled to America to

find work, and sent the money home. At the age of 15, Francisco was finally ready and he entered the novitiate of the Capuchin friars at Morcone. He took the name of "Pio" in honour of Pope Pius I, whose relic he often saw at his local chapel.

On one occasion during prayer, a fellow monk astonishingly reported he saw Pio levitate during an episode of ecstasy. Brother Pio became a priest in 1910. In 1915 with World War 1 Padre Pio was drafted into military service but due to ill health was sent home.

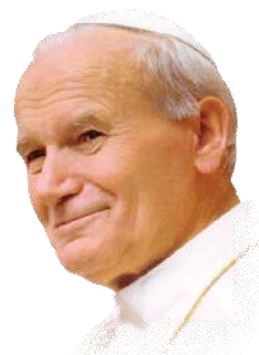
On September 20 1915, Padre Pio was hearing confessions when he felt pain in his hands and feet. He noticed the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, appearing on his hands and feet. The experience was painful. Bleeding occurred. The wounds smelled of roses, and although they continued to weep, they never became infected.

People visited Padre Pio from far and wide as he had the gift of working miracles. He was also known to bilocate and in confession could see into a person's soul and tell them if they left out any of their sins.

In 1947, Fr. Karol Wojtyla visited Padre Pio who prophetically told him he would rise to the highest post in the Church."

Fr. Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II

in 1978. Padre Pio died on September 23, 1968. His funeral was attended by over 100,000 people. Pope John Paul II recognized Padre Pio as a saint on June 16, 2002. His feast day is September 23. He is the patron of civil defense volunteers, adolescents, and the village of Pietrelcina.



Pope St. John Paul ii