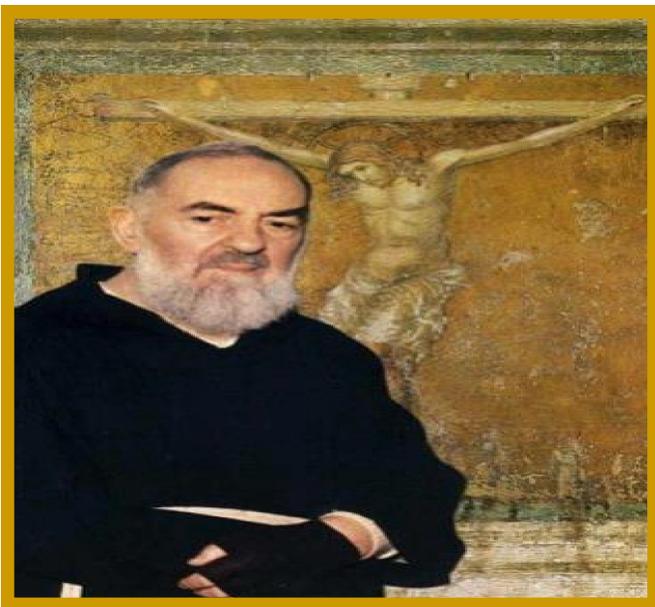


Before his remarkable experience, Antonio had been openly hostile to those he came in contact with. His arrogance and sarcasm made him very unpleasant to be with. However, his anger and negativity seemed to have vanished overnight. He now interacted with people in a loving and friendly way. He had previously been a nonbeliever. He now acknowledged God sincerely, with his words and with his actions. It was obvious to everyone who spoke to him that he was a man of deep faith. He began to pray diligently for all of the patients at the Home for the Relief of Suffering. Antonio had truly been healed in body, mind, and spirit.

Soon, Antonio was discharged from the Home for the Relief of Suffering. Upon leaving the hospital, he went to the monastery of Our Lady of Grace. He had an important appointment to keep. When Padre Pio had appeared to him in the hospital, he had asked him to visit his tomb. Antonio walked down to the tomb unaided. He no longer needed to use a wheelchair. He knew that he had Padre Pio to thank for that.

A number of people were gathered at Padre Pio's tomb when Antonio arrived. He knelt down and prayed aloud without any shame. In a strong voice, he named the serious sins in his life, one by one. He asked God to forgive him. He was truly sorry for the many wrongs of his past. All who were at the tomb heard Antonio's public confession and were deeply moved. Many were crying when he finished his prayer. Antonio's family and friends had hoped that he might receive some improvement in his health at the Home for the Relief of Suffering. No one had ever imagined that he would receive so much.



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Padre Pio and Antonio Paladino



Antonio Paladino at Padre Pio's tomb.

Antonio felt a growing sense of anger and frustration regarding the many trials in his life. As a result, he lost his faith in God. His moral life deteriorated as well. He had a deep sense of guilt regarding some of his actions but he did not have the motivation to change

Padre Pio and Antonio Paladino

Antonio Paladino of Foggia, Italy, earned his living as a day laborer. He had a serious accident on one occasion when he was hit by a car. Due to the accident, he lost most of the movement in his left foot. It became almost completely useless. He also incurred other serious injuries. Finally, he was declared totally disabled and was forced to retire from his job. Due to his disability, he received a small monthly pension.

Eventually, Antonio married and had a large family. As time passed, his health began to decline. He suffered from a heart condition as well as a lung disease. He was hospitalized on many occasions. Instead of improving, he grew steadily worse. The small pension he received was not enough to support his wife and twelve children. Antonio felt a growing sense of anger and frustration regarding the many trials in his life. As a result, he lost his faith in God. His moral life deteriorated as well. He had a deep sense of guilt regarding some of his actions but he did not have the motivation to change.

A number of people urged Antonio to visit the Home for the Relief of Suffering in San Giovanni Rotondo. It was considered to be one of the finest hospitals in Italy. It boasted of an impressive staff of doctors as well as state of the art medical technology. Antonio's failing health caused him to feel desperate. He finally agreed to seek medical help in San Giovanni Rotondo. Antonio was taken to the Home for the Relief of Suffering on a stretcher on December 6, 1968. He hoped for improved health but was not confident that the doctors would be able to help him.

Day after day, Antonio lay in bed, immobilized and in great pain. A cane was beside his bed but it was of no use to him. His legs were completely paralyzed. Antonio's anger and depression over his condition was apparent to all who entered his hospital room. He used bad language while speaking to the doctors, the nurses, and even to the nuns who worked at the hospital. He did not care that his profanities offended the hospital staff. It almost seemed as if he enjoyed offending people. Padre Pio, who had passed away several months before, was also on the receiving end of Antonio's anger. What did Antonio think of Padre Pio? He believed him to be a deceiver and a charlatan. And Padre Pio's hospital? It had not improved Antonio's condition in any way. As far as he was concerned, the Home for the Relief of Suffering was just another failure. He was convinced that when he was finally discharged, he would be no better off than when he had entered. One of the nuns who worked at the hospital began to pray each day to Padre Pio for Antonio's healing.

On the evening of December 12, Antonio was sleeping soundly in his hospital bed when he suddenly felt someone tapping him on the shoulder. Five times he was tapped on his shoulder. Antonio opened his eyes to find a monk standing beside his bed. "Get up and come with me," the monk said. "But I cannot walk," Antonio replied. "You must get up and follow me," the monk insisted. Antonio looked over at the cane that was in his room, even though he knew it was useless to him. "You will not need that cane," the monk said. Antonio was amazed to find that he could move his legs. He was able to get out of bed without assistance.

Antonio followed behind the monk who walked up and down the hospital corridor. Antonio had been immobile for so long that he was exhausted by the brief exercise. His entire body was sweating profusely. Nevertheless, he followed the monk obediently, like a puppy dog would follow its master. Finally, they returned to Antonio's room. The monk smiled at Antonio and said, "You have done well. Are you convinced now that you can walk just like anyone else? Tomorrow you will feel even better than you do right now. Antonio, I want you to come and visit my tomb." Right after that, the monk vanished. Antonio then understood that his visitor had been Padre Pio.

The next morning, Antonio felt a great happiness in his heart. He was simply bursting with joy. He felt renewed within and without. He realized that the constant pain that had wracked his body for many years was gone. His breathing too felt completely normal. He was certain that he no longer needed to depend on the oxygen tank that was at his bedside. When he got out of bed and walked down the hall, the hospital staff looked at him in disbelief. Antonio explained that Padre Pio had come to him in the night and had healed him. He told the details of his remarkable experience to the doctors, the nurses, and the patients. Everyone listened with great interest. For several days, Antonio did nothing but repeat his story over and over again to the many people who asked him for an explanation.

Dr. Federico Ficola, who worked in the orthopedic and trauma departments at the Home for the Relief of Suffering, listened with great interest to Antonio's story. Dr. Ficola saw the amazing change in Antonio's condition and marveled at it. Dr. Giuseppe Gusso, the chief of staff and medical director of the Home for the Relief of Suffering, also saw the transformation in Antonio's physical condition. Dr. Gusso noted that Antonio's personality seemed to have undergone a complete transformation as well.