

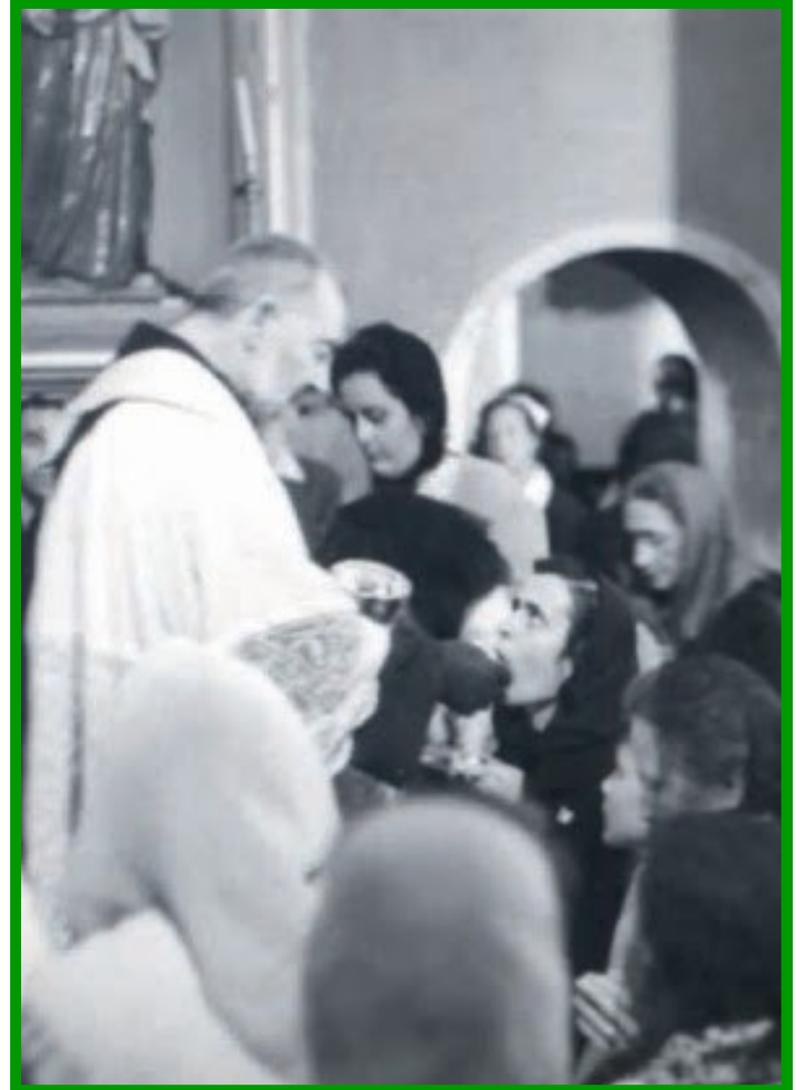
Christmas crib. Together with the choir, the Capuchins and the entire congregation sang Christmas carols and hymns of praise to God. All hearts seemed to glow with the fire of God's love.

After the midnight Mass, before retiring to his cell, Padre Pio spoke to his spiritual daughters for the last time that evening and said, "Tonight heaven opened and many graces came down into your souls." Truly, they had all been blessed.



PLEASE VISIT THE WEBSITE: www.pamphletstoinspire.com

Padre Pio and Maria Pompilio



Maria Pompilio
receiving Communion
from Padre Pio

Padre Pio and Maria Pompilio

Maria Pompilio, who was one of Padre Pio's faithful spiritual daughters, worked as a school teacher in San Giovanni Rotondo. She attended Padre Pio's Mass every morning and went to confession to him regularly. Through the years, she had received many graces through her contact with Padre Pio.

Once, on Christmas Eve, Padre Pio had gone to the sacristy of the church about 8:00 p.m. to hear the men's confessions. It happened to be a very cold night. Because there was no heating in the monastery at that time, a stove had been placed in the sacristy to take the chill off.

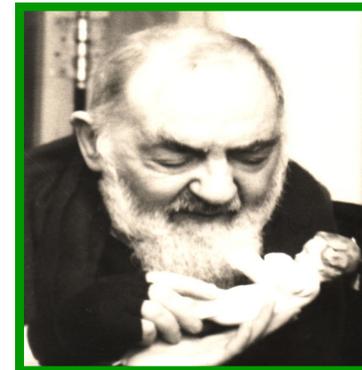
While Padre Pio was hearing the men's confessions, Maria Pompilio and several other women stayed in the church to pray. After the confessions were over, Maria and her companions went into the sacristy to greet Padre Pio and to kiss his hand. Maria noticed that Padre Pio's hand was ice cold. Padre Pio greeted his spiritual daughters and said to them, "May the Child Jesus make you feel His mercy and His tender love." "It is so cold tonight, Padre Pio," one of his spiritual daughters said. "Please speak to us for a while. Tell us more about the Infant Jesus and fill us with the warmth of His love."

Padre Pio then took his spiritual daughters to the visitors' room in the monastery. There was a long table in the room with enough chairs for everyone to be seated comfortably. Padre Pio spoke about the Christmas Mysteries and said, "Daughters, let us meditate on the words of scripture in the book of John. John, the beloved disciple said, And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Tears filled Padre Pio's eyes as he quoted John's words from scripture. He paused for a moment to dry his eyes and then continued. He reflected on the privations of Jesus' birth and infancy. He spoke of how Jesus was born in the winter, the coldest season of the year, in the depth of the night. There among the animals, he was laid in the manger. Mary and Joseph attended him lovingly as the angels in heaven rejoiced.

Suddenly Padre Pio closed his eyes and became silent. "Padre Pio has fallen asleep," one of the women whispered. "He heard confessions all day today and he is exhausted. Let's be very quiet and use the time to pray until he wakes up." "I do not think he is asleep," one of the other women said. "This is Christmas Eve. I believe that Padre Pio is in deep communion with Jesus at this very moment. It is truly a privilege for us to be sitting here with him."

After about thirty minutes, Padre Pio opened his eyes. One of his spiritual daughters then said to him, "Padre Pio, you were silent for a long time. Since it is Christmas Eve, we were wondering if you were with the Baby Jesus?" Padre Pio made no reply. Another said, "Padre Pio, please tell us what you experienced as you sat with your eyes closed." "If you promise not to say a word about it until after my death, I will tell you," Padre Pio replied. "We give you our word that we will tell no one," the women said in unison.

Padre Pio then said to the women, "The Lord permitted me to wish a happy Christmas to my brother Michael who is in America and also to my sister, Sister Pia, in her convent in Rome. Then Jesus showed me all of my spiritual children who have passed on to eternal life and I saw their dwelling places in heaven." The women were deeply inspired by his words.



Before long, it was time for Padre Pio to prepare for the celebration of the Christmas Midnight Mass. Softly glowing candles illuminated the little 16th century church of Our Lady of Grace. The church had never looked so beautiful. When the Mass began, Padre Pio, who held a small statue of the baby Jesus in his arms, processed solemnly down the aisle toward the