



Padre Pio: **"Nothing is too good or too beautiful for the sick and suffering."**

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Padre Pio and Emilia Sanguinetti



Emilia (Spillmann) Sanguinetti and Guglielmo Sanguinetti

**Emilia chose to live in humility
and self efficacy commitment to her husband "the doctor"**

Padre Pio and Emilia Sanguinetti

by Marianna lafelice

"Today 13 July 1975, I Emilia Sanguinetti Spillmann, in the full possession of my faculties and forever grateful to the Capuchin Friars of San Giovanni Rotondo for taking care of the burial of my husband, request that my mortal remains be placed to rest here in San Giovanni Rotondo in the grave plot purchased by me beside my beloved husband Guglielmo. I desire that my funeral be held in the church of San Giovanni Rotondo."

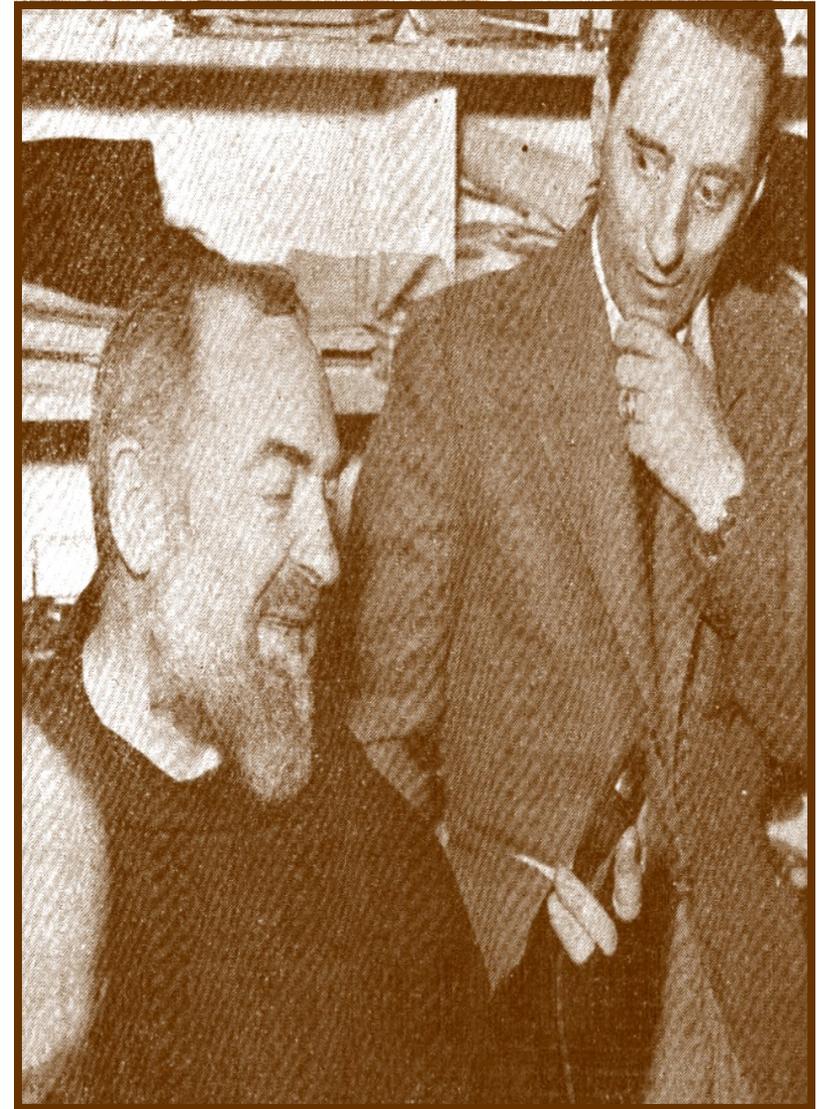
This was the last testament of Emilia Spillmann Sanguinetti, or "Mi" as she was nicknamed by friends, and who would leave this world on 2 July 1977 silently, with the same self-effacing humility that characterize her whole life.

Emilia was a good-looking woman, from a well-to-do family and with a strong character, nevertheless she chose to live in the shadow, and because of this quality and her commitment to her husband, "the doctor" and Padre Pio's Apostolic Work, she struck everyone as an angel of goodness.

Emilia came to San Giovanni Rotondo for the first time in 1934, but she had learnt of Padre Pio much earlier. She had read an article on the Friar in the home of her in-laws during the first years of her marriage and had been captivated by him. However, she left it at that. Then different events brought her closer to him. A friend and relation of Pope Pius XII, the Marquis Gerini Pacelli, came back from a visit to San Giovanni Rotondo and brought her greetings from Padre Pio. On another occasion, Emilia requested a patient of her husband, a farmer, who was going down to the Padre to ask him to pray for an increase of faith for herself and especially for her husband who was then critical of the Church.

Another person who helped in her coming closer to Padre Pio was a spiritual daughter of the Padre, Elena Bandini, who lived in the Mugello region in Northern Tuscany like the Sanguinetti's and who in 1937 would move down to live permanently in San Giovanni Rotondo. Suffering from poor health Elena Bandini would be visited by Dr. Sanguinetti, and whenever he went to her home, he would be confronted with a large photograph of Padre Pio in her bedroom.

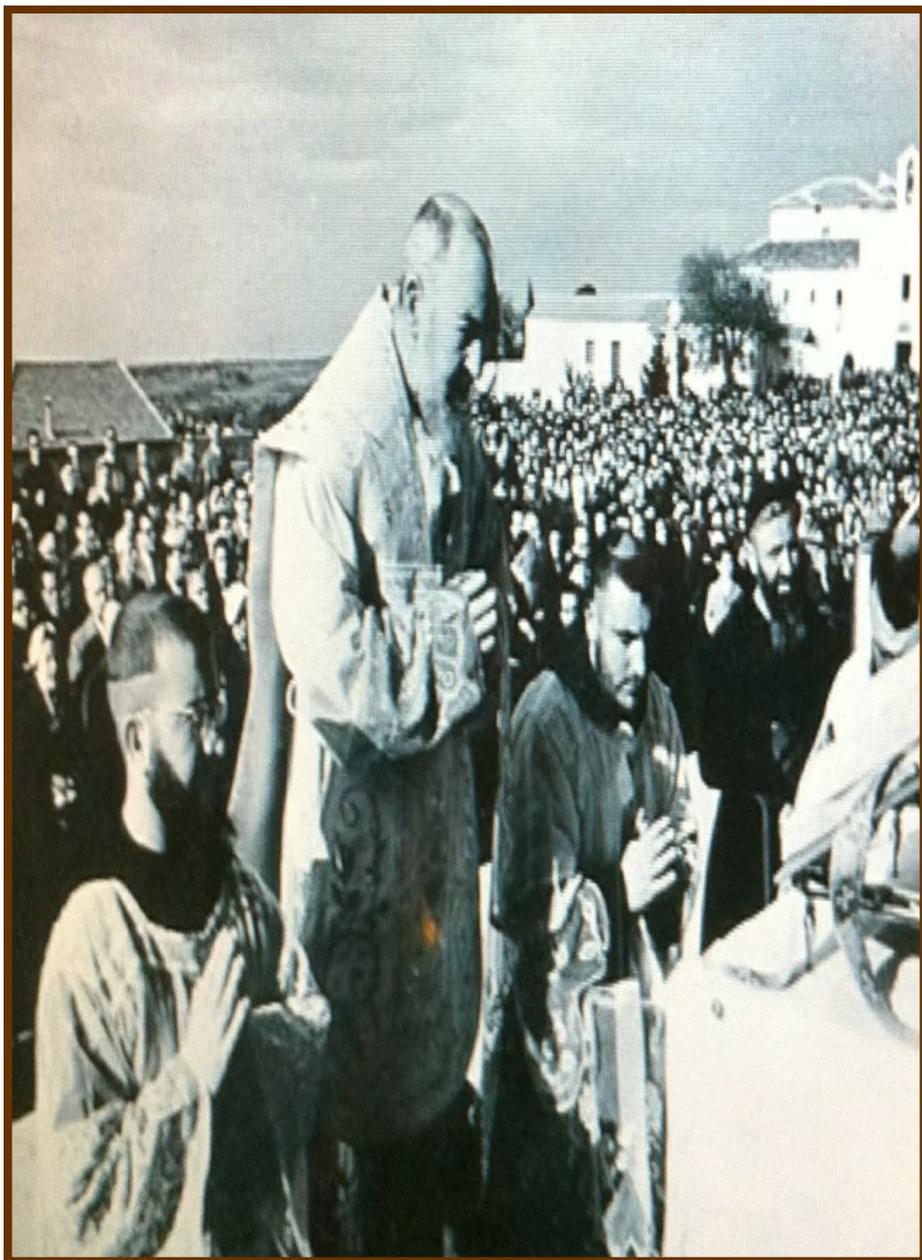
This image had a disturbing effect on him and would often be the cause of heated arguments with his wife, who instead was finding herself "drawn to religion always more," and "reading books on religion and Sacred Scripture." "It was as if there was a new light within me," she would recount. "And I would talk with my husband about these things and he would listen to me quite interested which also surprised me."



From the minute of the first meeting:

"It is agreed that everything undertaken must be subject to Padre Pio's advice."

Padre Pio refused to consider a bank loan.



Padre Pio celebrated Mass and made a speech on the day of the grand opening of the hospital on May 5, 1956.

And then before Christmas one year, Emilia felt the strong desire to go to confession. She asked her husband to accompany her to a priest, Msgr. Arturo Bonardi at Borgo San Lorenzo. And while there she would recall, "as I was making my thanksgiving, I heard someone close to me crying and I realized that it was my husband. I asked him what was the matter and he answered me that he suddenly felt as if a great abyss had opened up between us separating us forever. After many years away from the Church, he made up his mind to go to confession and receive Communion. It was a very beautiful Christmas for us."

Their first visit to Padre Pio was a birthday present from the doctor to his wife. In later years she would recount how this came about. "Every year my husband would give me a present for my birthday, but that year I asked him if instead he could take me to San Giovanni Rotondo. He was somewhat skeptical about the Padre and so answered: 'Yes, I will take you, but only as your driver; as I would not like you to be on your own should you discover him to be a person who is deranged or an epileptic.'"

Towards the end of the month of May, along with Elena Bandini, Dr. Sanguinetti and his wife Emilia, drove down to San Giovanni Rotondo in their Fiat Balilla to meet Padre Pio. It was around 8:00 PM when they arrived and the doctor not knowing the cloistral regulations of the friary, knocked at the main door, while Emilia waited in the car. A lay brother came to answer the door and began to severely tell the doctor: "How rude can you be to come knocking at this hour! We are closed now!" When the doctor got back into the car he simply said to his wife: "Well that's a fine beginning! I have just been told that I am very rude!"

They both saw the Padre for the first time the following morning in the church during holy Mass and when Emilia asked her husband: "What do you think?" He said gently to her: "He's a man of God." The doctor was so struck by him on this visit that they stayed for several days longer than they planned to be close to Padre Pio. Later on Emilia stated that they had put up with all kinds of hardships during this visit.

During one of her first confessions to Padre Pio, Emilia was unable to hold herself back from exclaiming, "Padre how beautiful it is to live here close to you!" He answered her, "Well why not remain always!" to which she said, "I can't because of my husband's work!" Then the Padre in a quite commanding tone, answered her, "Send him away, and remain always here!" She was so taken back by this answer that she was at a loss to what to do and when she asked him, "But how am I to tell him?" Padre Pio went on to explain, "But what have you understood. I don't separate anyone, you must leave and then return together."

A few months later the Sanguinetti's returned to San Giovanni Rotondo and Padre Pio said to the doctor: "We must build three tabernacles, three tents: one for Jesus, one for you and one for me! How beautiful that would be! You must remain here forever!"

Emilia recalled that during one of these encounters that Padre Pio had asked her husband to stay and work for him: "Doctor, I need your help. I have to build a hospital here and you shall be my doctor." But her husband, not being from the place and already with a job, answer: "Padre, no. It's impossible, because even if I left my job and came to work here I would be unable to practice my profession in San Giovanni Rotondo, because I would be taken the patients of the other doctors." The Padre responded at once: "And yet I tell you that you will come here, and you will help me with this construction."

Sometime later, Emilia would often recall their final journey down to San Giovanni Rotondo after Padre Pio had convinced them to work for him. The removal van was unable to bring all their antique furniture and so some had to be left behind. When they stopped along the way to refuel at a petrol station they discovered that some of the woolen mattresses had been stolen. But nothing could make them lose heart as they knew that they had made the right decision. Guglielmo and Emilia remained always convinced of this. They had been united in this way ever since they had first met during their school years in Rome, and they would remain so until that dawn of 6 September 1954, when the Lord would unexpectedly call to Himself the doctor.

How did Emilia take the loss of a husband. After a few weeks of what Emilia described as "very great sadness," she returned to work and dedicated the rest of her life to her husband's work on behalf of Padre Pio.

Her noble, unassuming nature, her dignified beauty that was never showy nor vulgar was greatly admired. Emilia could be described as a modern woman, if by being modern one does not mean a shallow emancipation but rather that capacity to stay at the side of a man with an important position as an equal and without rivalry.

Even though not seen in the front rows at the important official occasions with her husband, she was always close to him, especially during the many inevitable times of trial. She was modern even in the way she dressed. She never felt obliged to follow the fashion trends of the day, yet, she was never inelegant. A woman of simplicity and refinement with a fervent faith, despite the fact she was unable to have children, Emilia never became bitter but grew daily in perfection. She was always able to go forward in life even when, just as those children that never came, her husband was taken from her. She could is spent her remaining years in mourning as what expected of widows by society in those years. Instead she rolled up her sleeves and got down to work, doing what she could to continue her husband's work.

The facts of Emilia and Guglielmo Sanguinetti's life have recently been falsified in a popular book by the Italian author Enrico Malatesta "Padre Pio il Santo delle Stigmate" (Padre Pio the Saint with the Stigmata). One can only be saddened by these errors that have now spread. The inaccuracies of this author go even to the point of mistaking Emilia for the "daughter" of Sanguinetti. He erroneously describes Dr. Sanguinetti as the first director of the Hospital for the Relief of Suffering, and even suggests that he may not have saved his soul. He writes: "Padre Pio was not an infallible 'saint.' The daughter of Dr. Guglielmo Sanguinetti, the first director of the Home for the Relief of Suffering, went to the friar to ask for a grace for her father who was dying. She dreamt of Padre Pio who was knocking at a door that would not open until blood ran from the knuckles of his hands. When Dr. Sanguinetti died, Padre Pio told his daughter that he had knocked at great length on the door of heaven for her father but that the door had not been opened."

How any serious writer can be so inaccurate is beyond comprehension! But we will leave it at that as otherwise we risk going against all that the Sanguinetti's taught us by their lives.

Out of respect to them we wish just to share with you a few lines from the friary chronicles dated 7 September 1954, the day after the death of Dr. Sanguinetti. In my opinion these important words are enough: "The day after Dr. Sanguinetti's death a spiritual child asked the Padre: 'Can we at least be sure of his eternal salvation?' And he was given the answer: 'Well if he did not save his soul then there would be little hope for anyone!'"

Someone has certainly got the facts wrong. It certainly was not Padre Pio!

