



SISTER MELLA WITH A REDEMPTORIST SISTER, DUBLIN IRELAND

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Padre Pio and David Doherty

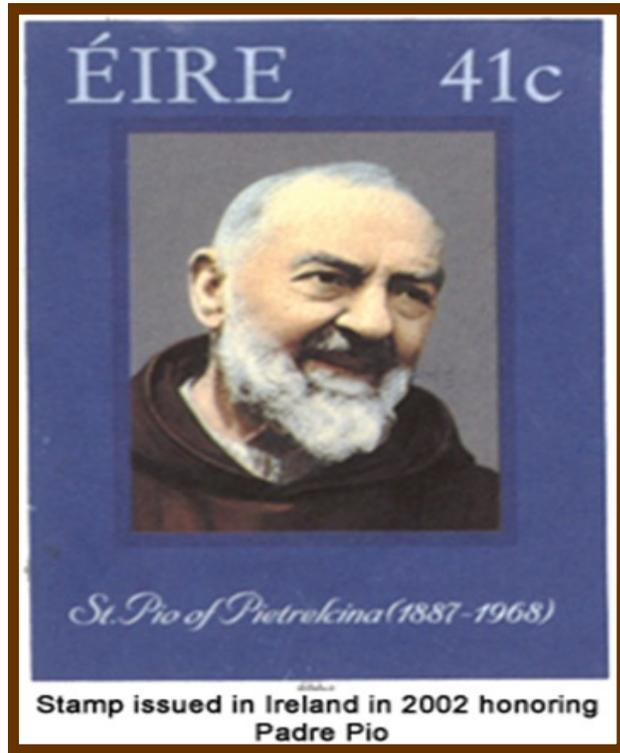


David and Isabel Doherty

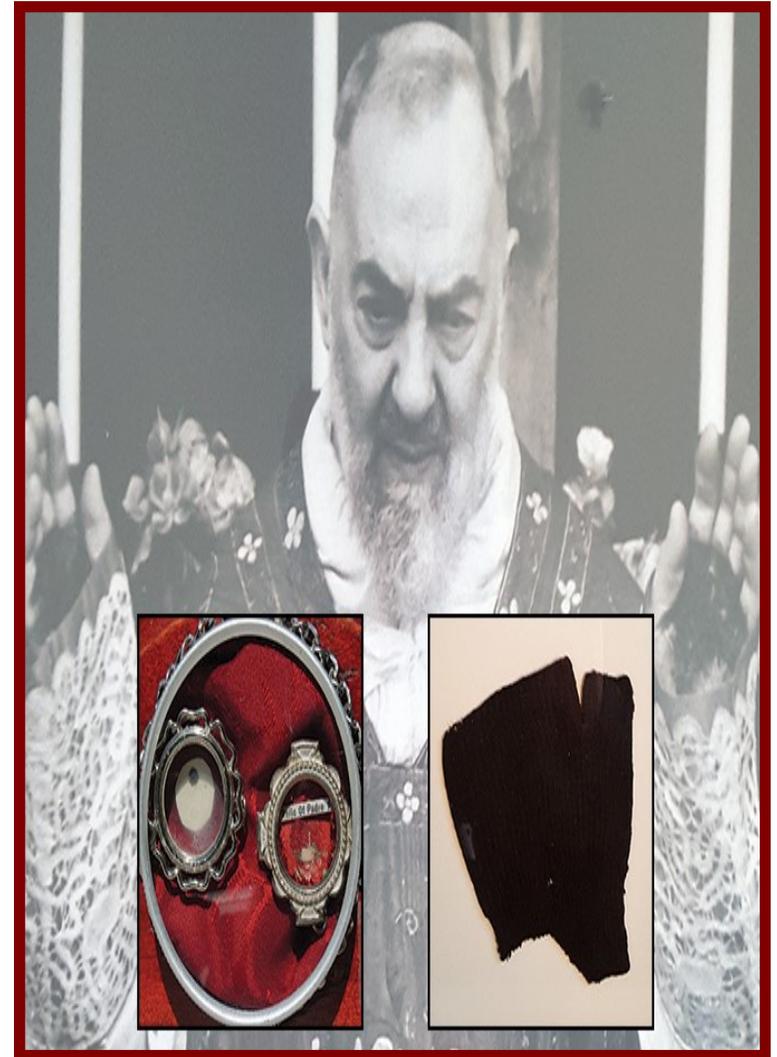
I am ready for anything as long as Jesus is happy and will save the souls of my brothers, especially those he has entrusted to my care.

St. Pio of Pietrelcina

The Testimony of David Doherty



David Doherty of Derry, North Ireland had always taken good care of his health. It came as a complete surprise to him when his doctor told him in 2003 that he needed to have triple bypass heart surgery. He was sent to the Golden Jubilee National Hospital in Glasgow, Scotland for the operation. His doctors were pleased with the outcome of the surgery and considered it to have been a success. Soon after the bypass, a second surgery became necessary. After the second surgery, David's condition began to deteriorate, and a week later David was moved back into the hospital's intensive care unit where he drifted in and out of consciousness. The doctors explained the gravity of his situation to his wife, Isabel. They told her that he could pass away at any moment and advised her to notify the family immediately and summons them to the hospital.



Padre Pio's Relics

David has seen the many blessings he and his family have received since his close brush with death. Many times he thought about the strong and insistent voice that shouted to him while he was lying in the hospital, "Get up and save some souls!" He knows now that it was Padre Pio's voice. "What could I possibly do to save other peoples souls? I am having enough trouble saving my own soul!" David wondered. Nevertheless, in thanksgiving for his many blessings, he began to have a great desire to do something for the Lord. He just could not figure out what he should do.

The answer came for him when he was invited to attend a Padre Pio prayer group meeting. After the meeting, he began to reflect how wonderful it would be to have a Padre Pio prayer group in his own large parish in Derry. He was able to get the permission of the bishop of Derry as well as his own parish priest.

The first Padre Pio prayer group meeting was held in January, 2005 in David's parish of the Holy Family, in Ballymagroarty, in Derry. David made a little booklet on his computer, complete with the prayers of Padre Pio. It is used at every meeting. The prayer group is well attended and the attendance has steadily increased every year.

When a nun from Dublin, Ireland, Sister Mella, heard about the Padre Pio prayer group that David had started, she contacted him and asked for information so that she could start a group in her parish. David went to Dublin and met Sister Mella and provided her with the prayer booklets he made for his prayer group. Sister Mella's Padre Pio prayer group is going very well. A young woman from Dungiven, Ireland has invited David to come to her parish and assist her in forming a Padre Pio prayer group there. He has also been contacted by an individual in England who expressed interest in forming a Padre Pio prayer group.

In reflecting on his near death experience and all that has happened since, David said, "My life and my family's life has taken a change in direction I wouldn't have thought possible. I feel sure that I would not be here today if it had not been for the prayers and the intercession of Padre Pio. I am just happy to be alive!"

Two days after being readmitted to the intensive care unit, David was put on a ventilator. A breathing machine now did the work of breathing for him. Antibiotics could not arrest the infection that was spreading throughout his body. His kidneys then failed and septicaemia (blood poisoning) set in. The doctor told Isabel and the family that they had done everything humanly possible to save David's life. He had multiple organ failure and his body was shutting down. There was nothing else that could be done.

One of David's daughters made some inquiries and arranged for Padre Pio's glove and a piece of bandage that covered his stigmata to be brought to the hospital. In the intensive care unit, the relics were placed on David's chest while the Rosary was recited by all who were gathered. All prayed for the intercession of Padre Pio.

That evening, as David's son Georgie was leaving the hospital, he noticed the distinct fragrance of perfume in the elevator. His two sisters, Patricia and Paula were with him but did not notice it. However, shortly after that, they both noticed an unexplainable fragrance of incense at their father's bedside. That was on a Friday afternoon. On Saturday, a priest came into the intensive care unit and gave David the Last Rites. On Sunday, the surgeon spoke to Isabel and told her that David showed very slight signs of improvement. On Monday, after examining David, another one of the doctors called Isabel aside and said to her, "It is amazing to see the changes in your husband's condition. He is getting better!" David remained in the intensive care unit for another three weeks and every day he got a little stronger.

David spent a total of nine weeks in the hospital. After he was released, he spent many months at home continuing his recuperation. His family and friends were astonished at his recovery. When they explained to David how close he had been to death, he was stunned. He had no idea. When David was told that Padre Pio's glove and bandage were brought into the hospital and laid on his chest, the spiritual experience that he had while in the hospital suddenly took on a new meaning. When he shared the experience with his family, it was their turn to be amazed.

David told his family that while laying in his hospital bed, he experienced seeing himself as already dead. He saw his body in a coffin in a small village just outside of Derry. He was watching his own wake. While not all countries have the tradition of a wake, it has long been observed in Ireland. During a wake, the body is kept at home in a coffin where friends and relatives come to pay their last respects to their loved one. Following the wake is the funeral at the church.

After witnessing his own wake, David saw that his coffin was then put in the back of a hearse and driven to Derry. Next he saw himself in a field in which he could see for miles and miles in every direction. But what he saw was horrific. Everywhere the eye could see were millions of bodies crawling over each other and under each other in mud. Everything was bleak and colorless. While he stood there in shock, he thought to himself, "Is this where I am going to spend eternity?" Then a loud voice shouted at him, "Get out! Get out and save some souls!" Next, David saw himself back in his coffin in the hearse. The hearse pulled to the side of the road and stopped. The man in the hearse turned and said to the driver, "Why have we stopped?" The driver then replied, speaking about David, "He has been given a second chance."

In reality, David had been given a second chance. Some of the nurses who cared for David in the hospital told him that they had been present when the relics of Padre Pio were brought into his room. Although they could not explain it, they said they felt without a doubt that something happened when Padre Pio's glove and bandage were placed on his body.

What did David know about Padre Pio? Almost nothing. He knew that Padre Pio had the stigmata but that was the extent of his knowledge. A statue of Padre Pio had been erected at David's parish in Derry in 1999 but he never gave it a second thought. About ten years before his heart surgery, he had to retire from work because of his arthritis. A friend brought him Padre Pio's glove but at that time it did not have much significance to him.

David is aware that he received a healing not only for his body, but also for his soul. Was his soul in need of healing? Yes, it was. Before his heart surgery, his spiritual priorities had been on the back burner of his life. He had married Isabel and settled down to a comfortable life. He was devoted to his wife and five children but he had neglected his relationship with God. He went to Mass on Sundays but if something else came up which caused him to skip Mass, he never gave it a second thought. He never attended Mass during the weekdays. Prayer was not an important part of his life and even though he knew that he was going to undergo a very serious heart operation, it had never even occurred to him to pray before the surgery. At the time he was admitted to the hospital, he had not been to confession in more than a year.

These days David goes to confession regularly. He never neglects Sunday Mass and also attends Mass on as many week days as he can. The family Rosary is now a part of the Doherty's daily routine. And he sees the way his children's lives have changed as well. His daughters, Paula and Patricia have since become involved in charitable ministries in their parish.