

Padre Pio was severely tormented by the devil, who would appear to him as the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Blessed Mother, St. Francis of Assisi, and the Father Superior. Padre Pio was smart, and tested the spirit. He would say, "If you are really Jesus, the Blessed Mother, St. Francis, or Padre Superior, repeat after me, "Viva Gesu!" and, the evil spirit would leave. The diabolical infestation was done with the purpose to ridicule, confuse, and constantly torment Padre Pio, so that he would give up his priesthood and the saving of souls for Christ.

Padre Pio spent fourteen hours a day in the confession box, bringing many souls back to the grace of Christ, and changing their lives to live as a committed Christian, ridding themselves of sin to live a life of grace. There were hundreds of people lined in the church to confess to Padre Pio. In fact, there were so many people who wanted to go to confession to Padre Pio, that in the 1950's, the friars had to issue numbered tickets to confess to Padre Pio. Some people waited for days.

There was jealousy and suspicion, because Padre Pio was famed among the faithful as a good and holy priest and an extraordinary confessor. Some of his own friars in the monastery bugged his confessional to see how he dealt with penitents, and why he was so popular among the faithful as a confessor. It was not until 1963, that Pope Paul VI ordered that the tapes be destroyed.

He also suffered because he was silenced and ostracized from people, who both needed him and loved him. Prayer and solitude led him closer to the Lord. He would go to the monastery chapel in the early hours of the morning, praying before the Blessed Sacrament. Sometimes a light would illuminate around the tabernacle. Padre Pio saw Our Blessed Lord many times.

Padre Pellegrino Funicelli, who was once the guardian of Padre Pio, would awaken to spy on Padre Pio, so that Padre Pio would not hear him.

He reports: "Unfortunately, I did not have the good fortune of surprising and enjoying my confrere transfigured by a mysterious ecstasy. And this, despite all my great efforts. The ecstasies were totally his and not mine. In compensation, however, through the crack (thin as a razor blade) in the window, I saw him surrounded by a light which was for me, providential, and which I held to be emanating from his soul, abounding with the grace of God. I enjoyed this to the point that I would have liked to shout to him: "Welcome, and thank you for the beautiful things you are showing me."

...And now, he shows us, as well, these wonderful mysteries of God.

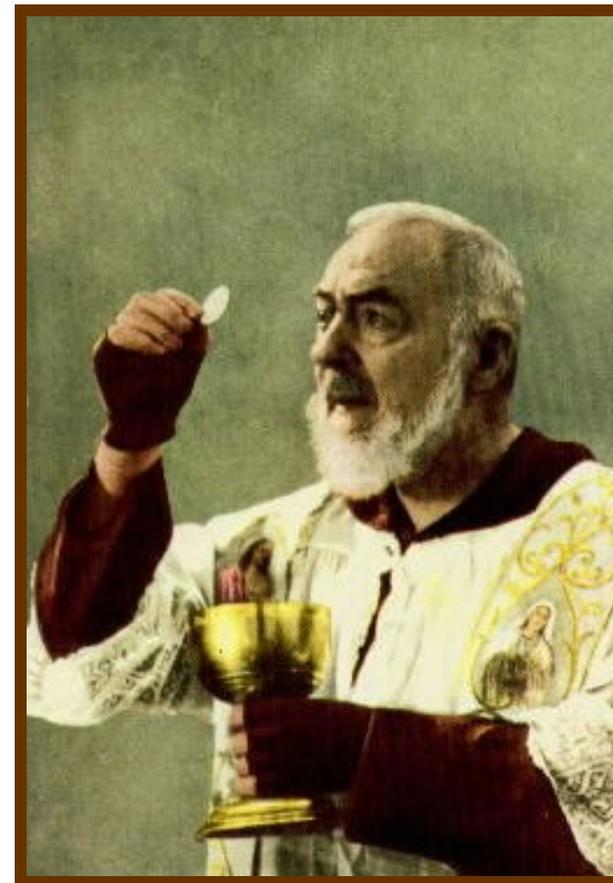
(by Fr. Anthony J. Cipolla from *Thorns and Roses*)



Padre Pio kneeling in prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

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Padre Pio And Strength From The Eucharist



**"Let us humble ourselves a little, my good father,
and confess that if God were not our armor and shield
we would be thoroughly riddled with every type of sin.
And it is for this reason that
*we must always cling to God with perseverance
in our practices.***

Padre Pio

Strength from the Eucharist

On December 18th, 1997 His Holiness, Pope John Paul II declared Padre Pio Venerable. This means that he is worthy to be honored publicly as a virtuous and holy person. Because of this, paintings, statues, and stained-glass windows of Padre Pio can be displayed in our churches.

There was a time when many enemies of Padre Pio tried to defame his image by ruining his good name and reputation, due to false accusations. He endured all the sufferings that the Good Lord permitted, in a spirit of peace and tranquility. He once said, “Be at peace in everything that you do.”

Many people have wondered where Padre Pio got all the strength to endure the excruciating physical pain of the stigmata, his ill health, weakened body, and emotional pain of false accusations regarding his purity and mismanaging money.

It has been said, that in life, there are three wounds of pain inflicted on man. The wounds are physical, emotional, and spiritual.

The first one is physical pain. It can easily be detected because it is seen and very much felt. The physical pain of a disease, illness, or malady is a “first degree” wound of suffering on the body. It is very painful, depending upon its depth and the nature of the physical ailment. Usually, various medications can be taken to lessen the pain and assuage the suffering. Padre Pio’s pain of the open wounds in his hands, feet, and side was so severe that no medication was able to stop the bleeding and pain.

Once, a news journalist came to see Padre Pio. He was very inquisitive and curious about the stigmata. He asked Padre Pio, who had a dry sense of humor, about it, and Padre Pio responded, “Well, the Lord didn’t give them to me to be decorations!”

Padre Pio often prayed for the stigmata to go away, but he began to understand that the stigmata was God’s Will for him. Because of it, Padre Pio experienced the emotional strain of embarrassing situations. He was subjected to constant physical and psychological examinations. There were all sorts of examinations and investigations to try to discredit the Divine Origin of the stigmata.

Once a student from the north of Italy came to see Padre Pio. He said, “Padre, my professor said that the reason that you have the wounds of Christ crucified, is because you meditate on the Passion of Christ so much that the wounds appeared on your body.” Padre Pio said, “Tell your brilliant professor to go out to the barnyard and meditate on a bull, and then see if he grows horns!”

Need For An Exorcism?

There were some ecclesiastical authorities who thought that the stigmata was diabolical. As a matter of fact, Pope Benedict XV, (1914-1922) had authorized a medieval exorcism in which a chain was placed around the altar when Padre Pio was celebrating Mass. If the chain would have broken, this would have been a sign that this stigmata was demonic. When the report of Padre Pio was presented to His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV responded, “They have chained the Saint, and let the beast run free.”

The Vatican, as well as the Capuchin Superior, sent medical doctors, psychiatrists, and scientists to investigate the nature of the stigmata. This went on for ten years. Doctor Amico Bignami, an atheist, was sent by the Vatican to give a scientific explanation of the stigmata, but he could not do so.

Even before Padre Pio received the stigmata in 1918, he never enjoyed good health. He had bronchitis, and often complained of stomach problems, and many times, he could not eat or retain food. He never ate supper. He would join the friars in Franciscan hospitality for meals, but a baby would not have been able to survive on the little food that he ate; yet, he maintained a weight of 160 lbs.

When Padre Pio was a young priest, many people thought that he had tuberculosis, but this was not the case. He endured temperatures of 125 degrees Fahrenheit, that once broke the thermometer.

This can only reasonable be explained that he was given a special grace to endure the severe physical suffering. He received strength to endure pain, as well as high temperatures that would have caused most people to die. He said that he received all his strength from the Holy Eucharist.

Emotional Pain

The emotional pain was even more severe than the physical. The embarrassment of placing him under an investigation because of the stigmata, and because people were coming to San Giovanni Rotondo from all over Italy and many other countries, calling Padre Pio, “Il Santo” The Saint.

Vatican authorities silenced him from 1931-1933. His faculties were taken away from him. This meant that he could not publicly celebrate Mass or administer the Sacraments. He was a prisoner in his own cell. He celebrated Mass alone, with a friar present to serve his Masses, in a small room near his cell.

It was during these years of persecution, that his Masses lasted two to three hours long, because he went into ecstasy. He wept very often at Mass. He was filled with so much joy of Christ’s presence, and he felt so privileged and unworthy to be a priest, thus enabling to offer the Holy Sacrifice. The Mass was his sole consolation during these years of persecution. He lived for the Mass. He once said, “This is my only comfort...that of being associated with Jesus in the Divine Sacrifice, and in the redemption of souls.”

Read Nearly Every Book

It has been reported that Padre Pio practically read every book in the Franciscan library during the years of persecution from 1931-1933. As happens to most of us in life, there are just as many people who will call you a saint, as there are who will call you a demon. Padre Pio had his enemies, and most of them were members of the clergy, from the bishop of the Diocese of Manfredonia down to the common friar.

Frequented Blessed Sacrament

He stayed close to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He was often found several times during the day praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament. The Holy Eucharist gave him all the strength he needed to endure the emotional strain and drain of constant harassment, torment, and temptation.

Like Christ, he was slandered even by priests and some confreres who surrounded him like guardian angels to protect him from the crowds. But their hearts were not pure, and their lives were not conformed to that of the Divine Teacher. Filled with false piety, like the Pharisees, they saw black in every expression, word, and phrase of Padre Pio, and they threw mud on his purity.

The spiritual attacks were the most severe, because it struck at his very soul. The devil, knew how powerful Padre Pio was as a priest, so he did everything in his power to persuade Padre Pio to leave the priesthood.