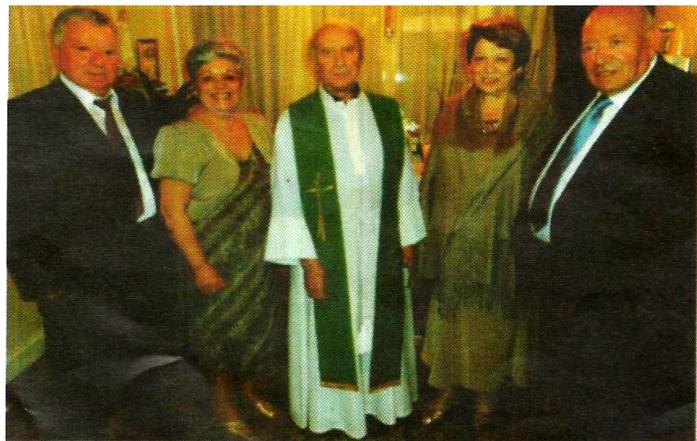


The second episode took place on a trip to Italy that was organized by my parish church in London. The goal of the voyage was Pietrelcina, Padre Pio's hometown in the province of Benevento. Once we arrived we toured the town and then we went to the house where the saint was born and grew up. As soon as I entered the house, I felt a special atmosphere and was very moved and while my travel companions searched in vain to chip off a small piece of rock from the wall as a souvenir relic of their visit, a piece of rock all of a sudden fell at my very feet. I gave it to Father Natalino to divide and share out with my traveling companions. This was a beautiful lesson to me on how what one receives gratuitously one must be able to share it with others.

The third recollection took place about nine years ago. I went with my wife to visit some friends. When we were leaving I tripped over and rolled down like a ball the external stairway, a flight of 10 concrete steps. My wife who had already descended, seeing the violent fall right before her thought that I was dead. All the blood that covered my face forebode the worst. They took me to the hospital in an ambulance, but my faith in Padre Pio saved me and I had to have only a few stitches on my lips.

The last episode took place in my Restaurant the Concordia Notte. One evening a Sicilian family came to dinner in my restaurant. They were very sad, so I asked them why. They told me that at the hospital of Catania (Sicily) the husband had been diagnosed with cancer and had only a few weeks more of life and that they were in London for a further checkup in a hospital of the English capital (London) specializing in oncology. I was inspired to give them a piece of that rock and a photograph of Padre Pio. A couple weeks later, the whole family returned to dinner in my restaurant and were all very joyous because the husband had been cured.



On 8 September 2012, Father Natalino Mignolli celebrated the golden wedding anniversaries of Lillo and Anna Militello (left) and long time friends Carlo and Anna Castiglione (right) at the Italian Missionary Chapel of Kensal Rise in London. Both families ran the Concordia restaurant for many years.

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Padre Pio – Testimony by Lillo Militello a Restaurateur in London



The Concordia
Restaurant

Padre Pio – a Testimony by a Restaurateur in London

When one reaches the reputable age of 81, one's body marked by the effects of time, but with one's spirit alive, can only thank God for his goodness. And to be able to recount one's life and to recognize the Lord's presence in it, becomes an extraordinary privilege. Not everyone in fact is given this gift of being able to see the story of their life as if in a film, and that continues into the future while one recounts it. One feels as if one is approaching some awesome goal, and encounter. The present can not satisfy one, the profundity of one's life is beyond us and we need the future to be able to read again one's past with some understanding.

My name is Lillo Militello, and I was born at Acquaviva Platani, in the province of Caltanissetta, on 26 December 1931. I am married to Anna Casdia and I have three children Giuseppe, Maria and Gabriella.

My life was influenced by my having to immigrate. This is a cross but can also be an opening. After having spent my childhood in my delightful little hometown of Acquaviva Platani, once it was time for me to earn my living, I joined the Carabinieri. I did my recruitment training in Caserta and from there I was sent to the Milan battalion assigned to the barracks of Luino on the Lago Maggiore. After six years with the Carabinieri, I then worked in a hotel in Lugano. Then in 1960, I made the great leap across the Channel and came ashore in the land of Albion.

In London I worked at the Mount Royal Hotel at Marble Arch, at the beginning of Oxford Street. I then spent a few years working in an Italian restaurant. This was an important experience because it was the introduction to what would be, from 1970 onwards, my work as a restaurateur. In fact, together with my brothers Salvatore, Giovanni and Gino, I opened the Concordia Restaurant. In the span of 38 years the Concordia Restaurant and the Concordia Notte would become a very well-known restaurant both for its food and service. The many famous people who came to the restaurant testify to this success. I was also involved in London with different associations to keep alive my sense of Italian identity. In the cultural world my brothers and I sponsored an Italian poetry and prose writing contest in which Italian writers and poets living outside of Italy participated.

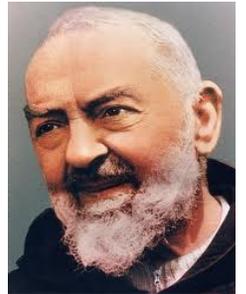
Living abroad I was always able to keep up my faith. Thanks to the Italian Missionaries I was able to practice, with the weekly participation at the Eucharist, my faith, a light that always guided me in my personal and family life.

I decided to write these few lines to share with you some experiences that clearly reveals to me the intervention and goodness of Padre Pio in the course of my life, a friar to whom I have been devoted ever since my youth.

If today I am still alive, I have to thank this holy friar of Pietrelcina for his intercession. I was a smoker and a tumor was found in my lungs. I have seen all my friends die, because of the same condition. And even if I now live 24 hours a day on oxygen, I consider every day a gift from the Lord.

There are four episodes in my life that I have learnt, because of this, to see with the eyes of faith that I personally witnessed or played a part in and that I wish to relate and which bear testimony that the faith is not simply a belief in doctrine, but the perception of reveal divine presence in this valley of tears.

The first episode goes back 60 years. I was with the Carabinieri then, and I remember seeing with my very own eyes a boy younger than myself, gravely sick because of appendicitis. When he arrived in the hospital emergency ward they decided at once to operate on the boy since the appendicitis could quickly become peritonitis and be fatal. On duty that morning in the operating theater was a young doctor who had not practiced long and despite his more expert qualified assistants, when he was operating, partly out of nervousness as well as his inexperience, he cut the abdominal tissue of the boy causing a severe hemorrhage, damaging part of the intestines. The more expert doctors that took over and tried in some way to repair the damage. But the damage caused was serious and once out of the operating room the doctors gave the boy little hope. The parents were desperate. The father not knowing what to do, decided to make a trip to San Giovanni Rotondo to see Padre Pio and to ask for his help to save his boy. Padre Pio, placed his hand on the man's head and said: "don't worry, your son will be okay."



At that very moment in Milan his son who was gravely ill and considered done for, opened his eyes and said to his mother: "I feel fine." A few days later his father, after his return from San Giovanni Rotondo, when he saw how much better his son was, recalled at once the words of Padre Pio: "Don't worry, your son will be okay!" In fact, after four weeks of convalescence, I saw with my very own eyes the father and son in a field playing football (soccer) and as if the episode of the hospital had been nothing more than a bad dream. I am absolutely certain that Padre Pio had a hand in this episode.