

BRIAN:

The marvellous story of Padre Pio
and a little Anglican boy

By
ANNE MCGINN CILLIS

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Photos of Padre Pio: Abresch; Elia;
San Giovanni Rotondo
Italy

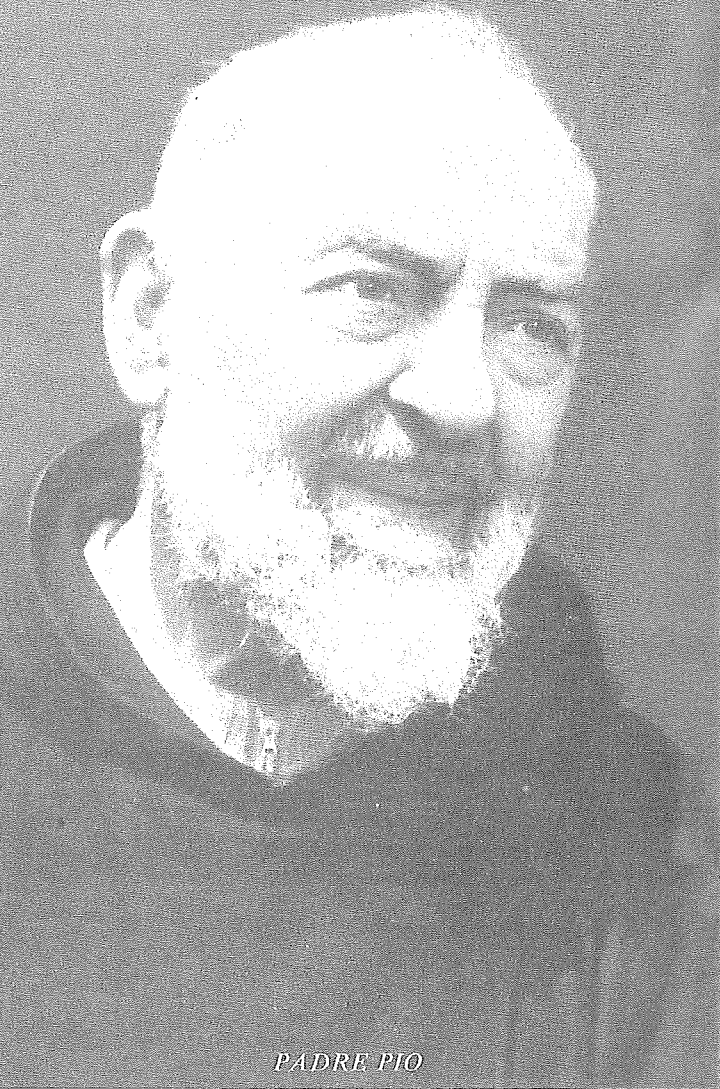
For Cathy -

With love -

M

Rane

Did I already give you
one?
(Can't remember!)



PADRE PIO

Padre Pio da Pietrelcina

BRIAN:



The story of Padre Pio
and
a little Anglican boy

(An excerpt from the book "Arrivederci, Padre Pio")

By ANNE MCGINN CILLIS

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INTRODUCTION

On September 23rd, 1968, an 81-year-old Franciscan Capuchin monk died in his monastery in a little village in the Gargano mountain region in the southern part of Italy. Within a short three days, over a million people had gathered to pay him tribute.

Who was this monk who could draw such vast crowds, on such short notice, to his funeral?

And these were no ordinary crowds.

They came from every corner of the earth, rapid news service and rapid travel being what they are in this half of the twentieth century. The crowds arrived by air in nearby Bari, by rail in Foggia, by car, and on foot — a veritable Biblical multitude descended on the tiny village, which all but disappeared in the all-encompassing inundation.

Thousands wept openly . . . and stood waiting patiently, hour upon hour, as the long lines moved ever so slowly up to the great doors of the new Capuchin Church of Our Lady of the Graces, in order to file past the casket, lying open, in state, in the sanctuary . . . to catch one last glimpse of this bearded monk in his brown Capuchin robe, with the strange, brown, knitted half-gloves on his fingers . . . to touch a rosary to his stockinged feet . . . to stifle a genuine sob of real grief at the sight of his silent, still, majestic form.

Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, known and loved by countless numbers throughout the Catholic world, was dead.

Who was he?

He was Francesco Forgione, born to humble peasant parents, in the Italian village of Pietrelcina, on May 25th, 1887, and he was considered to be a saint.

Drawn irresistibly to God even as a child, he early showed a great love for recollection in long and devout prayers, for

frequent fasting, and for sleeping on the bare floor. From the very beginning of his life, he was the declared enemy of the devil, but he constantly experienced the visible friendship, confidence, and support of his guardian angel. He had a special and lifelong devotion to the great Archangel Prince, St. Michael, whose celebrated shrine at Monte Sant'Angelo was a short twenty minute automobile drive away from his own Capuchin monastery. The angels in general as his friends, were woven in and out of his casual conversations, the way family members are mentioned by other people.

At the age of five, Francesco dedicated himself to the great St. Francis of Assisi, and at the age of fourteen, God called him to a most noble mission, known only to God and to himself. Together with this special vocation, God also entrusted him with a programme to fulfill: "sanctify yourself, and sanctify others."

He entered the Capuchin novitiate in 1903, and having completed his studies, partly with the Franciscans, and partly at home, he was ordained to the Catholic priesthood in the Cathedral of Benevento, on August 10, 1910, taking the religious name of Padre Pio (Father Pius).

Immediately after his ordination, he received, in the month of September, at Pietrelcina, the five bleeding wounds of Christ, on his hands, feet, and side, the visible "Stigmata" of which about seventy authenticated cases have appeared in the long history of the Catholic Church, and "baffled in soul by such strange phenomena, I prayed to the Lord to take it away." From that time onwards, the scars "did not reappear, but despite their disappearance, the acute pain persisted." He was suffering, in fact, the "invisible Stigmata."

Eight years later, on September 20th, 1918, while praying before a large and very realistic crucifix in the choir of the little ancient church of the Capuchin Monastery of Our Lady of the Graces in San Giovanni Rotondo, Jesus appeared to

him, and in a blaze of light and glory, imprinted once more upon his hands, feet and side, the visible and bleeding wounds of the Divine Crucifixion.

Padre Pio fell down unconscious, seared with pain and ecstasy. Thus began a period of fifty long years of bearing these bleeding wounds, as the first priest in the history of the Catholic Church, to have the Stigmata. (St. Francis had himself also borne these wounds, but only for the three years immediately preceding his death, and he was not a priest. He was a deacon.)

Padre Pio offered himself as a victim to the Lord on behalf of the Catholic Church, and of the Pope; for the holiness of the clergy, for the souls in Purgatory, and for the conversion of sinners.

On August 5th, 1918, while confessing one of the friars, he received the gift of "transverberation". (This is the painful and actual physical division of the heart, a suffering endured by Christ, through the lance-thrust of the Roman soldier, Longinus.)

In an age when the value of suffering is universally rejected by the materialistic and Satanistic forces of Anti-Christ, Padre Pio's life was one of continual suffering, joyfully accepted, to be borne for the glory of God and the sanctification of others. He slept little, ate next to nothing, and laboured as long as eighteen hours a day hearing the confessions of the thousands who flocked from every quarter of the globe to the little village of San Giovanni Rotondo, to bring him their sorrows, to beg his prayers, and to receive his comfort, and his counsel.

Stories of his miracles rival the stories of St. Anthony of Padua, considered by many to be the greatest of all the wonder-workers in the history of the Catholic Church. Padre Pio had the gift of bi-location (he could be in more than one place at once); his mysterious wounds gave off a sweet,

mystical perfume similar to incense blended with hyacinths, lilies, roses and violets; perfume which was, and still is, apt to manifest itself anywhere in the world, at any time, as a sign of his invisible presence; he could read a man's conscience, and was frequently able to tell penitents in his confessional, their sins in fine detail, even before they confessed them. He knew the past, could prophesy the future, and spoke with great authority on all matters concerning God. Those who had been enemies of the Church, returned to the Sacraments, non-Christians begged for Baptism, and thousands of the sick in body and in soul, were cured.

Padre Pio himself was constantly afflicted with strange illnesses which came and went, and he suffered fevers so elevated as to shatter even bathtub thermometers. All of his sufferings he offered up to God as celestial coin to purchase the graces of cure and conversion for which the crowds besieged him, day and night, for years.

Satan waged a continuous war against him, threatening to "do to me things unimaginable to the human mind," and he kept his vile threat. Physically "he never ceases to appear to me in horrid forms, and to strike me in a truly frightful manner." Spiritually, the devil stirred up misunderstandings, hatred, and persecution of Padre Pio, who bore all this evil and malice with heroic patience and forgiveness of his enemies.

His great devotion was to Christ Crucified, and after that, to the Madonna, the Blessed Virgin Mary. "Mary is the inspiration of my hope," was his favourite motto. He was never seen without the Rosary entwined about his fingers, most usually, with the beads slipping silently through them. There is a story authenticated by at least one of his brethren, that through a Divine intervention, time somehow stood still for him, so that he could say 150 15-decade rosaries a day in addition to all his other duties, in order to meet the needs of so many urgent, even frantic demands for his prayers.

Padre Pio founded two great works: the world-wide network of Prayer Groups, conducted in almost every language known to man, and a large and magnificent hospital, the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza (the Home for the Relief of Suffering) built immediately adjacent to the monastery where he spent so many years, in San Giovanni Rotondo.

Padre Pio died, clasping in his hands, the Holy Rosary, and with the words, "Jesus — Mary" on his lips. Significantly, the name of the Most Blessed Virgin was his last earthly word.

His tomb in the crypt of the Capuchin Church of St. Mary of the Graces in San Giovanni Rotondo is now the meeting place not only of his spiritual children, but also of many others, who, although not having approached him during life, are, nonetheless, convinced that they have a powerful intercessor in heaven.

Barely a year after his death, the Cause for his Beatification was opened by the Bishop of Manfredonia.

That Cause is now proceeding rapidly in Rome.

May the wonderful story of Padre Pio and Little Brian be received with delight, even joyous excitement, by those who are promoting the Cause.

Anne McGinn Cillis



*Our Lady of Lourdes
"Brian's Lady"*

DEDICATION

*To Mary, our Immaculate Mother,
Glorious Queen of Heaven and Earth,
Our life, our sweetness, and our hope;*

And to all of Padre Pio's friends, far and near, young and old; to all who love him, who are drawn to him, whose hearts and whose lives have been touched by him . . . who pray to him, who are inspired, uplifted, and transfigured by the beauty of his saintly life, and by the great, incalculable dimensions of his tremendous love for God, and for Our Lady . . . this little booklet is lovingly dedicated.

May it go forth, throughout the entire world, in all languages, as a testimony, in these wicked times, of faith in miracles, of swift answers to prayer, of the efficacy of devotion to the great Mother of God, and as a pledge of the undoubted existence of a luminous hereafter.

And may it, through the sweet intercession of Our Lady, draw many souls to Christ, the King and centre of our lives . . .

The Author



**THE STORY OF
PADRE PIO AND
A LITTLE ANGLICAN
BOY**

On the mantlepice in our living room, there is a photo of a little boy.

He shares the space with a robed statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague, and a solemn parade of individual portraits of our four little girls, Jacinta, Theresa, Francesca, and Christina.

People who visit our home for the first time, ask for him.

"And where is your little boy?" they politely enquire, as the four little girls line up to shake hands.

"You must mean Brian," I always say, with a smiling glance towards the photo. "Brian isn't ours. But he is very special to us, and very much loved in our home, particularly by the children . . ."

At this point, the visitor's interest is usually irrevocably aroused, and I find myself telling once again, the wonderful and incredible story of Brian.

* * * *

In the late summer of 1973, I received a long distance call from our dearly loved American friend, Ronald Tangen. Readers of some of my articles in various publications, will recall Ron as the zealous young man in search of a good Marian seminary, and who finally found one, at least temporarily, in Rome.

Ron was in the United States again for the summer, and wanted to pay one of his impromptu and delightful visits to us. I had warned him to tone down his dynamic whirlwind approach, and not to "blow in" on us without warning, as had been his maddening custom; I demanded at least two full hours' advance notification, lest the guest room should be a jungle of

naked dolls, half-finished coloring books, stuffed monkeys, a multiplication of crayon stubs and stacks of un-ironed laundry.

Ron had obliged nicely by calling me from Kennedy International Airport, where he was about to embark, at any moment, for Ottawa. I had no sooner hung up, when he called me back, and asked if he could bring along a friend.

"Certainly," I told him. "Don't you always?"

Shortly afterwards, Ron arrived with a young Englishman, and with his usual suitcase spilling over with Marian literature.

Ed was from Liverpool, and having learned while still in England, of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary at San Vittorino, near Rome, he had entered that seminary, and had become one of the companions of Ron and the numerous other Americans and Canadians Ron had been responsible for recruiting. Both boys were on summer leave from Rome.

Among all the seminarians and priests who frequently drop by or stay a few days at our home, Ron has always been very popular with the children. To say that they love him, would be the understatement of the year.

On this particular visit, as the days passed, it soon became evident that the children in turn had developed a special love, too, for Ed, whose gentle manner, prayerfulness, and quiet kindness, completely won their hearts. He spent hours with them, even taking them to a nearby park for picnics.

As I look back now, I truly believe that Ed was sent to us by heaven on that memorable visit, for he said afterwards that he had not the slightest intention of

coming to Canada, or even to the United States, at the end of the academic year in Rome. The whole thing had come about by chance, and he had accompanied Ron to our home on a mere whim of Ron's. Ron had wanted company on the trip from New York, and Ed, who had decided at the last minute in Rome to accompany Ron to the United States in search of a summer job, thought he "might as well go along" when Ron proposed the Ottawa visit, while waiting for his flight to be called.

One thing I will forever recall about that visit; from the moment Ed entered our house, he maintained a pronounced and quite visible fascination for the two objects which dominate our living room.

One is a large and very beautiful crowned statue of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Lourdes, and the other is a life-sized oil painting, over the fireplace, of Padre Pio.

I could not guess that the expression of astonishment and quiet joy on Ed's face when he saw the combination of these two objects in the same room, masked an undercurrent of profound mental association, the exposure of which was to have wide-reaching repercussions on hundreds of people. No, I could not guess this. But I did experience a certain indefinable spiritual anticipation.

Thus it was that when Ed, a few days after his arrival, quietly told me the fantastic story of Brian, the whole sequence of events seemed to fall implacably into place.

Ed sat in my grandmother's velvet chair in our living room, beside the fireplace, in the late summer twilight, beneath the benign gaze of Padre Pio, and in a tranquil

and deeply moving voice rendered all the more beautiful through the powerful medium of an impeccable British accent, unfolded the details of the story I know will bring hope, joy, and a great, wonderful renewal of faith in prayer, to countless thousands; the story of Brian, the little Anglican boy, and Padre Pio.

The Gift of a Son

John and Maureen are a married couple living in Liverpool, England. They are not Catholics.

Maureen had once been a school friend of Ed's, but he had lost track of her over the years.

The couple have three beautiful daughters, but they had always desired to have a little boy. It seemed as though nature was against them, for Maureen could never carry a boy child through to term. She had lost several.

However, after a few years of waiting, always in hope, their hearts were filled with joy upon the birth, at long last, of a little son.

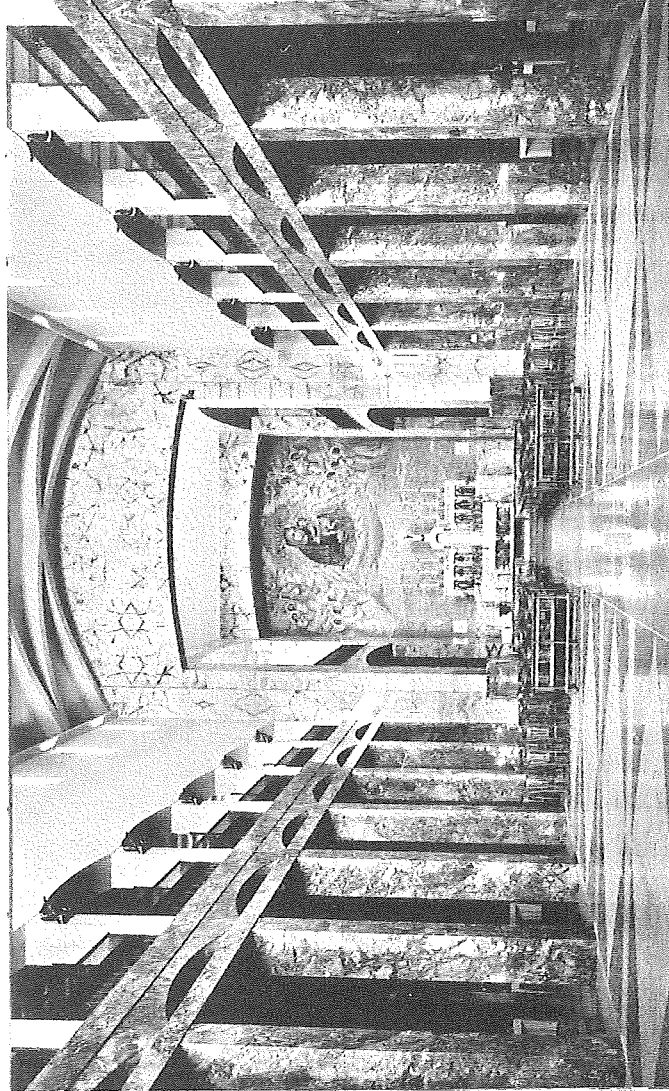
They named him Brian John, and he was baptized in the Anglican faith. He was a bright and very beautiful child.

When he was two years of age, they took him on his first vacation away from home, to the seaside.

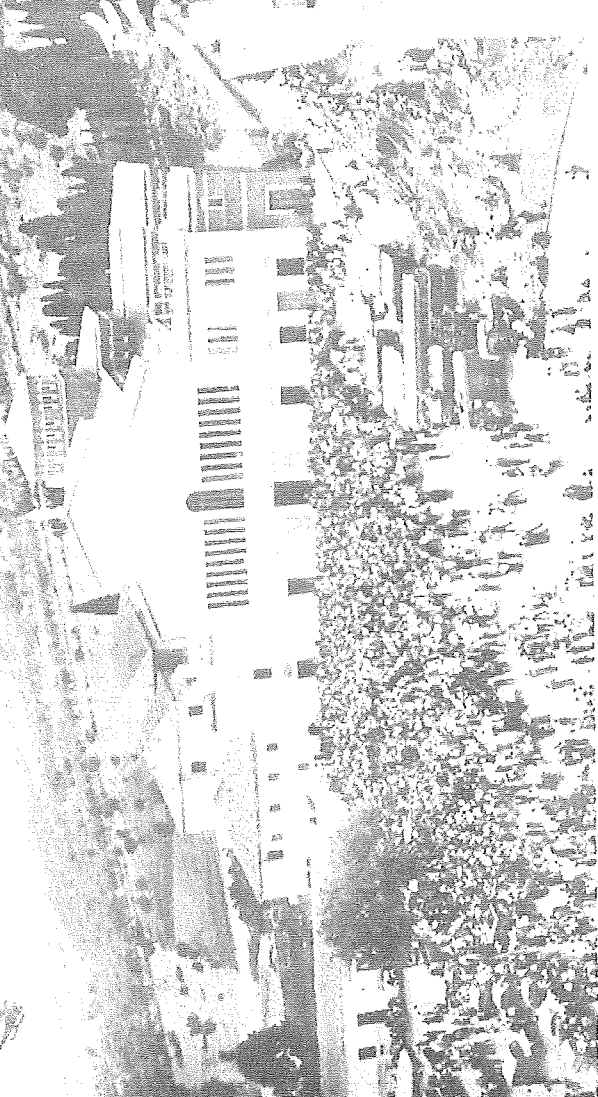
During the vacation, Brian began to look tired, and listless. This was most unusual for him, because he was normally a child of great vigour.

When they returned home after the two weeks away, concerned for the continuing fatigue of the little boy, they decided to consult the family doctor.

The doctor examined Brian, and told the worried



The interior of the new Capuchin Church of Our Lady of the Graces, at San Giovanni Rotondo. This magnificent edifice of Carrara marble was built out of necessity to accommodate the vast



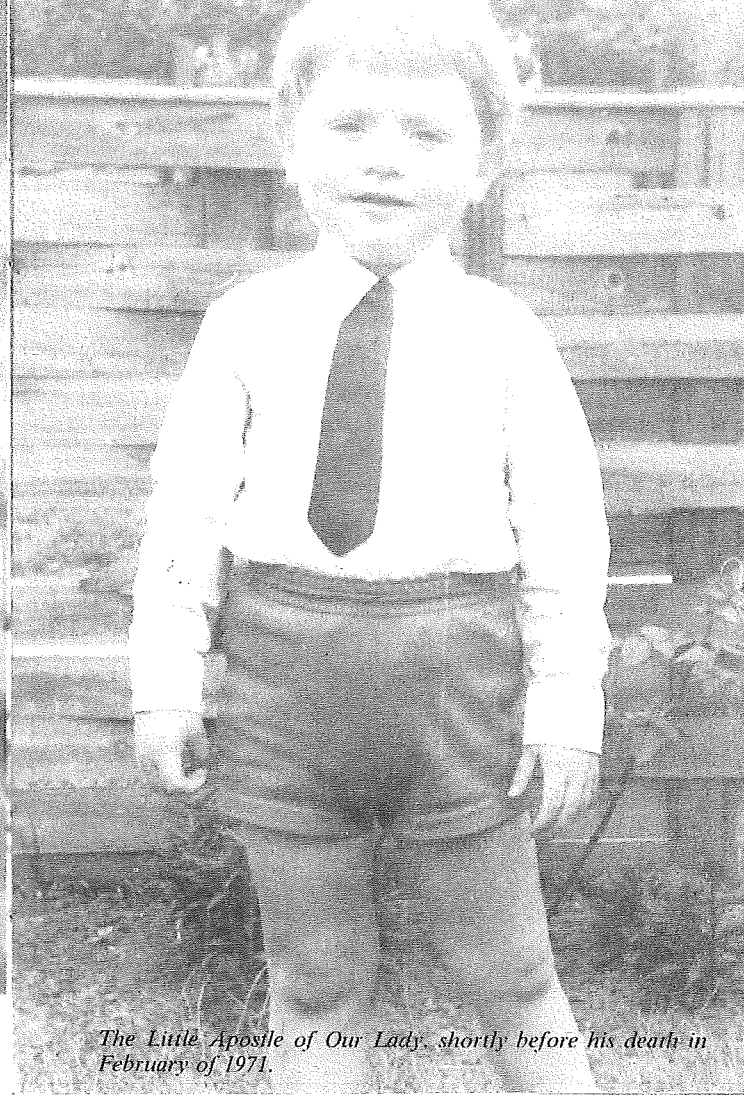
An aerial view of the crowds, on an average day, swarming around the outside of the Church of Our Lady of the Graces, beside the ancient Capuchin Monastery in San Giovanni Rotondo. Note the tiny original church, with its bell tower, attached to the new one, immediately to its left.



Padre Pio lies in the serene majesty of death, September 23, 1968. It was in 1970 and 1971 that he returned, to visit little Brian.



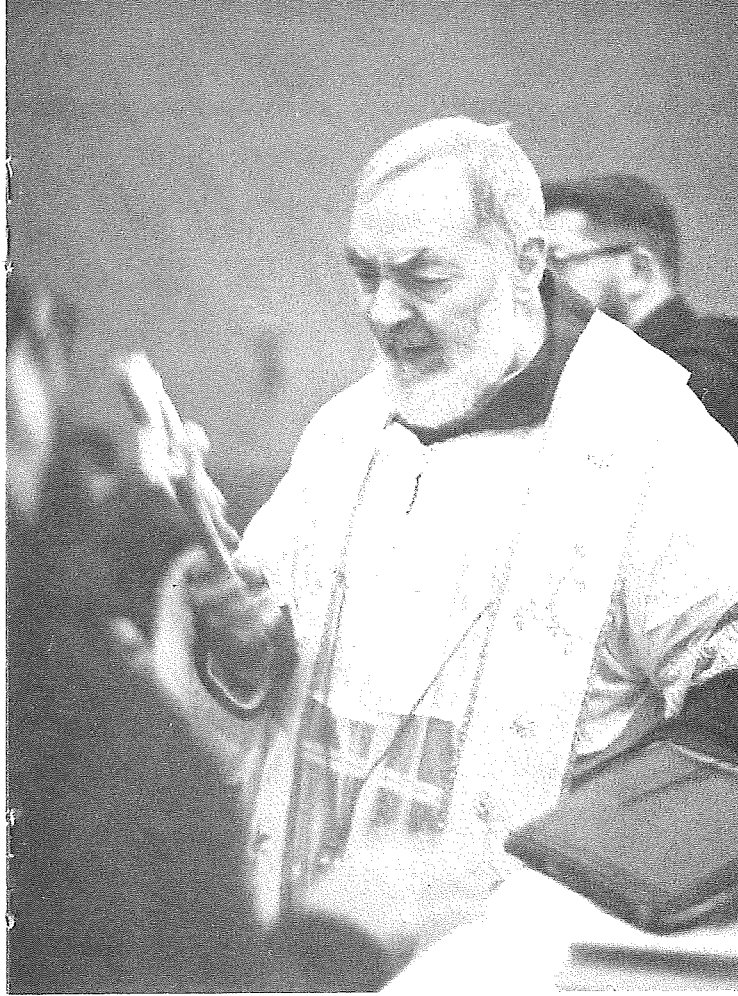
Padre Pio in his cowl, reflects the timeless quality of centuries of Roman Catholic monasticism.



The Little Apostle of Our Lady, shortly before his death in February of 1971.



The Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza, Padre Pio's Hospital, with the Capuchin Monastery and Church of Our Lady of the Graces to the left, as seen from the surrounding Italian countryside at San Giovanni Rotondo.



A very rare photo of Padre Pio, taken on Good Friday, of 1963. The author was present.



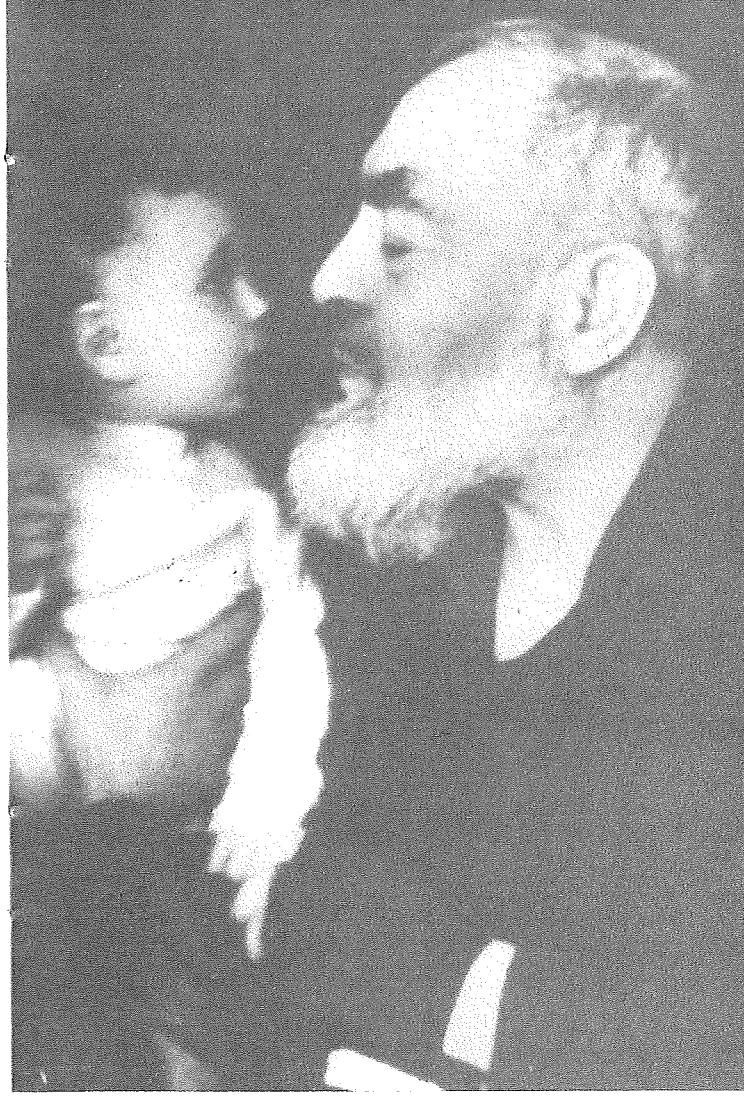
"On the mantelpiece in our living room, there is a photo of a little boy . . ."



Padre Pio baptizing an infant. Note the large cross on his forehead. This cross frequently made its appearance when the saintly monk administered the Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church.



The supreme moment. Padre Pio elevates the chalice during the celebration of his Holy Mass.





mother not to be too concerned, as probably he was only over-tired after the great excitement of a vacation trip away from home. A tonic of some kind was prescribed, and given to Brian over the following two or three weeks.

When, after this time, the little boy seemed no better, the parents returned to the doctor, and requested a letter of introduction to the local pediatrician. The doctor complied with this request, and Maureen took her son to the local Children's Hospital.

Tests were carried out on the child, and the results were then delivered to Maureen.

Brian had leukemia, and six months to live.

* * * *

It was about this time, that Ed's married sister, Pat, returned to Liverpool with her husband, after two years in Gibraltar. Shortly after coming back, she was looking up a few old friends, and went to renew her acquaintance with Maureen.

Maureen told her the devastating news about her precious little boy.

The anguished mother addressed her girlhood friend.

"Pat, you Catholics pray. Will you pray for him?"

Pat replied,

"Certainly we will, Maureen. But you know, you should pray too."

Maureen answered her sadly.

"But we don't know how to pray."

To this, Pat answered,

"Well at least you know the 'Our Father'. Say the Our Father!"

Maureen said that they would, but not before she and John had obtained the promise of Pat's prayers, and those of all her family, (including Ed) because this good Anglican couple had a great and boundless confidence in the prayers of Catholics.

Heaven Stormed

Ed's sister promised not only that she would pray, but that she would ask her friends to pray, also. To this purpose she contacted the local convents of Carmelites, who promised that they, too, would pray for little Brian.

During the period of the next two or three weeks, prayers were continued, and heaven was stormed.

In her anguish, Maureen turned again to Pat.

"Is there anybody else we can ask? Is there anybody else we can pray to?"

Pat answered,

"Yes. There's the Blessed Virgin."

Maureen and John said,

"But how can we pray to her?"

And Pat taught them the "Hail Mary."

They promised to continue to say it faithfully.

As time went by, and Maureen became progressively more anxious as she saw the sands of time running out on the life of her little boy, she repeatedly appealed to Ed's sister, about prayers.

To Ed, it seemed that poor Maureen was prepared to go through the entire litany of Catholic saints. For she said,

"Pat, is there **ANYBODY** else we can pray to, as well?"

Pat, for some strange reason, couldn't think of saints

as we normally can. If anyone asks us to pray, we can usually think of any number of popular saints . . . the Little Flower, for instance, or St. Anthony, St. Jude, St. Francis, St. Philomena, St. John Bosco . . . a multitude of saints. The list is endless.

But Pat just couldn't think of any of these saints at that particular given time.

The only one who came to mind was Padre Pio.

The year was 1971, and Padre Pio had been dead since 1968. Reports of his miracles were sweeping the world.

So Pat said to Maureen,

"Pray to Padre Pio."

Maureen asked,

"Who is Padre Pio?"

Pat answered,

"Don't worry about who he is. Just pray!"

Everyone then began to storm heaven all over again, begging God through the intercession of Padre Pio, to help little Brian.

Ed joined his sister Pat, and the rest of the family, in praying to Padre Pio, and he promised the prayers also of his friends.

The Man Who Came

Two weeks elapsed, and then, one morning, Brian, who was playing around the house, turned to his mother and asked,

"Mommy, did you see the man who came to see me last night?"

Maureen, taking this to be a caprice of imagination or fantasy, replied,

"No, son."

Over a period of the next few weeks, Brian began to make repeated references to the man who was coming to see him.

One day, Maureen, who was becoming more and more puzzled by Brian's constant talk of the mysterious visitor, took the child on her knee.

"Son, I don't know any man who comes to see you. Perhaps it's Daddy."

"Oh no, Mommy," he said. "It's not Daddy. It's some man."

Maureen, of course, didn't know what to make of this. She waited impatiently for Pat to call, and when Pat did, the excited mother told her about the man who kept coming to see Brian.

"Draw no conclusions, Maureen," said Pat wisely. "Just keep praying."

About this time, Ed decided to call on Maureen. He had not seen her since her marriage, and so of course, had never seen Brian. He was intrigued with the story, and wanted a chance to talk to the child.

Ed, who has, as I have already said, no difficulty whatsoever in relating to little children, was soon engaged in an earnest chat with the little boy.

"About this man who comes to see you . . . do you know the man's name?" asked Ed.

"No," said Brian.

"Brian, perhaps you should ask the man his name, the next time he comes."

Over a period of time, the prayers were continued, and Brian spoke again of the man who came to see him.

So Maureen sat him on her knee, and she said,

"Did you ask the man . . . did you remember to ask him his name?"

And Brian said, "Oh yes."

"Well," said Maureen, "Come on, what's his name?"

"**He said,**" answered Brian solemnly, "**that his name is Padre Pio.**"

A Wonderful Fragrance

Recovering from her initial shock, Maureen persisted.

"What's he like?" she asked.

Brian answered,

"Well, he has a long brown dress on, and he has holes in his hands and his feet."

Maureen was astounded by this, because she didn't know anything at all about Padre Pio.

On Pat's next visit, the excited mother confided these newest details. Pat told both parents something about Padre Pio, and encouraged them to keep on praying.

It was at around this time, that Maureen and John began to experience a wonderful fragrance that permeated the entire house.

During a discussion with Ed, she said,

"It's kind of like that beautiful smell that you people have in your Catholic church."

Ed replied,

"You mean incense, Mo?"

And she answered.

"Yes, that's right."

Brian, meanwhile, continued to talk about the man who was coming to see him, and the little boy at the same time, was developing an intense devotion to Our Lady.

He called her, "My Lady", and he spoke about her as

though he had some first-hand information.

He also began to manifest a great devotion to the Crucifix, the other, and most important, of Padre Pio's two great devotions.

One day, sitting on his mother's knee, he said,

"Mommy, I love you more than anybody else in the whole world. **But I love My Lady even more.**"

Then he said,

"Mommy, Padre Pio said that you are not to worry anymore. He says God has forgiven you."

Maureen was most perturbed by this. Why would the child say this? What had God forgiven her for?

A Locket for "My Lady"

Meanwhile, Ed's sister, Pat, after a time, gave Brian a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes; one of those plastic ones, which are filled with Lourdes water.

Maureen had a golden locket around her neck, and one day, Brian climbed up on her knee, and asked,

"Mommy, please give me that locket. I want it for My Lady."

His mother gave him the locket, and he put it around the neck of the statue. Both parents were later to affirm that on occasion, the locket would sometimes shine.

The child's father, being a prudent man, would move the statue, to see if there was, by chance, some possible distortion of light . . . to observe if there was some peculiar way that the light was coming into the room and striking the locket. But each time he did this, the result was the same.

The locket glowed, even in the dark.

From time to time, the child was also seen, speaking to an unseen being.

Perhaps most poignant here, would be the direct narration of Ed himself, taken, unedited, from the tape he made for me at the time of his Ottawa visit with us in August of 1973.

"One day I decided to put Brian to the test. So, I obtained two pictures of Capuchins. I already had one of Padre Pio.

"Anyone who is familiar with the Capuchin monks will realize that they all tend to look alike, especially to a child, with their long habits, and bushy beards.

"So, I made a visit, and in the first ten minutes or so, I took one of the pictures out, and I asked Brian . . . I said,

"Who's this, Brian?"

So he said,

"I don't know, Eddie."

So I said, "Okay," and just put the picture away.

"After the course of fifteen, twenty minutes, I took out the other picture, and I asked the child again,

"Who's this, Brian?"

So he looked.

"I don't know," he said.

I said, "I think you really **do** know."

"Oh no, Eddie," he said, "I don't know!"

"So okay, we let it go at that. I didn't want to pressure the child. I didn't want to fill his mind with any ideas or imagination having nothing to do at all with the phenomenon that was happening.

"So after about a half-hour, I took out the picture of Padre Pio. But I didn't ask, this time, who it was. I laid it on a table.

"The child was going about his child's business of playing, and he meant to leave the room.

"As he did, he caught sight of the picture. And he said,

"That's the man, Eddie! That's the man who comes to see me! That's Padre Pio!"

"Well, I was kind of shaken, myself, by this time, because I realized that the child was having no difficulty with identification.

"But still I decided to challenge him.

I said,

"No, Brian. That's not Padre Pio. You told me that it wasn't, when I showed you him, ten minutes ago."

"Oh no, Eddie. No!" he said. "I didn't know the other man. But **that** is Padre Pio."

"Well, I knew then that there was no point in me pursuing this. The child had made a positive identification."

Further Proof

Brian said to his mother on another occasion, "You know, Mommy, he's awfully nice when you get to know him."

And she asked,

"Does he speak to you, Brian? And does he ever touch you?"

And he replied,

"Oh yes."

Then he said,

"You know those holes in his hands and feet? Well, they don't hurt him anymore."

This was indeed a significant statement on the part of the child, since if Padre Pio is in Paradise, then certainly his wounds cannot hurt him anymore.

Love of the Cross

Ed decided to give Brian a day out, and with his parents' permission, he took him to a Franciscan Monastery.

One of the monks, coming along, stopped and spoke to the child, and picked him up.

Afterwards, Ed asked.

"Who was that, Brian?"

"I don't know," he said, and went with Ed into the church.

Brian's great devotion for the Crucifix drew him immediately to a huge Crucifix in a corner of the church. And he began to ask amazing questions. One of the things he said to Ed, was,

"When those evil men crucified Jesus, Eddie, did they go around to the back of the Crucifix, and knock the nails over, just to make it hurt more?"

Ed was stunned. What could he say? He told me that never had the thought of this occurred to him in all of his entire life.

And yet a study of the details of the visions of the Passion of Christ granted to the great mystics down through the centuries of the Church, reveals with chilling accuracy just how precisely this little three-year-old boy had grasped the degenerate cruelty of the assassins on Calvary.

On the return journey, Ed decided to call in and see some friends. Included in their company was the friends' daughter, a young girl of about seventeen. The family knew something about Brian, as they, too, had been praying for him.

Unknown to the others in the room, the young daughter made a mental prayer.

"If he really is seeing Padre Pio, have him kiss the Crucifix."

Without hesitation, the child went to the table, picked up the Crucifix, and kissed it.

The young girl was overcome. She told the story at once to the others, because they had all seen Brian kissing the Crucifix for what appeared to be no reason at all.

"My Jesus Come to Take Me"

In the meantime, Brian was making his visits to the hospital for check-ups. On one of his journeys to the hospital, the ambulance in which he rode, passed by the parish church of St. Margaret Mary. Outside the church stood a beautiful statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As the ambulance went by, Brian caught sight of the statue, and cried out,

"Oh Mommy! I thought it was my Jesus, come to take me!"

All were deeply moved by this, including the driver of the ambulance. He turned the ambulance around, and they all went and stood in reverence in front of the beautiful statue of Our Blessed Lord.

* * * *

One evening, Maureen was to taste the unfathomable bitter-sweetness of heavenly predeliction.

Brian climbed up on her knee.

"Mommy," he said earnestly, "you are going to have to ask God for another little boy."

Maureen felt herself stiffening, involuntarily.

"Why, whatever do you mean, Brian?"

She looked into the wide innocence of the beautiful

eyes of this little child who was scarcely more than a baby.

"Padre Pio has told me," Brian said distinctly, **"that he is coming very soon now, to take me to My Lady."**

A cold chill passed over his mother.

* * * *

On one of Brian's hospital visits, the doctor who was treating him, said to his mother one day,

"Mrs. D., something or someone is keeping the child alive. He certainly should be dead."

Sufferers from leukemia invariably endure, along with other pain, intense headaches, and the way to relieve these headaches, is by a lumbar puncture. This is accomplished by the doctor using a long needle inserted into the base of the spine to draw off fluid and thus relieve the pressure. It is done without anaesthetic.

Brian used to lead his little fellow-sufferers at the cancer clinic into the "torture chamber" where, this procedure was executed, and he was a source of encouragement to all.

The Little Apostle

As the days passed, and Brian grew weaker, he seemed to want to speak more and more about his Lady.

The strangest phenomenon began to occur.

All kinds of people began coming to the door of the home of Maureen and John, and asking for Brian. It seems that the child's earnest talk among his little friends, about his Lady, and about Our Lord on the Cross, was spreading far and wide.

Maureen and John were bewildered, and confused. Their great agony of having to watch their little son gradually slipping away, was difficult enough to bear, without the pain being compounded by the demands to see Brian, on the part of all these strangers.

But the facts were inescapable.

Here was this little boy, hardly more than three years of age, speaking with eloquence and profundity on something some of the most learned priests were publicly repudiating: the role of Our Blessed Mother in the scheme of salvation, and the redemptive power of the suffering of the Cross.

Here indeed was an outright challenge to the catechists of every nation on earth. Here was an Anglican child, of pre-kindergarten age, without even the most rudimentary instruction in the basic beliefs held by his own religion, flawlessly expounding, albeit in little child's language, some of the greatest truths of traditional Roman Catholicism.

Was it merely coincidental that these truths are, in fact, among the very ones most deliberately omitted from the modern catechisms, drawn up as they are by "teams" of faithless "experts" whose one consuming desire would appear to be the total eradication of any reference whatsoever, to the supernatural, and the life beyond the grave?

Certainly little Brian's grasp of Catholic doctrine posed a mystery beyond comprehension, to all who did not know about Padre Pio.

One very intrigued party was a Liverpool pastor, a friend of Ed's, in whom Ed eventually confided the story.

Father C. desired very much to meet with, and talk

to the child, and Ed, in a diplomatic manner (for the family was not inclined to readily welcome Catholic priests) arranged for his priestly friend to visit the home of Maureen and John.

Father C. had an opportunity to observe Brian, and to speak with, and question him.

Afterwards, he told Ed,

"I am convinced that child is seeing Padre Pio."

Medals by the Hundreds

Brian, meanwhile, was making demands on Ed to keep him supplied with Miraculous Medals. Ed was providing him with packages of 100, and Brian was giving these away as fast as he received them. Maureen, several times, was forced to contact Ed on a matter of urgency.

"Brian says he must have them right away. Do you have any more?"

The Little Apostle of Our Lady was very busy, even although his strength was waning, and the fateful tragic symptoms were growing more pronounced.

By Christmas of 1970, he was already gravely ill.

After the time of the Christmas festivities, Ed visited once again, the home of Maureen and John.

Taking Maureen aside, Ed suggested that perhaps she might derive some consolation, and Brian some extended Christmas joy, if they were to visit the crib in the local Catholic church. Maureen agreed to it, and little Brian was thoroughly delighted.

Ed drove them around to St. Margaret Mary's. They went down the aisle to the crib, and by this time, Brian was in considerable pain. Even to walk a few steps, was agony for the child.

He knelt, wide-eyed, at the crib, and asked Ed all about the different figures.

Ed pointed out the Infant Jesus, explaining that it was the figure of Our Lord as a baby. He showed him St. Joseph, and explained how St. Joseph was the husband of his Lady. Brian asked about the animals, and Ed explained that they were there because Our Lord was born in such great poverty that He had only an animal shelter to be born in.

Maureen went to point to the statue of the Blessed Mother, but Brian interrupted her.

"Oh I know who that is, Mommy!" he cried, happily. **"That's My Lady!"**

At the conclusion of the visit, he took the hand of the statue of Our Lady, kissed it tenderly, and said, "Bye-bye. My Lady!"

The Summons

At the end of January of 1971, Brian was hospitalized.

The first week of February, Ed went to visit him.

From his little sick-bed, the little boy said to his mother,

"Mommy, move My Lady where I can see her."

So his mother moved the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes to the foot of the bed, where the child could look straight down, and gaze upon it.

Shortly after that, his father arrived.

Brian said to his father.

"Daddy, you must get Mommy another little boy."

Ed left the room at this, overcome with emotion.

* * * *

A couple of days later, Brian said to his mother, "Mommy, go and get Father C . . ."

His mother answered,

"I will, son . . . later."

Poor Maureen could not realize what was to take place within the hour.

Within a matter of minutes, the little boy entered into his death-agony. As the doctors gathered about the bed of the child, the mother realized that the end was very close.

She fell on her knees, and she said,

"Jesus, if You really want him, then I give him to You. But just give me a sign!"

She said afterwards that she saw two beams of light come down, and converge on the child's breast, and with this, he heaved a sigh, and passed peacefully away.

"Something About Him"

Arrangements were made for his burial, and the little Anglican child was laid out in his little casket. In his hands he held the statue of his beloved Lady . . . the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, and his Rosary.

Maureen in her great grief approached the local Anglican minister, and it was agreed that Brian would be buried a few days later.

Father C. came forward and asked if he might have the privilege of burying the little boy from the Catholic church.

"That child was a Catholic by desire," he said to Ed.

But because the other arrangements had already been made, Maureen and John declined.

In the meantime, Brian's casket was put into the

chapel of repose. Ed used the word "phenomenal" to describe for me the great numbers of people who came to see the little body of this child apostle of Our Lady.

Even the wife of the funeral director said to Maureen,

"Mrs. D., we have been in this business twenty years now, and never have we encountered such. Why even myself, last night . . . I spent two hours sitting alongside the casket of this child. There is just something about him . . ."

The day before the funeral was to take place, there was a last minute obstacle of some kind, in the proceedings, and the whole affair was delayed for two full days. It was a heavy cross for Maureen and John, for the pain of the farewell was prolonged.

Perhaps it would be best herein, to quote Ed's own words:

"Brian was interred in Liverpool, on February 11, 1971.

"Coming from the graveside, I said to Maureen, "Mo, I know this is a great and terrible hour for you, but if it is any consolation to you, do you know what day it is?"

She said, "No, I don't."

I said,

"Well, it is the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Lady he loved so much."

"Was this not perhaps Her own gracious gesture?"

"Had She not arranged for him to be buried on Her own Feast Day?"

"People flocked to the graveside, and placed an abundance of flowers, and months later, when I was speaking to Maureen, she said to me,

"You know, Eddie, he prepared us for his own death. And I've been thinking about what he meant when he said, 'Mommy, Padre Pio said don't worry anymore. God has forgiven you.'"

She said, "I think he meant by this that God had forgiven me for feeling so bitter when I was first told the terrible news that he was going to die . . ."

* * * *

Ed had finished his story, sitting there in our living room, in my grandmother's amethyst velvet chair.

I looked across the room at our statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, and then at the portrait of Padre Pio. And I experienced, somewhere in the depths of my being, something of what Ed had experienced, that first night in our home. It was like seeing them for the first time, all over again.

And I knew.

I knew, and I felt very humble, and honoured.

I knew that I was to be the one to write what had never been written before.

I knew that I was to be the one to write the story of Brian.

This was why God had sent Ed to us.

And this is why, on the mantelpiece in our living room, beneath the portrait of Padre Pio, there is a photo of a little boy.

PRAYER

for obtaining the glorification
of Padre Pio

*O Jesus, crown and prize beyond description of those who are outstanding in humble and heroic faithfulness, in the imitation of Thy virtues, and especially in generously sharing Thy sufferings, men distinguished for being strong and tireless apostles in saving souls, with firm trust I beseech Thee to glorify Thy servant, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, here on earth as well as in heaven, and grant me, through his intercession, the favour I so ardently desire. . .
(Name it) Amen.*

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Roma, 23-12-1968



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