

# Saint Padre Pio's Body Not Found in His Tomb?

by Anne McGinn Cillis

An astounding piece of news has recently come to light, which very well might be the most spectacular of all the miracles attributed to the now-canonized Saint Padre Pio. (Padre Pio was canonized on June 16, 2002. His feast day is September 23.)

Reportedly, an exhumation was conducted by order from the Vatican, preparatory to his Beatification in Rome on May 2, 1999, and overseen by Silvio Cardinal Oddi († June 23, 2001) and other required canonical witnesses.

Padre Pio's tomb is encased in Italian marble weighing three tons, originally lowered by a crane over the casket of the saint, and then cemented to the concrete floor of the crypt in the Capuchin church of Santa Maria della Grazie, attached to the monastery where Padre Pio lived for over fifty years, and who died there in his cell. When the coffin in which his body had been laid to rest after ly-

ing in state in the church sanctuary, was opened in the presence of witnesses, it was found to be completely empty, except for three notable items.

These items were: his robe, his white cincture and his Franciscan sandals. There was no dust, nor residue of deteriorated remains. Nothing. Only the above mentioned items.

John McCaffery (R.I.P.), the author of *The Friar of San Giovanni: Tales of Padre Pio*, was a close friend of Padre Pio. John was also a dear friend of this writer.

Once he told me a fascinating story. "I am only a poor monk who prays," Padre Pio used to say to John, and the sight of vast throngs milling about outside his monastery, truly consternated and perplexed him, so great was his humility.

"Oh Padre," said John, "I know that thousands do come. But after you die, pilgrims coming here will be in the millions!"

Apparently, Padre Pio looked at him with a strange expression. "John", he said slowly, emphasizing every word, "Let them come! I will not be here!"

I was to have on occasion over the many years that would pass, to ponder, and wonder what these strange words of Padre Pio to my friend, John McCaffery might mean.

This writer has interviewed three prominent and credible traditionalists regarding the origin of this amazing story of the empty tomb in the crypt of Padre Pio's church, in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy.

All three agree that at the time of the exhumation, "Nothing was said, except they closed the coffin and told everyone nothing."

Father Carl Pulvermacher, OFM, Cap., well-known in the United States and Canada, and who will celebrate his Golden Jubilee of Fifty Years of Priesthood on September 3 of this year,



has corroborated this story, and referred me to Robert and Christine di Cecco in Connecticut. I have spoken to both these persons, and apparently the late Cardinal Oddi related the facts to a priest named Chamoiné de Porta from France who was the Cardinal's close friend. Chamoiné de Porta is also a close friend of Christine di Cecco's family, and told the di Cecco's this story.

Witnesses were evidently told to remain silent as it appears the monks now occupying Padre Pio's monastery did not want this news to be known. If true, one wonders

why.

San Giovanni Rotondo is now totally Novus Ordo (against everything that Padre Pio stood for). Saint Padre Pio is a hero of the restoration of true Catholicism. He wanted nothing to do with the post-Conciliar liturgical revolution and said the Tridentine Mass until the last day of his life.

Readers are encouraged to write to *Catholic Family News* if they have any information that either challenges or confirms this remarkable story.

Anne McGinn Cillis is the Executive Director of the Padre Pio Institute, Canada.