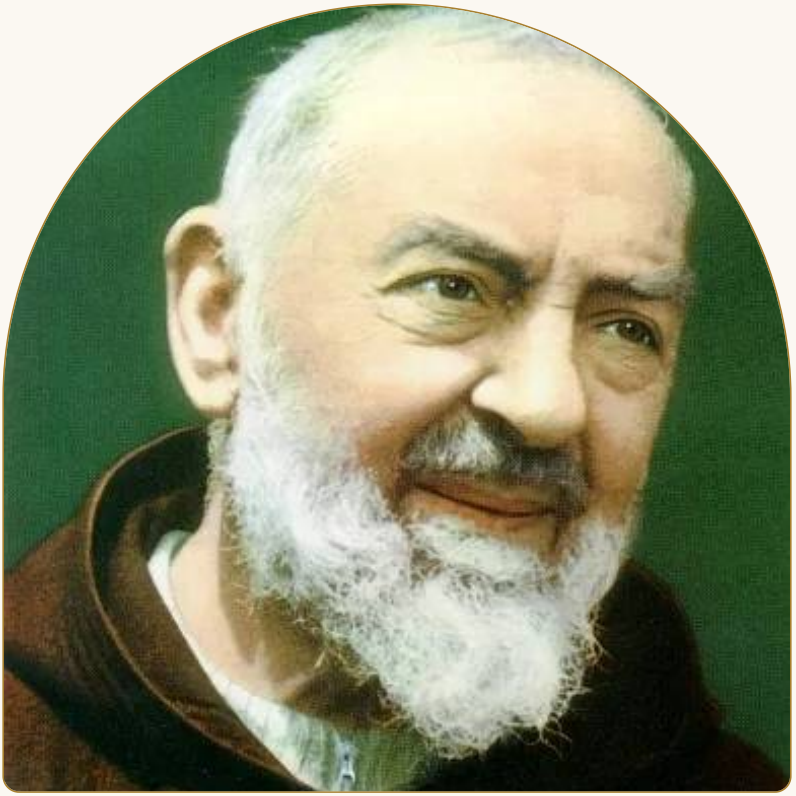


BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: September 23

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IN BRIEF

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)

Italian Capuchin priest, confessor and stigmatic of San Giovanni Rotondo.

Feast day	September 23
Born	May 25, 1887, Pietrelcina (Campania, Italy)
Died	September 23, 1968, San Giovanni Rotondo (Apulia, Italy)
Canonized	June 16, 2002, by Pope John Paul II
Era	20th century
Patron saint of	the sick, confessors, prayer groups

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Life

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Novena to Saint Padre Pio

Shrine of Saint Pio at San Giovanni Rotondo

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, known throughout the world as Padre Pio, was an Italian Capuchin priest who lived for more than fifty years in the friary of San Giovanni Rotondo, in the region of Apulia. Famous for the stigmata he bore for half a century, he was above all a priest of the Mass and the confessional, who welcomed crowds of penitents and founded a large hospital. He died on September 23, 1968, was canonized by Saint John Paul II in 2002, and is celebrated on September 23.

Who was Saint Padre Pio?

Francesco Forgione was born on May 25, 1887, in Pietrelcina, a village in Campania near Benevento, into a family of poor and deeply believing farmers. His parents, Grazio and Maria Giuseppa, worked the land; to pay for their son's education, his father went to work in America for several years.

The boy was devout, reserved and in fragile health. Drawn by a Capuchin brother who came to the village begging for alms, he asked at fifteen to enter the order. In January 1903 he began his novitiate in Morcone and received the name Brother Pio.



Pietrelcina, Padre Pio's home village near Benevento.

Key dates in the life of Padre Pio

- **May 25, 1887**: Born in Pietrelcina.
- **January 1903**: Enters the Capuchin novitiate in Morcone and takes the name Pio.
- **August 10, 1910**: Ordained a priest in the cathedral of Benevento.
- **1910-1916**: For health reasons, lives mostly in his home village.
- **1915-1918**: Drafted during the First World War, he spends most of that time on sick leave.
- **September 1916**: Settles in the friary of Santa Maria delle Grazie in San Giovanni Rotondo.
- **September 20, 1918**: Visible stigmata appear after a prayer before the crucifix in the choir.

- **1931-1933**: By decision of the Holy Office, he is barred from almost all public ministry.
- **May 5, 1956**: Inauguration of the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza hospital.
- **September 23, 1968**: Dies in San Giovanni Rotondo at the age of eighty-one.
- **May 2, 1999**: Beatified by John Paul II.
- **June 16, 2002**: Canonized by John Paul II in Saint Peter's Square.

The stigmata

On September 20, 1918, while praying alone in the choir of the friary church, Padre Pio saw wounds appear on his hands, feet and side, like those of the crucified Christ. He bore them, bleeding and painful, until shortly before his death. They made him suffer physically and morally, and he tried to hide them under fingerless gloves.

Several doctors examined them from 1919 on, reaching differing conclusions. The news spread and drew crowds of the curious and the faithful to this isolated friary on the Gargano peninsula.

The Church was cautious. In the 1920s and early 1930s, the Holy Office took restrictive measures: first limiting his contact with the faithful, then, from 1931 to 1933, forbidding him to celebrate Mass in public or hear confessions. Padre Pio obeyed without protest, and the restrictions were gradually lifted. In canonizing him, the Church did not make the stigmata the reason for his holiness: it recognized the heroic virtue of his life, his prayer and his charity.

Confessor and priest of the Mass

For those who knew him, Padre Pio was first of all a man of prayer. His Mass, long and recollected, was experienced as an intense sharing in the Passion of Christ. He also spent long hours in the confessional every day, receiving

penitents from all over Italy and far beyond, so many that waiting lists had to be organized.

He could be blunt with those who came without a sincere desire for conversion, and very gentle with those who were suffering. He offered demanding spiritual direction by letter, and prayed the rosary constantly, calling it his weapon.

A hospital and prayer groups

Moved by the lack of medical care in the region, Padre Pio launched in the 1940s the project of a large hospital, which he called the "Home for the Relief of Suffering." Funded by donations from all over the world, the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza opened on May 5, 1956. Today it is a major hospital, owned by the Holy See.

In the same years, he encouraged the birth of prayer groups, in response to Pope Pius XII's appeals to pray for the world. These groups, which meet regularly to pray together, are now found in many countries, including the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Philippines.

Padre Pio died during the night of September 23, 1968, the day after a last Mass celebrated before a crowd of the faithful. Since 2010 his body has rested in the lower church of the large modern shrine of San Giovanni Rotondo, which welcomes many pilgrims every year.



The Church of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, designed by Renzo Piano and consecrated in 2004.

Why do people pray to Padre Pio?

Padre Pio has no ancient patronage, but the faithful spontaneously turn to him for certain intentions. Because he founded a hospital and cared for those who suffered, he is invoked for the sick, for patients awaiting a diagnosis and for those who care for them. Because he spent his life in the confessional, he is prayed to for confessors and for the grace of a good confession. Many also ask him for peace of heart.

Beyond the extraordinary phenomena that made him famous, Padre Pio points to what is essential in Christian life: prayer, the Eucharist, the sacrament of forgiveness and charity toward those who suffer. He lived obedience in trial and offered his suffering in union with Christ. His best-known saying sums up his spirituality: pray, hope and don't worry.

Symbols and how to recognize Padre Pio in art

- **The brown Capuchin habit**, with its hood and cord.
- **A white beard** and a gentle face in old age.
- **Fingerless gloves** covering the wounds of his hands.
- **The rosary**, which he held in his hand to the end of his life.

Where to pray to Saint Padre Pio

- **San Giovanni Rotondo** (Apulia, Italy): the shrine of Saint Pio, with the friary, the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie and the church where his body rests.
- **Pietrelcina** (Campania): his birthplace, the churches of his childhood and Piana Romana, where he loved to pray.
- **Morcone** (Campania): the Capuchin friary of his novitiate.
- **Benevento**: the cathedral where he was ordained a priest.
- **In the United States**: the National Centre for Padre Pio in Barto, Pennsylvania, devoted to his memory.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Padre Pio for Trust and Peace

Padre Pio did not compose a prayer meant to be recited by everyone; his writings are mostly letters of spiritual direction. This page brings together the saying most often attributed to him, the traditional prayer he recited every day for those who asked for his prayers, and an original prayer to Saint Padre Pio for trust and peace of heart.

"Pray, hope and don't worry"

> *"Pray, hope and don't worry."*

This saying, in Italian "Prega, spera e non agitarti," is reported by those close to him and by his biographers as the advice he most readily gave to those who came to see him. It sums up his spirituality: prayer and hope win out over anxiety.

The prayer he said every day

According to the Capuchins of San Giovanni Rotondo, Padre Pio recited every day, for all who asked him to pray for them, a traditional prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus known in English as the "Efficacious Novena to the Sacred Heart." It is often attributed, without certainty, to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. It rests on three promises of Jesus in the Gospel. Here is its first invocation; the text is in the public domain.

O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you." Behold, I knock, I seek and I ask for the grace of... (name your intention).

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.

The next two invocations follow the same pattern with two other sayings of Christ: "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you" (John 16:23) and "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). The first one quotes the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 7, verse 7.

Prayer to Saint Padre Pio for trust

Saint Padre Pio, you spent your life praying, celebrating Mass and welcoming sinners: pray for me.

You bore the wounds of Christ in your flesh and suffered without complaining: teach me to unite my troubles to those of Jesus and not to be crushed by them.

You obeyed when the Church asked you to withdraw: give me humility and patience when I feel misunderstood. You built a house to relieve suffering: I entrust to you the sick, those who care for them and those who are waiting for a diagnosis.

Obtain for me the grace of a good confession and peace of heart. I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence). May I learn with you to pray, to hope and not to worry. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina is celebrated on September 23, the anniversary of his death. September 20 recalls the appearance of his stigmata in 1918, and May 25 his birth.

Pray to him when anxiety takes hold, before a medical test or an operation, at the bedside of a sick person, or before going to confession. Many prayer groups pray the Efficacious Novena together each week. For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Padre Pio and read the life of Padre Pio.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Padre Pio

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina. It is not an official liturgical text, nor a text written by the saint. To finish it on the eve of his feast, start on September 14, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross; it ends on September 22, and his feast falls on September 23.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation, and say the prayer of the day followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. Padre Pio prayed the rosary without ceasing: you can add a decade. The small act suggested for each day helps you live it with him.

You can pray this novena alone, as a family or in a prayer group, in the spirit of the groups Padre Pio himself encouraged. If you miss a day, do not give up: pick up where you left off and finish the nine days. Remember his advice to those who came to him burdened with worries: pray, hope and don't worry.

The nine days follow his life: the faith of his village, his entry among the Capuchins, the Mass and the confessional at the center of his priesthood, the wounds he bore, the years of obedience under restrictions, the hospital he founded and the prayer groups he encouraged. Each stage is an invitation to grow in trust, whatever intention you bring to these days.



Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) in a church statue or window.

Day 1: A village faith

In Pietrelcina, Francesco grew up in a farming family for whom prayer was part of the day, like work in the fields. Holiness is often rooted in a simple faith, handed on without speeches.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the faith I have received. Keep it alive and simple in my daily life.

Today: Pray for a moment with your family, or for your family.

Day 2: Giving yourself completely

At fifteen, Francesco became Brother Pio among the Capuchins, in the poverty of Saint Francis. He was not choosing a career, but to belong entirely to Christ.

Prayer: Lord, I want to belong to you more. Show me what I can give you today.

Today: Offer God one hour of your day, living it with him.

Day 3: The Mass at the center

For Padre Pio, the Mass was the heart of everything: he lived the Passion of Christ there with an intensity that struck the faithful. The Eucharist is not one rite among others: it is Christ giving himself.

Prayer: Jesus, present in the Eucharist, help me receive you with faith and live from your presence.

Today: Go to a weekday Mass, or spend some time in adoration.

Day 4: Forgiveness received

Thousands of people waited for hours to go to confession to Padre Pio. Many left transformed. God's forgiveness is always greater than our sins.

Prayer: God of mercy, give me the courage to acknowledge my sins and the joy of receiving your forgiveness.

Today: Make an examination of conscience and, if possible, go to confession.

Day 5: Carrying the cross

For fifty years, Padre Pio bore painful wounds. He did not seek suffering, but he offered it, united to Christ's, for the salvation of others.

Prayer: Lord, I present my sufferings to you. Unite them to yours, and let them serve some good.

Today: Offer one of today's annoyances for someone who is suffering.

Day 6: Obeying in trial

When the Holy Office forbade him to celebrate Mass in public and to hear confessions, Padre Pio obeyed without rebellion. For two years he prayed in the silence of his friary. Humble obedience is a form of trust.

Prayer: Lord, when I feel misunderstood or pushed aside, keep me from bitterness and give me peace.

Today: Accept without complaining a decision you do not like.



Praying with Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio).

Day 7: Relieving suffering

Padre Pio was not content to pray for the sick: he had a hospital built, and wanted it to be beautiful and dignified. Prayer and action go together.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you the sick, caregivers and all who are waiting to be healed.

Today: Visit a sick person, or support a work that cares for the sick.

Day 8: Praying together

Padre Pio encouraged the birth of prayer groups, so that Christians would meet regularly to pray for the world. Prayer in common is a strength.

Prayer: Lord, teach us to pray together, and make our communities places of peace.

Today: Pray the rosary with others, or join a prayer group.

Day 9: Pray, hope and don't worry

Padre Pio's most famous saying expresses what matters most: prayer opens us to hope, and hope drives out worry. He died peacefully, with the rosary in his hands.

Prayer: Lord, at the end of this novena, I place my intention in your hands. Through the intercession of Saint Padre Pio, help me to pray, to hope and not to worry. Amen.

Today: Write down what worries you, then entrust it to God in prayer.

Closing prayer

Saint Padre Pio, at the end of these nine days, I entrust to you the intention I have presented. Pray for the sick, for priests and for those who have drifted away from God's forgiveness. Obtain for us peace of heart and complete trust in the Lord. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Padre Pio and pray the prayer to Saint Padre Pio.

PILGRIMAGE

Shrine of Saint Pio at San Giovanni Rotondo

San Giovanni Rotondo, a small town on the Gargano promontory in Apulia, is where Saint Padre Pio lived from 1916 until his death in 1968. Around the Capuchin friary, a vast shrine and a large hospital have grown up, making it one of the most visited pilgrimages in Italy. The saint's body is displayed there for the veneration of the faithful.

The friary and the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie

When Padre Pio arrived in 1916, the Capuchin friary was an isolated place, set apart from the town. He spent fifty-two years there. The small church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, next door, is where he celebrated Mass and heard confessions; beside it, a larger church was built in the 1950s to hold the crowds. Visitors can see the crucifix in the choir before which he was praying when the stigmata appeared, on September 20, 1918, as well as his cell and places of his daily life, preserved by the friars.



Shrine of Saint Pio at San Giovanni Rotondo.

The church of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

In the face of the influx of pilgrims, a new church was built nearby to plans by the architect Renzo Piano and consecrated in 2004. It can hold several thousand faithful under a wide roof supported by stone arches. Since 2010, the body of Padre Pio, exhumed in 2008, has rested in the lower church, in a glass reliquary before which pilgrims file past.

The Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza

Not far from the friary stands the "Home for the Relief of Suffering," the hospital Padre Pio wanted, inaugurated in 1956. It has remained an important medical center for all of southern Italy. For the saint, this work was part of his mission just as prayer was: caring for the body, with competence and dignity, was a way of loving.

Praying at San Giovanni Rotondo

Before your visit, you can reread the life of Padre Pio. On site, Mass, the sacrament of reconciliation, widely offered by the Capuchin friars, and a time of silence before the saint's body are at the heart of the pilgrimage. You can also follow the monumental Way of the Cross that climbs the neighboring hill. The prayer to Saint Padre Pio can accompany this moment. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Other places of Padre Pio

- **Pietrelcina** (Campania): his birthplace, the churches of his childhood, and Piana Romana, the family property where he loved to pray.
- **Morcone** (Campania): the Capuchin friary where he made his novitiate in 1903.
- **Benevento**: the cathedral where he was ordained a priest in 1910.
- **Monte Sant'Angelo** (Apulia): a few dozen miles away, the Shrine of Saint Michael the Archangel, which pilgrims often combine with their visit.

Practical information

San Giovanni Rotondo is in the province of Foggia; the nearest train station is Foggia, from which buses depart. The shrine is very busy, especially around September 23 and in summer: it is advisable to plan your stay in advance. Times for Mass, confession, and access to the crypt vary by season: check with the shrine, run by the Capuchin friars, before you come.

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