



April
HOLY HEROES
Saint Pio of Pietrelcina
"Padre Pio"
Feast Day, Sept. 23

Padre Pio was born Francesco Forgione on May 25, 1887, in Pietrelcina, Italy, into a simple peasant family. Early in life Padre Pio showed a love for the things of God. He liked to sing, play church and preferred to be by himself where he could read and pray. Later as an adult, he said as a child, he had spoken with Jesus, Mary, and his guardian angel. At the age of 15 he entered the Capuchin Franciscan Friars, who are known for their holiness and simple way of life. He was ordained a priest in 1910.

After celebrating Mass on Sept. 20, 1918, as he was praying before the Crucifix, Padre Pio received the "stigmata." This means that his hands, feet and side were pierced with the nail marks and the lance wound of Jesus Crucified. Doctors estimated that for the next 50 years he lost a cup of blood every day. His five wounds were deep, bleeding and painful, but completely free of inflammation and swelling.

News of his holiness spread quickly. Millions of people attended his Masses that were said with dignity and intense devotion. He received letters from believers all over the world asking for prayers, advice, or cures. People waited as much as two weeks to have him hear their confession, where he spent up to 16 hours a day. His whole life was spent in long hours of prayer and sacrifice. Being the mirror of Christ's Passion, he had a very deep union with God, a burning love for the Eucharist, and a great devotion to Our Blessed Mother.

With a rosary in his hands, and the words "Jesus and Mary" on his lips he died on Sept. 23, 1968. Over 500,000 people attended his canonization by Pope John Paul II on June 16, 2002. Today his tomb is the most visited shrine in Europe.

To learn more about the miraculous life of Saint Pio, see the movie Padre Pio, Miracle Man, from Ignatius Press. www.ignatius.com.

"I want to be only a poor Friar who prays... Pray, hope and don't worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer... Prayer is the best weapon we have; it is the key to God's heart. You must speak to Jesus not only with your lips but with your heart. In fact on certain occasions you should speak to Him only with your heart..."

Padre Pio