



# The Little Flower Weekly

A Supplement to the St. Therese Parish Bulletin



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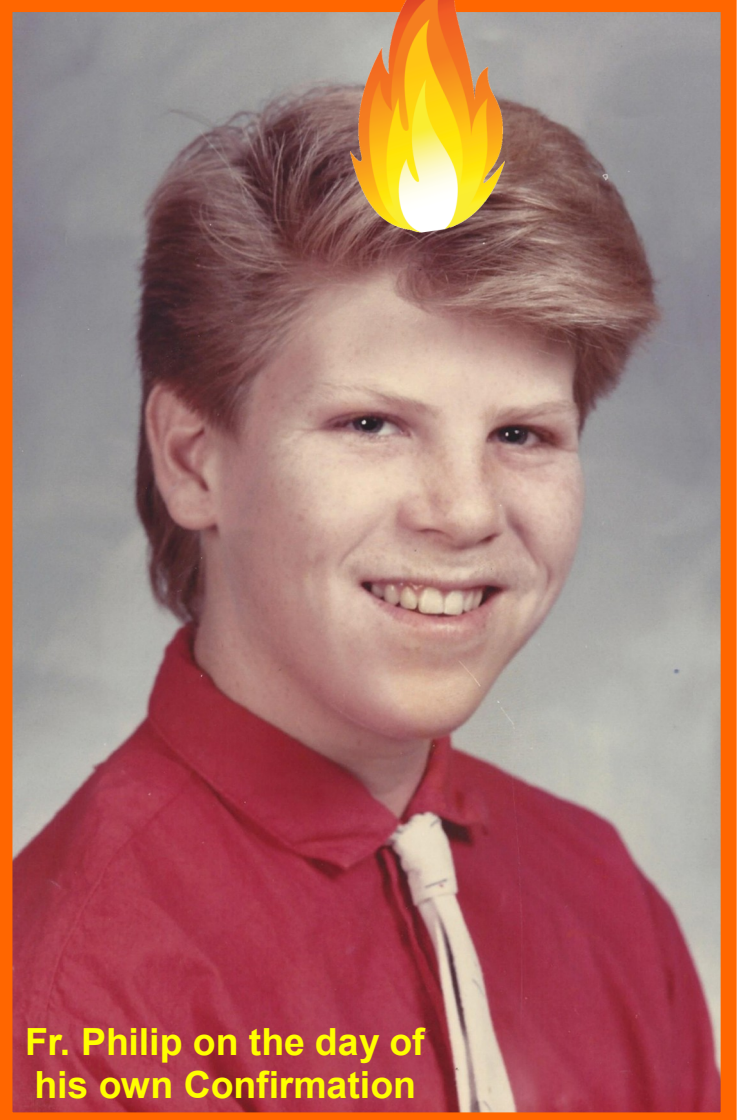
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# The Sacrament of Confirmation

## The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit



Fr. Philip on the day of his own Confirmation

As you've been reading and hearing about, Bishop Robert Barron will be here to celebrate the **5:00 p.m. outdoor Mass next Saturday, September 26.**

There are approximately 110 Confirmation students scheduled to receive this very important Sacrament. Each student has a sponsor and each will have two of their family members there as well. That means that we are expecting **440 people** at this Mass!

Because of this, there will be **NO PARKING allowed in the lot**—only in the street—as we will have to utilize the entire space for chairs and benches to allow for social distancing. For this reason, **PLEASE...PLEASE...PLEASE do not come to that Mass unless you are one of the 440 people mentioned above!** For the confirmation families, please consider carpooling as there are only so many spots on the street within easy walking distance. Many of the students and their families may have to walk for several blocks (wear comfortable shoes!). You should also leave earlier than you normally would to get here, considering the parking situation. Remember...the Mass will start whether you are there or not.

If you are thinking, "...one more won't hurt," just consider how many other people have the same thought as you. There are **FOUR MASSES** in English on Sunday (7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 5:00 p.m.), as well as a Traditional Latin Mass at 1:00 p.m. Please make arrangements to attend one of those Masses.

**LIVE STREAMED MASS!** Good News!!! The Confirmation Mass will be live streamed on the Church's Facebook page (access it by going to the home page of our website and clicking on the link you will see there) AND it will be uploaded to our YouTube page by that evening—or the next day at the latest (Our YouTube Channel is also accessible through our home page).



**Thank you for your consideration!**  
God bless you,  
Fr. Philip Sullivan, OCD



# In Honor of Padre Pio's Feast on September 23

Padre Pio (Francesco Forgione) was born on May 25, 1887, to Giuseppa and Grazio Forgione in the small farming town of Pietrelcina, Italy. Although the Forgiones were poor, they were certainly rich in their faith life and in the love of God. Even as a young boy, Francesco had already shown signs of extraordinary gifts of grace. At the age of five, he dedicated his life to God. From his early childhood, he showed a remarkable recollection of spirit and a love for the religious life. His mother described him as a quiet child who loved to go to church and to pray. As a young boy, he was able to see and communicate with not only his guardian angel but also with Jesus and the Virgin Mary. In his simplicity, Francesco assumed everyone had the same experiences. Once a woman who noticed his spiritual demeanor asked him, "When did you consecrate your life to God? Was it at your first Holy Communion?" and he answered, "Always, daughter, always."

When Francesco was fifteen years old, he was admitted to the novitiate of the Capuchin Order of the Friars Minor in Morcone, Italy. He was admired by his fellow-students as well as by his Superiors for his exemplary behavior and his deep piety. One of the novices stated, "There was something which distinguished him from the other students. Whenever I saw him, he was always humble, recollected, and silent. What struck me most about Brother Pio was his love of prayer." On August 10, 1910, at the age of twenty-three, Padre Pio was ordained to the priesthood. For him, the celebration of the Holy Mass was the center of his spirituality. Due to the long pauses of contemplative silence into which he entered at various parts of the Holy Sacrifice, his Mass could sometimes last several hours. Everything about him spoke of how intensely he was living the Passion of Christ. The parish priest in Pietrelcina called Padre Pio's Mass, "an incomprehensible mystery." When asked to shorten his Mass, Padre Pio replied, "God knows that I want to say Mass just like any other priest, but I cannot do it."

His parishioners were deeply impressed by his piety and, one by one, they began seek his counsel. For many, even a few moments in his presence proved to

be a life-changing experience. As the years passed, pilgrims began to go to him by the thousands, from every corner of the world, drawn by the



spiritual riches which flowed so freely from his extraordinary ministry. To his spiritual children he would say, "It seems to me as if Jesus has no other concern but the sanctification of your soul."

Padre Pio is understood above all else as a man of prayer. Before he was thirty years old he had already reached the summit of the spiritual life known as the "unitive way," or the transforming union with God. He prayed almost continuously. His prayers were usually very simple. He loved to pray the Rosary and recommended it to others. To someone who asked him what legacy he wished to leave to his spiritual children, his brief reply was, "My child, the Rosary." He had a special mission to the souls in Purgatory and encouraged everyone to pray for them. He used to say, "We must empty Purgatory with our prayers."

Padre Pio suffered from poor health his entire life, once saying that his health had been declining since he was nine years old. After his ordination, he remained in his hometown of Pietrelcina, separated from his religious community, for more than five years due to his precarious health. Although the cause of his prolonged and debilitating illnesses remained a mystery to his doctors, Padre Pio did not become discouraged. He offered all of his bodily sufferings to God as a sacrifice for the conversion of souls. He experienced many spiritual sufferings as well. "I am fully convinced that my illnesses are due to a special permission of God," he said.

Shortly after his ordination, he wrote a letter to his spiritual director asking permission to offer his life as a victim for sinners. He wrote, "For a long time I have felt in myself a need to offer myself to the Lord as a victim for poor sinners and for the souls in Purgatory. It seems to me that Jesus wants this." The marks of the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, appeared on Padre Pio's body on Friday, September 20, 1918, while he was praying before a crucifix after Mass. He was thirty-one years old and became the first stigmatized priest in the history of the Church (St. Francis of Assisi was not a priest). With resignation and serenity, he bore the painful wounds in his hands, feet, and side for fifty years.

**In addition, God endowed Padre Pio with many extraordinary spiritual gifts and charisms, including the gift of healing, bilocation, prophecy, miracles, discernment of spirits, the ability to abstain from both sleep and nourishment (it's on record that he went 20 days consuming nothing but the Eucharist), the ability to read hearts, the ability to speak and understand languages he'd never studied, the gift of conversions, the grace to see angelic beings in form, and the phenomenon of fragrance emanating from his wounds.** When a friend once questioned him about these charisms, Padre Pio said, "You know, they are a mystery to me, too." Although he received more than his share of spiritual gifts, he never sought or felt worthy of them.

His day began at 2:30 a.m. when he would rise to begin his prayers and to make his preparation for Mass. He was able to carry on a busy apostolate with only a few hours of sleep each night and an amount of food that was so small (300 to 400 calories a day) that his fellow priests stated that it was not enough food to keep a small child alive. Between Mass and confessions, his workday lasted 19 hours. He very rarely left the monastery and, in 51 years, never took even a day's vacation from his grueling schedule. He never read a newspaper, listened to the radio, or watched TV—the last of which he cautioned his spiritual children against doing.

In his monastery in San Giovanni Rotondo, he lived the Franciscan spirit of poverty with detachment from self, possessions, and comforts. He always had a great love for the virtue of chastity, and his behavior was modest in all situations and with all people. In his lifetime, Padre Pio reconciled thousands of men and women

back to their faith. The prayer groups he established have spread throughout the world. He founded a hospital (conceived of in 1939 by Padre Pio, finally opened in 1956, and still running today), which he called, "The Home for the Relief of Suffering." He saw the image of Christ in the poor, the suffering, and the sick, and he gave himself particularly to them. He once said, "Bring God to all those who are sick. This will help them more than any other remedy."

Serene and well prepared, he died on September 23, 1968, at the age of eighty-one—although, since he was young, he always thought death was imminent. He died as he had lived, with his Rosary in his hands. His last words were "Jesú, Maria," which he repeated over and over until he breathed his last. Similar to what our patroness St. Therese said, he often declared, "My real mission will begin after my death." In one of the largest liturgies in Vatican history, he was canonized on June 16, 2002, by St. John Paul II.

Padre Pio acknowledged that he had received numerous spiritual gifts from the Lord, but he always understood that they were exactly that—gifts from God that belonged to God. Padre Pio never felt worthy of any of them and took no credit for them. When a friend once questioned him about the many favors he had received from the Lord, Padre Pio said simply, "You know, they are a mystery to me too." On one occasion, Padre Pio told his spiritual director, "I attach no importance to my extraordinary state. For this reason I never stop asking Jesus to lead me by the ordinary way followed by everyone else, for I am well aware that the way by which Divine Mercy is leading me is not suitable for my soul, accustomed as it is to needing food." On another occasion he said, "God made all things. His creation includes the stars and the humblest domestic utensils. I belong to the s e c o n d category."

(On the next two pages are examples and stories of some of his spiritual gifts.)



# Padre Pio's Spiritual Gifts

## THE GIFT OF BILOCATION

This gift of being able to be present in two places at the same time is an uncommon spiritual gift, but it is also an ancient phenomenon. Besides Padre Pio, several other Christian saints and monks were adept at bilocation, including St. Anthony of Padua, St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Alphonsus Ligouri, and St. Severus of Ravenna. Author Stuart Holroyd relates a few of the many stories of Padre Pio's miraculous bilocations:

During World War I, an Italian general, after a series of defeats, was on the point of committing suicide when a monk entered his tent and said, "Such an action is foolish," and promptly left. The general didn't know of the existence of Padre Pio until sometime later; but he later identified him as the monk who saved his life.

During World War II, an Italian pilot bailed out of a blazing plane. His parachute failed to open but he miraculously fell to the ground without injury. He told his Commanding Office that as he fell to the ground, a monk had caught him and carried him down to earth. His CO said he was obviously suffering from shock and sent him home on leave. However, when he told his mother, she said: "That was Padre Pio. I prayed to him so hard for you!" Then she showed him a picture of the Padre. "That's the man!" said the pilot. He later went to thank Padre Pio for his intervention. Padre Pio replied, "That's not the only time I saved you. At Monastir, when your plane was hit, I made it glide safely to earth." The pilot was astounded because that very thing had happened some time before, and there was no way he could have known about it.

## THE GIFT OF READING HEARTS

One of the things Padre Pio was most famous for was his ability as a confessor. Kenneth Woodward writes: "Padre Pio is credited with the gift of 'reading hearts'—that is, the ability to see into the souls of others and know their sins without hearing a word from the penitent. Padre Pio was able to discern when someone was being deceitful in Confession or simply had forgotten a serious sin, perhaps through lack of an adequate examination of conscience. In such cases he was able to tell the penitent exactly what her or she did and when, as well as any relevant circumstances. Some came to his confessional who did not believe in his gifts but just wanted to test him. These were invariably unmasked, often in harsh ways. In the end they often repented, made a sincere confession, and renewed their lives, despite their initial bad intentions.

## THE GIFT OF PROPHECY AND HEALING

Padre Pio's gifts of prophecy and healing were demonstrated in his encounters with St. Pope John Paul II. When the young Fr. Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II) learned about this Italian monk who had the stigmata, he went to Italy in 1947 to go to confession to him and ended up meeting with him several times. Fr. Wojtyla laughingly told some of his friends that during the visit Padre Pio remarked, "Someday you will be pope." One of these friends, an old Polish priest, said that Fr. Wojtyla had often told about this

prophecy, joking that it was impossible; however, the priest said that after Fr. Wojtyla became the Archbishop of Krakow, he no longer mentioned it—because he feared it might well come true.

In 1962, while Bishop Wojtyla was in Rome attending Vatican II, he received from Krakow a letter which informed him that one of his main collaborators was seriously ill with throat cancer. Although the hope of saving her was almost nil, the doctors decided to schedule an operation. Wojtyla wrote Padre Pio a letter in Latin about the situation and, right before the operation, she was suddenly and inexplicably healed.

Some sixteen years after that, in August of 1978, gossip circulated in Rome about Padre Pio's meetings with Cardinal Wojtyla back in the 40's when he told him he would someday become Pope. However, when Cardinal Albino Luciani was elected and became Pope John Paul I, Wojtyla felt a huge relief. However, when—only thirty-three days later—Pope John Paul I died, Cardinal Wojtyla sadly prepared to leave Poland for Rome to participate in the next papal election, believing it would be the last time he would live in his beloved native home—which, of course, it was, as he was elected Pope on October 16, 1978—taking the same name as his predecessor.

### THE GIFT OF THE STIGMATA

The gift of the stigmata is another rare spiritual gift, in which the individual receives on their body the wounds of Christ. A little more than a month after it began, Padre Pio wrote to Padre Benedetto of his experience:

“It all happened in a flash. While all this was taking place, I saw before me a mysterious Person, similar to the One I had seen on August 5, differing only because His hands, feet and side were dripping blood. The sight of Him frightened me: what I felt at that moment is indescribable. I thought I would die and would have if the Lord hadn’t intervened and strengthened my heart, which was about to burst out of my chest. The Person disappeared, and I became aware that my hands, feet and side were pierced and were dripping with blood” (Ep., V. 1, no. 5 10, p. 1094).”

Padre Pio had just received the visible stigmata. He had not desired such a thing and said, “I am dying of pain because of the wound but mostly because of the resulting embarrassment which I feel deep within my soul. Would that Jesus, who is so good, grant me the grace of relieving me of the embarrassment which these outward signs cause me” (Ep. V. 1, p. 1904). Not the wound nor the pain did he wish removed, but only the visible signs which at the time he considered to be an indescribable and almost unbearable humiliation.

For the next fifty years, the continuous and profuse effusion of blood, accompanied by a sweet fragrance, came to be regarded as a prolonged miracle, because, as the experts correctly state, blood for its production requires nourishment while this friar’s extraordinary frugality was such as hardly to maintain the life of a small child.

### THE GIFT OF SPIRITUAL VISIONS

Another gift worth mentioning is that Padre Pio spoke frequently in visions with Jesus, Mother Mary, and his own guardian angel. On many other occasions he spent the night in intense struggles with the Devil, physical attacks that literally left him bruised and beaten. Other monks often heard the noise of these encounters, although only Padre Pio saw the demons. As well as these invisible assaults, Padre Pio also suffered the persecution of people within the hierarchy of his beloved Church; for example, for ten years he was not permitted to serve Mass publicly or hear confessions.

### THE GIFT OF THE EMANATION OF FRAGRANCE

The extraordinary charism of perfume in the life of Padre Pio is well known and well documented and often communicated the message of a grace to be received, acted as a comfort to those who were suffering, served as a warning of impending danger, was seen as a sign of Padre Pio’s protection, and an admonishment to those who were straying off course. At times, the perfume could be perceived directly from Padre Pio’s person, his clothing, his belongings, on the things he touched, and in the places where he passed through. When his clothing was laundered, the water sometimes gave forth a wonderful perfume. The fragrance could be perceived from a distance, even hundreds of miles away. It was reported that at the time of Padre Pio’s burial, when his body was laid in the crypt, a very noticeable perfume permeated the entire area. Thousands more have experienced the perfume since his death.

In Milan there was an engineer who’d been away from the church for twenty-six years. He had a good friend who was one of Padre Pio’s spiritual sons. This man gave the engineer a small photograph of Padre Pio, which the engineer—although he did not want it—put into his pocket so as to not offend his friend. A bit later, the engineer began noticing an unpleasant odor everywhere he went, which he described as “something burning.” He finally said aloud, “Where is that awful smell coming from?” Suddenly a voice spoke within his heart and said, “It is your extremely bad life!” The experience was a true wake-up call for the engineer, who confessed his sins to Padre Pio and returned to the Church.

A fascinating story regarding the extraordinary perfume of Padre Pio involves an incident that was recorded in the book, *The Pierced Priest*, by Jim Gallagher. Mrs. Kay Dick, the headmistress of St. Jude’s Primary School in Scotland, took time off for vacation. While she was away, the school’s caretaker smelled a strong scent of perfume coming from Kay’s office. When Kay returned from her vacation, the caretaker told her about the unusual phenomenon. Kay immediately noticed the fragrance in her office but couldn’t explain it. Finally, she opened a drawer of her desk and the perfume became so strong that both she and the caretaker had to take a step back. There in the drawer were several picture postcards of Padre Pio. Before she left on her vacation, Kay put the pictures there, praying and entrusting the school to Padre Pio’s protection.

At least four doctors who experienced the charismatic fragrance of Padre Pio wrote testimonies describing it. They tested his blood and described it as “very pure and perfumed.” There have been a number of different fragrances associated with the charismatic perfume of Padre Pio, including roses, lilies, violets, carnations, pine, cologne, incense, honeysuckle, lavender, carbolic acid, fine oriental tobacco, medicine, sulphur, orange blossoms, cinnamon, vanilla, licorice, eucalyptus, phenol acid, and more. Sometimes the fragrance has been described as having a fine, subtle, and delicate nature, while at other times it has been described as strong and overpowering. It has been experienced as coming in waves, wafts, or intermittent bursts of fragrance.

# SAVE THE DATE!

You are invited to a special “Going-Away” celebration for Fr. Philip & Fr. Matthias.

It will be held on **Sunday, October 4**, beginning at the **outdoor 5:00 p.m. Mass**. After Mass, sandwiches, etc., can be picked up from the buffet tables in the Hall (dinner must be eaten **outside**).

Be sure you put the date in your calendars so you won't miss this perfect opportunity to say “farewell” or “until we meet again”.

We hope to see **YOU** there!



We'll all be praying for you, our dear Fathers!

Bring your appetites!