

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

1887-1968

PARADISE

General Luigi Cadorna, chief of staff of the Italian army during the First World War, was saved from suicide by Saint Pio of Pietrelcina. One night in November of 1917, after suffering defeated at Caporetto, the general was prey to despair and was thinking of suicide because of having been replaced as supreme commander by General Armando Diaz and seeing his own military conduct undermined by unbecoming comments. That evening, after posting sentries around his tent with the emphatic order not to let anyone enter, he shut himself up in the tent and took out his revolver to commit suicide... All of a sudden a friar wearing a habit entered the tent. His hands were bleeding and he had a kindly gaze. He stopped for a moment and raised a finger in disapproval. "Come now, general, you will not do something so foolish. You will not carry out a senseless act of despair!"

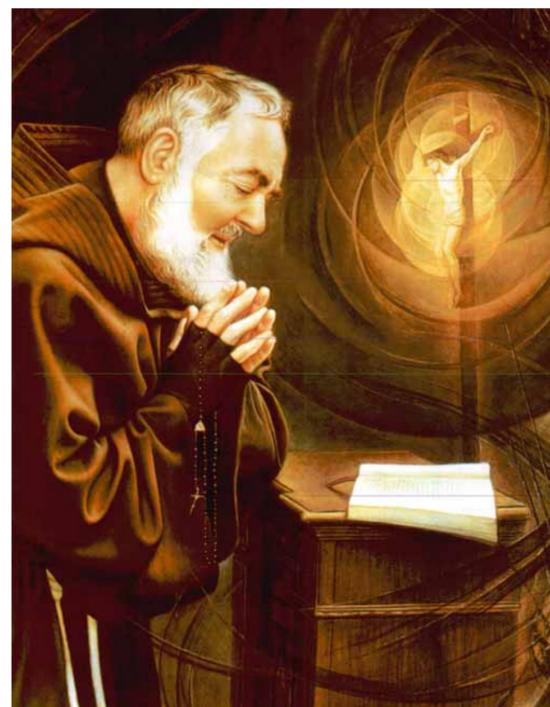
The general, who had given strict orders not to be disturbed by anyone for any reason, was infuriated and rushed outside, but saw no one. The friar had disappeared. The sentries were questioned but swore on their life that they had not seen anyone or let anyone pass. Anger gave way to amazement, and suddenly the obsession with suicide vanished. The general was forced to change his mind; he was saved.

The incident, nevertheless, left him perplexed and he doggedly sought an explanation. Who was that young Franciscan, so insolent as to invade his privacy and so powerful as to make him drop the revolver from his hand? When the general, who had never seen Padre Pio, related the details of the event, he was told that it could be none other than the stigmatic friar of San Giovanni Rotondo: Padre Pio. He felt a great desire to see him again. To understand what had happened to him, General Cadorna left for San Giovanni Rotondo.

At the time, however, the Vatican had directed that Padre Pio be kept in seclusion and that no one speak to him. The general insisted, "At least let me see him!"

"All right," Father Guardian replied, "you will stay there in the hallway while we go into church to make our thanksgiving after lunch. You will see him go by."

Standing in a corner, the general waited. The friars walked by and he recognized his nocturnal visitor: "This is the friar who came to me!" Padre Pio smiled at him and raised his finger in the same gesture, half comical, half threatening, as if to tell him, "You had a close call that awful night!" Another of Padre Pio's bilocations was confirmed by many pilots of the Anglo-American air



force belonging to various nationalities (English, American, Polish, Palestinian) and various religions (Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish). During the last war, every time they flew over Monte Gargano on bombing missions they saw a friar in the air who extended his wounded hands and forbade them to drop their bombs.

Foggia and almost all the towns of Apulia were bombed repeatedly. Not a single bomb, though, fell on San Giovanni Rotondo, Padre Pio's fortress.

At the end of the war, those aviators went up to San Giovanni Rotondo and with absolute certitude recognized Padre Pio as the friar they had seen and encountered on their flights.

