

LIKE THE GOOD SHEPHERD

By Fr. **FRANCESCO D. COLACELLI**

We would like a year of joy, but not one of prolonged festivity that is an end in itself, but one that is full of events that are able to cause reflection, a re-flowering of faith and inspire conversions. This is what we have in mind for 2008. With these ambitious goals we aim to arrange a calendar of events to commemorate in a fitting way the anniversary of the death and birth in heaven of our beloved fellow friar, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, and the 90th anniversary of his receiving of the visible stigmata, that took place in San Giovanni Rotondo on 20 September 1918. The decision to proceed with the exhumation of the body of Padre Pio and to expose it for a number of months for public veneration, must not become an occasion of controversy nor of sterile publicity by the media of a place and name that certainly has no need of fame and popularity.

We must all gather from this event the opportunity to return to reflect on the teachings of this great Saint, on the reasons why the Lord chose to send a prophet like him to our times, impressing on his body the marks of His Passion. On his very stigmata we have organised, for this coming month of September, an international conference with doctors from around the world specialised in medicine, psychology, sociology and theology.

Our wishes are that Padre Pio's voice may reach out to the learned and simple, to those who have faith and to those who have little or none and that we are able to transmit, through different media and languages, one message: God's love for all mankind and every single person. Once Angelo Battisti, a spiritual son of Padre Pio and the administrator of the Home for the Relief of Suffering, asked Padre Pio: "How do you manage to remember everyone who turns to you, all those who come

to visit you and all those who ask for your help from distant places?" "I suppose," he continued, "that you must remember them all generally in a common intention as if you placed them in a large cauldron..." Padre Pio looked him from head to foot and with a smile said to him: "I will throw you into the cauldron! I remember them each by name, I count the number of their hairs and more..."

This is the greatness of the saints. They have the capacity to love every single soul that is entrusted to them.

And this great capacity to love is infinitely greater in God, who as the Good Shepherd, when He loses one of His sheep leaves the ninety-nine to go in search of it and having found it proclaims: "Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep which was lost...there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance". ■