

# EASTER: A REFLECTION OF GOD'S LOVE

By Fr. **FRANCESCO D. COLACELLI**

**I**n the autumn of 1934, amongst the many pilgrims who came to the Capuchin friary of San Giovanni Rotondo was a priest Fr. Giuseppe De Luca from Lucana, already then known as an eminent Catholic intellectual. What took place during Fr. Giuseppe's short visit in the Gargano town is described in a letter he wrote to his friend Giovanni Papini after his return to Rome.

The scholarly priest went to confession to Padre Pio, remained with him for lunch in the friary refectory and talked to him at length. It was certainly not the cultural breadth of the stigmatic that impressed him. In fact, in his letter he described Padre Pio as "unlearned." "Nevertheless," he continued, "he has God, that terrible and awesome God whom we perceive only in our imaginations, and he possesses Him passionately in his soul as well as in his flesh that wounded trembles continuously with terrible sufferings, as if beneath always heavier blows. I have seen what a saint is, not in a life of action but one who lives the passion: who lives God." Fr. Giuseppe then went on to write words of

profound reflection: *"There is a passion, also human, for God, dear Papini, that is a thing of such beauty and such profound sweetness that words fail me. Neither love for a woman, nor love for ideas can be minimally compared to it... This encounter between God and man, I have seen with my own eyes."*

How many lessons can be drawn from these astonishing words! Meeting Padre Pio, Fr. Giuseppe understood that it serves little to search for God in "lofty" thought, in the abstract notions of philosophers and in the rational observations of science that can only go so far in their explanations. God is love and He can be known only by love. And when one falls in love with God, like Padre Pio, no other human love can be minimally compared to it.

But how does one fall in love with God? This is a fitting time to meditate on these things. The Church in fact teaches us during the time of Easter to recall a reality that is too often forgotten or relegated to fable. It is necessary to find again the historic dimension of a God who became man and suffered on our behalf, accepting insults, was spat upon,

who allowed His flesh to be flagellated and crowned with thorns and who carried the cross upon which He would then suffer His last terrible agony before giving up His life. We must remember how this sacrifice is the greatest act of love ("Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"), to obtain eternal life for man without impairing or lessening his freedom.

Meditating on God's immense love for us, can certainly arouse in us a response to this love. *"Love does not forgive whoever has been loved, not to love in his turn,"* (*"Amor che a nullo amato amar perdona"*), wrote Dante seven centuries ago in his Divine Comedy. These words I make my own in my wishes to you this Easter. May you receive many graces this Holy Week and an unwavering faith in the reality of the mysteries we commemorate and that it may assist us to be inflamed with that passionate love for God, also human, that is of *"such beauty and such profound sweetness"* that no words can describe, but that we can experience in our heart. ■