



“BUT ONE THING IS NECESSARY”

by. Francesco D. Colacelli

There were some who were troubled by the exhumation. They could not accept the idea of visiting the crypt and finding it no longer as it had been for the last 40 years, of no longer seeing the block of black Labrador marble on which they, and others like Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta and the Servant of God Pope John Paul II, had placed their hands in prayer. It was of little use to explain to these sufferers of nostalgia that this is part of the process for all saints.

There were others who were troubled by the exposition of his body. Lacking a sound knowledge of Padre Pio's spirituality, it seemed to them to be a violation of his humility, that inspired his whole life. And it was not enough to explain that, even though Padre Pio always sought never to draw attention to himself and to hide his supernatural gifts for which he experienced such “confusion,” he would not have thought twice if he knew, through his gift of reading hearts, that by showing his stigmata, even to people he barely knew, he could have awakened a conscience or enlivened the faith.

Some expressed their opinions quietly, or kept to themselves their perplexity and gladly accepted, in respectful and filial obedience, the Church's decision.

Some instead preferred to make known their disapproval publicly before television cameras drawing attention to themselves and perhaps a little fame.

However, eight and a half million people welcomed the decision made by the Holy See and took advantage of those 17 months in which the body was exposed to pay a visit and see for themselves the mortal remains of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, in the hope of receiving some spiritual benefit and grace.

Even now, since Padre Pio's body has been enclosed in a sarcophagus and is no longer visible to the eyes of the faithful, there have been voices raised in disapproval. Padre Pio's face in repose, a faithful mask of the saint's features shortly after death, had become familiar and dear to many. Those mortal remains marked by the signs of Christ's death and resurrection, had become a point of reference to the prayers, tears and hopes of many. In less than a year and a half the exposition of his body had aroused an intimacy and then a nostalgia and a question asked over and over: Why not leave his mortal remains exposed permanently?

And lastly, there are those who are already troubled, and we have to say with an extraordinary timing, about the future

and still unannounced transfer of his body from the present crypt to that of the new church of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, that was blessed last 21 June by the Holy Father at the end of his pastoral visit to San Giovanni Rotondo.

All this ardent concern, no doubt, demonstrates that Padre Pio is seen by devotees not only as a saint and powerful intercessor, but also as a friend and as one of the family. But how much better it would be if all this concern could go deeper. How much better it would be if all this interest over the mode of Padre Pio's burial could be focused, by the media and especially in our hearts, on the Saint's spirituality and teachings, remembering Jesus' words to Lazarus' sister: “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things: But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

These are my wishes to you this Christmas. May Saint Pio, like a true spiritual father, lead you to the crib of the Child Jesus where you may forget all your troubles and anxieties and listen and delight, like Mary, to Jesus and everything He teaches you.

A very happy and holy Christmas to you all. ■