



LET US REJOICE TOGETHER WITH THE CHURCH

By Bro Mariano Di Vito OFM Cap

How great our joy! Together with the whole Church we rejoice, because the Pope whom we followed and loved for almost 27 years of our lives will this coming 1 May, be proclaimed blessed. The Capuchin Friars however, have also many other reasons why they wish to thank the Lord, who has so willed to glorify in this world too, His Vicar who led the holy people of God into the third millennium.

As well as the personal bond that was established already back in 1948, between the young priest Karol Wojtyla and Padre Pio, that was then consolidated with the various requests of intercession made by the bishop of Cracow to our holy confrere, we feel particularly close to the future Blessed because he was crucial in re-establishing the truth. It was under his pontificate, in fact, on 20 March 1983, that it was possible to begin the diocesan cognitional process for Padre Pio's beatification, which had been blocked because the obligatory "nulla osta" was lacking. Moreover, the former prohibition to visit San Giovanni Rotondo in

pilgrimage was still in force when on 23 May 1987, that "bishop clad in white" knelt at the tomb of the Friar of Pietrelcina, in moving and silent prayer with his hand resting on the granite block that marked the place of his burial. From then on the number of pilgrims increased in an extraordinary way. It was John Paul II who insisted that the process be speeded up, while at the same time requesting the documents be thoroughly studied so as not to leave a shadow of doubt on the sanctity of the Capuchin friar with the stigmata. He it was who beatified him in 1999 and then canonised him in 2002. And it was on this very occasion that he reserved for us Capuchin friars and Padre Pio's devotees two very pleasant surprises: he established the obligatory memorial of Saint Pio on the Church's liturgical calendar and he accepted to compose a prayer for Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, that he recited at the end of his homily, in answer to the invitation of the then minister of our religious province, Fr. Paolo Maria Cuvino.

We also owe to John Paul II's paternal kindness, the concession

of the plenary indulgence on behalf of pilgrims who visit the old church of our friary in San Giovanni Rotondo. And he would have most surely been happy to consecrate himself, on 1 July 2004, the new large church that we had built in order to receive appropriately the many pilgrims and that is named after Saint Pio of Pietrelcina. His by then poor health did not permit him, nevertheless he wished to give us a significant sign of his closeness by donating a monstrance.

Because of all of this we shall be present in St. Peter's square this coming 1 May. However we look forward to being there also so as to be able to draw near, once more, to the fount of his teachings and example and to submit ourselves again to his guidance who, in his apostolic letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, recalled all to the universal vocation to sanctity. That sanctity that for John Paul II and Padre Pio is a goal that has already been attained and that for us is a goal still to be sought and following their example.

My very best wishes to all our readers for this Easter!