



2018, TWO IMPORTANT COMMEMORATIONS

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The year 2018, just begun, will be fully dedicated to the celebration of two important events in Saint Pio's life: the 100th anniversary of his stigmata and the 50th anniversary of his death.


With regards to the first, Saint Pio himself gives a description of what took place in a letter he wrote to Father Benedetto of San Marco in Lamis, his spiritual director, on 22 October 1918: "On the morning of the 20th of last month, in the choir, after I had celebrated Mass I yielded to a drowsiness similar to a sweet sleep. All the internal and external senses and even the very faculties of my soul were immersed in indescribable stillness. Absolute silence surrounded and invaded me. I was suddenly filled with great peace and abandonment which effaced everything else and caused a lull in the turmoil. All this happened in a flash. And while this was taking place I saw before me a mysterious person similar to the one I had seen on the evening of 5 August. The only difference was that his hands and feet and side were dripping blood. This sight terrified me and what I felt at that moment is indescribable. I thought I should die and really would have died if the Lord

had not intervened and strengthened my heart which was about to burst out of my chest. The vision disappeared and I became aware that my hands, feet and side were dripping blood. Imagine the agony I experienced and continue to experience almost every day. The heart wound bleeds continually, especially from Thursday evening until Saturday. Dear Father, I am dying of pain because of the wounds and the resulting embarrassment I feel deep in my soul. I am afraid I shall bleed to death if the Lord does not hear my heartfelt supplication to relieve me of this condition. Will Jesus who is so good, grant me this grace? Will He at least free me from the embarrassment caused by the outward signs?" (Letters I, p. 1218-1219).

As for the second event, Padre Pio died at 2:30 on 23 September 1968, at the age of 81, surrounded by his fellow friars and after having made a last confession.

These events deserve to be celebrated because they powerfully recall the very basis to the whole of the Saint of Pietrelcina's life, namely Jesus Christ. In the first, Christ made Himself visibly present in Padre Pio's body and a participant in His sacrifice, while, in the sec-

ond, the Risen Lord was the beginning and end of his whole earthly existence. Essentially, these two events are the greatest celebration of Saint Pio's faith in Jesus Christ, both in life and in death. This is the reason why the Capuchin Friars of the Sant'Angelo and Padre Pio Foggia Province, will be celebrating the two anniversaries in a special way and with a number of engagements and which will commence officially at Morcone, on 22 January 2018, with a solemn Celebration of the Eucharist. There will be many other cultural, liturgical and celebratory events during the rest of the year and we will keep you updated with news and commentaries in our journal in a section especially dedicated to the anniversary. And as well as *The Voice of Padre Pio's* contribution, *Padre Pio Tv* will be offering programmes with information and reflections.

To conclude, I would like to convey to all Saint Pio's devotees and spiritual children my best wishes for this new year of 2018, and that these anniversaries in Saint Pio's life be an occasion of abundant spiritual fervour and reward for you, to the glory of the Risen and Living Lord Jesus. 

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