



AN UNFORGETTABLE MEETING

by bro FRANCESCO SCARAMUZZI OFM Cap.

On Saturday 17 March 2018, the Holy Father Francis visited Pietrelcina and San Giovanni Rotondo and met with the faithful, the infirm, the clergy and religious and he celebrated the Eucharist in the Saint Pio outdoor church. It was truly a historic day of intense spiritual communion and fervour. Already from early dawn, the Piana Romana region of Pietrelcina with its liturgical hall began to be filled with thousands of pilgrims who wished to participate in this exceptional meeting. The intensity of their fervour united into a single prayer was almost tangible. At 7:50 the Holy Father's helicopter landed. From its beginning to its end, this meeting was unforgettable. The message of his speech had profound reverberations. His invitation to imitate Saint Pio's "heroic example" and virtues, so as to become "instruments of Jesus' love for the weakest," was inspiring and equally his invitation to consider "his unconditional loyalty to the Church." And then to "bear witness to communion, because only communion edifies and is constructive." At 9:30 he arrived by helicopter in San

Giovanni Rotondo, where thousands of faithful also awaited him. His meeting with the children from the Paediatric Oncological ward was one of the special moments. This was followed by the celebration of the Eucharist in the large outdoor church of Saint Pio, filled with the faithful. During his homily, the Pope from the Argentine spoke of the three "valuable legacies" left to us by the Saint of Pietrelcina: prayer, smallness and the wisdom of the Gospel. In the light of this legacy, he encouraged everyone to learn to pray, to pray without distractions, without those "many excuses," and "many urgent things to do," that he called "an inconclusive activism." He urged everyone to consider "the little ones of the Gospel," that is "those who have a humble and open heart, who are poor and needy, who are aware of the need to pray, to entrust themselves and to let themselves be accompanied." Finally, he urged everyone to cultivate the wisdom of the Gospel, which consists in "to know Him, to meet Him, as God who saves and forgives." It was a concise, and splendid homily that we should all read

carefully and completely and which we have printed in this number. This year with the 100th anniversary of Saint Pio's stigmata and the 50th anniversary of his death will be remembered for ever because of this meeting with the Holy Father, and it will be a beacon of light that will show us the way forward as well as for new openings in the future. The memory of the thousands of people who in prayer and joy gathered at the shrine of Saint Pio and the "Home for the Relief of Suffering," and who filled the roads and surrounding spaces will remain incised in the minds of all.

To conclude we can and should make our own the prayer that was addressed to the Lord on that day: "Almighty God, You conceded to Your priest Saint Pio the extraordinary grace to share in Your Son's Cross, and renewed through his ministry Your boundless mercy. May You concede to us, through his intercession, the grace to attain, united always to Christ's passion, the blessedness and glory of His resurrection."

In this we hope and in this we long.



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