Padre Pio Not a Catholic?

From the above examples it appears that Padre Pio did not blindly adhere to the proposition that only Catholics can be saved. Yet, it would be difficult to find someone more committed to the Catholic Church throughout his life than was Padre Pio. His obedience to the hierarchy was legendary, and he humbly submitted to Vatican-authorized suppression and even persecution without resistance. The spirituality of his epistles astonished even Carmelites, and his writings and teachings, born of the school of suffering, are the basis of an effort to make him a Doctor of the Church. 20

"Brother" Peter Dimond concludes his book on salvation with this dogmatic quote: "... only those who die as baptized Catholics can be saved. Anyone who refuses to accept this teaching is not a Catholic." The bizarre conclusion forced by this statement is that Padre Pio was not a Catholic, at least according to the Catholic Church, and yet they publish a booklet about him that appears designed to confuse and mislead others into thinking that Padre Pio would support their teachings.

Padre Pio lived by the Spirit of God, not by the letter of the law, except when his superiors in religion routinely commanded obedience of him. His ingenuous openness to the plentitude of God’s mercy anticipated the explicit declarations of the Church during and after the Second Vatican Council on the possibility that non-Catholic churches can be a "means of salvation," 23 and on the reception by non-Catholics of the sacraments in certain cases. 22 Padre Pio actually believed that the gospel of Jesus Christ was Good News!

References

5.  http://www.mostholyfamilymonastery.com/Outside_the_Catholic_Church_There_is_Absolutely_No_Salvation.html
10.  Ibid., p. 108.
17.  Ruffin, *Padre Pio*, p. 241. (Ruffin correctly identifies the King who died in 1936 as George V, while the other two sources incorrectly call him Edward VI).
21.  Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 3. (www.vatican.va) It follows that the separated Churches and Communities as such, though we believe them to be deficient in some respects, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church.
22.  On commitment to Ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, n. 46. (www.vatican.va). "In this context, it is a source of joy to note that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases, to administer the Sacraments of the Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church but who greatly desire to receive these sacraments, freely request them and manifest the faith which the Catholic Church professes with regard to these sacraments."

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Padre Pio on Salvation Outside the Church

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It is quite unfortunate that alleged quotations or viewpoints attributed to Padre Pio have frequently been used to justify the stances, rumors, or agendas of various individuals or groups. Often it is difficult to find reliable documentation to verify their involvement in such scenarios as the "three days of darkness," his alleged opposition to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, 7 or his purported support of Garabandal. 3 Another area of speculation focuses on what he would think of the current state of the Church – where would this Tridentine rite Catholic, known for his lifelong obedience and loyalty to the hierarchy, place his support along the Novus Ordo – Traditionalist – reactionary spectrum?

It is not surprising, then, to find some who contend that St. Padre Pio held their own strict interpretation of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* – outside the Catholic Church no one can be saved. The most notable proponents of this presumed stance of Padre Pio are to be found among the Sedevacantists (the See of Peter is vacant, since it has been occupied by invalidly elected and/or heretical popes since Vatican II). In particular, "Brother" Michael Dimond, a Sedevacantist from the non-canonical Most Holy Family Monastery in Fillmore, New York, has recently written and published an 86-page illustrated booklet on the life of Padre Pio. Regrettably, he promotes this booklet as containing evidence that Padre Pio would support the teaching that only those who die as Catholics can be saved. Neither can those invoking this teaching be true Catholics.
In 1936, Adelaide, who had grown older and was nearing death, made one last trip to San Giovanni Rotondo. As she said good-bye to Padre Pio at the end of this visit, the saintly priest pointed heavenward, saying to the Protestant Adelaide, “I hope we will see each other again soon, but if we don’t see each other here, we will see each other in heaven.” 

Did Padre Pio receive a revelation that Adelaide Pyle had secretly ‘in pectore’ converted to the Catholic Faith? If that were true, he most certainly would have told this to his daughter Mary, who was obviously distraught from worrying over her mother’s salvation. Further, it seems likely that if Adelaide had converted, she would have shared this good news with her convert daughter. It is reasonable to conclude then that Padre Pio believed that this particular person who died outside the Church could be saved. In addition, there is evidence that Padre Pio would have been willing to hear Adelaide’s confession, and grant her sacramental absolution. On one occasion, she had confided to her daughter her great desire to kneel before Padre Pio in his confessional, but she lamented that her inability to speak Italian made this impossible. When Padre Pio heard of this, (apparently it was after her death), he bemoaned, "Oh! If she had only done it! As for the language, I would have taken care of that!"

King George V of England, a Baptized Protestant

“Let us pray for a soul . . .”

One evening in 1936 Padre Pio was conversing with some dear friends in his cell. Among those present were Dr. Guglielmo Sanguinetti and Angelo Lupi, who would respectively become the medical director and the builder of Padre Pio’s hospital years later. In the middle of their conversation, Padre Pio suddenly interrupted the discourse with the words, “Let us pray for a soul soon to appear before the tribunal of God.” With that he bowed his head, and his guests, although astonished, kneeled and joined him in prayer. When they had finished, Padre Pio announced that they had been praying for the king of England. The next morning, the news, the blare forthed on the fiery radio of the unexpected death of King George V of England the previous evening. Two of the sources for this story report that Padre Aurelio was also present in the room, while another source states that Padre Pio went to the fiery cell of Padre Aurelio at midnight that evening and asked him to join him in prayers for the king of England who “at that moment” was to appear before God.

An Anglican and the son of the future King Edward VII, George was baptized on July 7, 1865 in the private chapel of Windsor Castle. Upon accession to the throne in 1910, the new king swore the following required oath: “I, N., do solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God, profess, testify and declare that I am a faithful Protestant, and that I will, according to the true intent of the enactments to secure the Protestant Succession to the Throne of my realm; uphold and maintain such enactments to the best of my power.”

In all likelihood, the king was in his final agony or had already died when Padre Pio requested prayers for him, since he was “at that moment” to appear before God. If he believed that the soul of this Protestant were doomed to the everlasting fire, why would he pray for him, and also ask others including another priest to do so? Perhaps Padre Pio did not believe this is necessarily so. However, it is not recorded or implied that he asked his conferees to pray for the deathbed conversion of the king – an important intention that Padre Pio in all likelihood would have explicitly stated, if such were his purpose. Although he mentioned the king to his priest colleague, he did not tell the friends in his room that they were praying for a non-Catholic until they had finished their prayers. One cannot therefore say that it is to be assumed that as Catholics they were praying for the king’s conversion.

Since as far as is known they were not specifically asked to pray for his deathbed conversion, there are two alternatives. The first is that they were simply praying for the salvation of a Protestant whom Padre Pio did not consider doomed because of his non-Catholic religion; but this would not be acceptable to one who holds that Padre Pio subscribed to a literal extra ecclesiam nulla salus position. Those who hold that position are left with the unlikely alternative that they were praying for a Catholic, and that Padre Pio had requested the prayers because he was given a private revelation that King George V of England was secretly a Roman Catholic, loyal to the Pope!

Julius Fine, an Unbaptized Devout Jew

“Julius Fine is saved . . .”

Fr. Alessio Parente, O.F.M. Cap., lived and worked alongside Padre Pio for many years in Our Lady of Grace Friary at San Giovanni Rotondo. He wrote numerous books about his confere, and his works provide reliable source material for the saint. The following information is from Fr. Alessio’s book The Holy Souls, and was related by a “very good friend” of his, Mrs. Florence Fine Ehrman, the daughter of the person in question.

In 1965 her father, Julius Fine, who had practiced the Jewish faith all his life and believed firmly in God, was stricken with what is commonly called “Lou Gehrig’s disease.” Mrs. Ehrman wrote to Padre Pio beseeching a cure for her father from this fatal illness. A short time later she received the reply that Padre Pio would pray for her father and would take him under his protection. When her father passed away in February of the next year, she was able to accept his death peacefully. However after some time, she began to worry about whether or not he was saved, even though he had been a very loving and kind husband and father. "This fear came about because I began to hear many people, Protestants and Catholics alike, say that unless person had been baptized they could not be saved."

On a visit to Padre Pio at San Giovanni Rotondo in the fall of 1967, she was told by a personal friend (quite possibly Fr. Alessio himself) to write down whatever she wished to ask Padre Pio, and this friend would present the letter to him. She of course wrote down her concerns about the eternal state of her father’s soul – this good and gentle Jewish man who had never been baptized. The reply from Padre Pio, which she received in writing, was this: