

God thus showed the Church his desire to glorify on earth his faithful servant. In a short time the Capuchin Order took the steps prescribed by canon law to begin the cause of beatification and canonization. After examining the case, the Holy See, in accordance with the norm of the Motu Proprio Sanctitas clarior, granted the nihil obstat on 29 November 1982. The Archbishop of Manfredonia was thus able to introduce the cause and set up the informative process (1983-90). On 7 December 1990 the Congregation for the Causes of Saints recognized its juridical validity. When the Positio had been completed, there was the usual discussion on whether the servant of God had exercised the virtues to a heroic degree. On 13 June 1997 the special meeting of the theological consultants was held and gave a positive judgment. In the ordinary session on 21 October 1997, with Bishop Andrea Maria Erba of Velletri-Segni as the proposer of the cause, the Cardinals and Bishops recognized that Padre Pio of Pietrelcina had lived to a heroic degree the theological, cardinal and associated virtues. On 18 December 1997, in the presence of Pope John Paul II, the decree on heroic virtues was promulgated. For the beatification of Padre Pio, the Postulation presented to the competent Congregation the healing of Mrs. Consiglia De Martino of Salerno. The regular canonical process concerning this case was held at the ecclesiastical tribunal of the Archdiocese of Salerno-Campagna-Acerno from July 1996 to June 1997, and the case was recognized as valid by a decree dated 26 September 1997. On 30 April 1998 at the Congregation

for the Causes of Saints, the Medical Board examined the miracle, and on 22 June 1998 the special meeting of theological consultants gave its judgment. On 20 October 1998 the ordinary congregation of the Cardinals and Bishops belonging to the Congregation, together with the proposer, Bishop Andrea M Erba, was held in the Vatican. On 21 December 1998, in the presence of Pope John Paul II, the decree on the miracle was promulgated. The beatification, presided over by the Holy Father, took place during a solemn Eucharistic liturgy in the Piazza before the Vatican Basilica in May 1999.

The Evangelization Station

Hudson, Florida, USA

E-mail: evangelization@earthlink.net

www.evangelizationstation.com

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Like the Apostle Paul, Saint Pio of Pietrelcina placed at the center of his life and apostolic work the Cross of his Lord as his strength, his wisdom and his glory. Inflamed by love of Jesus Christ, he became like him in the sacrifice of himself for the salvation of the world. In his following and imitation of the crucified Christ he was so generous and perfect that he could have said: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). And the treasures of grace which God had granted him so lavishly he unceasingly passed on through his ministry, serving the men and women who came to him in ever greater numbers, and bringing to birth an immense host of spiritual sons and daughters. This worthy follower of St Francis of Assisi was born on 25 May 1887 at Pietrelcina in the Archdiocese of Benevento, the son of Grazio Forgione and Maria Giuseppa De Nunzio. He was baptized the next day and given the name Francesco. At the age 12 he received the sacrament of Confirmation and made his First Holy Communion. On 6 January 1903, at the age of 16, he entered the novitiate of the Capuchin Friars at Morcone, where on 22 January he took the Franciscan habit and the name Brother Pio. At the end of his novitiate year he took simple vows, and on 27 January 1907 made his solemn profession. After he was ordained a priest on 10 August 1910 at Benevento, he stayed at home with his family until 1916 for health

reasons. In September of that year he was sent to the friary of San Giovanni Rotondo and remained there until his death. Filled with love of God and love of neighbor, Padre Pio lived to the full the vocation to work for the redemption of man, in accordance with the special mission which marked his entire life and which he exercised through the spiritual direction of the faithful, the sacramental reconciliation of penitents and the celebration of the Eucharist. The pinnacle of his apostolic activity was the celebration of Holy Mass. The faithful who took part witnessed the summit and fullness of his spirituality. On the level of social charity, he committed himself to relieving the pain and suffering of many families, chiefly through the foundation of the Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza (House for the Relief of Suffering), opened on 5 May 1956. For the servant of God, faith was life: he willed everything and did everything in the light of faith. He was assiduously devoted to prayer. He passed the day and a large part of the night in conversation with God. He would say: "in books we seek God, in prayer we find him. Prayer is the key which opens God's heart". Faith led him always to accept God's mysterious will. He was always immersed in supernatural realities. Not only was he himself a man of hope and total trust in God, but by word and example he communicated these virtues to all who approached him. The love of God filled him, and satisfied his every desire; charity was the chief inspiration of his day: to love God and to help others to love him. His special concern was to grow in charity and to lead

others to do so. He demonstrated to the full his love of neighbor by welcoming, for more than 50 years, countless people who had recourse to his ministry and his confessional, his counsel and his consolation. He was almost besieged: they sought him in church, in the sacristy, in the friary. And he gave himself to everyone, rekindling faith, dispensing grace, and bringing light. But especially in the poor, the suffering and the sick he saw the image of Christ, and he gave himself particularly to them. He exercised to an exemplary degree the virtue of prudence, acting and counseling in the light of God. His concern was the glory of God and the good of souls. He treated everyone with justice, frankness and great respect. The virtue of fortitude shone in him. He understood very early in life that his would be the way of the Cross, and he accepted it at once with courage and out of love. For many years, he experienced spiritual sufferings. For years he endured the pains of his wounds with admirable serenity. He accepted in silence the many interventions of his superiors, and in the face of calumnies he always remained silent. He habitually practiced mortification in order to gain the virtue of temperance, in keeping with the Franciscan style. He was temperate in his attitude and in his way of life. Conscious of the commitments, which he had undertaken when he entered the consecrated life, he observed with generosity the vows he had professed. He was obedient in all things to the commands of his superiors, even when they were burdensome. His obedience was supernatural in intention, universal in its

scope and complete in its execution. He lived the spirit of poverty with total detachment from self, from earthly goods, from his own comfort and from honors. He always had a great love for the virtue of chastity. His behavior was modest in all situations and with all people. He sincerely thought of himself as useless, unworthy of God's gifts, full of weakness and infirmity, and at the same time blessed with divine favors. Amid so much admiration around him, he would say: "I only want to be a poor friar who prays". From his youth, his health was not very robust, and especially in the last years of his life it declined rapidly. Sister Death took him well prepared and serene on 23 September 1968 at the age of 81. An extraordinary gathering of people attended his funeral. On 20 February 1971, barely three years after the death of the servant of God, Pope Paul VI, speaking to the superiors of the Capuchin Order, said of him: "Look what fame he had, what a worldwide following gathered around him! But why? Perhaps because he was a philosopher? Because he was wise? Because he had resources at his disposal? Because he said Mass humbly, heard confessions from dawn to dusk and was it is not easy to say it one who bore the wounds of our Lord. He was a man of prayer and suffering". Even during his lifetime, he enjoyed a vast reputation for sanctity because of his virtues, his spirit of prayer, sacrifice and total dedication to the good of souls. In the years following his death, his reputation for sanctity and miracles grew steadily and became established in the Church, all over the world and among all kinds of people.