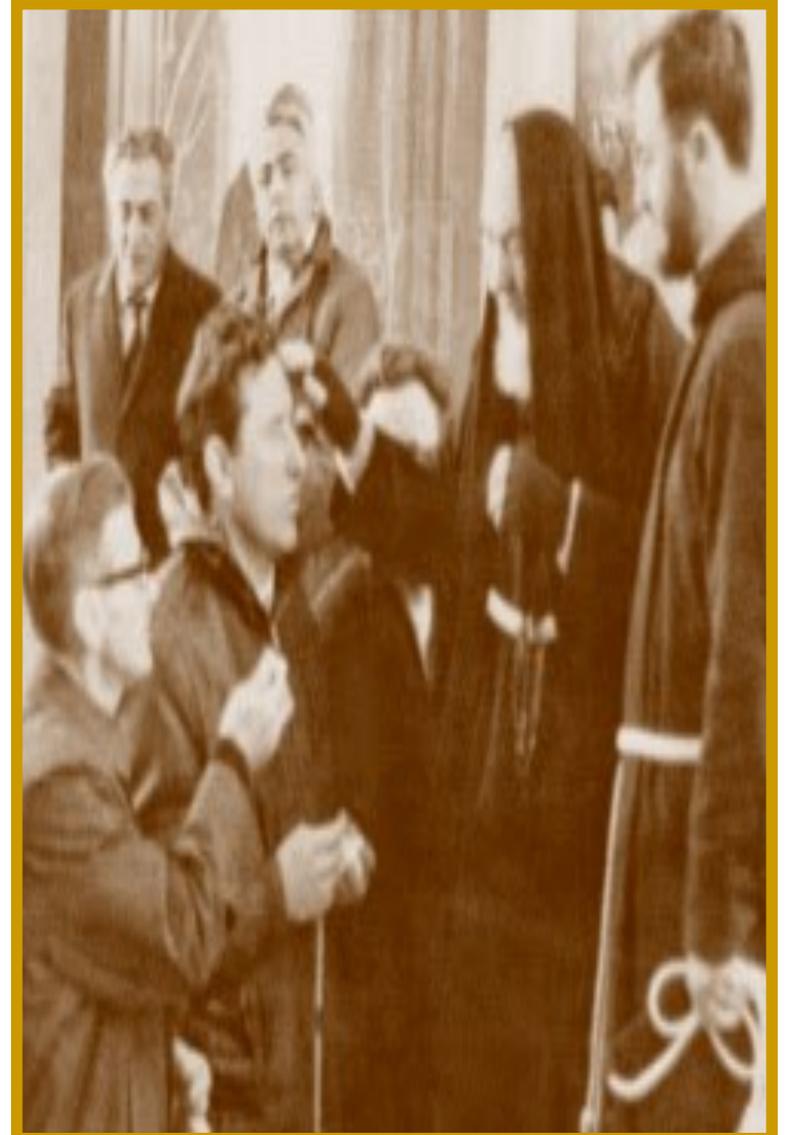


One of the other Capuchins who was in residence at Our Lady of Grace monastery offered to hear Raffaele's confession. Afterwards, Raffaele went out and bought a Rosary and a prayer book. Eleven months later, he returned to San Giovanni Rotondo and knelt before Padre Pio in the confessional once again. "Have you been attending Mass?" Padre Pio asked. "Yes, I have gone to Mass every Sunday since I last saw you," Raffaele replied. "Have you been attending Mass on the Holy Days of Obligation as well?" Padre Pio inquired. "Yes, I have also gone to Mass on every Holy Day of Obligation. I have not missed a single one," Raffaele answered. Three times Padre Pio exclaimed, "Ah." It was as though he was saying, "All is well now. All is very good." For the next ten years, until Padre Pio's death in 1968, Raffaele traveled twice a year to San Giovanni Rotondo to attend Padre Pio's Mass and to make his confession.

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Padre Pio and Raffaele Scalzi



Padre Pio and Raffaele Scalzi

Raffaele Scalzi invited an elderly friend to go with him to see Padre Pio. The year was 1958. Raffaele and his companion were able to greet Padre Pio in the corridor of the monastery. Padre Pio extended his hand to the elderly man to kiss but not to Raffaele. Padre Pio then continued walking down the hall. Raffaele felt very disappointed by the encounter. He wondered why Padre Pio had rejected him but had been so cordial to his friend.

After Padre Pio had walked a few steps down the hall, he turned around and looked back at Raffaele. He said to him, “May God enlighten you,” and then he continued on his way. Later, Raffaele saw one of the Capuchins and told him about his encounter with Padre Pio. “Padre Pio spoke to me in the corridor and said, “May God enlighten you.” Does he say that very often?” Raffaele asked. “No, he doesn’t,” the Capuchin replied. “I have never heard him say that to anyone before.”

The next day, Raffaele and his friend left San Giovanni Rotondo to return to their homes. Once home, Raffaele could not get the thought of Padre Pio out of his mind. He had been shocked when Padre Pio withheld his hand from him. It caused him to take stock of his life. “May God enlighten you,” were the words that kept resounding in Raffaele’s mind. Why had Padre Pio said that to him? Raffaele admitted to himself that he was in great need of spiritual enlightenment. He was a non-practicing Catholic. His faith life had withered and died due to long years of neglect. Even though he had been baptized a Catholic, he knew practically nothing about the teachings of the Catholic Church. He had never had the slightest interest in studying his faith.

With great anticipation, Raffaele planned his next visit to San Giovanni Rotondo. The only problem was that he did not have the money to make the trip. It was expensive to travel from his home in Vicenza, in the north of Italy, down to the southern area of San Giovanni Rotondo.

A short time later, one of Raffaele’s friends needed 500 lira and asked Raffaele for the money. Raffaele was not in a position to be giving money away. Anyway, he had decided to save any extra money that he could come by so that one day he could return to San Giovanni Rotondo. However, his friend was insistent. Raffaele finally agreed to give him the needed money. Not long after that, his friend returned and handed Raffaele 50,000 lira. He had won a large sum by choosing the correct numbers in a football betting pool. The unexpected money enabled Raffaele to travel to San Giovanni a second time.

Raffaele had to wait five days to make his confession to Padre Pio. When his turn finally came, Padre Pio greeted him and allowed him to kiss his hand. Raffaele’s heart soared. “How many years has it been since you have been to Mass?” Padre Pio asked. “It has been ten years,” Raffaele replied. Upon hearing Raphael’s reply, Padre Pio became stern. He raised his voice and said, “Do not waste my time. Go now!”

There were a number of men standing nearby, waiting in the confessional line. Raffaele was certain that they had heard Padre Pio’s strong words. But strangely, Raffaele did not feel the least bit embarrassed or ashamed. He was not offended by what Padre Pio had said to him. Quite the contrary, he felt a great happiness, a “celestial happiness” welling up in his heart. At that moment, he was exactly where he wanted to be. He was kneeling in front of Padre Pio, looking into his eyes, speaking to him. He could hardly contain his joy.