



Of Bilocations and the Odor of Sanctity

Examples of bilocation have been recorded in the lives of many mystic saints i.e. that state in which a given person is present in two different places at once, sometimes many thousands of miles apart. This is one of the most mysterious phenomena in the lives of mystics.

Padre Pio had the gift of bilocation. He made use of it frequently to help people in need. Once he admitted that he only ever had seven hours of sleep a year. His bilocations began as he lay down to rest at night. When he bilocated he went wherever Christ sent him, to particular people, with spiritual comfort, advice and help. On these "journeys" St. Anthony of Padua and St. Francis of Assisi were his frequent companions. Bilocation cannot be rationally explained. It is supposed that the spirit leaves the body and makes its way to a different place while the body remains inactive. When Alphonse Liguori went to Rome in bilocation to be present at the death and funeral of Pope Clemens XIV, for two days he sat in his armchair where he lived as if turned to stone.

The phenomenon of bilocation in the life of Padre Pio is richly documented.

The Monk in the Sky

Allied pilots stationed at Bari from September 1943 on were witnesses to extraordinary meetings as they carried out their missions. Each time they flew out on a mission and neared San Giovanni Rotondo they saw a monk appear in the sky who would not let them drop their

bombs and turned the planes back. All the surrounding settlements were heavily bombed, however not a single bomb fell on San Giovanni Rotondo. "When the pilots returned from their missions," recalls General Rossini "they told how a monk suddenly appeared before them in the sky and then the aircraft suddenly changed course of their own accord."

At first, few believed these incredible stories. However as more and more

pilots came to share similar experiences (amongst them Americans, Englishmen, Poles, Jews, Catholics and atheists) the commander-in-chief, an American general, decided to check out the veracity of these stories himself.

He led a bomber squadron, which was to destroy a German ammunition dump located near San Giovanni Rotondo. It was one of several missions, all of the previous ones having failed owing to the mysterious apparition in the sky. In great expectation everyone waited to see how the flight would end. When the squadron returned to base, the American general was in shock. He recalled that they had been in the vicinity of the target when they suddenly noticed the figure of a monk with raised hands at the same

Our Lady's sanctuary and the Capuchin Fathers' cloister at San Giovanni Rotondo





photo Voce di Padre Pio

altitude as the flying aircraft. Suddenly, the bombs in all the planes self-released and fell to the surrounding forests below. The planes, with no intervention from the pilots, turned in the direction of the base. This event became the main topic of conversation in the unit. During the discussions someone suggested that the monk could be the stigmatist Padre Pio, who lived in the monastery at San Giovanni Rotondo. The general decided that, just as soon as the frontline shifted, he would personally pay the monastery a visit to check this out. When the Germans

retreated, the general and a few pilots made their way to San Giovanni Rotondo. As he entered the sacristy the general immediately noticed that among the group of friars was the very one who had turned the planes back. Padre Pio came up to the general, placed his hand on his shoulder and said, "So you are the one who wanted to blow us all up!" Hearing these words and seeing Padre Pio, the general experienced a spiritual upheaval. Later, they spoke at length and understood each other perfectly, although the general talked in English and Padre Pio in his native Benevento dialect. Following this meeting, the general, a protestant, became a Catholic.

The handprint on the window

In 1957 Father Placid Bux became ill with liver cirrhosis and lay dying in a hospital in San Severo. During the night he noticed Padre Pio standing at his bed. Padre Pio comforted him, assuring him that he would be cured. He then walked up to the window, pressed his hand against the pane and disappeared. In the morning, Father Placid felt very well. He looked at the window and saw the Stigmatist's handprint, which confirmed that Padre Pio's night-time visit had truly taken place. The news spread throughout the hospital and town. Crowds of curious people came to the sick father's room to see Padre Pio's handprint. The hospital authorities ordered the window to be cleaned. Although all available cleaning materials were used, the trace of Padre Pio's hand could not be removed. Father

Pietrelcina – Padre Pio's village

Placido regained his health and after leaving the hospital immediately went to San Giovanni Rotondo. When he came across Padre Pio in a corridor in the monastery he heard the question, "How is our Father Placido?" "Wonderful," he answered; and seizing the opportunity he asked, "Did you really visit me in hospital and leave your handprint on the windowpane?" Looking straight into his eyes Padre Pio answered, "You doubt it yourself. I was there, but don't tell anyone about it."

Thanks for saving my life

After Mass one day Padre Pio was removing his vestments when a man approached him. He fell to his knees and cried out, "Father, thank you for saving my life." He had been a captain in the infantry. During the war he had been at the front and the battle raged around him. Suddenly, he saw a monk standing some ten to twenty yards away from him. The monk beckoned to him and said, "Captain, move quickly and stand next to me." The captain ran up to the monk, and at that moment a hand grenade exploded exactly where he had stood just before. When the officer turned around to thank the monk he was no longer there having disappeared without a trace. After the war the captain arrived in San Giovanni Rotondo, and it was then that he realised that the mysterious monk was Padre Pio.

A letter from Czechoslovakia

Among the many letters which reached San Giovanni Rotondo there was also correspondence from the communist-block countries. They provide evidence that Padre Pio frequently appeared there through bilocation. He was in Yugoslavia with Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac during his court trial. He was at the side of Joseph Mindszenty, the primate of Hungary, when he was being tortured in prison. The secretary to the primate of Hungary recalled how the cardinal yearned to celebrate Mass in prison in 1956. One day Padre Pio appeared in his prison cell, bringing with him all that was necessary to celebrate the Eucharist. He even served at Mass. When he left, he took everything with him.

In Czechoslovakia the communist authorities dissolved religious orders and priests were imprisoned. One community



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of nuns led a hidden life. The nuns did not wear habits. During the day they worked on a farm and at night gathered for communal prayer. It was these sisters who wrote a letter to Padre Pio thanking him for making a special trip to celebrate Mass with them. They were only sorry that he had refused their invitation to a simple meal. In the letter they also asked about his return journey and if he had had any problems at the border crossing. This letter demonstrates that the nuns were absolutely convinced that Padre Pio left San Giovanni Rotondo and journeyed to Czechoslovakia. But it was an instance of bilocation.

A wonderful perfume

A unique perfume emanated from the bleeding wounds of Padre Pio. It was reminiscent of a combination of violets, roses, lilies and incense. However, the fragrance was impossible to describe since apart from known aromas it included new, unknown elements. These wonderful perfumes also emanated from things associated with Padre Pio. Often they arose suddenly, and were either short or long lasting. Padre Pio explained that this fragrance was a sign that through his mediation God sending grace and comfort and warning against danger, temptation and sin.

Wonderful scents have emanated from holy people united to God in love. Such was the case, for instance, with the body of St. Martin de Porres, which gave off a subtle fragrance. When his tomb was opened 25 years after his death the same fragrance still emanated from his body. The indisputable credibility of Padre Pio's wonderful fragrance is confirmed by the testimony of thousands of people who experienced it not only during Padre Pio's lifetime but also following his death.

From San Giovanni Rotondo Dr Giorgio Fiesta brought back to his surgery in Rome a small piece of blood-soaked bandage from the wound in Padre Pio's side. For a long time this small fragment of linen kept inside a small cupboard gave off such a strong fragrance that all his patients asked Dr. Fiesta where this subtle aroma came from.

The superior of the monastery in San Giovanni Rotondo, Father Rosario,



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Pietrelcina – the church in which Padre Pio was baptized.

wrote that every day for the first three months of office he smelt a wonderful fragrance wafting from the neighboring stigmatist's cell.

Giuseppe Onufrio from Palermo recalls that during confession Padre Pio took hold of his right hand. When he returned home his right hand gave off the fragrance of Padre Pio. Despite washing his hand many times the perfume lasted for many days. Padre Pio had given him a penance that was to last three months. During this period Onufrio sensed the extraordinarily strong and pleasant fragrance. It would come unexpectedly and then cease. When the time of penance came to an end, the fragrance ceased altogether.

Rosa Baldi had a very high temperature reaching 40 degrees Celsius. The doctors were helpless and could not identify the cause. Mrs Baldi sent her son to San Giovanni Rotondo to ask Padre Pio for help. During confession the boy asked the Father to heal his mother. On the day of the son's return, everyone sensed an incredible fragrance in Mrs. Baldi's house. That same day her fever suddenly broke.

In this manner Padre Pio made known his spiritual presence and the grace of healing which he had obtained through prayer.

Through his wonderful fragrance Padre Pio told and continues to tell his spiritual sons and daughters that even though they may be living life's darkest night, its greatest dangers and difficulties, they are never alone, because the loving God is always with them. "When your trials are extremely tough," writes Padre Pio, "I repeat to you without fail that you must not be afraid, because even if you see that your soul is on the edge of an abyss, Jesus is with you after all. You must unceasingly lift your voice to heaven, even if grief is attacking your soul and loneliness is crushing you. Join your loud shouts with Job's: his patience was without limit, and with God's consent he experienced what you are now experiencing. He cried out, "Even if the Almighty should kill me, I trust in him."

Editors ■

