

Because he had worked as an electrician for the railroad before his accident, he put his skills to good use. He thoroughly examined the wiring system at the monastery and did much repair work to the electrical outlets. Padre Pio was very happy to see the improvements he was making at the monastery.

As time passed, Giuseppe became a part of the inner circle of Padre Pio's closest friends. On one occasion, Giuseppe went to see Padre Pio on a very cold and rainy evening. Even though he was not feeling well, he decided to visit Padre Pio anyway. Due to a sore throat and laryngitis, he was not able to speak above a whisper. He was soaking wet when he walked into Padre Pio's cell. Father Carmelo was visiting with Padre Pio at the time.

Padre Pio noticed at once that Giuseppe looked ill. He asked Father Carmelo to see if he could find some warm clothes for Giuseppe to put on. Father Carmelo tried his best but could not find any. Padre Pio began to look around the room and finally found one of his large scarves. He put it around Giuseppe's neck. At once, Giuseppe felt a wonderful warmth coursing through his entire body. "I feel better already!" he said to Padre Pio. As he spoke the words, he suddenly realized that his laryngitis was gone. Giuseppe felt such a sense of well-being that he did not want to take the scarf off. He wore it home that night and then kept it on for many days. Finally, Padre Pio told him that he could keep it. Giuseppe was very happy to be in possession of a relic of Padre Pio. Many of Padre Pio's spiritual children had a desire for such a relic, but very few were able to obtain one.

One day, Padre Pio lost his handkerchief and was looking everywhere for it. Giuseppe had a handkerchief with him and offered it to Padre Pio. Padre Pio took it and put it inside his habit, over his heart wound. He always kept a cloth over the wound to absorb the blood. Later, Padre Pio returned Giuseppe's handkerchief to him. Even though it had been washed and ironed, there were still blood stains visible on it.

On one occasion, Giuseppe felt a strong desire to pray for Padre Pio's deceased parents, Grazio and Giuseppa Forgione. He began to pray for them faithfully every day. Later, he became busy with many other concerns, and eventually forgot to include them in his prayers. One day at the monastery, Padre Pio's words surprised Giuseppe. "I want to thank you, Giuseppe," Padre Pio said. "What do you want to thank me for?" Giuseppe asked. "I want to thank you for the prayers you said for my dear parents," Padre Pio replied. Giuseppe had never mentioned to anyone that he had been praying for Grazio and Giuseppa.

From his very first meeting with Padre Pio in the confessional, Giuseppe felt Padre Pio's paternal love and care. He was like a father to Giuseppe. It was true that Padre Pio had a reputation for being stern. That was not Giuseppe's experience. In the years that followed, Giuseppe felt continually supported by Padre Pio's prayers. He once stated that the only time he felt truly happy was when he was with Padre Pio.

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## Padre Pio and Giuseppe Canaponi



Giuseppe Canaponi and his wife in San Giovanni Rotondo

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# Padre Pio and Giuseppe Canaponi

In 1945, thirty-four-year-old Giuseppe Canaponi, a railway worker from Sarteano, Italy was riding to work on his motorcycle when he was hit by a truck. He was hospitalized with a fractured skull as well as numerous broken bones. For a while it was touch and go, and the doctors did not know if Giuseppe would live or die. Gradually, he recovered from all of his injuries except one. His left leg, which had been broken in five places, remained completely rigid and caused him constant pain.

Giuseppe had numerous surgeries on his leg as well as physical therapy, but to no avail. He had to use crutches in order to walk. His left knee too, was a problem. He was not able to bend his knee and was finally diagnosed with “fibrous ankylosis” of the knee. To add to his problems, the incisions made in his leg for the corrective surgeries, did not heal. The open and painful wounds added to his distress.

Giuseppe became very depressed. It had been more than two years since the accident but his condition had not improved. He was declared permanently disabled and forced to retire from his job at the railroad. His health in general was going in a downward spiral and he feared that death was approaching. His wife’s strong faith made up for his own lack of faith. She wrote several letters to Padre Pio asking for his prayers for Giuseppe’s healing. She told Giuseppe that they should make a trip to San Giovanni Rotondo to see Padre Pio, but he was not interested. He did not think it would be beneficial. Giuseppe’s wife continued to talk to him about Padre Pio and he finally agreed to make the trip.

Giuseppe and his wife took a train to Rome and then to Foggia. Giuseppe was in intense pain on the train trip. After they arrived in Foggia, Giuseppe lost his footing and took a very bad fall. He and his wife spent the night in the train station. The next morning, they took a bus to San Giovanni Rotondo. Trying to get situated in a comfortable position on the bus was next to impossible. The bus driver dropped them off almost two miles from the monastery. A single dirt road lay in front of them. They had no choice but to walk the distance.

Giuseppe breathed a sigh of relief when he and his wife finally arrived at the little monastery church of Our Lady of Grace. The trip to San Giovanni Rotondo had been much more difficult than he had ever imagined. He was so exhausted from the journey that he slipped into one of the back pews and laid down. Taking a short rest in the church seemed to revive him.

Inside the church of Our Lady of Grace, there were several Capuchin priests. Giuseppe wondered if one of them might be Padre Pio. One of the Capuchins was hearing confessions in a nearby confessional. The curtain of the confessional was parted slightly and when the priest raised his hand to give the penitent absolution, Giuseppe

noticed that he was wearing half-gloves. “That must certainly be Padre Pio!” Giuseppe said to himself. At that very moment, Padre Pio lifted his eyes and looked straight at him. When their eyes met, Giuseppe felt as though he had been hit by a bolt of electricity. His entire body began to tremble.

Giuseppe decided to wait in line to make his confession to Padre Pio. In the confessional, he did not have to worry about remembering all of the sins of his past. Padre Pio remembered them for him, down to the letter. He named them one by one, as Giuseppe listened and affirmed that what he said was true. Padre Pio was very kind and very compassionate. Giuseppe was suddenly able to see his sins for what they were – offenses against God. When Padre Pio gave him absolution, Giuseppe’s whole body began to tremble, just like it had when their eyes met for the first time.

When Giuseppe left the confessional, he felt like a new person. His wife saw him walking toward her and noticed that he looked very peaceful. She suddenly realized that Giuseppe was walking without his crutches. “Giuseppe, look. You are not using your crutches and you are walking just fine!” she said. Giuseppe had not noticed it until his wife mentioned it to him. He was just as astonished as she was. Not only was he walking unaided, he was also free of pain. But there was more. His knee had lost its rigidity. He then reflected that he had been able to kneel with ease while making his confession to Padre Pio, something that had previously been impossible for him to do. At the time he was making his confession, it had not occurred to him that he was doing anything unusual.

When Giuseppe returned to his hotel room, he examined his leg closely. He repeatedly knelt down on his “once immobile knee” and had no trouble doing so. In addition, the open and painful sores on his leg, which had bothered him for months, had all healed over. It was true. Giuseppe had received a miraculous healing.

The next day, Giuseppe went to the monastery to thank Padre Pio. “You do not need to thank me because I did not heal you,” Padre Pio said. “It was God who healed you. All I did was pray.” When Giuseppe went back to the doctor’s office for a check-up, he was greeted with amazement by his doctor. His doctor was shocked to see the change in his condition. Giuseppe’s case was eventually studied in Rome in a special Orthopedic Congress and presented to eight hundred doctors. His instantaneous recovery defied scientific explanation.

As time went by, Giuseppe made many more trips to see Padre Pio. The two became close friends. Giuseppe tried to think of different ways in which he could help the Capuchin community at Our Lady of Grace monastery.