

Our Lady of Grace Church — San Giovanni, Italy

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Padre Pio and Fedora DePamphilis



Fedora and her son Gino today

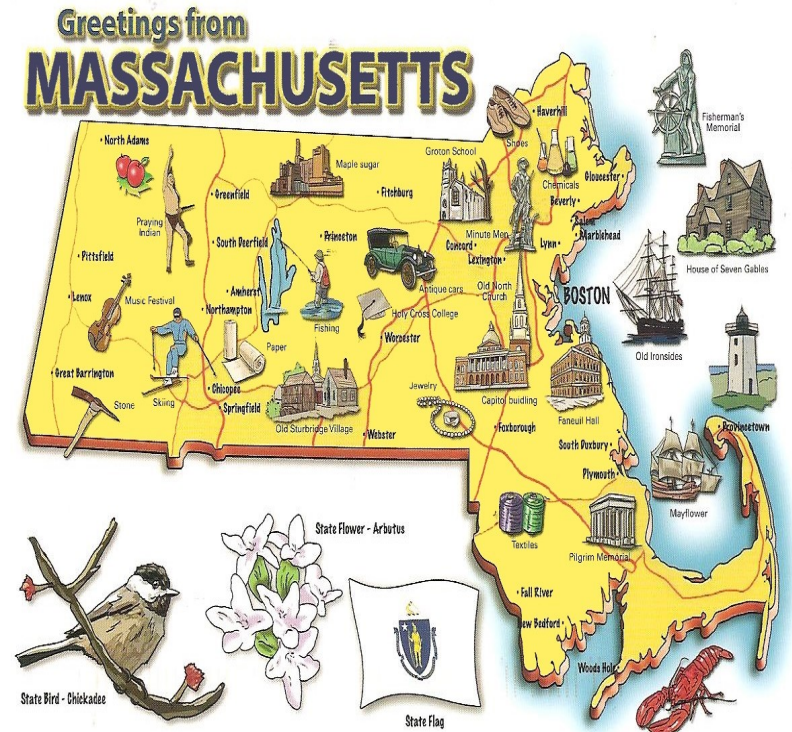
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The story of Fedora DePamphilis who lives in Massachusetts

Fedora Circello DePamphilis grew up in the small town of Torremaggiore in the province of Foggia, Italy. Known for its production of wine and olives, Torremaggiore is located just 30 miles from Padre Pio's monastery in San Giovanni Rotondo. Everyone in Fedora's town knew of Padre Pio and all had devotion to him. The townspeople would make a day pilgrimage to Padre Pio's monastery and always stop at Monte Sant Angelo, the shrine dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel, before returning home. Padre Pio loved this sanctuary dedicated to St. Michael and often encouraged people to visit it.

Fedora's first cousin, Vincenzo Leone had a memorable experience on one occasion while making his confession to Padre Pio. When he entered the confessional, Padre Pio asked him, "How long has it been since your last confession?" "It has been six months," Vincenzo replied. "But you are lying to me," said Padre Pio. "You have not been to confession in over three years." Vincenzo was so shocked that Padre Pio knew the truth about the matter that he went back to Torremaggiore and told everyone about it. "Can you believe it?" said Vincenzo. "I could not conceal anything from him. He knew everything. I know he is a saint!" But Vincenzo was not telling the townspeople anything that they did not already know. They all venerated Padre Pio as a saint.

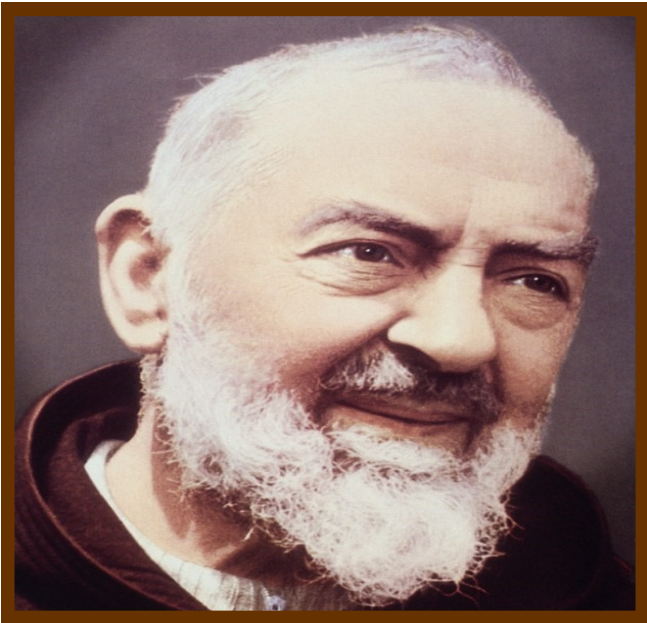
Fedora's mother, Angela, once traveled with several of her cousins to San Giovanni Rotondo to see Padre Pio. They waited in the confessional line for two days with no success. At the end of the second day, Angela was very discouraged. She said to her cousins, "We have to return home tomorrow no matter what. Let's get up before sunrise and be the first ones inside the church when the door opens. Perhaps we will then be able to make our confession to Padre Pio." Angela's idea proved to be a good one. But all were surprised when Angela's cousin came running out of the confessional in tears. When pressed for an explanation, she told her cousins that while she was confessing her sins, Padre Pio said to her, "You are forgetting to tell me something." "No," she replied. "I do not think I am forgetting



The family prayed constantly to their spiritual father, Padre Pio, that Gino would recover. One night Angela had a dream. Padre Pio was standing in front of her. The brown hood of his Capuchin habit was pulled up on his head. In the dream, Padre Pio said to her simply, "Your grandson will be ok." The dream gave the family a tremendous sense of hope.

Gino recovered from his life-threatening illness and has enjoyed good health ever since. In gratitude for Gino's recovery, Fedora and her husband traveled to San Giovanni Rotondo in 1968 to say thank you to Padre Pio. Padre Pio had passed away on September 23, 1968, shortly before their trip. When Fedora and her husband walked into the church of Our Lady of Grace, where Padre Pio had spent so many years of his life, they were overcome with emotion. All they could do was cry.

As Fedora looks back through the years, she is aware of the many blessings she has received from God. Her faith has sustained her through it all, the good times and the bad. And Padre Pio has always been nearby to help.



anything." "But don't you remember the promise you made to me? You promised that you were going to help the poor and you did not do it. You must go back to your town immediately and do what you said you would do. Then come back and I will hear your confession."

She explained to Angela and the others that when her husband was critically ill, she said a heartfelt prayer to Padre Pio, begging for his intercession. In her prayer, she promised that if her husband got well, she would give a generous portion of the grain that they produced on their farmland to the poor people in the town. Her husband recovered from his illness but she had completely forgotten about her promise.

Nicola, Fedora's father went to San Giovanni Rotondo on one occasion, hoping to discuss a personal matter with Padre Pio. But there were too many people at the monastery and it was impossible to approach him. The Capuchins acted almost like bodyguards, making every effort to shield him from the crowds. Padre Pio was often sick and this made his fellow-Capuchins desire even more to protect him from the people. When Nicola expressed his dilemma, one of the visitors at the monastery told him that if he stood in a particular corridor, Padre Pio would probably be passing that way shortly. Nicola waited in the corridor and was able to speak to Padre Pio for a moment. "Padre Pio," he said. "My wife and I are very concerned about our son, Michael. He has met a girl up in the northern part of Italy and wants to marry her. But my wife and I have our hearts set on him marrying a very nice girl from our town in Torremaggiore." "Let your son marry the girl up north," Padre Pio told him. "She is very nice. It is going to work out well." Nicola returned home and said to his wife, "Listen, we are not going to worry about this any more. Padre Pio told me it would be ok." As it turned out, Michael married the girl from the north. She proved to be a wonderful wife and they were very happily married.

Fedora and her friends and family would travel from Foggia to San Giovanni Rotondo in a very large transportation vehicle with a canvas that covered the top. It was similar to the military vehicles used by the U.S. soldiers who were stationed at that time at the air base in Foggia. The road was so bad that it was extremely difficult to get up the mountain but they always managed to do it. On one occasion her brother Michael went with her and a large group of family and friends who were going to the monastery to make their confession to Padre Pio. When he walked into the confessional, Padre Pio said to him, "Why have you come here? You have no faith in God and you certainly do not believe in me. Isn't this true?" "Yes, you are right," said Michael. "Well, why did you come?" "I came because my other family members and friends were coming. I just came along for the ride." Then you must leave at once," Padre Pio said. Michael left the confessional deeply embarrassed and ashamed. But it was after that very short encounter with Padre Pio that his faith in God began to grow. Through the many years since, his faith has continued to deepen and he has remained very close to the Church.

Padre Pio had a reputation for being stern, even at times severe. He would never mince words. Fedora remembers that her parents, from time to time, used to talk about this aspect of his personality. But they understood that his sternness was always tempered with love and with a desire to help people grow closer to God. Many people entered Padre Pio's confessional with hearts that were not properly disposed and with no desire to change their lives. These people usually received a wake-up call. Although it was difficult to be confronted by Padre Pio, the fruits that resulted from the encounter were frequently life changing. Padre Pio used to say that God directed him in how to deal with each individual soul. Fedora and her family trusted his counsel completely and they had many proofs of his sanctity. Fedora described him as "very strict, very fair and very holy."

Fedora recalled that during the years her family visited San Giovanni Rotondo, active and militant members of the Communist party would occasionally go to the monastery to see Padre Pio. "What is that in your pocket?" Padre Pio would sometimes ask them. Surprised by his knowledge, they would answer, "It is a membership card for the Communist party." "Go and burn it immediately and then come back and I will speak to you," was Padre Pio's standard reply.

When Fedora was twenty years old, she decided to move to the United States. She wanted to continue her education and train for a career and this was not possible in her small town. There was only one thing for the women in Torremaggiore to do and that was to marry and raise a family. Her mother Angela was distraught about her decision. She told Padre Pio, "My only daughter has decided to move to America. We do not want her to leave us. What can we do?" Padre Pio answered, "Let her go. The move will be good for her and it will also be good for you and your husband. You will see."

Fedora settled in Massachusetts and in a short time sent for her parents to come and join her. The arrangement worked out wonderfully. Angela and Nicola enjoyed living in the U.S. Fedora met a wonderful man and married and when she had children, her parents took care of them while she worked. When Angela and Nicola became elderly, Fedora took excellent care of both of them.

When Fedora's son Gino was just two years old, he was diagnosed with Wilms Tumor. A cancerous tumor was discovered between his kidney and his intestines. He received radiation treatments and lost a great deal of weight. His doctor told the family that it would be a miracle if he survived, as few children survive this type of cancer. During the difficult surgery to remove the tumor, there were complications and one of Gino's kidneys was destroyed.