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## Padre Pio and Father Denys Pierre Auvray



Father Denys Auvray

*Prayer was the key to Padre Pio's existence and the guarantee of his mission. Prayer was his daily activity. He also dedicated many hours of the night to prayer. It was the task which he felt was particularly his own and which drew upon him the attention of the whole world. At the altar, in his cell, or in the monastery garden, with his hands folded in prayer or holding his Rosary, his world was God – to be contemplated, to be praised, to be entreated, to be propitiated. More than anything else, his was a life of prayer, of uninterrupted conversation with God. – Father Fernando of Riese Pio X*

# Padre Pio and Father Denys Pierre Auvray

Father Denys Pierre Auvray, a French priest of the Dominican Order, visited Padre Pio for the first time in 1956. Father Denys was able to talk with Padre Pio during the Capuchins' recreation period, when Padre Pio and the others took a short break from their busy schedules. Since Father Denys did not speak Italian, he spoke to Padre Pio in Latin. Among all the brown-robed Capuchins who were gathered together that day, Father Denys stood out in his long white wool Dominican habit.

Father Denys was very happy that he had been able to talk to Padre Pio but he knew that it would be much better if he could converse with him in Italian rather than Latin. He also had a great desire to make his confession to Padre Pio. He decided to study the Italian language so that he could communicate freely with Padre Pio and receive spiritual direction from him.

Father Denys made many return trips to San Giovanni Rotondo. When he visited, he frequently lodged at the *Villa Pia* hotel, not far from the Capuchin monastery. One afternoon when he returned to his room at the *Villa Pia*, he noticed that it was pervaded by a strong perfume. It had happened on more than one occasion and he became very concerned. He spoke to Luigi, one of the employees at the hotel, and voiced a complaint. "Someone is sneaking into my room when I am out and I am very upset. I always keep my door locked when I am away but I believe that a woman has been unlocking my door and going inside. I have proof because there is a strong scent of perfume that is still lingering inside the room." In order to prove his point, he invited Luigi to step inside his room.

To Father Denys, Padre Pio was a model of holiness for all people, both priests and laity. Whenever Padre Pio spoke about God, Father Denys always had the sense that he was speaking about someone that he had intimate contact with, someone that he knew very well. When Father Denys looked back on the many times he was able to visit Padre Pio through the years, he knew how truly fortunate he was. To Father Denys, every encounter with Padre Pio had been a time of grace.



**The Holy Land**

That afternoon, Padre Pio presided at the Benediction service, just like he did every day. After Benediction, Father Denys told Mr. and Mrs. DeChabert to follow him into the sacristy. Padre Pio would be there shortly. When Padre Pio came into the sacristy, Father Denys introduced him to the couple and said, "Padre Pio, this is the couple I was telling you about. Their son died three months ago." Mr. DeChabert had a photograph of his son, and he gave it to Padre Pio. Padre Pio held the photo in his hand and looked at it in silence. Finally, he blessed it. Mr. and Mrs. DeChabert felt greatly consoled.

Father Denys was always happy whenever he had a chance to spend time with Mr. and Mrs. DeChabert. Since the couple lived in Lebanon, Father Denys told them that he had always been interested in the Holy Land. He asked them if they had ever traveled there and they replied that they had. "I am particularly interested in Jerusalem," Father Denys said. "Have you ever been there?" he asked the couple. "Of course we have," Mr. DeChabert replied. "It is only an hour plane ride from where we live in Beirut. And you, have you ever been to the Holy Land?" Mr. DeChabert asked. "No, I have not," Father Denys replied. "I have always wanted to go there but my health is not the best and besides, I would never be able to afford it." "It wouldn't be expensive at all," Mr. DeChabert said. "It would be free. I am going to give you a first-class ticket. I am the Director of Public Transportation in Lebanon."

Father Denys was astonished. He thought about his lifelong desire to visit the Holy Land and he remembered the time he had spoken to Padre Pio about it. He had the feeling that Padre Pio had something to do with the unexpected gift.

In 1963, Father Denys traveled to the Holy Land for a three-week stay. Later, he visited Mr. and Mrs. DeChabert in Beirut, Lebanon. Before the trip to the DeChaberts' homeland, Father Denys spoke to Padre Pio about it. "In that country, you will suffer," Padre Pio said. Father Denys was not sure what he meant, but he would soon find out. The widespread poverty in Lebanon was very painful for Father Denys to witness. To see the privation and the hardship of so many people, caused him great suffering.

Luigi entered Father Denys' room and noticed the fragrance at once. He did his best to explain the phenomenon to Father Denys. "The fragrance in your room is not because a lady has been coming in while you are away," Luigi said. "The fragrance is from Padre Pio."

Luigi explained to Father Denys that sometimes Padre Pio made his presence known by a wonderful fragrance. As he was talking to Father Denys, the room suddenly became pervaded with the strong scent of incense. "You see," said Luigi. "Now we notice the fragrance of incense. It just so happens that Padre Pio is at the church right now presiding at the Benediction service." The penetrating fragrance of Padre Pio's perfume stayed in Father Denys' room for the next fifteen days.

During Father Denys' visits to San Giovanni Rotondo, he met many of the people who collaborated with Padre Pio in his apostolic works. Dr. Guglielmo Sanguinetti was one of those individuals. Emilia Sanguinetti, the doctor's wife, told Father Denys that she made it a practice to go to confession to Padre Pio once each week. On one occasion when she was making her confession, she noticed that Padre Pio's face was swollen. There was also a small cut on his face. She asked him about it and he told her that the injury occurred when he was reciting the exorcism prayers over a woman who was possessed. At that moment, the devil struck him. Padre Pio told Emilia that if he had received the blow just a millimeter lower, it would have taken out his eye.

At the monastery of Our Lady of Grace, there were generally always long lines of people waiting to make their confession to Padre Pio. Father Denys was impressed by the fact that Padre Pio met thousands of people in his lifetime, but he saw each person as an individual. He marveled at Padre Pio's gifts of discernment and reading of hearts.

Father Denys was speaking with Padre Pio on one occasion when he made a comment about the weather. "What is it about San Giovanni Rotondo? It certainly rains too much. It rains almost constantly!" Father Denys remarked. "Yes, it does rain a lot here," Padre Pio replied. "But here it also rains the Asian flu." Evidently Padre Pio could sense what was about to happen, because shortly after he spoke the words, Father Denys came down with the Asian flu.

Father Denys heard much talk about Padre Pio's love for the angels. Every day at the monastery, Father Denys observed that Padre Pio prayed to St. Michael the Archangel. One day, he asked Padre Pio, "Are the angels really present to you? Are they with you when you retire for the night and do they ever help you get to sleep?" "Yes, they are with me," Padre Pio replied. "They help me get to sleep unless they are coming to deliver a message from my spiritual children. In that case, they come to wake me up."

On one occasion, Father Denys sent his guardian angel to Padre Pio. It happened when he was preaching a retreat to a religious order of nuns in the seaside town of Biarritz, in the southwest part of France. During the retreat, he suddenly began to feel very ill. Worried that he might not be able to continue with the program, Father Denys prayed with urgency to his guardian angel. "Dear guardian angel," he prayed, "Please take a message to Padre Pio for me. Tell him that I am very sick and I need his prayers so that I can recover. Otherwise, I do not see how I can complete this retreat." To Father Denys' great relief, he soon began to feel better and he managed to preach all the sermons in the retreat.

Later, Father Denys wrote a letter to one of the Capuchins at Our Lady of Grace monastery. He explained that he had sent his guardian angel to Padre Pio and he wanted to know if Padre Pio had received the message. The Capuchin wrote back to Father Denys and told him that he had spoken to Padre Pio about the matter. Padre Pio said that Father Denys' guardian angel had paid him a visit. Padre Pio hoped that Father Denys was feeling better and he had been praying for him ever since he had received the angelic message regarding his illness.

From time to time, Father Denys was troubled by various health issues. He told Padre Pio that if the state of his health improved, he wanted to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He had always had a desire to go there. "If I become stronger physically, I would like to go on pilgrimage in thanksgiving to God for the blessing of good health," Father Denys said. "Of course, Divine Providence would have to assist me, because the expenses of such a trip would be enormous, far more than I would be able to afford." Padre Pio listened to Father Denys but made no comment.

One day, in the hotel dining room, Father Denys met a couple from Lebanon, Mr. and Mrs. DeChabert. Father Denys was enjoying the fact that he could converse with them in his native French. They told Father Denys that they had come to San Giovanni Rotondo in order to ask Padre Pio for his prayers. Their son had died tragically in an accident in India just three months previously.

Father Denys felt very sorry for the couple. He knew that it was almost impossible for the pilgrims to speak to Padre Pio privately. There were visitors at the monastery from all parts of the world. Almost everyone had a desire to speak to Padre Pio. The Capuchins were very protective and did their best to shield Padre Pio from the crowds. Because Father Denys was a priest, he had easier access to Padre Pio. He decided to speak to Padre Pio and see if he could arrange for Mr. and Mrs. DeChabert to meet him.

Father Denys went to the monastery and told Padre Pio about Mr. and Mrs. DeChabert. "The couple's son has recently died," Father Denys said. "They have come here to ask you for your prayers," he added. "All right," Padre Pio answered. "I will be happy to pray for their son." "But they have a great desire to meet you and to speak to you," Father Denys said. "It will not be necessary," Padre Pio replied. "But it is necessary," Father Denys answered. "They need to see you."