

to wait for the priest to come out so that she could ask him his name. Giovanna waited but the priest did not come out. Finally, the sacristan looked in the confessional and found that it was empty.

The following year, Giovanna made a trip to San Giovanni Rotondo. She stood in a crowded corridor with many others who were waiting to greet Padre Pio. When he passed through the corridor, he noticed Giovanna. He said to her, "Daughter, I know you. On the very day that your father died, you were born." Giovanna did not know what to make of his words.

The next day, Giovanna returned to the church and was able to make her confession to Padre Pio. Lovingly, Padre Pio told her that he had been waiting for her for many years. Giovanna thought that he had mistaken her for someone else. Padre Pio went on to explain to her that he was the priest who had heard her confession the year before in St. Peter's Basilica. "You belong to me, daughter. You have been entrusted to me by the Madonna," he said. Giovanna was later able to read the statement that Padre Pio had written and had given to Father Agostino regarding his experience of bilocation on January 18, 1905. Giovanna noted that everything in the letter was accurate according to her birthdate as well as her family history.

Padre Pio told Giovanna that he wanted her to visit San Giovanni Rotondo often. Through the years she was able to attend Padre Pio's Mass on many occasions and to make her confession to him. He encouraged her to enroll in the Third Order of St. Francis and she did so. He truly took care of her soul.

A short time before Padre Pio's death, Giovanna felt in her heart that he was calling her to come to San Giovanni Rotondo. Just four days before he passed away, she was able to talk with him. "You will not see me again," he said to her. She then understood that it was to be their last visit. Giovanna knew that for many years, she had been spiritually guided by a saint. She was aware that she had been blessed immeasurably. "I will be able to help you much more when I am in heaven," he frequently repeated to his spiritual children.

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## Padre Pio and Giovanni Rizzani



A photo of Giovanna Rizzani  
when she was eighteen years old.

# Padre Pio and Giovanni Rizzani

Padre Pio was a seventeen-year-old Capuchin student residing at the monastery of St. Francis of Assisi at Sant' Elia a Pianisi when he had his first experience of bilocation. It happened on the evening of January 18, 1905. He was praying in the choir loft of the monastery church at eleven o'clock in the evening with a fellow Capuchin, Brother Anastasio. Suddenly, Brother Pio found himself in a large and beautiful estate in a faraway place. There, he ministered to a man who was dying. In the same house, a baby girl had just been born.

The Virgin Mary then spoke to Brother Pio and said, "I entrust this child to your care. She is a precious jewel. I want you to polish her and make her as brilliant as possible because one day I want to adorn myself with her."

"But how can I do that?" Brother Pio answered. "I am a simple Capuchin Brother. My future is uncertain. I do not even know if I will be ordained. And besides, how could I take care of a child?" "You will see," the Virgin replied. "She will come to you. You will meet her at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome." The Virgin then vanished and Brother Pio found himself once again seated beside Brother Anastasio in the church.

Brother Pio knew that he had not fallen asleep in the monastery chapel and dreamed about the incident that had just occurred. He also knew that the experience had not been a product of his imagination. Nor was it an hallucination. But as to what had really happened, he did not know. The experience was so strange that he decided to write down all of the details. He gave his written testimony to Father Agostino.

As it turned out, the beautiful home that Brother Pio suddenly found himself in was the home of Giovanni Rizzani. It was located about three hundred and fifty miles away in the city of Udine, in northern Italy.

Giovanni had been suffering for many months from a terminal illness. The night of Brother Pio's visitation, Giovanni was on his death bed.

During Giovanni's illness, he had informed his wife Leonilde that he did not want a priest to come to visit him. Giovanni had a great hostility toward religion. His friends kept a watch to make sure that no members of the clergy

approached the house.

Leonilde Rizzani was a fervent Catholic. Her greatest desire was that her husband make peace with God before his death. She prayed to God and asked him to change her husband's heart. When Giovanni seemed to be near the end, Leonilde begged the Lord for his salvation. As she was praying, she saw a young Capuchin monk. She could not understand what was happening because he appeared and then he seemed to disappear right before her eyes.

Leonilde, at that time was pregnant. In those anxious moments, she went into premature labor. Soon she gave birth to a baby girl. A friend of the family noticed that a Capuchin monk was standing in the darkness just outside of the Rizzani house. He insisted that the Capuchin be allowed inside. He knew that Giovanni had given specific orders against letting any clergy members in the house. However, it seemed only right to allow the Capuchin to come inside and baptize the newborn baby.

As soon as the Capuchin stepped inside the house, he went directly to Giovanni's room. No one tried to stop him. He spoke to Giovanni privately. Before the visit was over, Giovanni asked for forgiveness for his sins and made his peace with God. He died later that night.

After Giovanni passed away, Leonilde decided to move with her new baby, Giovanna, to Rome. In 1922, when Giovanna was a teenager, she visited St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. At the Basilica, Giovanna was hoping to have the opportunity to go to confession. She had been having many doubts about her faith and she felt that her spiritual life was in a precarious state because of it. She wanted to talk to a priest and ask for advice. However, St. Peter's was about to close so she realized that she would have to wait for another opportunity.

Giovanna was just about to exit the church when she saw a Capuchin priest standing near one of the confessionals. She asked him if he would hear her confession and he agreed to do so. The priest heard her confession and also gave her excellent spiritual counsel regarding her doubts about the faith. After Giovanna left the confessional, she told the sacristan that she wanted