

surgeon of the Capuchin's at their Motherhouse in Rome. About Padre Pio's side wound, Dr. Festa wrote:

"On the left side of the chest region of the body there is a final lesion in the form of an upside down cross. The perpendicular part measures about 7 cm. (2 3/4 inches). The line begins at about the fifth rib and slants down toward the cartilage border of the ribs. The horizontal part of the cross is about 4 cm. (About 1 1/2 inches) long. It does not intersect at right angles but at a slant, a point 5 cm. (about 2 inches) down from the point where the perpendicular bar begins. It seems to spread out and become more straight as it reaches the lower extremity.

"The figure of a cross is merely on the surface. The two lines are about as big as 1 cm. (About 1/4 inch). Their color is like that of the other lesions. The center part is covered with a thin and small scab. Here again the surrounding tissue shows no trace of redness, edema, swelling, or infection.

"Although these wounds appear superficial, drops of blood appeared before my very eyes in a quantity more remarkable than on the other wounds... The loss of blood is substantial, continuous and occurs for a long time. ..."

We believe we have each been given gifts in accordance with our walk with the Lord. For Padre Pio, the **transverberation of the heart** may well have been to prepare him for the stigmata, which he was to receive shortly after. It may also have been given to him as a source of strength and joy, that would offset the physical pain and agony which the Lord wanted to use for His glory. We say this because of the following letter which he wrote on January 12, 1919:

"Because of the exultation of possessing Him in me, I cannot refrain from saying with the most holy Virgin, My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Possessing Him within me, I am impelled to say with the spouse of the Sacred Song, I found Him whom my soul loves; I held Him and would not let Him go."

The Transverberation of Saint Padre Pio

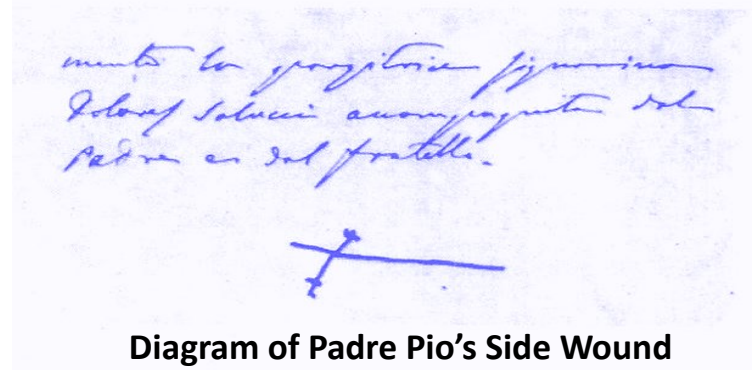
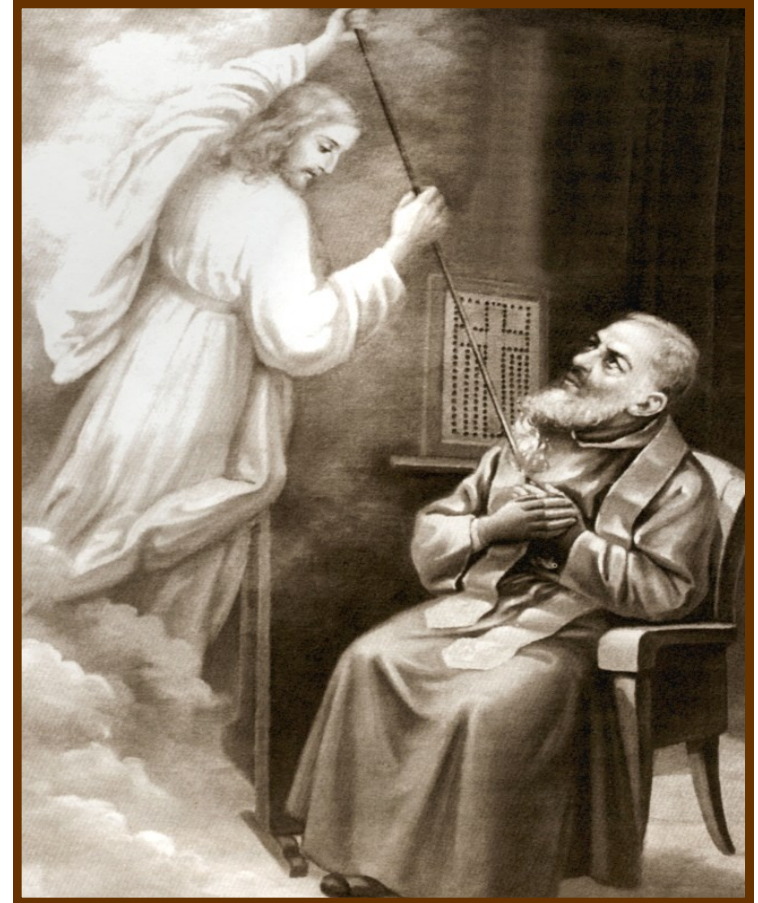


Diagram of Padre Pio's Side Wound

The Transverberation of Saint Padre Pio

St. John of the Cross describes the phenomenon of transverberation as follows: The soul being inflamed with the love of God which is interiorly attacked by a Seraph, who pierces it through with a fiery dart. This leaves the soul wounded, which causes it to suffer from the overflowing of divine love.

World War I was still going on, and in the month of July 1918, Pope Benedict XV who had termed the World War as "the suicide of Europe" appealed to all Christians urging them to pray for an end to the World War. On July 27 of the same year, Padre Pio offered himself as a victim for the end of the war. Days passed and between August 5 and August 7, Padre Pio had a vision in which Christ appeared and pierced his side. As a result of this experience, Padre Pio had a physical wound in his side. This occurrence is considered as a "transverberation" or piercing of the heart indicating the union of love with God.

As an interesting side-note, a first-class relic of Padre Pio, which consists of a large framed square of linen bearing a bloodstain from "the wound of the transverberation of the heart" in Padre Pio's side is exposed for public veneration at the St. John Cantius Church in Chicago.

With his transverberation began another seven-week long period of spiritual unrest for Padre Pio. One of his Capuchin brothers said this of his state during that period:

During this time his entire appearance looked altered as if he had died. He was constantly weeping and sighing, saying that God had forsaken him.

In a letter from Padre Pio to Padre Benedetto, dated August 21, 1918 Padre Pio writes of his experiences during the transverberation:

While I was hearing the boys' confessions on the evening of the 5th [August] I was suddenly terrorized by the sight of a celestial person who presented himself to my mind's eye. He had in his hand a sort of weapon like a very long sharp-pointed steel blade which seemed to

emit fire. At the very instant that I saw all this, I saw that person hurl the weapon into my soul with all his might. I cried out with difficulty and felt I was dying. I asked the boy to leave because I felt ill and no longer had the strength to continue. This agony lasted uninterruptedly until the morning of the 7th. I cannot tell you how much I suffered during this period of anguish. Even my entrails were torn and ruptured by the weapon, and nothing was spared. From that day on I have been mortally wounded. I feel in the depths of my soul a wound that is always open and which causes me continual agony.

In a letter to Padre Benedetto, on September 5, 1918, Padre Pio talked more about the suffering and anger he was enduring. *"I see myself submerged in an ocean of fire! The wound which has been reopened bleeds incessantly. This alone is enough to make me die a thousand times.The excessive pain of this open wound makes me angry against my will, drives me crazy and makes me delirious. I am powerless in face of it."* This letter was written 13 days before he received the stigmata. He was referring to the **transverberation of the heart**.

Dr. Luigi Romanelli, the Chief of Staff of the city hospital of Barletta, was asked by the father provincial of the Capuchin order to examine Padre Pio. Dr. Romanelli conducted five examinations over a period of fifteen months. In November, 1920, he submitted this report: "Padre Pio has a very deep cut in the fifth intercostal space on the left side, 7 or 8 cm. long (about 2 3/4 or 3 inches), parallel to the ribs. That depth is great, but it is very difficult to ascertain.

At approximately the same time as Dr. Romanelli was examining Padre Pio, the General Superiors of the Capuchin Order commissioned noted surgeon Giorgio Festa to also examine Padre Pio on October 9, 1919. His medical practice in Rome led many people to consider him one of the city's finest doctors. Among his other duties he was the head doctor and