

encounter once he returned home. Padre Pio said that it was good to be afraid of temptations, and that one should always have a certain fear of them. He advised Carlo to stay away from all the dark forces and satanic influences of the world. Padre Pio assured him of his spiritual support.

It was very evident that Padre Pio's spiritual support was with Carlo through the ensuing years. Carlo attended Mass and received Holy Communion every day upon Padre Pio's recommendation. With his work schedule, it was very difficult to do, but he always found a way to do it. He also turned down many starring roles in films. He was acting upon Padre Pio's advice to never take a part in a movie that had immoral content.

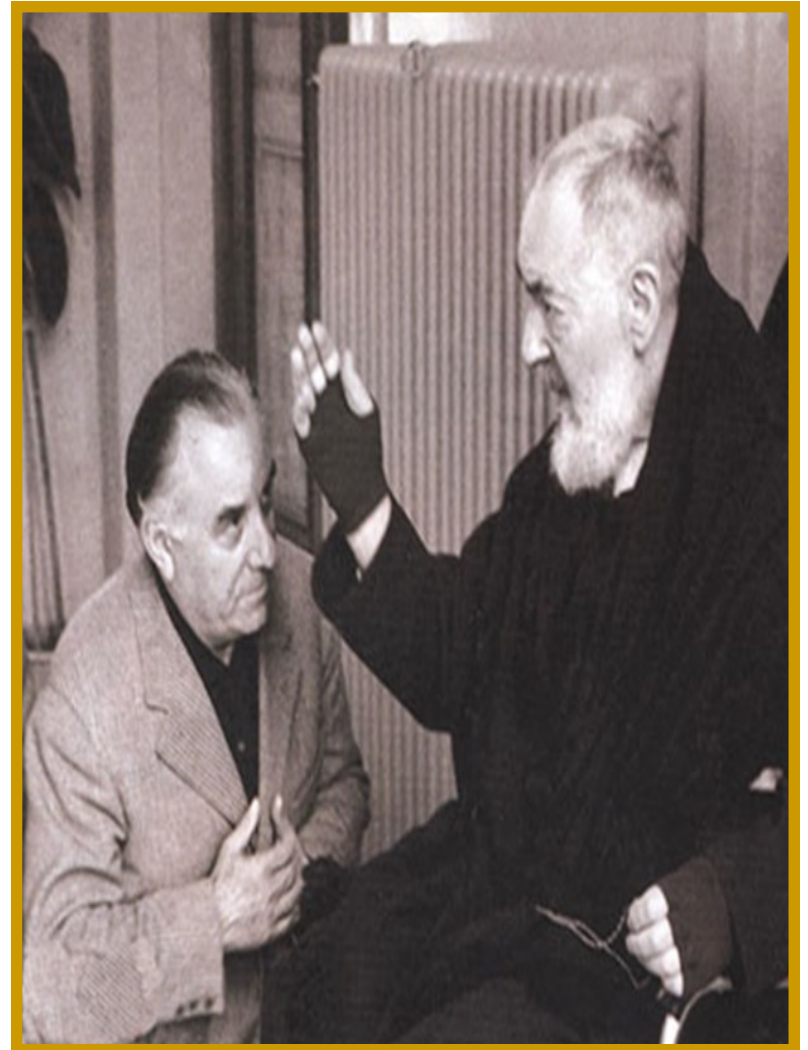
Padre Pio had explained to Carlo that the people who made such movies would have to answer to God for their actions. That included everyone from the producers to the actors to the carpenters who built the sets to the people who sold the tickets. Padre Pio also warned Carlo never to tell off-color jokes or use bad language. If a movie script had even one vulgar word in it, Carlo would not consider being a part of the project. Movie directors and producers could not understand why Carlo was passing up such lucrative job opportunities. When they asked him for an explanation, he simply told them that he was a spiritual son of Padre Pio and that Padre Pio set a very high standard.

Whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have forfeited all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ.

– *Philippians 3:7-9*

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Padre Pio and Carlo Campanini - 1



Carlo Campanini receiving a blessing from Padre Pio

Padre Pio and Carlo Campanini

In the life of holiness, there are moments of profound obscurity when one must be buried like the seed that falls to the ground to die. . . When many years ago, a poor sick friar, Padre Pio, came to the monastery of Our Lady of Grace in San Giovanni Rotondo, he came only to make contact with God and to live in His presence. It is written in the Gospel, "You do not light a lantern to put it under a bushel." And Jesus did not light a little lantern in Padre Pio, he kindled a bright sun, which was to give so much light, so much warmth to the whole world.

– Father Peter Tartaglia

Carlo Campanini, the famous comedian and actor, met Padre Pio for the first time in 1939. Carlo had learned a little about Padre Pio from his friend, Mario. They were both working for a theater company at the time. When Carlo and Mario knocked on the monastery door at Our Lady of Grace, they were greeted by Brother Gerardo. When they told the Brother that they were interested in speaking to Padre Pio, he told them that since it was Holy Week, it would be impossible. He explained that Padre Pio always suffered from the wounds of the stigmata, but his sufferings intensified during Holy Week. No one was allowed to visit him at that time.

Carlo tried to convince Brother Gerardo to make an exception to the rule. He said that he and Mario had been looking forward to meeting Padre Pio with great anticipation. They had used their time off from work to make the trip from Bari. However, Brother Gerardo would not change his mind.

Instead of leaving, Carlo and Mario decided to stay at the monastery for a while. They walked around the grounds and made a visit to the little church that was connected to the monastery. They hoped that if they waited long enough, they might run into Padre Pio. In order to pass the time, Carlo and Mario were cracking jokes and laughing as was their habit. It did not occur to them that it was disrespectful for them

He explained to Padre Pio that he had been to confession just two days before and had already confessed the serious sins of past years. But for some reason, it did not seem to matter to Padre Pio. He told Carlo for a second time, "Begin your confession from 1936. I know that you feel ashamed for the things that you have done in the past. You would rather that I did not know about them. But whether I know of them or not is of no importance. What matters most is that you have offended God by your sins. For some reason, that thought does not bother you."

Carlo began his confession as instructed, but he kept his head lowered. Padre Pio called him a coward and said, "I want you to look at me as you confess your sins." Carlo did so. After Carlo finished his confession, Padre Pio told him that he wanted him to once again make a promise to change his life. Carlo gave him his word that he would do so. This time he truly meant it. Finally, Padre Pio pronounced the words of absolution. He gave Carlo a Rosary and told him to pray it as often as he could. He promised Carlo that he would always be near to assist him in any difficulty. Before Carlo left the confessional, Padre Pio embraced him. From that moment forward, Carlo's life underwent a complete transformation.

There was a great peace in Carlo's heart as well as a desire to lead a good Christian life. The next morning, he was able to attend Padre Pio's Mass. When he received Holy Communion from Padre Pio, it felt like a hot ember had been placed on his tongue. He felt the burning sensation in his mouth for several hours.

Before Carlo left San Giovanni Rotondo, he asked Padre Pio for his continued prayers. Carlo was aware that in some sense, his spiritual life would always be an uphill climb. He told Padre Pio that he was afraid of the temptations that he knew he would

That posed a big problem for Carlo. He would have to go to confession before he could receive Holy Communion. He dreaded the thought of it because he had many serious sins on his conscience. The embarrassment regarding what he would have to reveal in the confessional was very hard to think about. He did not know if he had the courage to go through with it. Carlo had not been to Mass or confession in a long time. Carlo knew that it was important to his wife to have their home consecrated. He also knew that if he made a sincere confession, he would be obliged to change his life. He did not feel that he was ready to do that. He kept postponing the confession. Several times he went to church and stood in the confessional line but then lost his courage and left just before his turn came.

Carlo began to make one excuse after another to his wife. He finally told her that he was sorry but he would not be able to be there on the day the priest was coming to consecrate their home. One day, Carlo made a visit to the parish of St. Anthony. He looked at the confessional line and knew that he would never have the time to wait in such a long line. "Please come to the front and take my place in line," a stranger said to him. Carlo was surprised but he took the man's place in line. Finally, he made a sincere and heartfelt confession and felt blessed to receive the grace of absolution.

Carlo and his family were all together when their home was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus on January 8, 1950. With great joy in his heart, Carlo was able to receive Holy Communion on that day with all the members of his family. He wanted to tell Padre Pio about the wonderful changes in his life and decided to make a trip to San Giovanni Rotondo to see him. He had nothing to fear now. He had already confessed the sins of his past and he would never have to do so again.

In San Giovanni Rotondo, Carlo waited in line to make his confession to Padre Pio. In the confessional, Padre Pio told Carlo to kneel down and to begin his confession from the year 1936 forward. Carlo's heart sank.

to be talking so loudly in a sacred place. Suddenly, one of the Capuchins came out of the church and complained about the noise they were making. The Capuchin happened to be Padre Pio.

At once, Carlo noticed the strong odor of carbolic acid in the air. It was so strong that it caused his throat to constrict. Many people noticed the fragrance of flowers or perfume around Padre Pio but when a strong odor of carbolic acid or sulfur or disinfectant was present when Padre Pio greeted someone, it usually indicated that the person in question needed to change his life. That happened to be true in Carlo's case.

At the time of his first visit to San Giovanni Rotondo, he was living a life that was very far from God. Padre Pio asked Carlo and his companion to state their business. "We are two poor stage actors," Carlo said. "We are all poor," Padre Pio replied. "But why have you come to the monastery?" "We have come here to make our confession," Carlo answered. Padre Pio told them both to prepare themselves and he would hear their confession after Mass the following day. As Carlo looked at Padre Pio, a certain fear gripped his heart and he began to tremble. He felt that his whole life was laid bare to Padre Pio.

The next morning, Carlo and Mario were present at Padre Pio's Mass. It was the longest Mass that Carlo had ever attended in his life. He was out of practice, for one thing. Kneeling on the hard stone floor of the church caused him to feel severe pain in his knees. It was almost more than he could bear.

Carlo felt a great sense of relief when the Mass was finally over. At the time of his visit to Padre Pio, his greatest anxiety was that his work caused him to be separated from his children. He and his wife were always on the road, traveling from one city to another. Their children were living with one of

their relatives. Carlo wanted to ask Padre Pio to pray that he could find work that would enable his family to be reunited. If it meant that he had to leave his acting career, he was prepared to do so. However, when he made his confession to Padre Pio, he could not bring himself to ask Padre Pio for anything.



A photo of Carlo Campanini visiting patients at Padre Pio's hospital, "The Home for the Relief of Suffering."

At the end of the confession, Padre Pio gave Carlo absolution, but before he did so, he made him promise to change his life. Carlo gave his word that he would make the necessary changes. After visiting Padre Pio, Carlo returned to Bari and then moved to Rome. He found steady work in Rome that made it possible for his family to be reunited. It was a dream come true. He knew that Padre Pio had answered the secret prayer of his heart, the prayer that he had not been able to verbalize. Working as an actor exposed Carlo to innumerable temptations, temptations that he could not always resist. He felt guilty about his immoral lifestyle but did not have the will to make the necessary changes.

Padre Pio had asked Carlo to amend his life, but he had not done so. For that reason, he did not want to return to San Giovanni Rotondo to see Padre Pio. When Carlo won a leading role in a very successful film, his acting career began to soar. His photograph could be seen on the cover of numerous magazines and his name frequently appeared in the newspapers. People recognized him when he went out in public. He was offered starring roles in one movie after another and was making more money than he had ever dreamed of. But fame and fortune did not bring him the happiness he longed for.

Spiritually, Carlo was in a dark place. He was depressed most of the time and was haunted by a feeling of emptiness. His life had lost its meaning and its joy. He longed for peace of mind and peace of soul and prayed to God for assistance. One day, Carlo's wife told him that the parish priest had spoken to her and suggested that their home be consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They had even set the date. The priest wanted them all to receive Holy Communion on the day that their home was consecrated.