

(Sept. 16th – 17th)

Padre Pio: Patron Saint for the Unborn

St. Padre Pio was born on May 25, 1887, in Pietrelcina, Italy to a peasant farming couple. From a young age Francisco had a unique ability...he could see guardian angels, spoke with Jesus and Virgin Mary. It occurred so naturally that he thought others could see them, too. Because his family was poor, he had to work and his schooling suffered.

On January 22, 1903, at the age of 15, he took the Habit of the Orders of Friars Minor Capuchin, entering the novitiate and taking the name of Pio. On August 19, 1910, he was ordained to the priesthood and became a Capuchin priest, following the example of St. Francis of Assisi, with vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

He did not have an easy life, suffering the stigmata for 50 years, touched by demons often, and suffering from illnesses; but he was also rewarded with the gift of bi-location (more on this in another column) and he could read into peoples' souls and know their sins.

While he was still a seminarian, known as Brother Pio, he experienced an unusual and striking spiritual encounter. He explains that he was in the choir in a humble friary in southern Italy when he experienced bilocation. He found himself in the palace of an extremely wealthy family where the master was dying while his daughter was about to be born. The Blessed Mother appeared and told Pio, *"I am entrusting this unborn child to your care and protection. Although she will become as a precious jewel, right now she has no form. Shape and polish her. Make her as brilliant as you can, because one day I would like to adorn myself with her."* He questioned her how he could do this, but she admonished him and explained what would happen to this child in the future. Then he found himself back in the choir.

Thus, while two patron saints are generally invoked for the protection of the unborn, St. Joseph and St. Gerard Majella, and others for Pregnant Women and Childbirth...none are specifically designated by the Church for protection of the unborn. Padre Pio, however, has a specific claim of the honor of patron saint of the unborn, since it is a prerogative that was confirmed by the Blessed Virgin Mary herself.

Judy Pearson

