

### Famed Italy Stigmatist

## Padre Pio Builds Hospital For Poor

The author of the following article is a member of the Rescue Bureau of the N.C.W.C. News Service. He has returned from a tour of southern Italy where he went to make a first-hand report on the area's developments and interview its outstanding Catholic personalities.

By FATHER JAMES I. TUCEK  
(N.C.W.C. News Service)

San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy—Fidelity and clarity go hand in hand. The one glorifies, the other sanctifies.

These words, which Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, the famed stigmatist Capuchin priest, once wrote to one of his spiritual children, have become the cornerstones of his hospital here, The House for the Relief of Suffering.

HEMILETY AND clarity are everywhere in the little world that clusters about the Capuchin monastery of Our Lady of Grace. They are written on the facade of the new 300-bed hospital. They are felt in the silence of the pious congregation attending the stigmatist's Mass at 4:30 in the morning.

They are apparent in the conduct of the spiritual and physical invalids who come here from every part of the world for relief. They are the predominant theme, the motive for every word and action performed on this desert mountain of Gargano.

It is true that the thousands who come to San Giovanni Rotondo come to attend Padre Pio's Mass and go to confession to him. But even there his personality escapes the faithful. When you attend this Mass, you forget about Padre Pio and are drawn to concentrate on the true meaning of the sacrifice.

ONE OF HIS regular penitents said to me:

"In the confessional Padre Pio loses his personality. He is a simple tool in God's hands. He is joyful with the joyful, suffers with the suffering, weeps with the sorrowful. Yet he refuses the least compromise. Where it is a matter of violating God's laws, he seems at times to be almost brutal, but only as the doctor's scalpel seizes, brutal cutting into rotten flesh."

If you spend only one or two days at San Giovanni Rotondo, you understand what one bishop wrote after his visit there: "There are no bodies at San Giovanni Rotondo; there are only souls."

Everyone is praying. There is a constant flow of faithful entering and leaving the small monastery church. Everything focuses on the altar and the confessional. These are usually the focal points. Padre Pio is the magnet that draws them there. Here humility is most in evidence. In the hospital, charity is most in evidence.

In 1940 a handful of men gathered in Padre Pio's cell and joined him in making the first plans for the hospital. It was then that he himself gave it the name which was to be a simple description of its function: The House for the Relief of Suffering.

TEN YEARS ago, on April 16, 1947, the picket first struck at the rock of Mount Gargano to prepare the foundation. The hospital was finally dedicated in late 1953 in the presence of Cardinal Lercaro, Archbishop of Bologna, and with the blessing of Pope Plus XII.

From the beginning there was no thought that Padre Pio would have any part in the hospital other than in its conception and in encouraging its completion. However, last year Pope Plus XII himself acknowledged Padre Pio as the hospital's founder and designated him director for life.

At the same time the Pope assigned the hospital to the management of the Congregation of Third Order Franciscans of Our Lady of Grace under Padre Pio's leadership.

The House for the Relief of Suffering was built at a cost of approximately one and a half million dollars. Under the management of laymen, members of the Third Order Franciscan, it is staffed by the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

It is a complete and modern hospital in every detail, including among its facilities a helicopter airport on the rooftop for

transportation of those patients whose condition prevents them traveling over the rough mountain roads that lead to San Giovanni Rotondo. Its five stories comprise an area of 6,000 square meters.

THE HOSPITAL operates on a strict policy of pay if you can, do not pay if you cannot. No patient is turned away because of inability to pay. Its 300 bed capacity is almost constantly full.

There are regular chaplains assigned to the hospital from the Capuchin monastery. Padre Pio is not one of them, although he sometimes goes into the hospital for special cases, particularly to prepare the dying.

A great part of the contributions for construction of the hospital came from the United States, and contributions continue to come from Americans for its maintenance.

American interest in Padre Pio and his hospital project was stimulated by U.S. servicemen who visited San Giovanni Rotondo during the war. Padre Pio is commonly known to have "a special tenderness" for the American GI.

Some who knew him during the war have since become priests. Many, both priests and laymen, return to visit him from time to time. He remembers many of them by name, and always welcomes them warmly.

With the new hospital completed, the framework of a new monastery church is beginning to rise on the Capuchin's hill. Even in its early stages one can see the tall and stately lines that it will have. It will have additional chaplains to handle the increased number of penitents as well as additional altars for the Masses of visiting priests.

An additional floor has been added to the monastery itself providing roomy cells for the community of 20 monks. Padre Pio, however, has remained in his old cell, and it is said that he has so far not even seen the new addition to the monastery.

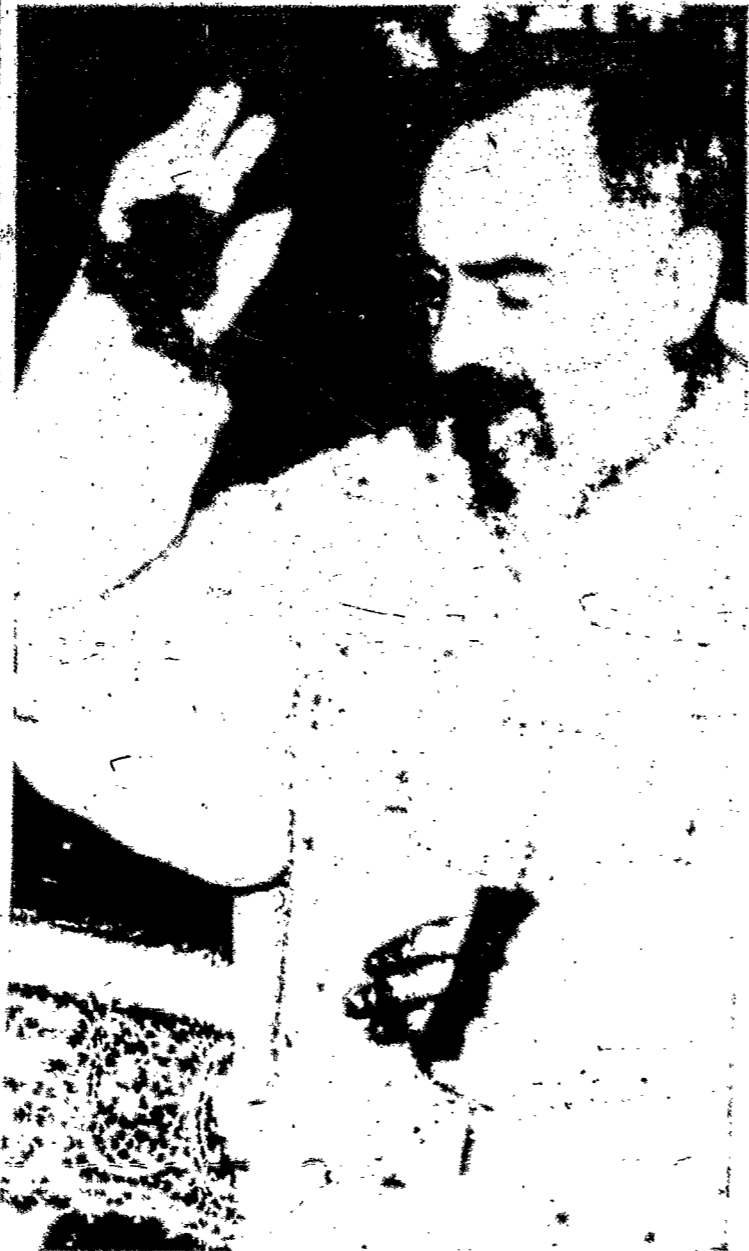
ALTHOUGH PADRE PIO is now approaching 72 years of age, he is still hard shouldered and erect. To see him is to know something of his character. He stands about five-and-a-half feet square built and chunky like most of the country people of the Naples area from which he originates.

His face of soft and solemn expression when he is about his priestly duties, assumes a playful look when he is engaged in conversation, betraying the true sense of humor for which he is commonly known. He speaks with a strong resolve, rather deep voice.

Inside the convent he takes part in the community life as his duties will allow. He always takes his noon meal with the community. During recreation he is said to be an interesting conversationalist and has the reputation of being the prankster of the community.

ONE FELLOW monk said of him: "Padre Pio has sometimes been accused of hysteria. They try to explain away his stigmata this way. I do not believe that a man with his sense of humor could be said to be hysterical."

Today Padre Pio receives about 500 letters a day from all over the world (not 1000 daily as reported elsewhere) but very few are answered by him personally. Sometimes he will jot down a short note to one of his penitents. For the rest, his correspondence is handled by fel-



Padre Pio's bleeding hands are visible as he gives blessing at Mass. He is marked with crucifixion wounds of Christ.

low monks who know several seen and experienced on Mount Gargano: Things spiritual in the work with souls, and things material in the new constructions. The essence of it all was summed up by Cardinal Lercaro.

"Where God is, there is charity and love. Do you not notice it at San Giovanni Rotondo? Yes, The whole world has noticed it. God is here. Exuberantly, charitably and love must also be here."

There are many things to be

### French War Hero Visits Daughter In America

Oregon City—(NC)—France's most decorated World War II hero came here to visit his daughter, Mrs. Don McEachran, a member of St. John parish in Oregon City.

Albert Tjebelle hadn't seen his daughter, Ginette, since she married McEachran in France, shortly after VE day and left for Oregon 12 years ago.

Both he and his daughter played a big part in France's defense. MR. TJEBELLE won the highest military award of his country—the Legion of Honor—for his bravery in World War II, and also the Military Medal, second highest award. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre four times and France's Escape Medal three times, in addition to eight lesser awards.

During World War II he was a key member of the French underground in the city of Tourcoing, Ginette, a member of the Red Cross, helped rescue Allied wounded along the German lines in the last stages of the war.

Mr. Tjebelle is seeing Ginette's four children for the first time during his visit to Oregon City.

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## Oberammergau Prepares For 1960

By FATHER PLACID JORDAN, O.S.B.

Oberammergau — (NC) — To be chosen for a part in the world-famed Passion Play here, no matter how modest it may be, means so much to the girls in this Bavarian village that they are willing to have their weddings postponed, sometimes for years.

The reason lies in the fact that only unmarried girls and women, up to the age of 35, are eligible for participation in the play staged every 10 years.

THIS TRADITION has been followed ever since the play was first presented, some 300 years ago. It will once again be strictly enforced by the committee to be elected by the municipality of Oberammergau early next year to prepare the next presentation of the play, which will be held in 1960 to coincide with the International Eucharistic Congress that another tradition is observed of Munich.

The committee must see to it with equal strictness. Only native-born Oberammergau citizens or residents of more than 20 years standing can be members of the cast, with the exception of children to whom the rule does not apply.

As a matter of fact an American boy was allowed to take part in the play when it was last held in 1950. Some 300 children who will form the choir and orchestra of the next play are already being trained for their future roles.

In 1950 the cast included 600 women and 800 men. Next Spring about the same number will have to be chosen. Then the men who have been selected will start letting their hair and beards grow, and the women who contemplate marriage will know that they will have to wait until the autumn of 1960 for their wedding days.

Wood carver Hans Schwaighofer who gave a masterful performance as Judas by the 1950 play is likely to be appointed production director this time, succeeding Johann Georg Lang who served for three consecutive terms.

Schwaighofer is a teacher at the school which turns out craftsmen for the village's most important industry, wood carving. It traces its origins to the Benedictine monastery of Ebnath near here, and the men and women engaged in it often are called "The Lord's Own Wood Carvers."

Nearly half of the village's 5,000 people are engaged in wood

K. C. Chaplain  
Sacramento — (NC) — Bishop Joseph T. McGucken, of Sacramento is the new state chaplain of the Knights of Columbus, succeeding Auxiliary Bishop Alden Bell of Los Angeles.

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**First Friday**  
**First Saturday**  
Today and tomorrow are days of special devotion for Catholics.  
Today, Friday, is the First Friday of the month of August, a day dedicated in honor of our Lord's Sacred Heart.  
Tomorrow, First Saturday, honors the Blessed Virgin Mary's Immaculate Heart.

Mass and Holy Communion are recommended for both days. Many parishes list First Friday late afternoon or evening Mass. Consult parish bulletins for Mass schedule.

**Science Courses To Be Started**  
St. Louis — (RNS) — A formal science course will be introduced for the first time this September in all St. Louis archdiocesan elementary schools.

**Have Diapers, Will Travel**  
Aodan, Japan — The little singers from the Maryknoll kindergarten and nursery school here are so good a sponsor came looking for them to put them on radio.

A well-known milk company from Kyoto asked to sponsor the singing kindergarten class from the mission of Father Constantine F. Burns, M.M., of Toledo, Ohio, over a local radio station.

The program, based on Catholic themes receives wide reception throughout the area, and through it, the kindergarten has gained such prestige that Father Burns will expand to accommodate applicants next year.

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