

Pilgrims Still Visit His Church

Padre Pio Lives Within You'

By LOUIS A. PANARALE
(NC News Service)

San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy — People still visit this village of Padre Pio in the Apulia region of southern Italy.

They don't come by the thousands as they did in the past. They don't fill the pews of the church anymore to hear the special Mass at five o'clock in the morning. They no longer wait in a long line to have their confessions heard inside one particular old wooden confessional.

But the buses filled with pilgrims still come. They arrive at irregular intervals during the day, but they still come. Families of three, four or five members come in their automobiles.

When a bus or automobile moves up the steep street that leads to Santa Maria delle Grazie church the visitors are likely to see a large poster pasted on it. It is an old, white-bearded Capuchin friar. His expression looks somewhat pained and his dark eyes seem to be gazing out toward some unknown point. At the bottom of the poster are the words in Italian, "Padre Pio Lives Within You."

About 10 years ago, the owner of one of the several new hotels being built at San Giovanni was asked by a visitor what he would do with his building when Padre Pio died, and he answered, "Padre Pio will never die."

Padre Pio did die, on the morning of Sept. 23, 1968. He died of a bronchial disorder, one of several illnesses that had plagued the old priest in the last few years of his life.

Padre Pio was 81 years old when he died. For the last 50 years of his life he carried wounds on his hands, side and feet corresponding to those of the crucified Christ. There are those who say he caused the blind to see, the lame to walk and the insane to recover. His reason, his fame spread throughout the world and through the years, millions came here to see him.

But now the casual observer who comes to San Giovanni these days might note that Padre Pio does not have the following he had during his life. There is no doubt that most of the carnival atmosphere is gone, and with it are gone many of the tourists, the religious fanatics and the promoters of questionable causes. In that respect he has lost followers, but the Capuchins here are breathing easier because of it.

Vatican officials had always looked with a jaundiced eye at some of the events that took place at San Giovanni. The Capuchins needed a change of atmosphere to prevent Padre

Pio's cause for beatification to discrediting Vatican officials — and now they have that atmosphere.

In the eyes of many people who still come to San Giovanni Rotondo, there is the look of the casual visitor, the serious pilgrim, the devout believer, but seldom the look of the mourner.

Padre Pio's confessional in the church is never used any more. A heavy black iron gate, 10 feet high, encloses it. The Capuchins built the gate because some people had been slicing slivers of wood from the old confessional as mementos of their visit.

Gone are the morbid curiosity seekers, gone are the cynics and gone are the swindlers who from time to time came here to sell unwary visitors some "holy relic." Bloody bandages, perhaps, said to be the dressings that had covered Padre Pio's hands.

The visitor arriving at San Giovanni, by one means or another, should have no trouble finding a hotel room for the night. The hotel business saw better days when Padre Pio was alive, but the staff members at the better hotels usually manage to remain courteous and helpful to the guests.

San Giovanni Rotondo has changed, after all, and the people of the town knew it would happen when Padre Pio died. And now this mountain village is in a period of transition. It is no longer the home of Padre Pio and it is not yet his shrine.

There are those who hope to make San Giovanni a shrine by asking for early beatification and canonization for Padre Pio, but the Vatican will not be pressured. As one Vatican official stated, there can be no short cuts to beatification or canonization for anyone.

In short, the Vatican's attitude lately has been a mixture of restraint and encouragement for Padre Pio's beatification.

On several occasions since Padre Pio's death, Pope Paul VI has referred to the famed stigmatic as a good and devout priest and an obedient servant of God who had undergone great sufferings during his lifetime.

In the meantime, San Giovanni continues its transition. Near the hospital built by donations to Padre Pio from all over the world, workmen with pneumatic hammers are carving out the beginnings of a foot path that will zigzag its way up the side of the hill. When completed, stations of the cross will be erected along the path. Each station of Christ will be depicted in bronze bas-relief about four feet square.

There will be a reminder of Padre

sufferings at the fifth station of the cross where Simon of Cyrene is depicted taking up the cross for Christ. The Simon will bear the likeness of Padre Pio because like Simon of Cyrene, he shared in the sufferings of Christ.

Except for special occasions there are not likely to be more than several dozen people in the church at any time. They used to come in much greater numbers to have their confessions heard by Padre Pio — the women for several hours in the morning and the men during the entire afternoon.

These days the visitors gather in greatest number in the small chapel-like room where the remains of Padre Pio rest inside a gray crypt which is surrounded by an iron gate like the one that encircles the old confessional. The room is downstairs, directly below the main altar of the church.

Some of the visitors bring flowers that they wish to have placed on the crypt. The flowers are put there by a friar who reaches the crypt through a small entrance gate.

A single row of pews encircles the outside of the gate. If the pews are filled with people kneeling in prayer, others often will stand two and three deep behind them. The people's prayers are solitary. But if a woman, for instance, begins reciting her prayer aloud, others often will join her.

Foundation Announces \$9.8 Million in Grants

New York — (RNS) — The Ford Foundation announced 28 grants totaling \$9,871,010 for research, information and action programs in population control.

Largest grant of \$1.5 million went to the University of Michigan's Center for Population Planning. The Michigan facility prepares students for careers in family planning, studies the relation of population to health and gives technical assistance to international organizations concerned with population problems.

Kueng Book Wins Thomas More Medal

Chicago — (NC) — Father Hans Kueng, Swiss theologian, has been named winner of the 1968 Thomas More medal for his book, "The Church." The Thomas More association awards the medal annually for "the most distinguished contribution to Catholic literature."

The citation accompanying the medal praises the book "as a positive and substantial step along the difficult path of renewal."

Pope Consecrates Twelve Bishops

VATICAN CITY — (NC) — Pope Paul VI conferred episcopal ordination on 12 prelates, including four Americans, in special ceremonies here on Jan. 6.

The Americans are Archbishop Raymond E. Eitel, from Ossian, Iowa, newly appointed apostolic delegate for New Zealand and the Pacific Islands; Bishop Paul Marcinkus, from the Chicago archdiocese, who has been made secretary of the Holy See's Institute for the Works of Religion, which administers funds of the Vatican and other religious organizations; Bishop Andrew Schierhof from St. Louis, who was named auxiliary of La Paz, Bolivia; and Bishop Bernard J. McLaughlin, named auxiliary of Buffalo.

(Bishop Schierhof will become the local superior of three Rochester diocesan priests who administer a parish in La Paz.)

Among the eight others are a Canadian, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Fulton of Toronto; an Italian, a Congolese, a Mexican, two Bolivians and two Frenchmen.

INVESTIGATION SOUGHT

La Paz, Bolivia — The Bolivian Senate has asked for "an exhaustive investigation" of charges that the U.S. Peace Corps seeks to reduce births by distributing contraceptives.

Papal Authority Stressed By Scottish Archbishop

Edinburgh — (NC) The uniqueness of papal authority and loyalty to the Pope were stressed in a pastoral letter of Archbishop Gordon J. Gray of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, president of the Scottish Bishops' Conference.

Loyalty to the Pope, he said, "is not a sentimental loyalty, but a loyalty rooted in our Catholic belief that the Holy Father is the vicar of Christ on earth, and that his directives and guidance enjoy a unique authority. Although these directives have rarely attached to them the stamp of infallibility, nevertheless they always deserve and demand a hearing more attentive than that given to any other voice. Nor does the absence of the stamp of infallibility imply that they need not be accepted."

"No utterance of any theologian, bishop or body of bishops on matters of faith or morals has an authority comparable to the authority of the considered teaching of the Pope," Archbishop Gray said.

The archbishop went on to say that the assent of the Pope was necessary for the promulgation of the decrees of the Second Vatican Council. The

Pope also, he added, sanctions the decrees resulting from the commissions of experts studying areas of Catholic understanding and practice.

Reassuring those troubled by changes in the Church, the archbishop said, "Be assured of this: provided we march with the Church, going neither before nor behind, we need have no fear."

Stressing that the Church will not and cannot "change the revealed teachings of which she is the divinely constituted guardian," the archbishop said, "truth — and the Church proclaims the truth — does not change."

Popularization of theological controversy, the archbishop said, led to less accurate expression and the presentation of theories as facts. "As a result," he added, "the truths of Christianity are often eroded, and Christian standards of morality weakened in the misguided hope of making Christianity more acceptable."

Referring again in conclusion to the troubled nature of the present time, the archbishop urged faith in the Church "which is our guide" and prayer "for grace to follow her directives in humble and simple trust."

Viet's Thieu Stronger Than Ever

(Continued from Page 1)

command structure and the personnel changes in command positions have improved the quality of the fighting man. Since the introduction of modern weapons to the Vietnamese armed forces, such as the M-16 rifle, their fighting capability has improved.

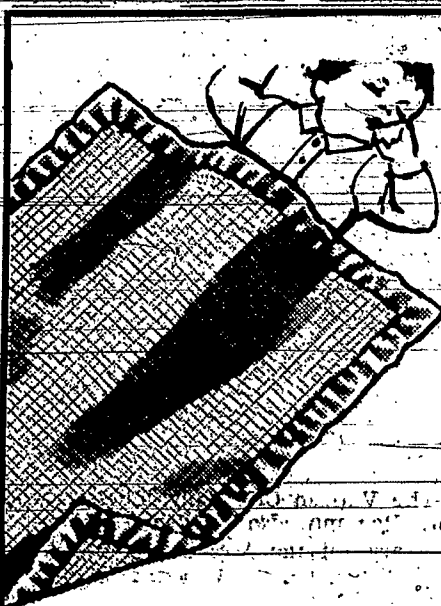
The Tet offensive found many units under strength yet they fought well and "maybe fought better than they themselves thought they could." They survived the May-June offensive and they defeated the third offensive of August-October away from the population centers.

Desertion is still a problem but not as bad as it was. There is general mobilization since early in the year and that is taking its toll of the civil administration, with many qualified men going into the armed services.

In recent months the allied and Vietnamese forces are deep in enemy base areas, his main forces have been driven back and the military initiative has passed to the allies. The Vietcong suffered military reverses in his three offensives and was forced to change his strategy from conventional warfare. Despite his supply of sophisticated weapons from the Soviet Union and China, he was forced to retire to safer havens.

There is also a weakening of enemy morale and of his confidence in victory. The enemy can still attack Saigon for its psychological impact in the United States and in Paris and on world opinion, but it may be too costly for him and the level of hostilities may drop back to what it was a few years ago.

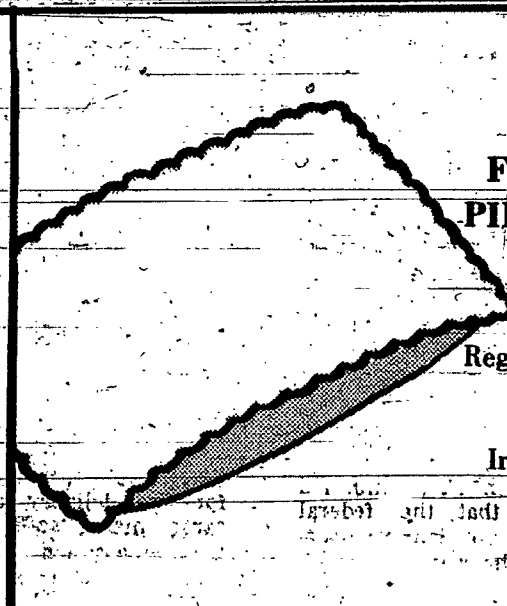
The official summed up his review as "cautious optimism." The government faces many difficulties. It is fighting a limited war for limited objectives and is trying to bring about a social revolution. It is beginning to generate popular support and confidence.



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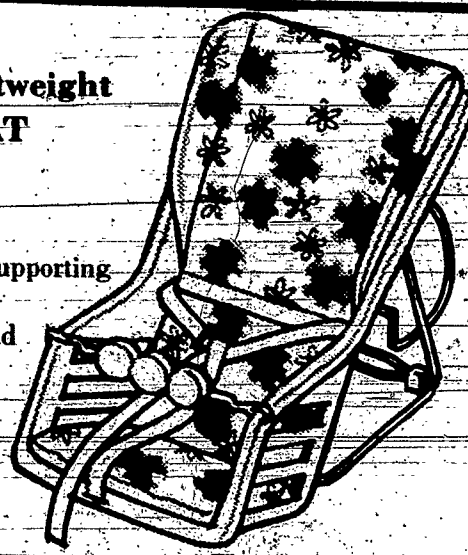
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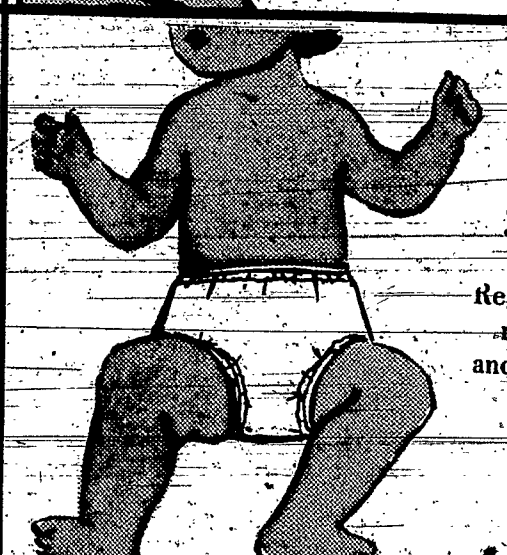
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New York — (RNS) — Jews to higher than Arabs and other groups. The Jewish community in New York City is estimated to be the largest in the world, with a population of over 1.5 million.

Long centuries of persecution have not deterred the Jewish people from their faith. In the past, they were often persecuted and even killed. Today, they are more accepted, but still face challenges.

Israel's raid on the Lebanese airport in 1968 was a significant event. It was seen as a show of force and a statement of Israel's determination to protect its interests in the region.

"There are those who say that Israel's raid on the Lebanese airport was a mistake. They argue that it was unnecessary and that it only made the situation worse. However, many others believe that it was a necessary and justified action."

"A man who is guided by his conscience and who is willing to sacrifice for his beliefs is a man who is truly great. He is a man who is worth following."

"But if the accident belongs to a man, then it is his fault. It is his responsibility. We must hold him accountable for his actions. We must not let him off the hook."

"I cannot deny the fact that the moral point of view is a very important one. It is the foundation of our society. Without it, we would be lost."

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Biafra

By John R. (NC News)

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Meanwhile the Nigerian government has been accused of blocking relief efforts. It is seen as being more concerned with its own interests than with the welfare of the people of Biafra.

Lagos sources have said that the first seemed to be a sign of things to come. They believe that the situation in Biafra is becoming increasingly unstable.

Cardinal Cushing, pastor of 'way ahead' edgeability."

Trygve L. Lie, 72, a general of the U.S. Army, died on Dec. 30 in Gellert, north of Oslo, Norway, from a heart attack.

For support of the Korean War, Lie was awarded the Medal of Honor. He was a highly respected and decorated soldier.

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