

"Julius Fine is saved, but it is necessary to pray much for him." Her mind was put at ease by such a "sure and definite" statement," since she understood that her father was in Purgatory, his salvation guaranteed.

Whether Padre Pio was enlightened by his Guardian Angel, the Holy Spirit, interior locution, or some other means is not known. What is known, however, is his ability to make such determinations after intense prayer, nourished by his mystical union with Christ during his Mass and Holy Communion, and by the offering up of his sufferings, especially the painful bloody wounds of his stigmata. In this instance, Padre Pio committed himself to assuring a grieving daughter that her father, who was not baptized, and was not a Roman Catholic, was saved. As in the case of King George V, someone who wishes to force Padre Pio into the strict "absolutely no salvation outside the Church" camp, is only left with this improbable scenario: it was revealed to Padre Pio that the devout Jew, Julius Fine, was secretly a baptized Roman Catholic!

Padre Pio Not a Catholic?

From the above examples it appears that Padre Pio did not blindly adhere to the proposition that only Catholics can be saved. Yet, it would be difficult to find someone more committed to the Catholic Church throughout his life than was Padre Pio. His obedience to the hierarchy was legendary, and he humbly submitted to Vatican-authorized suppression and even persecution without resistance. The spirituality of his epistles astonished even Carmelites, and his writings and teachings, born of the school of suffering, are the basis of an effort to make him a Doctor of the Church.²⁰

"Brother" Peter Dimond concludes his book on salvation with this dogmatic quote: ". . . only those who die as baptized Catholics can be saved. Anyone who refuses to accept this teaching is not a Catholic." The bizarre conclusion forced by this statement is that Padre Pio was not a Catholic, at least according to the Sedevacantist followers of the Most Holy Family Monastery. And yet they publish a booklet about him that appears designed to mislead others into thinking that Padre Pio would support their reactionary interpretation of the teachings of the Catholic Church!

Padre Pio lived by the Spirit of God, not by the letter of the law, except when his superiors in religion routinely commanded obedience of him. His ingenuous openness to the plenitude of God's mercy anticipated the explicit declarations of the Church during and after the Second Vatican Council on the possibility that non-Catholic churches can be a "means of salvation,"²¹ and on the reception by non-Catholics of the sacraments in certain cases.²² Padre Pio actually believed that the gospel of Jesus Christ was Good News!

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18. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13213a.htm>
19. Parente, *The Holy Souls*, pp. 104-106.
20. Rega, Frank M., *Padre Pio and America*, Rockford, IL, TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 2005, pp. 280-281.
21. Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 3, (www.vatican.va) "It follows that the separated Churches and Communities as such, though we believe them to be deficient in some respects, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church."
22. On commitment to Ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, n. 46, (www.vatican.va). "In this context, it is a source of joy to note that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases, to administer the Sacraments of the Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church but who greatly desire to receive these sacraments, freely request them and manifest the faith which the Catholic Church professes with regard to these sacraments."

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Padre Pio on Salvation Outside the Church

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It is quite unfortunate that alleged quotations or viewpoints attributed to Padre Pio have frequently been used to justify the stances, rumors, or agendas of various individuals or groups. Often it is difficult to find reliable documentation to verify his involvement in such scenarios as the "three days of darkness,"¹ his alleged opposition to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre,² or his purported support of Garabandal.³ Another area of speculation focuses on what he would think of the current state of the Church – where would this Tridentine rite Catholic, known for his lifelong obedience and loyalty to the hierarchy, place his support along the Novus Ordo – Traditionalist – reactionary spectrum?

It is not surprising, then, to find some who contend that St. Padre Pio held their own strict interpretation of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* – outside of the Roman Catholic Church no one can be saved. The most notable proponents of this presumed stance of Padre Pio are to be found among the Sedevacantists (the See of Peter is vacant, since it has been occupied by invalidly elected and/or heretical popes since Vatican II). In particular, "Brother" Michael Dimond, a Sedevacantist from the non-canonical Most Holy Family Monastery in Fillmore, New York, has recently written and published an 86-page illustrated booklet on the life of Padre Pio. Regrettably, he promotes this booklet as containing evidence that Padre Pio would support the central tenet of the Most Holy Family Monastery, that absolutely no one can be saved outside of the Catholic Church. Along with adherence to the true Faith, and being in a state of grace at the moment of death, Dimond and his followers insist that a strict requirement for entering the kingdom of heaven is water baptism, and water baptism alone. "Baptism of Desire" and "Baptism of Blood" are rejected as not being true Catholic dogmas. Neither can those invincibly ignorant of the Faith be saved.⁴

Another member of the Most Holy Family Monastery, "Brother" Peter Dimond, has written a tome which examines the historical documents and pronouncements of the Church on the issue of salvation: *Outside the Catholic Church There is Absolutely No Salvation*.⁵ This extensively researched and detailed book attempts to present its case by explaining away all references, regardless of their level of authority, to any other means of salvation other than water baptism for Catholics. Thus, only Roman Catholics who die faithful to the Church, loyal to the Holy Father, and sealed by validly administered water baptism, can enter heaven. Peter Dimond concludes his book with this uncompromising and explicit statement: "In this document I have shown that it is the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church – and therefore the true teaching of Jesus Christ – that only those who die as baptized Catholics can be saved. Anyone who refuses to accept this teaching is not a Catholic."

The full title of the Monastery's Padre Pio booklet, written by "Bro. Michael Dimond, O.S.B." is *Padre Pio: A Catholic Priest who worked miracles and bore the wounds of Jesus Christ on his body*.⁶ On page 62 Michael Dimond writes: "The letters from Padre Pio clearly prove that he didn't respect false religions and that he held firmly to the dogma that it is necessary for salvation to be a Catholic." On the next page he then quotes from a meditation composed by Padre Pio in which he states: "He [Jesus] sees the sacrileges with which priests and faithful defile themselves, not caring about those sacraments instituted for our salvation as necessary means for it; now, instead, made an occasion of sin and damnation of souls." From this it can be seen that Padre Pio viewed the sacraments as the "necessary means" of salvation. However, in studying the course of his life and ministry as a Catholic priest, evidence can be found that he understood the sacraments as necessary for all in general, but not for all in particular. Thus, while he believed that the sacraments of the Church are necessary as the normative means of salvation, Padre Pio was willing to admit of exceptions on an individual basis. But these exceptions did not compromise his conviction that the one true Church founded by Jesus Christ is the Roman Catholic Church.

Lest anyone be deceived into joining the Sedevacantist camp under the assumption that Padre Pio would support their views if he were alive today, the following documented cases are presented as evidence that Padre Pio believed that non-Catholics could be saved.

Adelaide McAlpin Pyle, a Baptized Protestant
"She will be saved because she has faith."

(Most of the information for this first account comes from the English version of the book *Mary Pyle*, by Bonaventura Massa.⁷ This work was diligently compiled from written documents and taped oral testimonies, kept on file in the Archives of Padre Pio's friary in anticipation of the process for Miss Pyle's Cause for Beatification.)

The wealthy Presbyterian, Adelaide McAlpin Pyle, was the mother of Mary Pyle, a well-known convert to Catholicism who renounced her family fortune in order to spend her life near Padre Pio. The Pyle family was related by marriage to the Rockefellers, and made their fortune in the soap and hotel business. After Adelaide found out that her daughter Mary had chosen to move to southern Italy to learn about God from a saint, curiosity impelled her to travel from her plush New York townhouse to medieval San Giovanni Rotondo, in order to meet this holy man.

In spite of an unpleasant initial encounter, Adelaide eventually became quite friendly with Padre Pio. She made numerous journeys from America, beginning in the mid-1920s, to visit her daughter Mary, and to meet with the Padre. Mary often tried to convince her mother to convert to Catholicism as she herself had done, but Adelaide reportedly said in Padre Pio's presence, "I would rather allow myself to be burned alive for my religion!" Padre Pio advised Mary not to push her mother to convert: "Let her be! Don't upset her peace."⁸ However, Mary continued to worry because her mother was not a Catholic, and Padre Pio counseled, "Let's not confuse her. She will be saved because she has faith."⁹

In 1936, Adelaide, who had grown older and was nearing death, made one last trip to San Giovanni Rotondo. As she said good-bye to Padre Pio at the end of this visit, the saintly priest pointed heavenward, saying to the Protestant Adelaide, "I hope we will see each other again soon, but if we don't see each other here, we will see each other up there."¹⁰ She passed away in the fall of 1937 at the age of seventy-seven.¹¹ Her daughter Mary then became pre-occupied about her mother's salvation. After dreaming that her mother was in Rome standing in front of the Vatican, she poured out her anxiety to Padre Pio. He replied, "And who told you that your mother could not be saved?"¹²

Did Padre Pio receive a revelation that Adelaide Pyle had secretly *'in pectore'* converted to the Catholic Faith? If that were true, he most certainly would have told this to her daughter Mary, who was obviously distraught from worrying over her mother's salvation. Further, it seems likely that if Adelaide had converted, she would have shared this good news with her convert daughter. It is reasonable to conclude then that Padre Pio believed that this particular person who died outside the Church could be saved. In addition, there is evidence that Padre Pio would have been willing to hear Adelaide's confession, and grant her sacramental absolution. On one occasion, she had confided to her daughter her great desire to kneel before Padre Pio in his confessional, but she lamented that her inability to speak Italian made this impossible. When Padre Pio heard of this, (apparently it was after her death), he bemoaned, "Oh! If she had only done it! As for the language, I would have taken care of that!"¹³

King George V of England, a Baptized Protestant
"Let us pray for a soul . . ."

One evening in 1936 Padre Pio was conversing with some dear friends in his cell. Among those present were Dr. Guglielmo Sanguinetti and Angelo Lupi, who would respectively become the medical director and the builder of Padre Pio's hospital years later. In the middle of their conversation, Padre Pio suddenly interrupted the discourse with the words, "Let us pray for a soul soon to appear before the tribunal of God." With that he bowed his head, and his guests, although astonished, kneeled and joined him in prayer. When they had finished, Padre Pio announced that they had been praying for the king of England. The next morning, the news blared forth on the friary radio of the unexpected death of King George V of England the previous evening.¹⁴ Two of the sources for this story^{15, 16} report that Padre Aurelio was also present in the room, while another source states that Padre Pio went to the friary cell of Padre Aurelio at midnight that evening and asked him to join him in prayers for the king of England who "at that moment" was to appear before God.¹⁷

An Anglican and the son of the future King Edward VII, George was baptized on July 7, 1865 in the private chapel of Windsor Castle. Upon accession to the throne in 1910, the new king swore the following required oath: "I, N., do solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God, profess, testify and declare that I am a faithful Protestant, and that I will, according to the true intent of the enactments to secure the Protestant Succession to the Throne of my realm, uphold and maintain such enactments to the best of my power."¹⁸

In all likelihood, the king was in his final agony or had already died when Padre Pio requested prayers for him, since he was "at that moment" to appear before God. If he believed that the soul of this Protestant were doomed to the everlasting fire, why would he pray for him, and also ask others including another priest to do likewise, other than to ask for his conversion. However, it is not recorded or implied that he asked his confreres to pray for the deathbed conversion of the king – an important intention that Padre Pio in all likelihood would have explicitly stated, if such were his purpose. Although he mentioned the king to his priest colleague, he did not tell the friends in his room that they were praying for a non-Catholic until they had finished their prayers. One cannot therefore say that it is to be assumed that as Catholics they were praying for the king's conversion.

Since as far as is known they were not specifically asked to pray for his deathbed conversion, there are two alternatives. The first is that they were simply praying for the salvation of a Protestant whom Padre Pio did not consider doomed because of his non-Catholic religion; but this would not be acceptable to one who holds that Padre Pio subscribed to a literal *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* position. Those who hold that position are left with the unlikely alternative that they were praying for a Catholic, and that Padre Pio had requested the prayers because he was given a private revelation that King George V of England was secretly a Roman Catholic, loyal to the Pope!

Julius Fine, an Unbaptized Devout Jew
"Julius Fine is saved . . ."

Fr. Alessio Parente, O.F.M. Cap., lived and worked alongside Padre Pio for many years in Our Lady of Grace Friary at San Giovanni Rotondo. He wrote numerous books about his confrere, and his works provide reliable source material for the saint. The following information is from Fr. Alessio's book *The Holy Souls*,¹⁹ and was related by a "very good friend" of his, Mrs. Florence Fine Ehrman, the daughter of the person in question.

In 1965 her father, Julius Fine, who had practiced the Jewish faith all his life and believed firmly in God, was stricken with what is commonly called "Lou Gehrig's disease." Mrs. Ehrman wrote to Padre Pio beseeching a cure for her father from this fatal illness. A short time later she received the reply that Padre Pio would pray for her father and would take him under his protection.

When her father passed away in February of the next year, she was able to accept his death peacefully. However after some time, she began to worry about whether or not he was saved, even though he had been a very loving and kind husband and father. "This fear came about because I began to hear many people, Protestants and Catholics alike, say that unless person had been baptized they could not be saved."

On a visit to the friary at San Giovanni Rotondo in the fall of 1967, she was told by a personal friend (quite possibly Fr. Alessio himself) to write down whatever she wished to ask Padre Pio, and this friend would present the letter to him. She of course wrote down her concerns about the eternal state of her father's soul – this good and gentle Jewish man who had never been baptized. The reply from Padre Pio, which she received in writing, was this: