

For Immediate Release:
February 20, 2018

Contact: Deacon Jim Armstrong, APR
Executive Director, Communications
jarmstrong@dioceseofcleveland.org
216-402-1507

Relics of St. Pio of Pietrelcina to visit the Diocese of Cleveland
Touring relics to be on view at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist

Relics of St. Pio of Pietrelcina – better known as Padre Pio – will be on display at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, on Sunday, March 4, from 1:30 to 5:30 p.m., and on Monday, March 5 from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Viewing of the relics will be paused during regular Mass times at the Cathedral on Monday at 7:15 a.m. and at noon. The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist is located at East Ninth Street and Superior Avenue in downtown Cleveland. Admission to the viewing queue will be ended 30 minutes prior to the closing of the exhibit on both Sunday and Monday.



The relics of St. Pio available for public veneration will be the following (pictured at left): St. Pio's glove; St. Pio's crusts of the wounds from his stigmata; Cotton-gauze with St. Pio's blood stains; A lock of St. Pio's hair; St. Pio's mantle and St. Pio's handkerchief soaked with his sweat hours before he died.

Auxiliary Bishop emeritus Roger Gries will celebrate a Mass in honor of St. Pio at noon on Monday, March 5 at the cathedral.

The Saint Pio Foundation, which is sponsoring the tour on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his passing, will sell books and items related to Padre Pio in the entryway of the cathedral.

St. Pio was born on May 25, 1887 in Pietrelcina, Italy, and baptized Francesco Forgione. He first expressed his desire for priesthood at age 10. In order to pay for the preparatory education, his father, Grazio Forgione, emigrated to the United States in 1899 and he worked here for several years.

The future saint entered the Capuchin order at age 15, taking the name Pio. He was ordained a priest in 1910 at the age of 23. During his lifetime, Padre Pio was known as a mystic with miraculous powers of healing and knowledge, who bore the stigmata for fifty years.

Stigmata is the term the Catholic Church uses to speak about the wounds an individual receives that correspond to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ. They can appear on the forehead, hands, wrists and feet.

Padre Pio's stigmata emerged during World War I, after Pope Benedict XV asked Christians to pray for an end to the conflict. Padre Pio had a vision in which Christ pierced his side. A few weeks later, on Sept. 20, 1918, Jesus again appeared to him, and he received the full stigmata. It remained with him until his death on Sept. 23, 1968. Pope John Paul II canonized him St. Pio of Pietrelcina in 2002. This year marks the 50th anniversary of St. Pio's death.

About relics

In the Catholic Church, relics are physical objects associated with a saint or candidate for sainthood – part of the person's body or something with which he or she was in contact. Relics are not worshiped, but treated with religious respect. Touching or praying in the presence of such an object helps a faithful individual focus on the saint's life and virtues, so that through the saint's prayer or intercession before God, the individual will be drawn closer to God.

What is a saint?

Many popular devotional practices involve veneration of the saints. The saints have a special place in the Body of Christ, which includes both the living and the dead. Through Christ we on earth remain in communion both with the saints in heaven and with the dead who are still in Purgatory. We can pray for those in Purgatory and ask the saints to pray for us. Through their prayers of intercession, the saints in heaven play an integral role in the life of the Church on earth. "For after they have been received into their heavenly home and are present to the Lord, through Him and with Him and in Him they do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, showing forth the merits which they won on earth through the one Mediator between God and man." The saints, the members of the Church who have arrived at perfect union with Christ, join their wills to the will of God in praying for those in the Church who are still on their pilgrimage of faith.

About the Saint Pio Foundation

The Saint Pio Foundation is a premier national charitable organization that promotes awareness of St. Pio and his mission by working with institutions and individuals who share the same vision to serve "those in need of relief of suffering." Funds raised by the Saint Pio Foundation are used to provide grants to American Catholic healthcare, educational, social, religious, and cultural partner organizations. More information about Saint Pio Foundation can be found at <http://www.saintpiofoundation.org>.

About the Diocese of Cleveland

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Cleveland was founded on April 23, 1847. Under the leadership of the Most Reverend Nelson J. Perez, Bishop of the Diocese of Cleveland, it is the 23rd largest diocese in the United States. The diocese encompasses the counties of Cuyahoga, Summit, Lorain, Lake, Geauga, Medina, Wayne and Ashland. There are more than 692,000 Catholics in the diocese, and Catholic Charities-Diocese of Cleveland is one of the largest diocesan systems of social services in the world. There are 185 parishes, 111 Catholic schools, one pastoral center and one mission office within the diocese. The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist is located in downtown Cleveland.

About the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist

The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist stands in the middle of vibrant theater entertainment, professional sports venues and a thriving commercial district. It is the setting for episcopal liturgies and ordinations. It has grown into a vibrant and flourishing parish community serving over 1,100 members. As the mother church of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, the cathedral is the spiritual home of over nearly 700,000 Catholics.