



Padre Pio: Miracles and Politics in a Secular Age

Sergio Luzzatto

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The first historical appraisal of the astonishing life and times of a controversial twentieth-century saint

Padre Pio is one of the world's most beloved holy figures, more popular in Italy than the Virgin Mary and even Jesus. His tomb is the most visited Catholic shrine anywhere, drawing more devotees than Lourdes. His miraculous feats included the ability to fly and to be present in two places at once; an apparition of Padre Pio in midair prevented Allied warplanes from dropping bombs on his hometown. Most notable of all were his stigmata, which provoke heated controversy to this day. Were they truly God-given? A psychosomatic response to extreme devotion? Or, perhaps, the self-inflicted wounds of a charlatan?

Now acclaimed historian Sergio Luzzatto offers a pioneering investigation of this remarkable man and his followers. Neither a worshipful hagiography nor a sensationalist exposé, *Padre Pio* is a nuanced examination of the persistence of mysticism in contemporary society and a striking analysis of the links between Catholicism and twentieth-century politics. Granted unprecedented access to the Vatican archives, Luzzatto has also unearthed a letter from Padre Pio himself in which the monk asks for a secret delivery of carbolic acid—a discovery which helps explain why two successive popes regarded Padre Pio as a fraud, until pressure from Pio-worshipping pilgrims forced the Vatican to change its views.

A profoundly original tale of wounds and wonder, salvation and swindle, *Padre Pio* explores what it really means to be a saint in our time.

Padre Pio is the winner of the 2011 Cundill Prize in History

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