

Last Thursday, Sept 23rd it was the feast day of Saint Padre Pio. This coming Tuesday we are going as a parish to the National Center of Saint Padre Pio, Barto PA. Every year in September I used to go with our parish to this beautiful and peaceful place. This year marks the 53rd anniversary of his death and also 103rd anniversary of his stigmata. The story of the Shrine of Padre Pio in PA is unique. Fifty three years ago, in Barto, PA, a little girl was diagnosed with kidney cancer. The doctors told her mother that she could die at any time, and there was no hope for her to recover from that kind of cancer. Her mother during those tormenting days thinking the death of her dear child, suddenly felt the smell of roses in her room and a voice telling her to take her terminal sick daughter and go immediately to see Padre Pio in Italy. Amazingly, she trusted and took very seriously the unknown and mysterious voice. She took her sick daughter and went to San Giovanni Rotondo, near Foggia, Italy. The first day she joined the huge crowds desperately trying to let Padre Pio see her daughter. Padre Pio very tired and close to his death could not see them. The next day she insisted saying to the superior that she came from the United States and needed to see Padre Pio who mysteriously invited her to bring her daughter to see him. Finally, her request was granted. Padre Pio came in his wheelchair approaching the mother and the little sick girl in her arms. He placed his hands on her head assuring that everything will be fine. Filled with trust and peace they went back to Pennsylvania. They went to the doctor who noticed that the cancer was gone. A real miracle that science could never explain how it happened. Her parents grateful and thankful to Almighty Father, for this miracle that saved the life of their daughter, through the intercession of Padre Pio. Promised to build in Barto, PA, a replica of the friary of San Giovanni Rotondo, where Padre Pio lived. It is a beautiful and very peaceful place surrounded by the farms. The shrine has many relics of Saint Padre Pio, including one of his gloves used to cover his bleeding hands from his stigmata. Thousands of people come to this shrine begging the intercessions of Padre Pio. Last May, for the first time, we decided to have the confirmation retreat at the Shrine of Padre Pio in Barto, Pa. We had two full buses with students soon to be confirmed. I never can forget that our students were touched by listening to the life of Saint Padre Pio, his numerous miracles, and the miracle that saved the life of the little girl fifty years ago. The retreat was given by the older sister of the girl who was cured through the intercession of Padre Pio. She is an excellent speaker who has the gift to share the story of her sister and touching the hearts of those who carefully listen to her. Padre Pio was a saint who spent hours in the confessional, praying, fasting, by locating, counseling people, giving spiritual directions, and above all celebrating Holy Mass with his bleeding hands covered by his glove. He celebrated Holy Mass with great passion and love knowing well the redeeming value of the sacrifice of Christ on the Altar. He used to say that "It would be easier for the world to exist without the sun than without the Holy Mass." It is very true indeed. Amen! He told thousands of people who came to see him to pray in silence, to kneel to the feet of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament confiding our needs to Him, to place the confidence in divine Providence, not to be afraid but to lift our spirit to the love of Christ. He always insisted and encouraged the faithful to make a good confession and begging Christ's mercy. We beg the intercessions of Saint Padre Pio, and take refuge in his saintly and powerful words:

**My past, O Lord, to your mercy; my present, to your love: my future, to your providence!**

Amen!