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changed. But it is certain that Luisa gives witness to an authentic, undiminished love for Jesus in the Eucharist.

In 1947 Luisa falls ill with bronchitis – the only illness that doctors will ever be able to diagnose for her. It lasts almost 15 days and leads quickly to her death.

### **Relationship with St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina**

Some people also remember Luisa's relationship with the stigmatic Capuchin friar, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina. It was a long-distance relationship, but intense just the same, especially during the difficult years of her censure. The relationship was kept alive by Federico Abresch who was born in Cologne, Germany, March 3, 1897. He moved to Bolzano, Italy, after the Great War, and from there, he went to Bologna to improve his Italian. It was there that he met his future wife. More out of convenience than out of conviction, he embraced the Catholic faith so he could marry her since he was a Lutheran. His true conversion took place in San Giovanni Rotondo after meeting Padre Pio. From that point on, his bond with the stigmatic friar became so strong that in 1943, after suggestions made by Padre Pio himself, he decided to settle definitively in San Giovanni Rotondo where he opened a store selling religious articles and photographs. Since he already knew Luisa from around the mid-1930s, a strong spiritual bond grew between him and Padre Pio as well as with Luisa; that is why Federico always felt himself to be a devout spiritual child of Padre Pio and faithful disciple of Luisa also.

Besides making frequent trips to see Luisa, Abresch kept up a steady correspondence with her. He found an endless spiritual font for his spirituality in the message of the Divine Will. And, to the best of his ability, he lavishly shared it, joyous over the good he saw in those who embraced it. When he was in Bologna, he had formed a group of faithful who got together without fail to be nourished by this spirituality. It continued in San Giovanni Rotondo until his death on August 18, 1969.

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During his visits to Luisa, Federico Abresch would relay to her the thoughts and words of Padre Pio, including the famous phrase meant for her after her books were condemned: "The saints are made, but woe to those who make the saints!"

Luisa took advantage of him being near Padre Pio, and asked that everything that concerned her be relayed to him so that the holy friar would talk to the Lord about it. She also asked him to have the friar pray for her because she was in "such need" and to kiss his hands for her.

But he is not the only *intermediary* between her and Padre Pio. Luisa writes to Mrs. Caterina Valentina of San Giovanni Rotondo on April 25, 1939 to ask Padre Pio to pray "very much" for her and for those in her life because "the storm shows no signs of letting up" and the lightning and thunder "seem to want to burn us all."

There are countless testimonies beyond these that talk about the mutual esteem and faith Luisa and Padre Pio had in each other, perhaps because of the deep similarities in their lives, too.

A young girl recalls going on a pilgrimage to San Giovanni Rotondo with her aunt and going to a Mass that Padre Pio was celebrating at 5 o'clock in the morning. When the aunt told Padre Pio that the girl had been dying, but she received a miracle through Luisa Piccarreta, Padre Pio made the sign of the cross on her head and said, "Yes, by intercession of Luisa Piccarreta, the Lord has saved her." Obviously the whole town started talking about this event.

Even the residents of San Giovanni Rotondo knew how much respect Padre Pio had for Luisa. Miss Adriana Pallotti recalls that day she asked Padre Pio, her spiritual father, if she was doing the right thing by donating money to have Luisa's books printed. Padre Pio said "yes", and, in fact, rather uncharacteristically, he had her repeat the question, astounding his spiritual daughter to no small degree. The answer again was a clear "yes."