

FATHER PETE TO DELIVER FINAL MASS

A community of faith bids a beloved pastor a fond farewell and reflects on all the blessings they have shared in his 15 years at St. Padre Pio Parish.



SUNDAY, JUNE 28
Father Pete's Last Mass. St. Padre Pio Parish at 10:30 a.m. Following Mass, a luncheon reception will be held in Rosary Hall. Everyone welcome to join in thanking Father Pete for his 15 years of dedication and service. Call 865-691-7526 if you plan to attend.



Best Wishes in your future endeavors Father Pete!



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Memories of accomplishments in Father Pete's 15-year tenure ... { BY CAROL KIRCHMAN }

This final Sunday in June marks the end of a 15-year stay for the beloved pastor of St. Padre Pio Parish. Father Peter Saporito will be moving on and the community will be saying farewell to a true friend and family member. Hundreds upon hundreds of people are expected to attend his final mass celebration at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, June 28 at our Lady of Pompeii church in Vineland.

Father Pete started his pastorship in September 2000 at Our Lady of Pompeii Church, which later merged with St. Mary Church and St. Joe's in January 2003 to what is now known as St. Padre Pio Parish. There is much to celebrate of his accomplishments.

Father Pete likes to refer to his stay here as "home" and the parishioners as "family." His goal was simple—bring the people together, bring them closer to God, and make the church a vibrant active community where people want to be. Not just on Sunday, but every day. A place to feel welcome and a part of something bigger. Well, he accomplished that and more.

First up on the list was having a festival and as he gathered up a group of volunteers, the St. Anthony Festival was formed and was held in June. It was a four-day event that included a midway and rides.

Then, with the merging of the parishes coinciding with the canonization of St. Padre Pio, the merged parishes became St. Padre Pio Parish. So, it was only fitting to move the festival to the saint's feast day in September and name it in honor of St. Padre Pio.

The St. Padre Pio Festival is now in its 13th year and has grown to be an event where people travel great distances by bus loads to attend this day-long festival and some even have traveled from as far away as Italy. The day begins with an Italian mass and is followed by a procession and mass in celebration of St. Padre Pio, culminating in a day filled with food and fun for all.

The parishioners of St. Padre Pio Parish are the ones from soup to nuts that come together as a community to make this event happen with Father Pete at the helm. Every year the attendance grows with over 4,000 people converging in the small East Vineland farming community. The food is plentiful, the company is always good, local farmers provide the produce, there's music and celebration and St. Padre Pio is at the core of the celebration.

Father Pete has a knack for bringing people together and finding the right folks for any job. He can easily spot someone for the job and has the unique ability of getting them to buy in. He places his trust in them to get the job done and get it done they do. That is why St. Padre Pio Parish is now home to over 1,300 families. Saporito recognizes that the church is not a building where members come to visit



Crowd at the St. Padre Pio Festival and festival workers,

each Sunday, but it is the people that make the Church. From his very first days as pastor, he set his sights on bringing the people in and having them take ownership. He can often be heard saying, this is "your" parish and "your" family.

Grace Hoffner, longtime friend and parishioner had this to say of Father Pete, "The best way to describe Pete, is that he is an imperfect man, who lives in a perfect manmade world. The world says, charity begins at home, take care of number one, it's not my problem. Well, that's not Father Pete. He gives without reserve, he places himself last and tries to take on everyone's problems. Father Pete is a large man with an equally large heart. The one thing that I really love about Pete, is that he never negates an idea. He is extremely supportive and recognizes talent. And once he gives you a job to do he never gets in your way."

Always filled with ideas, he never rests on his laurels and is always planning programs that provide spiritual formation and always focus on bringing families back to church. Each year, missions have been held that included the likes of Grayson Brown, Hard As Nails Ministry, Vince Ambrosetti Music Ministry, and Father McAlear, OMI Ministry of Hope & Healing.

Another simple but very effective change Father Pete made was when he first arrived. He added a center aisle to Our Lady of Pompeii church so that brides-to-be would want to get married there. A pond was built at the entry of the church and provides a serene tranquil setting for reflection and a favorite place for the children to watch the fish both before and after church while moms and dads

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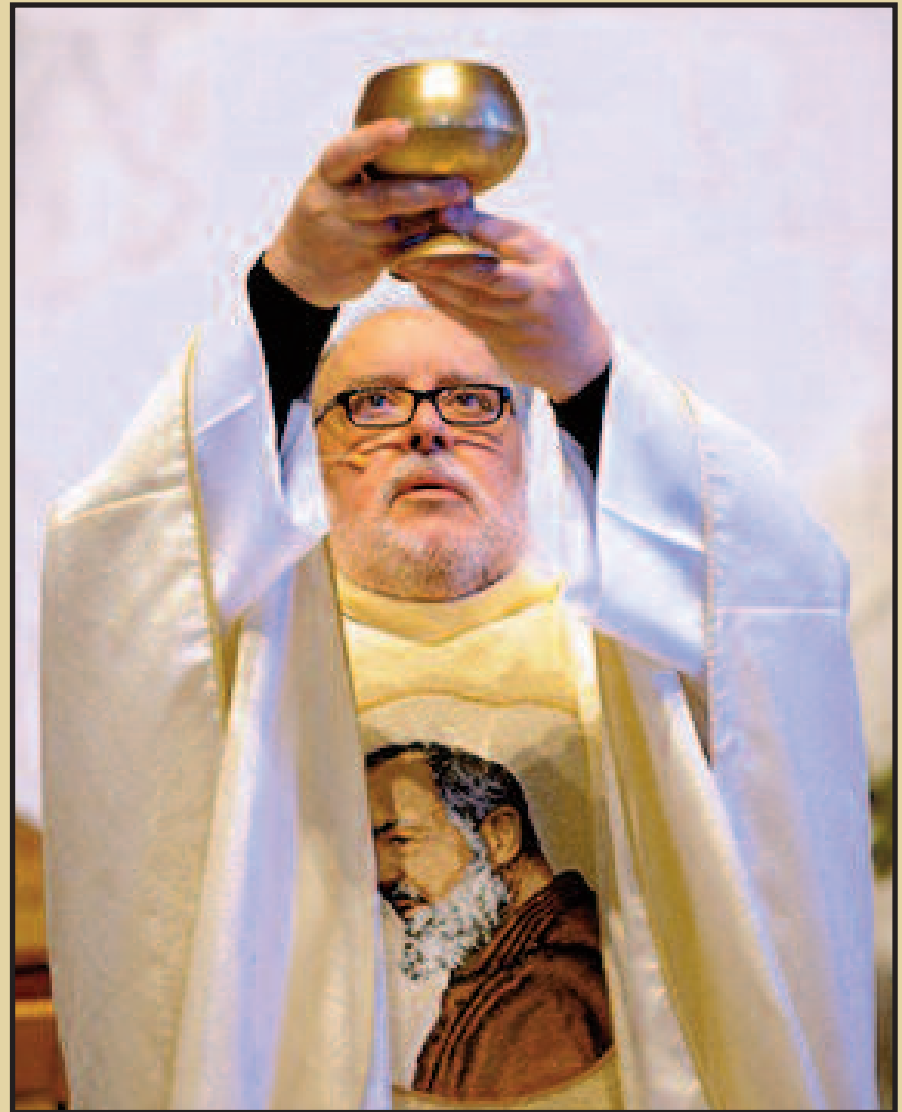
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for Everything
We will miss you!**

**Love,
*The Ploch Family***



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Father Pete

We wish you a fond farewell!

*God Bless,
The Pustizzi Family
and
SNJ Today*

Peace and all good things to you Fr. Peter Saporito!



From all of us at
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Continued from previous page

gather to catch up.

Other additions include the Children's Chapel where daily masses are held and the Garden of Saints where people can visit or pray and where Easter Sunrise mass is celebrated on Easter morning.

Each religious holiday is treated with deserving reverence and Father Pete never settles for ordinary. The Easter Celebration always includes a Holy Thursday liturgy with the washing of feet, breaking of bread and sharing of wine as part of the mass. Then, a Tableau was performed that traced the steps of Jesus in silence with parishioners taking parts of each biblical person.

The Tableau has now grown to a full-fledged production of the Passion of Christ that was first held each year in the church then moved to St. Mary School and now has taken center stage at the Frank A. Guarancini Performing Arts Center at Cumberland County College with the St. Padre Pio Players prayerfully acting out the final days of Jesus' life and resurrection.

Father Peter even had the idea of holding a Tent Revival in the month of June and summer thunderstorms tried to hamper attendance but for those who attended, it was well worth it.

Father Pete's love of music is evident in the many songs he has taught the congregation at Sunday services. He not only expects them to remember, he coaxes them to sing. The music ministry of the church has grown to include the adult choir, children's choir, the Christian Rock Band and the St. Padre Pio Players. He has also incorporated liturgical dance into many celebrations.

His love of music doesn't stop at religious services but includes the yearly Jerry Blavat dances, The Rat Pack dinner shows a '70s Dance, western dances and bringing the Italian legend and music great Patrizio Buanne concert that was held at the Landis Theater.

Father Pete is never afraid to try something that will bring people together and is always willing to take the chance. Another example of these programs is the St. Padre Pio Players, which has brought the Broadway stage to the St. Mary School Auditorium with *Nunsense*, *Nuncrackers*, and *Nunsense the II*



FROM TOP: Annual May crowning at St. Mary's School, an Easter Sunrise Mass, and Thanksgiving Mass. Father Pete has played an integral role in the life of church and community for the past 15 years.

Coming, a Broadway review and Salute to Military. All of these events would not have been possible if it were not for the support of the pastor and his faith in the dedicated volunteers and the congregation.

St. Padre Pio Parish has blossomed into a parish of the people and they welcome the new Pastor, Father Robert Sinatra. We wish Father Peter Saporito peace and all good things and thank him for breathing life into our church community and to quote Father Pete as he is often heard to say, "God is good all the time and all the time God is good."

God Bless You, Father Pete, and we'll see you at the Festival. ☩

**Thank you for being there for our family
spiritually and through the milestones.
We will miss you!**

**—The Galettos
Mary, David, Matt, Brian, & Lauren**

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Large Footprints

Father Peter Saporito will be finishing his 15-year stewardship of the Saint Padre Pio Parish in East Vineland at the end of this month.

And while Father Pete (that's how everyone refers to him) may soon be gone, he will leave large footprints for his successor, Father Rob Sinatra.

Dr. Paul Trivellini, a parishioner and member of the parish's St. Joseph Society, summed up Fr. Pete's tenure as "leaving the parish better than he found it."

Fr. Pete has touched many lives over his 15-year stewardship. There probably isn't a family in East Vineland that hasn't felt his presence over the past decade and a half.

As one parishioner put it, "(Father Pete) has been at more of our family events than some distant relatives."

He's presided over weddings, funerals, confirmations, baptisms, family illnesses, and more.

And, if he wasn't there to personally oversee the event, he was the one, as steward of the parish, who oversaw its execution.

When he came to the parish in September, 2000, it was still Our Lady of Pompeii Parish.

He coordinated the merger of St. Mary's Church and Our Lady of Pompeii in January of 2002 when they combined to become the St. Padre Pio Parish.

The merger was not without its challenges but, according to parishioner Jim Sauro, "God knew just what our Lady of Pompeii needed to help move St. Mary's Church and school forward to where they are today and Fr. Pete was a real blessing."

Pearl Giordano spoke of Fr. Pete's compassion and heart.

"When our son, Jerry, passed three years ago, Father Pete helped my husband and I through a very difficult day," she said. "He just seemed to know what was needed and provided



Father Pete with Cardinal Peter Turkson. He was a classmate of Father Pete's and is at the Vatican.

comfort and peace at our moments of greatest pain."

Another parishioner, Marie Dandrea, praised Father Pete for his "staunch support of the St. Padre Pio Shrine in Landisville" and just generally for "being a great priest."

A significant part of Father Pete's legacy will be the church's annual Fall Festival.

Under Father Pete's guidance the festival has grown each and every year to become a "calendar event" for not only the parish, but literally thousands for people who come to enjoy the traditional Italian music and food.

Another legacy Father Pete leaves behind is the parish's online prayer site, which he established to "spread the power of St. Padre Pio to all the faithful."

His true legacy for most parishioners, however, will be the fact that he was forever doing something, moving the parish forward through song, dance and example.

This Sunday, June 28, the parish will be celebrating Father Pete's last Mass at 10:30 a.m.

Following the mass, all are invited to attend a small reception for Father Pete at Rosary Hall, located behind the church at Dante and Cornucopia avenues in Vineland.

Please call the rectory at 856-691-7526 if you plan to attend so that proper accommodations can be made.

—Paul Doe



**Thanks for all the love and blessings over the years!
My family and I will miss you dearly!
Farewell & Best Wishes.**

Love,

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**Fr. Pete
To a Valued Colleague
and Good Friend.**

Peace and all Good Things.

Rev. Msgr. John Burton, Clergy, Staff and People of



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Best Wishes and Blessings Father Pete!

— Bob McCormick

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Good Luck Father Pete!



We wish you well.
You will not be
forgotten!

Love,
Ann Cantoni &
Families

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*Best Wishes
Father Pete
from all of us at*

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So sorry to see you go. Thank you for
being our Pastor for the past 15 years,
doing so many wonderful things for us.
You will be greatly missed!

With Love,
The Tolotti Family
Ann, Louis, Lisa & Robert & Families

Best Wishes Father Pete Thanks for all your help.

—The Merighi Family.



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Best wishes Father Pete
From the LaTorre Family

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Thank you Father for your love and support.

May the Angels protect and
guide you always,
Jo, Sharon, Scott

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Best Wishes Father Pete

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—Phil &
Jeanne Marie Brunozzi
and staff

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The Role of Pastor Fulfilled

Webster defines pastor as a spiritual overseer. Father Peter Saporito, whose term as pastor of St. Padre Pio Parish will come to an end in the next few days, embodies that term. Fr. Pete has fulfilled this role in ways that reach the greatest number of parishioners—from traditional liturgies with inspirational homilies to spiritual and social activities.

Under Fr. Pete's leadership, the parish has held events large and small including a tent revival, healing masses, parish retreats, parish dances, parish picnics, the Palm Sunday dinner and, of course, the Padre Pio Festival which draws visitors from multiple states to participate in beautiful liturgies as well as an afternoon of fun. While some of these events are purely spiritual and others are social, they serve a common theme of providing spiritual guidance while fostering a sense of fellowship and support among the parishioners.

The impact of Fr. Pete's efforts to inspire the community is reflected in the response from the parishioners who fill the church for the many liturgical services conducted throughout the year in addition to weekly mass, including Holy Week services at Easter a sunrise mass in the garden of saints that was developed under Fr. Pete's guidance.

Fr. Pete's efforts to provide spiritual enrichment include participating in a local radio broadcast on Saturday mornings and making himself available for individual meetings for those in need of his guidance. Many of us in the parish have seen the tremendous impact he has had on this parish and community. Fr. Pete is a humble person who will probably get annoyed at me for writing this article. Perhaps one of his best qualities is that he refuses to focus on his many successes and is more concerned with those he feels that he has not reached.

I have benefited greatly from having developed a close friendship with Fr. Pete over the years and I know that there are countless other people who have as well. We all feel greatly enriched spiritually from his stewardship and for this reason we will miss him.

—Stephen Barse

Best Wishes to our Dear Friend *Father Pete*



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THE SAINT JOSEPH'S SOCIETY FAREWELL TO OUR FRIEND

The Saint Joseph's Society is an organization of men who are dedicated to serving the Parish of Saint Padre Pio. We serve under the auspices of Saint Joseph, our patron saint. By donating time, talents and labor to support various events and physical projects we attempt to improve the churches, the grounds, the ancillary buildings and the spiritual events of our Parish. We always attempt to complete our projects at little or no cost to the church. We hold one annual fundraising event, a take-out chicken barbeque, which is usually held in March. Other projects are supported through donations. The society was founded on April 17, 1910 and is always looking for volunteers to join and donations toward projects.



The Society attempts to work in ways that compliment the goals of our parish and to not create any burden upon the Pastor and staff. With Father Peter's support, the society has completed numerous projects such as replacement windows, a concrete ramp at the handicapped entrance, a new produce stand for the annual festival, reconstruction of the garage at St. Mary's cemetery, repairs to commercial doors, painting projects, a redesign to the storage closet for tables and chairs and construction of the barbeque pit. An ongoing project that we have recently undertaken is the restoration of the "Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes and Mount Carmel," a labor of love created by Father Eugene Fitenti, the fifth pastor of Our Lady of Pompeii Church. So far, with the donations of many, we have replaced the fountain, replaced interior and exterior lighting with LED lights, increased the sidewalk area and installed granite benches. Father Peter has supported all of these projects, offering his time and encouragement whenever we had a question.

Father Peter, you have done a superb job under trying and difficult circumstances. There is an old saying that goes something like "leave it better than you found it." You have certainly done that. While we are sorry to see you go, others will now benefit from what we have learned together. And although we will not be close in proximity, we will remain close in our hearts.

Remember...God is good, all the time! Thank you for guiding us, for your friendship, and for your support of our humble goals.

For the Saint Joseph Society

—Dr. Paul D. Trivellini

THE STAFF OF ST. PADRE PIO PARISH wish Fr. Peter God's blessings as he completes his ministry at St. Padre Pio Parish. Fr. Peter is a loving priest, generous and kind. He has always been understanding to our needs and the needs of his church family. We love him and will miss him. He leaves accompanied by our prayers.

Love,

Your family at the parish office

It is Not Good Bye, It is "Fare Thee Well," Good Friend

Father Pete has a heart that is larger than life. He has a faith that is beyond measure. Father Pete has opened his heart to those who are grieving, lost and feel forsaken—those in his flock with greater needs than his own, those with crosses that have become too heavy to bear. Father Pete has been there to comfort those dealing with the many pressures of life and to encourage those who have become lost along the way.

St. Padre Pio Parish has been blessed with a priest that truly lives his faith. I am one of those touched by his kindness and goodness. When our son Jerry passed three years ago, Father Pete helped my husband and me through very difficult days; he just seemed to know what was needed and provided comfort and peace at the moments of our greatest pain. We have seen him reach out to many others in their moments of grief and loss with the same compassion and caring.

Jim Sauro said, "God knew just what our Lady of Pompeii needed to help move the church and St. Mary's School forward to where they are today, and that was a real **blessing!** Tomorrow he will find himself exactly where God wants him to be."

Father Pete has spent many hours lifting those in crisis and offering hope to many who have been struggling to find their way.

His mark has been left in every corner of St. Pio Parish and on the hearts and lives of those in his Parish Family. I have watched him buy food for the hungry and fuel for those without heat in the dead of winter, with never an expectation of repayment; he is a humble man with an indomitable spirit.

Marie Dandrea said Father Pete has always been a staunch supporter of the St. Pio Shrine in Landisville, and, "he is a great Priest."

Father reminds us that God is good all of the time, and, all of the time God is good! Father Pete has said:

To those I may have wronged, I ask forgiveness.

To those I may have helped, I wish I did more.

To those I was unable to help, I ask for understanding,

To those who helped me, I sincerely thank you so much...

These are words that express the feelings of his heart. Father Pete has



Father Pete with Pearl Giordano, Jake Kell, and Vince Ambrosetti.

helped to inspire many to become the best they can be, and, allow their faith to lead them.

Jackie Greer said, "Many years ago I left my home and family in England, and I was afraid, but God puts us where he wants us to be. I then met Padre Pio and he became one of my most special and dearest friends, and then I met Father Pete who has become another of my dearest friends. I know that St. Pio will never desert him and life for Father Pete has a new beginning."

Dan Cuellar said, "Father Pete is a great spiritual leader, mentor and man of God. Thank You for coming into our lives, Your Friend Dan Cuellar"

—Pearl Giordano

The Grapevine
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best of luck in
your future
endeavors. Thank
you for your
service to our
community!



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"Father Pete"
a man of God

Thank you for helping us feed thousands of seniors and those without food. Thank you for caring for the sick and those in transition. Thank you for reaching out to the lost, lonely, and those feeling forsaken. May your faith, kindness and goodness carry you to greater success and service in the years ahead.

*Pearl Giordano and
your faithful
listeners at 92.1*



Peace and all good things to you Fr. Peter.

Thank you for all you have done for the St. Padre Pio Parish community, for your spiritual leadership and caring; for all the religious celebrations, healing masses and special liturgies; for your love of music; for your love of the parish and for all the great events planned, especially the St. Padre Pio Festival. We will miss you and we wish you many blessings for the future.

Love, the parishioners of St. Padre Pio Parish