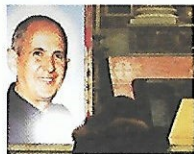


walking in processions; and repeatedly encouraging his parishioners to break their traditional *omertà* (imposed silence) and cooperate with the Italian authorities. "If everyone does something, then we can do a lot," was one of his favourite remarks. Perhaps the activity the Mafia most resented was his relentless reaching out to the young men and women of the parish who, in the face of bleak employment prospects otherwise, were easy prey for the mobsters. He wanted to show them there was a different future open to them.



One of the hitmen sent to murder him that day later turned penitent and revealed that, as they had approached Father Pino, he had turned to them with his characteristic smile and said, "I've been expecting you." In 1998, four assassins received life sentences for his murder, along with the local Mafia bosses, Filippo and Giuseppe Graviano. Seeing his killers – and those who ordered the hit – jailed, many who had previously been too frightened to act on his words of encouragement to break the Mafia's hold over their lives were galvanised.

### BEATIFICATION

Father Pino's cause was taken up by the Vatican. In May 2013, at an open-air Mass in Palermo, he was beatified. A 50,000-strong crowd hailed him as "the first martyr of the Mafia". "They tried to defeat him and killed him," said Pope Francis (himself a fierce critic of the Mafia) in his next Angelus message, "but in reality it is [Father Pino] who won, with Christ risen."

Peter Stanford is a Catholic writer and broadcaster ([peterstanford.org](http://peterstanford.org)). His latest book, *Pilgrimage*, is published by Thames & Hudson.

### Mass text

#### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**A great sign appeared in heaven:  
a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon  
beneath her feet,  
and on her head a crown of twelve stars.**

FIRST READING Apocalypse 11:19; 12:1-6. 10

PSALM Psalm 44

RESPONSE **On your right stands the queen,  
in garments of gold.**

1. The daughters of kings are among your loved ones.  
On your right stands the queen in gold of Ophir.  
Listen, O daughter, give ear to my words:  
forget your own people and your father's house. **R.**
2. So will the king desire your beauty:  
he is your lord, pay homage to him.  
They are escorted amid gladness and joy;  
they pass within the palace of the king. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
Mary has been taken up into heaven;  
all the choirs of angels are rejoicing.  
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Luke 1:39-56

#### COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**All generations will call me blessed,  
for he who is mighty has done great things  
for me.**

#### Next Sunday's Readings:

Joshua 24:1-2. 15-18  
Ephesians 5:21-32  
John 6:60-69



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# SUNDAY BULLETIN

THINKING FAITH

## FATHER PINO PUGLISI

That early autumn morning in 1993 the priest known to his parishioners as "3P" – Padre Pino Puglisi – in the run-down Brancaccio district of Palermo, the capital of Sicily, had conducted two marriages. Then there had been a First Communion class where he heard the candidates' confessions. He never missed, as he had a particular mission to the youngsters of the area, where he too had grown up, wanting to stop them getting caught up in the tentacles of the local Mafia. Finally, he had been to a party at the parish's Centro Padre Nostro because 15 September was his fifty-sixth birthday. Afterwards he headed home and was in front of the parish house of San Gaetano in Piazza Anita Garibaldi when a gunshot to his neck ended his life.

Father Pino – who was given the name Giuseppe by his dressmaker mother and cobbler father – knew all too well the risks of confronting the Mafia in their own backyard. The Mob had just the year before assassinated two Italian government prosecutors who had come to the island intent on bringing the criminal organisation to book. And then there were the phone calls he had been getting at night, threatening his life. He refused, though, to be cowed into silence, or to turn a blind eye, as so many Catholic clergy on the island had done over the decades. The staunchly anti-communist Cardinal Ernesto Ruffini, who ordained Father Pino in 1960, was once challenged about the Mafia's existence on his doorstep. "What is the Mafia?" he responded, "So far as I know, it could be a brand of detergent."



Father Pino was not afraid of what lay ahead. "The disciple of Christ is a witness," he told those who worried aloud about his safety. "Christian witness comes upon difficulties and can lead to martyrdom. It's only a small step, in fact it is precisely martyrdom which gives value to witness." And then he would quote St Paul: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." This desire, he concluded, "becomes a wish for communion which even transcends life".

In his three years in the parish, "3P" had repeatedly challenged the Mafia's hold: refusing to be forced to hire their recommended contractor when his church roof needed fixing; rejecting donations made by known members on feast days; banning them from

## Martyrs of our times



Peter Stanford looks  
at a priest who stood  
up to the Mafia.

15 AUGUST 2021

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE  
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK IV