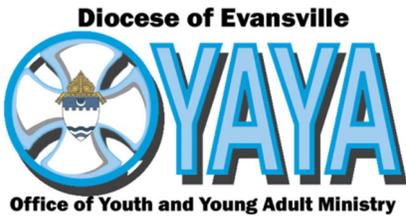


SAINT MARIA GORETTI YOUTH DISTINCTION



Feast Day: July 6th
(b. 1890; d. 1902)

Maria Goretti is an Italian Saint whose power of forgiveness and purity is a model for all young people. Maria Goretti refused the advances of a neighbor boy on several occasions. After refusing him a fourth time, and in a fit of rage, the boy, Alessandro, stabbed Maria 14 times in the neck and chest.

The neighbors contacted the Red Cross and transported Maria to the nearby hospital 14 miles away on a bumpy, rocky road. Maria lived for 24 hours after she was stabbed.

Before she died, she forgave Alessandro and asked her mother to forgive him as well. After that, she received communion and then she died.

Alessandro spent the first 6 years of his 40 year prison sentence unrepentant and surly. One night he dreamt of Maria who offered him 14 lilies (one for each stab wound). Alessandro began his own long process of conversion and redemption.

After serving the full 40 years in prison, Alessandro begged Maria's mother for forgiveness, which she did in honor of the deathbed request of her daughter. He then joined a Capuchin Franciscan Friary and spent the rest of his life in service to the poor and marginalized and in prayer.

Maria is a superior example of mercy and that forgiveness is greater than “an eye for an eye”. If Maria had not forgiven Alessandro, he might have been put to death for his crime, without the opportunity for conversion and later service to the poor.

We ask that Maria’s intercession for our youth leaders to guide them to be forgiving and to be the example of goodness that she embraced.

From Pope John Paul II’s Wednesday Angelus of July, 2003:

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Today, July 6, concludes the celebration of the centenary of the death of St. Maria Goretti, “little and gentle martyr of purity,” as she was described by my venerated predecessor Pius XII. Her mortal body rests in the church of Nettuno, in the Diocese of Albano, and her beautiful soul lives in God’s glory. What does this fragile but mature Christian girl say to young people today with her life, but above all with her heroic death? Marietta, as she was familiarly called, reminds young people of the third millennium that true happiness calls for courage and a spirit of sacrifice, the rejection of any compromise with evil and readiness to pay in person, including with death, for one’s faithfulness to God and to his commandments.

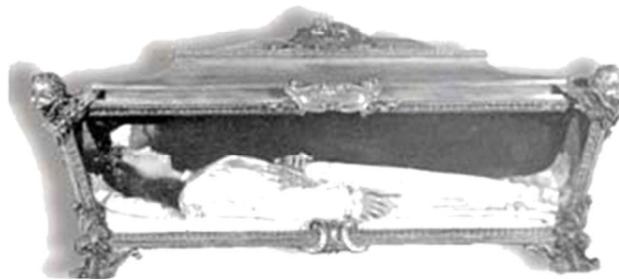
How timely is this message! Today, pleasure and egoism, or even immorality, are often exalted, in the name of false ideals of freedom and happiness. It is necessary to reaffirm with clarity that purity of heart and body must be defended, because chastity “safeguards” authentic love.

2. May St. Maria Goretti help all young people to experience the beauty and joy of the evangelical beatitude: “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

Purity of heart, like every virtue, calls for a daily training of the will and constant interior discipline. It requires, above all, assiduous recourse to God in prayer.

Numerous occupations and the accelerated speed of life at times make it difficult to cultivate this important spiritual dimension. Summer vacations, however, which begin for many, precisely, in these days, if they are not “burnt” in dissipation and simple diversion, can become a propitious occasion to give new breath to the interior life.

3. Hoping that the summer rest will be of profit to grow spiritually. I entrust young people to Mary, radiant with beauty. May she, who sustained Maria Goretti in her trial, help all, especially adolescents and youths, to discover the value and importance of chastity to build the civilization of love.



**Saint Maria Goretti’s body lies incorrupt at
Our Lady of Mercy in Nettuno, Italy**