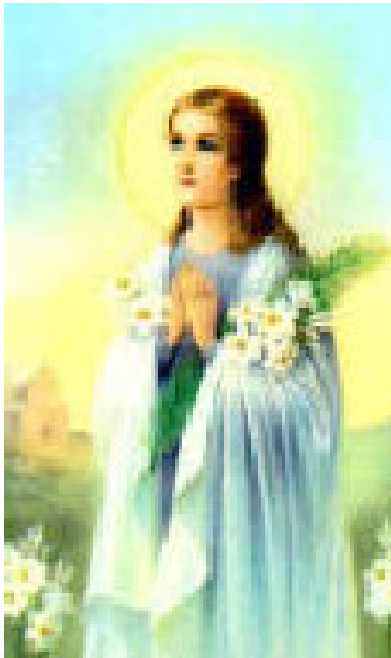


Lives of Saints

St Maria Goretti

1890 - 1902

Feast day: 6th July



"Yes, for the love
of Jesus I forgive
him...and I want
him to be with
me in Paradise."

St Maria Goretti
about Alessandro

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I was born in Corinaldo in Italy. My father was a poor farm worker who moved his family to Ferrier di Conca. He died of malaria when I was nine, and my mother had to struggle to feed us all. I never had the chance to go to school, and never learned to read or write. When I made my First Communion not long before my death at age 12, I was one of the larger and somewhat backward members of the class. I always tried to share whatever I had, and I recited the Rosary every night.

One hot afternoon in July 1902, I was sitting at the top of the stairs of our cottage, mending a shirt. I was not quite 12 years old, even if I was physically developed. A cart stopped outside, and our eighteen-year-old neighbour, Alessandro, ran up the stairs, seized me and pulled me into a bedroom. I struggled and tried to call for help, gasping, but convinced that I would rather be killed than submit to what's sinful. "No, God does not wish it. It is a sin. You would go to hell for it." Alessandro then began striking at me blindly with a long dagger.

I was taken to the hospital in a really bad state. During my last hours I expressed my concern for my mother. Where would she sleep? I also forgave my murderer. Alessandro had been chasing me for a while, but I had not told anyone lest I cause trouble to his family. I also received the grace of the Viaticum. I died about 24 hours after the attack.

My murderer was sentenced to 30 years in prison. For a long time he was unrepentant and surly. One night I went back to him in a dream. I was gathering flowers and offered them to him. His life was changed after this dream. When he was released after 27 years, his first act was to ask for my mother's forgiveness. I was canonized less than half a century later. My mother (82 years old by then) as well as two of my sisters and a brother were present at my beatification, which took place in 1950.