

# Maria Goretti

(1890-1902 AD)



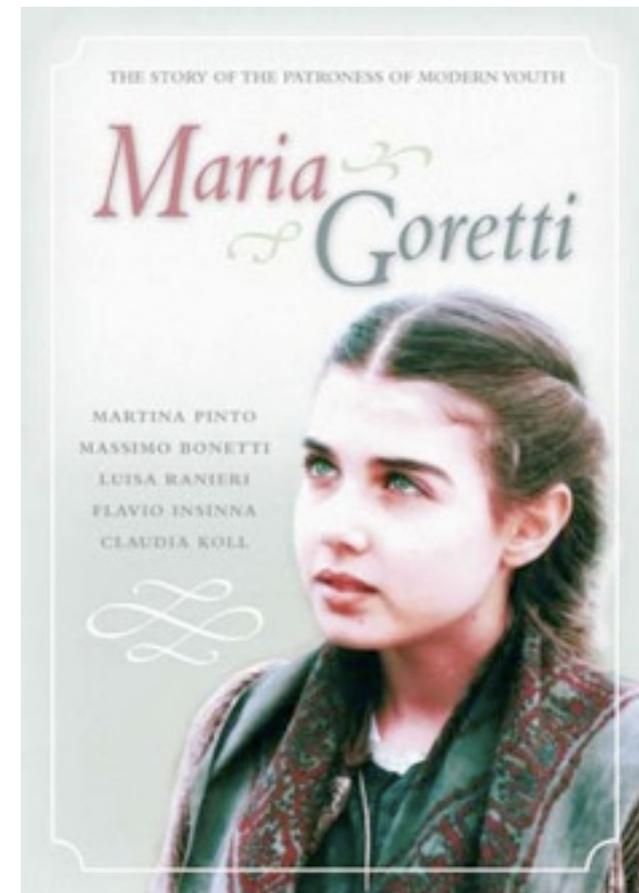
Maria Goretti is an Italian virgin-martyr of the Roman Catholic Church, and is one of its youngest canonized saints. She was martyred after dying from multiple stab wounds, inflicted by her attempted rapist after she refused him because of love of Jesus and her loyalty to the Ten Commandments.

Maria was born on October 16, 1890 in Corinaldo, Italy. She was the third out of six children. By the time she was six, her family had become so poor that they were forced to give up their farm, move, and work for other farmers. Soon, Maria's father Luigi became very sick with malaria, and died when Maria was just nine. While her brother, mother and sisters worked in the fields, Maria would cook, sew, and keep the house clean. It was a hard life, but the family was very close. They shared a deep love for God and the faith. She and her family moved to Le Ferriere, where they shared a residence with another family, the Serenellis.

On July 5, 1902, finding eleven-year old Maria alone sewing, Alessandro Serenelli (a 20 year-old farmhand) came in and threatened her with death if she did not do as he said (he was intending to rape her). She would not submit, saying that what he wanted to do was a mortal sin that he would go to Hell if he did it. She desperately fought to stop Alessandro from abusing her. She kept screaming, "No! It is a sin! God does not want it!" Alessandro at first choked Maria, but when she insisted she would rather die than submit to him, he stabbed her 11 times. The injured Maria tried to reach for the door, but Alessandro stopped her by stabbing her 3 more times before running away.

Maria's little sister Teresa awoke with the noise and started crying, and when Serenelli's father and Maria's mother came to check on the little girl, they found the bleeding Maria and took her to the nearest hospital. She underwent surgery without anesthesia, but her injuries were beyond the doctors' help. Halfway through the surgery, Maria woke up.

She insisted that it stay that way. The pharmacist of the hospital in which she died said to her, "Maria, think of me in Paradise." She looked to the old man: "Well, who knows, which of us is going to be there first?" "You, Maria," he replied. "Then I will gladly think of you," said Maria. The following day, 20 hours after the attack, having expressed forgiveness for her murderer and stating that she wanted to have him in Heaven with her, Maria died of her injuries, while looking at a very beautiful picture of the Blessed Mother.



Alessandro Serenelli was captured shortly after Maria's death. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison, where he remained unrepentant and uncommunicative from the world for three years, until a local bishop, Monsignor Giovanni Blandini visited him in jail. Serenelli wrote a thank you note to the bishop asking for his prayers and telling him about a dream, "in which Maria Goretti gave him lilies, which burned immediately in his hands."

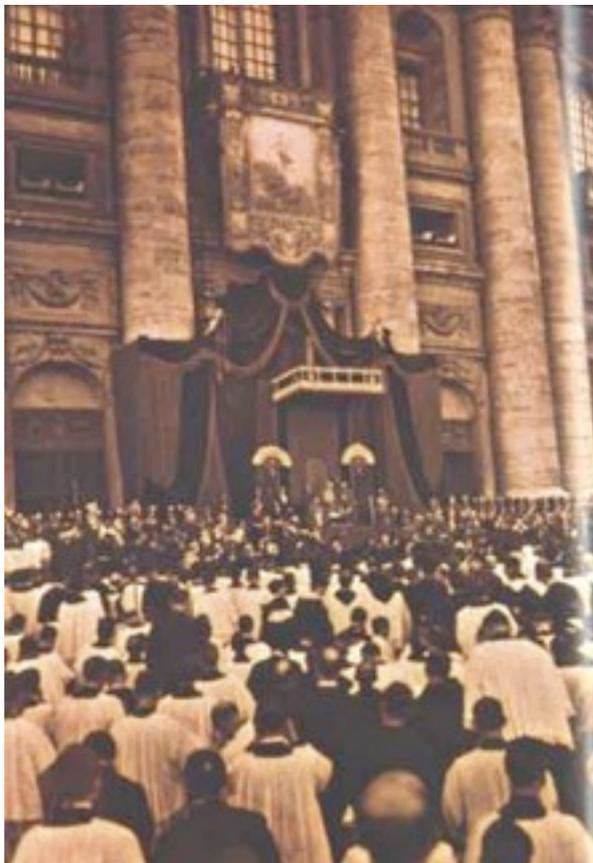
After his release, Alessandro Serenelli visited Maria's still-living mother, Assunta, and begged for her forgiveness. She forgave him, saying that if Maria had forgiven him on her deathbed then she couldn't do less, and they attended Mass together the next day, receiving Holy Communion side by side. Alessandro reportedly asked Maria to pray for him every day and referred to her as "my little saint."

Serenelli later became a lay Capuchin Franciscan brother and lived in a monastery working as its receptionist and gardener until dying peacefully in 1970.

# Maria Goretti

On June 24, 1950, Pius XII canonized Maria as a saint, calling her "The St. Agnes of the 20th century." Assunta (Maria's mother) was present at the ceremony, along with her four remaining sons and daughters. She was the first mother ever to attend the canonization ceremony of her child. Maria's murderer, Alessandro Serenelli, was also present at the canonization.

So many people came for Maria's canonization that the ceremonies were held *outside* of St. Peter's Basilica in the piazza (plaza). Pius XII spoke, not as before in Latin, but in Italian. "We order and declare, that the blessed Maria Goretti can be venerated as a Saint and we introduce her into the Canon of Saints". Some 500,000 people, among them a majority of youth, had come from around the world. Pius asked them: "Young people, pleasure of the eyes of Jesus, are you determined to resist any attack on your chastity with the help of the grace of God?" A resounding "YES!" was the answer.



Maria Goretti's canonization

Some of Maria's remains are kept in the crypt of the Basilica of Santa Maria Goretti in the city of Nettuno, south of Rome.

St. Maria Goretti's feast day is celebrated on July 6. She is the patron saint of chastity, rape victims, youth, teenage girls, poverty, purity, and forgiveness.



St. Maria Goretti