

...for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

How often do we think of the words of Jesus referring to Children and indeed all those who have a childlike quality of complete trust? Do we ever consider how many children have actually become saints many, in our time? It has often been difficult to define these little people as Saintly because holiness needs to be able to be 'proved' and tested but such is the incredible witnesses of these over the centuries and especially the last century that they are certainly justly called Saints.

It would be impossible to name them all, some were martyred others showed extraordinary courage and virtue. As early as in the days of the Catacombs there were many who were put to death such as St Agnes but in later centuries we have the Korean martyrs many who were very young. Peter Yu who was put to death at thirteen. There were Ugandans, Charles Llwanga and his companions such a Kisito (13), the Martyrs of China, St Anna Wang (14) and St Paulus Lang Fu age 9.

Little Saint Imelda Lambertini's (11) love of the Eucharist took her too an early death but gained her the title of Patron of First Communicants.

There is St Dominic Savio who died of illness at 15 but witness to peaceful coexistence with his friends

and stood up for integrity.

St Maria Goretti (overleaf) and similarly Bl Karolina Kostka resisted attackers. There was Ven Anne Guigné whose 'conversion' at a very early age made her go from a stubborn and wilful child to an incredible degree of self-control, dying very young (11) in 1922. Even



St Anna and Our Lady Mary

more recently we have the example of brother and sister Jacinta and Francisco Marto the two little visionaries of Fatima. These two children showed extraordinary courage in stating what they saw and stuck to the truth in spite of threats but it was their lives that earned them the title of blessed. They truly sacrificed their lives and both died of illness aged ten and nine respectively.



Bl Jacinta, Lucia dos Santos and Bl Francisco Marto at home

However tempting it is to underestimate the understanding of children it is wise to reflect on these lives and how little children often have a greater honest and deep appreciation of truth which is neither naïve nor simplistic but fundamentally honest and sincere unfettered by selfishness.

Finally to end with a very recent saint: Bl Chiara Bandano (1971) became ill at the age of nine with a rare bone cancer. She had already joined The Folklore movement as a young apostle. As the illness progressed she started to offer everything to Jesus She became even more debilitated and rejoiced at being able to suffer but was so content that she drew others to her like a magnet. Before she died at eighteen she told her mother, "Oh Mamma, young people, they are the future. You see I can't run any more but I would like to pass on to them the torch like in the Olympics. Young people have only one life. It is worthwhile spending it well. Food for prayer in this Olympic month.

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Saint Maria Goretti

‘Lily mantled with crimson... sweet little martyr of purity. Maria Goretti’. Pope Pius XII spoke these lovely words at the canonisation of Maria on 24th June, 1950. It was certainly the first time that the ceremony had taken place outside the Basilica of St. Peter’s, such was her popularity. She was seen by the Church as a model of purity and a role model for the youth of the world, but her life, death and canonisation was much more.

She died on 6th July, 1902 on the Feast of the Precious Blood. As church bells tolled the hour and Passionist priests in a nearby church recited prophetic words from Isaiah 63: ‘Who is this coming ... in garments stained with crimson ...? Why are your garments red, your clothes as if you had trodden the winepress?’

Maria Teresa was born on October 16th 1890 in Corinaldo Italy She was the third of six children. By the time she was six her family had become so poor that they were forced to give up their farm and move and work for others. Luigi her father became very ill and died when she was just nine. She was often called to ‘mind’ the other children and help with domestic duties. Theirs was a prayerful family but one that struggled with poverty. They moved to Nettuno in Lazio where they shared a building with another family which included Giovanni Serenelli and his son Alessandro.

It was he who was to become her attacker and murderer. When she resisted his advances and tried to escape he stabbed her many times. She continued to cry out ‘No! NO! God does not want this! You



Saint Maria Goretti. Actual Photo

will go to hell. You will go to hell.

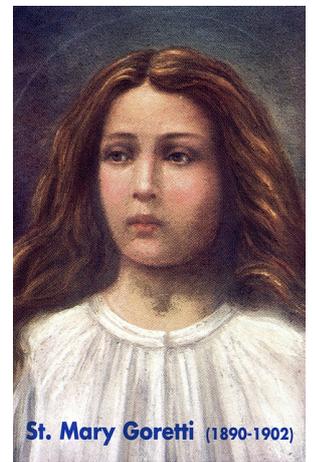
Against all odds she survived for over twenty hours as a living example of God’s Mercy in practice. She had time to

Confess and receive Holy Communion but also time to forgive her killer with these words ...

‘Yes, for the love of Jesus I pardon him and I want him to be with me in Heaven.

Alessandro Serenelli, her nineteen-year-old murderer, showed no remorse. Indeed, he even claimed that everything was Maria’s fault. All of

that changed when Maria appeared to him in a dream in prison in November 1910. Maria gave him, one by one, fourteen white lilies that she had gathered one for each stab wound he had inflicted upon her. As he took each one from her he felt her forgiveness. So began his religious conversion and he accepted responsibility.



He became a major witness in the canonisation process by testifying that ‘Maria Goretti had not agreed to sin’. He went much further. He left a deathbed note in 1970 pleading for God’s Mercy, asking pardon of the world for the outrage done to Maria, but also exhorting everyone ‘to keep away from immoral shows, from dangers, from occasions that can lead to sin’.

Even more remarkably Assunta Goretti, Maria’s mother showed mercy towards her daughter’s killer. They were brought together thirty two years after the crime when she answered the door as the priest’s housekeeper in her village of Corinaldo, Italy. It was Christmas Eve, 1934. She recognised Alessandro. He begged her forgiveness to which she replied: ‘Maria forgave you. Christ has forgiven you, and why should I not also forgive you.’ On Christmas Day, Assunta and Alessandro received communion side by side.

Prayer: Dear Little Saint, Maria Goretti, Patron Saint of chastity, rape victims, youth, those in poverty, those seeking purity and of forgiveness, pray for us.

P.J. et Al.

Let us also remember all the children in the world who experience violence in any way either through war, poverty or neglect. Let us not ourselves neglect to lead them to Jesus by our good example and by protecting them from all that could harm them by actions words and scandal. Let us give them hope.

August, a Great’s Month. A month of great feasts and saints... not just a holiday month.

The feast of the Transfiguration and The Assumption of Our Lady head the list. The month starts with three Eucharistic Saints in a row. Sts Alphonsus Liguori, Peter Julian Eymard and Jean Vianney. In the middle of the month there are great Saints such as St Teresa Benedicta (Edith Stein) and St Clare of Assisi. At the end of the Month we have three English martyrs Margaret Clithereo, Anne Line and Margaret Ward. Not to mention St Aidan and Saints of Lindisfarne. What a month to praise God for!