

# Saint Maria Goretti

## Prayer

**O Saint Maria Goretti, who, strengthened by God's grace, did not hesitate, even at the age of twelve, to shed your blood and sacrifice life to defend your virginal purity, deign to look graciously on the unhappy human race, which has strayed far from the path of eternal salvation.**

**Teach us all, and especially modern youth, with what courage and haste we should flee anything that could offend Jesus and defile our souls with sin. Obtain for us from God great horror of sin so that, keeping our souls undefiled, we may live holy lives on earth and win eternal glory in heaven. Amen.**



St. Maria Goretti was born to a poor peasant family on 16 October 1890 in Corinaldo, a town near Ancona, Italy. Maria was the third of seven children of Luigi and Assunta Goretti.

When she was seven years old, the Goretti family moved to Ferriere di Conca, a village near Anzio, where they shared a home with Giovanni Serenelli and his son Alessandro. Maria was nine years old when her father died of malaria. While her mother worked the farm Maria took care of her siblings and also cooked for the Serenellis.

Maria was known for her unusual serious-mindedness and piety. Every night she would recite the Holy Rosary for the repose of her father's soul. As Ferriere had no parish church, nor a priest, Maria would walk for kilometers for the privilege of hearing Mass.

At the time it was not customary to receive First Holy Communion before the age of twelve, but Maria, extremely devout and religious, pleaded with her mother to let her take instructions when Maria was not quite eleven years of age. Every day, Maria walked to the village of Mazzoleni, where she received catechetical instructions. During this time Maria intensified her piety, obedience to her mother and love for her siblings. She was busy preparing her soul to receive Jesus. On Thursday, 29 May 1902, the feast of Corpus Christi, she received her Lord for the first time. Maria would receive the Body of Christ only 4 more times before she died.

Being a beautiful child, Maria attracted the attention of 20-year-old Alessandro. It was 5 July 1902 when Alessandro tried to force his attention on her. He was furious over her refusal to commit an act of impurity and when Maria resisted him with all her strength, crying out repeatedly, "It is a sin. God forbids it," he drew a knife and stabbed her fourteen times.

At about 6 o'clock in the evening her weakened body was put on a stretcher and put in a horse-drawn ambulance which took her to the hospital at Nettuno. Doctors worked feverishly to save her life. No anesthetic was administered because the attendants feared peritonitis. Despite the intense pain, she uttered not a sound, till she finally lost consciousness. In the morning of 6 July 1902, Maria received Holy Communion for the last time, and openly forgave Alessandro, her murderer. Then Maria died.

Alessandro was captured soon after Maria's death. Originally, he was going to be sentenced to death, but since he was a minor at that time the sentence was commuted to 30 years in prison. He remained unrepentant and incommunicative to the world. In his 8<sup>th</sup> year of imprisonment, he had a vision of Maria. He saw a garden, where a young girl dressed in white was gathering lilies. She smiled, came near him and invited him to accept an armful of lilies. As he accepted them, each lily was transformed into a still white flame. Maria then disappeared.

A local bishop, Monsignor Giovanni Blandini, visited Alessandro in jail. He wrote a thank you note to the Bishop, asking for his prayers and telling him about his dream. Alessandro's conversion was complete. When he was released from prison after serving 27 years, his first act was to travel to Maria's mother, Assunta, to beg her forgiveness. She forgave him, saying that if Maria had forgiven him on her deathbed then she could not do less, and they attended Mass together the next day, receiving Holy Communion side by side. Alessandro reportedly prayed every day to Maria Goretti, referring to her as "my little saint."

Alessandro later became a Capuchin lay brother, living in a convent and working as its receptionist and gardener, until he died peacefully in 1970.

On 27 April 1947, His Holiness, Pope Pius XII beatified Maria, and on 24 June 1950, the same Pope solemnly canonized her and proclaimed Saint Maria Goretti the new patroness of Catholic Youth. This ceremony was attended by 250,000 of the faithful, including her mother (the first mother to see her child canonized) and her brothers and sisters. St. Maria Goretti has also been a principal patroness of the WORLD YOUTH DAY celebrations, begun by Saint Pope John Paul II, and held around the world.

## Parish Week † Sunday, 9 July 2023

### Saturday, 8 July

- 8.00 am Mass: † Elizabeth Chamberlain (family)  
4.00 pm Holy Hour  
5.00 pm Mass: † Jose, Maria, Antonio & Stella Fernandes (Joseph)

### SUNDAY, 9 JULY / 14-A

■ Homilist: Deacon Ramon Villardo

■ St. Maria Goretti Devotions at all Masses

- 9.00 am Mass: † Lydia Marquez (family)  
10.30 am Mass: † Elizabeth Chamberlain (family)  
12.00 pm Mass: Int. Helen Serneo (family)  
1.30 pm Infant Baptisms  
7.00 pm Mass: Pro Populo

### Monday 10 July

- 8.00 am Mass: † Antonio Guerrero (Ditas Boctor)  
7.00 pm Mass: † Matty D'Souza (family)

### Tuesday, 11 July / St. Benedict, abbot

- 8.00 am Mass: † Elmer James (Corine Maulion)

### Wednesday 12 July

- 8.00 am Mass: † Xavier Rodrigues (Filomena)

### Thursday, 13 July / St. Henry

- 8.00 am Mass: † Trevor De Silva (wife)

### Friday, 14 July

- 8.00 am Mass: † Carmelita & Teodoro Mulla (Willie)

### Saturday, 15 July / St. Bonaventure, bishop & doctor

- 8.00 am Mass: † Norah & Anthony Teixeira (Lallajee family)  
5.00 pm Mass: Int. Alwina Fernando (friends)

### SUNDAY, 16 JULY / 15-A

■ Homilist: Fr. Edwin Galea

■ 2<sup>nd</sup> Collection: ShareLife Freewill

- 9.00 am Mass: † Cyrilda Alagaratnam (Shirani Hemachandra)  
10.30 am Mass: † Ernesto, Lydia & Justino Rodas (family)  
12.00 pm Mass: † Lina & Giancarlo Vaccaro (family)  
7.00 pm Mass: Pro Populo

## Focus on the Word

### 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

**Isaiah 49.14-15; 1 Corinthians 4.1-5; Matthew 6.24-34**

*O God, who in the abasement of your Son have raised up a fallen world, fill your faithful with holy joy, for on those you have rescued from slavery to sin you bestow eternal gladness. Amen.*

## St. Maria Goretti Feast

6 July is the feast of the dear patroness of our parish, **St. Maria Goretti**. We have the privilege of honouring her in a special way in our Masses on: **8/9 July**.

### THURSDAY, 6 JULY

On Friday, 6 July, the actual feast day of our dear Saint Maria Goretti, we have an appropriate program to venerate the patroness of our Parish:

- 6.00 pm Holy Hour in honour of St. Maria Goretti  
7.00 pm Solemn Mass for Parishioners' Intentions

### SATURDAY & SUNDAY, 8/9 JULY

All Masses: *Sprinkling with Holy Water* in reparation for all acts of sacrilege and desecration; *Prayer to St. Maria Goretti* after Communion.

- 9.00 am: *Enthronement* of statue of our Patroness, by the **Catholic Women's League**.  
10.30 am: *Liturgical dance* at the Presentation of the Gifts, by the **Children's Choir**.  
12.00 pm: *Enthronement* of picture of the visit of the Body of our Patroness, by the **Knights of Columbus**.

## ShareLife 2023

Living the Gospel by helping our neighbours in need

Please make a sacrificial gift to *ShareLife*.

So far, we have raised: \$ 16,815.00

toward our 2023 goal of: \$ 52,000.00

A **Freewill offering** will be taken on: **16 July**.

Please donate, and help us reach our goal! Your generosity will help bring compassion and hope, and show Christ's face to others.



### 16 July: **ShareLife** Appeal, Freewill Offering

On 16 July, the 2<sup>nd</sup> collection will be the *Freewill* Offering for our annual *ShareLife Appeal*, supporting 33 Catholic agencies and 10 grant recipients that respect the sanctity of all human life.

## Parish Bazaar 23 July, 9 am – 2 pm

Our Parish is holding a Bazaar on Sunday, 23 July, beginning after the 9.00 am Mass and continuing to 2.00 pm. **Krispy Kreme** donuts will be on sale: \$10 a dozen. The proceeds will support *ShareLife*.

## COMING UP

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- 23 July *Mission Co-op* Sunday: **Fr. Sampath**, representing the Diocese of Galle, Sri Lanka;  
- PARISH BAZAAR (9 am – 2 pm)  
30 July 2<sup>nd</sup> Collection: **Maintenance**  
1-6 Aug. ► WORLD YOUTH DAY, Lisbon, Portugal  
5 Aug. TALENT & KARAOKE NIGHT (6 – 9 pm)

## Website [stmariagoretti.archtoronto.org](http://stmariagoretti.archtoronto.org)

For more details on Parish activities, see the website bulletin.

# The Cross & the Dragon

*Modern-day China is ruled by an atheistic government in clear opposition to Christianity, and the faithful cannot defend themselves.*

*By Simon Caldwell*

An Historic deal was reached between the Vatican and the people's Republic of China in 2018 that was seen as a breakthrough in a struggle for human rights and religious liberty. It was hoped that the agreement would spell the end to an impasse over freedom of worship in the officially atheist communist state. Tensions over religious rights had dogged relations between the two for several decades, as well as making life a miserable and unrelenting ordeal for the 12 million Catholics who form part of the 104 million Christians in the country.

In 2023, it would appear that such optimism was short-lived because in that period China has tightened restrictions on the rights of Christians, while violating its initial agreement with the Holy See, which was renewed in 2020 and then 2022.

## **Secret Document**

The agreement is largely secret, but what is known publicly is that it relates chiefly to the appointment of Bishops. The deal allows the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to have a say on the bishops that the Pope appoints, while at the same time bringing all bishops in China in communion with Rome, thereby ending both illegitimate ordinations within the church and illegal ordinations under Chinese Law.

Pope Francis was one of those who held on to the hope that the deal he renewed last year for the second time would bear positive fruit, telling Reuters in an interview published in July that he believed "the agreement is moving well." Within just four months, however, the Vatican was forced to concede that the agreement was, on the contrary, moving very badly indeed.

The Holy See went so far as to announce at the end of November that China had violated terms stipulated on the appointment of bishops, noting "with surprise and regret" that Bishop John Peng Weizhao had been installed as an "auxiliary bishop of Jiangxi," a diocese created by the government, and not recognized by the Vatican.

His installation ceremony in Nanchang "did not occur in accordance with the spirit of dialogue.... and what was stipulated in the Provisional agreement on the Appointment of Bishops, on September 22, 2018," a statement said, adding that Rome was also concerned about the "Prolonged and heavy pressure from local authorities" that preceded the ceremony.

"The Holy See's hopes that similar episodes will not be repeated, remains. It awaits appropriate communications on the matter from the authorities, and reaffirms its full readiness to continue the respectful; dialogue concerning all matters of common interest," the statement concluded.



*St. Ignatius Cathedral, Shanghai*

## **"Sinicised" Christianity**

The betrayal by China triggered international scorn for the Vatican's approach to the problem among those who have long objected to such policies on the grounds that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was an untrusty partner.

The CCP, whose members are obliged to be atheists, has never tolerated underground Catholic and Protestant Churches, permitting Chinese Christians to belong only to either the state-controlled *Three-Self Patriotic Movement* for Protestants, or the *Catholic Patriotic Association* (CPA). Those who violate the law face imprisonment and fines.

The agreement with the Vatican has not only produced few signs of leniency, but appears to have emboldened greater repression. In 2019 the CCP began to roll out a five-year plan to "Sinicise" Christianity.

This means "incorporating Chinese elements into Church worship services, hymns and songs, clerical attire, and the architectural style of Church buildings," while proposing to "retranslate the Bible or written biblical commentaries."

An egregious instance of this was the re-writing in 2021 of the account of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery in the Gospel of John. In the Communist version, Jesus waits for the woman's accusers to leave, and then stones her himself, saying, "I too am a sinner. But if the law could only be executed by men without blemish, the law would be dead."

## **Clergy Cards**

The CCP has banned anyone younger than 18 from receiving religious education, or participating in religious activities. It enacted a law to prevent individuals or organizations from interfering with the state education system for minors.

The state Administrations of Religious Affairs has begun to register clergy for a database of "religious personnel" and to issue "clergy cards" only to ministers who are members of the government-sanctioned churches. Even they face fines, however, if they travel abroad without permission to take part in "religious training, conferences, pilgrimages, and other activities."



Illegitimate episcopal ordinations by Chinese authorities continue, such as that in 2020 in Zhangjiakou, a diocese created by the government, and not recognized by Rome.

That same year the CCP also curbed the celebration of Christmas. It stipulated that it must be observed either in private homes or in state-sanctioned churches.

### **Resistance Movement**

In February of the following year, authorities ordered the destructions of Sacred Heart Church in Yining, Xinjiang, because it was “too showy”. Even though it held all the required permits from the State Administration for Religious Affairs, the Communists chiseled off four *bas reliefs* on the façade, removed the statues of St. Peter and Paul, ripped off the cross adorning the cusp of the tympanum, and destroyed the two domes and bell towers.

One Christian told *Aid to the Church in Need*, the Catholic charity, that “this is further confirmation that the country does not respect the freedom of worship”. It is little wonder that on the ground Catholic resistance continues, evidenced by the arrest in May 2021 of bishop Joseph Zhang Wizhu, 10 priests and 10 seminarians for organizing an underground seminary. The priests were sent away to be re-educated, but the whereabouts of Bishop Weizhu remain unknown.

### **Cardinal Zen Ze-kiun**

Relations between the CCP and the Vatican became yet more strained following the arrest of 91-year-old Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, the Emeritus Bishop of Hong Kong, in May 2022, for his work with the Humanitarian Relief Fund, which gave financial support to pro-democracy protestors. His treatment was insufficient to derail the Agreement between the two sides and it was renewed again in the summer, just months before Cardinal Zen was tried and fined \$HK 4,000.

Archbishop Javier Herrera-Corona, the Vatican’s unofficial representative in Hong Kong, warned the city’s Catholic missions that in spite of the renewed agreement “change is coming and you’d better be prepared.” He added, “Hong Kong is not the great Catholic beachhead it was.”

### **The Patriotic Church**

Nina Shea, the director of the Center for religious Freedom at the Hudson Institute in an interview with Catholic News Agency in May 2022, was clear about what such change had so far looked like, saying that in 2018 “the CCP had all but destroyed the Catholic underground church and tightened conformity with its teaching over the patriotic church”.

She said that six new episcopal appointments used by Rome to justify the Beijing agreement was insignificant because they were “offset by the detention, arrest or disappearance of six Vatican-recognized Catholic Bishops.”

Children are now banned from churches and exposure to religion, bibles are tightly restricted and censored on the internet and in app stores, churches are blanketed with high tech surveillance, priests and Christians leaders are forced into life-long indoctrination on Christianity according to communist thought, and are required to actively support CCP practices, leadership, and core values, even in their sermons,” she added.

### **From bad to worse**

Bishop Paul Lei Shiyin of Leshan, an illegitimately ordained China Bishop whose excommunication was lifted under agreement, is one cleric who remains explicitly Communist, choosing to celebrate the birth of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) in his cathedral on the June 29 Solemnity of St. Peter and Paul by inviting the faithful to “listen to the work of the Party, feel the grace of the Party, and follow the Party.”

Reggie Littlejohn, the president of Women’s Rights Without Frontiers, agreed that since 2018 “things have gone from bad to worse for Catholic in China” and said the “secrecy of the China-Vatican deal has been used to bludgeon faithful Chinese Catholics.”

“Faithful Catholics cannot defend themselves or their Church because they do not have access to this secret deal,” she told journalists. “It’s difficult to see how the Pope can possibly succeed in the art of diplomacy when dealing with a force as evil as CCP. I think the Vatican should be energetically bolstering the underground church and speaking up for human rights, not making accommodations with the CCP and self-censoring on important moral issues.”

### **Letter to China**

In spite of his conviction Cardinal Zen was given permission by CCP to fly to Rome in January for the funeral of Pope Benedict XVI, the pontiff who elevated him to the College of Cardinals in 2006.

In a blog two days before the requiem Mass, Cardinal Zen expressed his immense gratitude for the work the late Pope had undertaken on behalf of Chinese Catholics, calling Benedicts’ 2007 Letter to China “a masterpiece of balance between the lucidity of Catholic ecclesiological doctrine and humble understanding with respect to civil authority.”

“Despite his great efforts, Pope Benedict failed to improve the situation of the Church in China. He could not accept some compromises,” said the Shanghai-born Cardinal. A critic of the 2018 Agreement, Cardinal Zen said that “every effort to improve the situation of the church in China will need to be taken in line with the 2007 letter.”

After the funeral he met Pope Francis at Casa Santa Marta and described their talks as “friendly.” Further details of their conversation remain confidential. It is reasonable to assert, however, that the two men surely discussed the plight of Chinese church and perhaps even touched upon the worth of an Agreement which is honored by one side and derisively ignored by the other.



**Fr. Elias Chachati** celebrates his 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination as a Priest.  
*Above: Mass of Thanksgiving, 1 July.*  
*Below: Mass on the Anniversary, 3 July*





Fr. Elias receives the prayers of Parishioners as he prepares to cut his 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary cake.



Office Team member **Regina Meneses** (1) with family & friends in Portugal in June.

Let the Earth breathe



