

# FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



## CELEBRITIES IN GOD'S EYES...

The other night I was invited by a wonderful priest, Monsignor Thomas Sandi for an Italian dinner at his rectory in Manhattan. Along with about a dozen other priests, we had a great time with excellent food and conversation. However, driving there was another matter! The traffic was horrendous on the West Side. Later on, I found out the reason for all the congestion on the roads. Apparently, it was because of the "Tony Awards" at Radio City.

From what I heard about it, it was hardly worth going to, especially after the famous actor Robert DeNiro totally trashed the President of the United States by launching the "F Bomb" not once but twice! Even if you might disagree with President Trump, have some class! Perhaps class and respect has become a thing of the past in 2018.

It is unfortunate that many of our Hollywood stars, our athletes, politicians and even some of our clergymen have "feet of clay." Oh, they might be very good at their craft, but realistically speaking, their "moral performance" leaves a little something to be desired. While much attention is paid by the media and to performers like Robert DeNiro and others, little attention is paid by the world to those who are "stars" in God's eyes—the Saints of the Church.

This coming week on Friday, July 6th, we celebrate the feast of a twelve year old girl by the name of Maria Goretti. In my estimation, she is a far more credible model for youth than any one Hollywood couple could offer.

Who was Maria Goretti? She was born on a farm in Ancona, Italy in the year 1890, the third of seven children. Her father died when she was only nine years old and Maria helped out with the housework and the younger children while her mother ran the farm. She received First Communion at eleven and took that communion seriously. She prayed and strove to grow in her Catholic faith.

Young Maria, a very beautiful girl, was seriously tried in her faith. About a year after her First Communion, a young man who worked on the farm by the name of Alexander Serenelli made repeated sexual advances toward her. She repelled him immediately and he threatened to kill Maria if she told on him.

Finally, one day half crazed by lust, Alexander tried to force himself on Maria when she was alone. But she resisted him again and told him, "No! It's a sin-God does not want it-you will go to Hell!" Overwhelmed by anger, Alexander stabbed her over ten times. She was rushed to the hospital but it was to no avail. Maria Goretti died on July 6, 1902.

Before she died, she forgave Alexander and said that she would pray for his repentance. Her prayers worked too. After having served twenty-seven years of his sentence, Alexander Serenelli had a complete conversion and change of heart. He begged forgiveness from Maria's mother and became a Lay Brother in a monastery. The murderer lived to see Maria canonized a saint in the year 1950!

To my mind, it is immensely refreshing to read about the saints who were celebrities in God's eyes and not the world. In any event, in the long run, whose evaluation really matters? Stars fade and the "idols" of today are forgotten about next year. The saints are the heavenly "stars" that young people should look to in the penetrating moral darkness of our world today. By their example, they lead us to holiness, to purity and ultimately to God!

Sincerely in Christ,  
Father Jerome