

## Information about St. Maria Goretti<sup>1</sup> for Instructors of Young Children:

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### **IMPORTANT EDITOR'S NOTE:**

This sheet is for instructors only and is offered purely as background information about this saint. Do not read this information to your students, as some of it may be too graphic for them. While this background information will help you to be better prepared to discuss the life of the saint, we recommend that you limit the details of the discussion with your students to the information included in the attached “Facts for students ...”

The *Touching Safety* program will feature two saints per year—one female and one male—to bring to life the lessons provided through this program. Each lesson is designed to provide students with awareness about certain behaviors that are inappropriate and/or blatantly wrong. Our purpose for including information about a saint in each lesson is to provide positive reinforcement—by giving children and young people examples of role models for “rightdoing” in relationships. We strive to provide an appropriate balance of both elements in each lesson for students.

Though we recommend including information about the featured saint in the lesson for your students, the saint material is an optional part of this program and is not required.

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Maria Goretti was 12 years old when she fought off the advances of her attacker—a local farm hand. The attacker tried to touch her private body parts, but Maria said “no” and, as she struggled, she screamed that what the attacker was doing was wrong. Later, before she died, Maria asked God to forgive her attacker.

Because he attacked Maria, the man was sent to prison. While he was in prison, Maria came to him in a vision. She was in a garden gathering lilies. She smiled and came to him asking him to accept the lilies. As he took them, each one turned into a still, white flame. The vision led to his conversion, and he later testified at her beatification.

### **Maria reminds us about two important things:**

1. We have the power to say “no” when someone tries to harm us, no matter how young we are.
2. When we are afraid, we need to tell someone who can do something about it—even if we are frightened or confused.

### **Here's how you'll use this information during the lesson:**

- Read the *student handout* aloud to your class. Then, ask for a few student volunteers to describe what they learned from the story about Maria Goretti.
- The key to this exercise is reinforcing the points that St. Maria teaches us about protecting ourselves while relying on our faith in God for courage and guidance.

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<sup>1</sup> Rabenstein, K., *For All the Saints*, © 1998; Breiling, M.M. *A Saint to Emulate*, Reprinted with permission, Catholic Family's Magnificat, October 1994-January 1995. [www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com).



## **Facts for students about St. Maria Goretti<sup>1</sup>**

- She was a farm girl in Italy and she loved God.
- An unsafe person tried to touch her private body parts and hurt her.
- She said “no” and yelled at the top of her lungs.
- She forgave him.
- He was sorry for what he had done and asked God to forgive him. He lived the rest of his life doing what God wanted him to do.

## **St. Maria Goretti’s life teaches us that:**

- We have the right and the power to say “no” when someone tries to touch our private body parts or tries to harm us in any way.
- Even when someone hurts us on purpose, God asks us to forgive the person.
- Our love of God gives us courage.
- Our forgiveness can help bad people become good people.

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