



***January Holy Heroes***  
***Saint Maria Goretti***  
***Feast Day July 6***

**Maria was a beautiful Italian farm girl born in 1890. Her father died when she was nine years old and her family then had to work for other farmers. They led a hard life, but were very close to each other and to God. Maria cooked, sewed, and kept house without complaining.**

**When Maria was 12 years old, a 19-year-old farm hand, Alessandro, went to her house and wanted to do wrong with her.**

**"No! No!" Maria cried out. "Do not touch me, Alessandro! It is a sin. You will go to hell."**

**When Maria began to fight him, in his anger, he took a knife and stabbed her 14 times. Maria was taken to a hospital and before she died, she forgave her attacker and asked God to forgive him also.**

**The story does not end here. While Alessandro was in prison, she had a dream of Maria in a garden, where she gathered white lilies and offered them to him. After this, he was truly sorry for his crime and repented. When he was released from prison many years later, he begged for forgiveness from Maria's mother, and she gave it to him. He spent the rest of his life working as a gardener in a monastery, devoting his life to God.**

**On June 24, 1950, Pope Pius XII pronounced Maria saint and martyr. Maria's mother and her murderer attended the canonization together. Maria's story is one of a simple little girl who loved God and hated sin. Her purity of heart and her imitation of Jesus in forgiving her attacker is what makes her so special. She is the patron of young boys and girls, that she might help them to be pure.**