



My Dear Parishioners,

A Happy 4th of July Weekend! Last week, I shared the news that Blessed Carlo Acutis' mother is coming to Philadelphia in September. She will be speaking at the Eucharistic Congress in Doylestown. I look forward to meeting her perhaps with some of you. Mark your calendar now! September 30, 2023.

The meeting of a Saint's mother, reminds me of the story of St. Maria Goretti whose feast day is this week. Her mom met Alessandro Serenelli, the man who murdered her daughter. In fact, the two were present in St. Peter's Square when Pope Pius XII declared Maria, a Saint! It's a terrific story of martyrdom and forgiveness. I share the following article with you here and encourage you to learn more. Many today know the power of sexual addiction. But God has Power, too! Seek His Power, His Mercy for yourself and your family! Share the story of Alessandro and Maria!

Could Alessandro Serenelli Be The Future Patron Of Porn Addicts? By Chloe Langr

On June 24, 1950, Pope Pius XII stood before 500,000 people gathered in Saint Peter's Square. "Young people," the Pope asked the crowd, "are you determined to resist any attack on your chastity with the help and grace of God?" "Yes!" echoed the response of thousands of young Catholics. Despite the celebration and joy, sixty-six year old Alessandro Serenelli stood crying in the middle of the crowd. He may have stuck out in the crowd of young people promising, but he played a part in the life of the young woman whose canonization the Church was celebrating. He had murdered St. Maria Goretti in 1902. On a hot day in July, Maria was home watching her little sister Teresa and repairing one of Alessandro's shirts. Their families lived in the same house as poor Italian tenant farmers Alessandro returned from threshing beans and Maria fought back, telling Alessandro that what he wanted to do with her was a mortal sin, and she didn't want his soul to go to Hell. "No! It is a sin!" she screamed. "God does not want it!"

He tried choking her, but when she said she would rather die than let him commit a mortal sin, he stabbed her fourteen times and ran away. Maria lived for 24 more hours before dying at a local hospital. Before she entered into Heaven, she said she wanted Alessandro to join her in Heaven and she forgave him. Alessandro couldn't have cared less about Maria's forgiveness. During the trial he was unrepentant, and admitted to attempting to rape Maria several times before killing her because of her refusal. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison, escaping a life sentence only because he was a minor when he committed the crime.

For three years, Alessandro said nothing to the outside world from his prison cell. But when a local bishop, Monsignor Giovanni Blandini visited him in jail, Alessandro told him of a strange dream he had. He was in a garden, and so was Maria. She handed him a bouquet of lilies, which burned his hands. He woke up a changed man. He was released from prison 27 years after Maria's death and his first visit was to Maria's mother, Assunta. He begged her for forgiveness and she told him, "If my daughter can forgive you, who am I to withhold forgiveness?" The two went to Mass together the next day and received Holy Communion side by side at the altar rail. Alessandro repented of the murder and prayed to Maria every day, calling her his "little saint." He became a lay brother with the Capuchin Franciscans and worked in the monastery as a gardener. He died in 1970. In a testimony given shortly before he passed away, Alessandro reflected on his past and his encounter with Maria Goretti.

"My behavior was influenced by print, mass-media and bad examples which are followed by the majority of young people without even thinking. And I did the same. I was not worried," he wrote. "There were a lot of generous and devoted people who surrounded me, but I paid no attention to them because a violent force blinded me and pushed me toward a wrong way of life."

In the early 1900s, pornographic photos were sold near the train stations. Pornography was readily available to Alessandro, and it twisted his ideas of the sexuality and chastity.

"I hope this letter that I wrote can teach others the happy lesson of avoiding evil and of always following the right path, like little children. I feel that religion with its precepts is not something we can live without, but rather it is the real comfort, the real strength in life and the only safe way in every circumstance, even the most painful ones of life."

Although the Catholic Church has not opened a case for the canonization of Alessandro, his story of overcoming the effects of pornography is inspiring in today's world. Our modern, hyper-sexualized culture encourages sexual immorality yet Alessandro's life stands as an example of repentance and bears witness to the beauty of chastity.



Glorious Lord, on this day, we celebrate our nation's birth and the symbol of freedom it represents to many. We acknowledge that you have been the author of this nation and that it is your great faithfulness that has brought us this far.