

A Litany of Saints

A Biblical walk of 22 women

Heart of Mary Women's
Fellowship



heartofmarywf.com

About This Study

We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!

If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.

Looking for a group? Please visit www.heartofmarywf.com/groups to find a meet up near you.

Are you already in one but not listed on our website? Looking to start one? Please contact us for more information about our "HOM Ambassador" program. We have team members available specifically to help you grow a local group and lead other women through community, prayer, and devotion. Their support is available at all times. We also want to help you grow! We will advertise your group on our website & social media! And we have free resources for you as well. Please email us at heartofmarywf@aol.com

Note: All written content has been reviewed by a Catholic spiritual director to cross check that all statements are align with the teachings and tenants of the Roman Catholic Church.

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Writer

Monique



Writing Director

Christine

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[Isaiah 30:15-21, Romans 8:28](#)

If you asked 13-year-old me why I picked Saint Monica to be my Confirmation saint, I would've said it was because her name is similar to mine. My full name is Ann Mary Monique (multiple names are standard for Filipinos), but I preferred to be called "Monique" because I already had a cousin named "Ana", and the name Monique sounded cooler.

Saint Monica may have lived in the third century, but I'm certain a lot of moms can relate to her story. She was a Catholic mother who was married to a pagan. She made every attempt to raise her children with the Catholic faith, especially her son Augustine. The only problem was that Augustine spent his adolescence and young adulthood rebelling against his parents. He stopped going to church and embraced the trendy philosophies of his time to the point that he made his own patchwork of spiritual beliefs and philosophy, picking and choosing what he wanted and ignoring everything else.

It was through Monica's constant prayers, and the mentorship of St. Ambrose, that Augustine finally started turning his life around. Eventually, he would become a great Catholic apologist, taking on the heresies and trendy philosophies that he used to embrace. As of now, Augustine is a Doctor of the Church. But none of that would've been possible without Monica's unconditional love.

I credit Saint Monica for saving me from some really bad relationships. Like a lot of teenage girls, I was a sucker for the "bad boy" type. If I had gotten more serious with any of the guys I dated in high school or college, I might've ended up like her.

Saint Monica taught me prudence when it comes to approaching my relationships and with dating. I asked for her intercession during a speed dating event. While I had a lot of fun, it was also a strange learning experience. To my surprise, I was matched up with a few guys. After I started getting to know the guys I was matched up with, though, I realized that I was looking for something different from what my suitors were expecting. It's not that none of my matches liked me after getting to know me. It's that I realized that I was happier being single than I was at the idea of being in a relationship with any of them.

Many times, we want different things out of our relationships. It's important that we know what we want before we seek out any kind of relationship. This is where the virtue of prudence comes in. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church: *"Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it...It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral*



[Luke 12:1-12](#)

One of my favorite memories from college was taking an acting class. I did some theatre in high school and decided that acting would help fulfill one of my fine arts credits. As part of my theatre class, I memorized monologues and acted out scenes with my classmates. One character I played was Joan of Arc from *The Lark*. I memorized a monologue from that play as part of my acting final. In this monologue, Joan was testifying about the first time she saw Saint Michael. She was given a great responsibility at an early age: to go to the king of France and lead the armies in the Hundred Years War. In the monologue, she begged Michael to have pity on her, but instead, she was left with the weight of the world on her shoulders.

While not all of us will lead armies the way that Joan did, we can look to Joan as an example of courage and leadership. I think she's also a great example of what Catholic Feminism should be like.

Now I know not all of us like the label of "*Feminist*." It's been used and misused by women who want to forward agendas that aren't compatible with the teachings of the Catholic Church. However, it's my opinion that the feminism movement just needs a long overdue makeover. At its core, true feminism stands for equality for all human beings (which includes the unborn and refugees), nondiscrimination (which means treating all human beings with the dignity of being God's unique creation), and nonviolence (which means turning the other cheek and standing your ground without retaliating with anger or retreating in fear).

So with that being said, how is Joan of Arc a model of what feminism should be like?

She treated men like equals.

I think the biggest problem with gender politics is that it always feels like a war. A majority of feminists don't like to consider men as part of the equation and the most extreme ones see men as hostile. Men's Rights Activists or "*meninists*" see feminists as extreme as well, and many countries in the Middle East have some really horrible perspectives on women, to say the least.

We cannot see men as the enemy. Nor should we be competitive with other women over things like jobs and men. Instead, we need to cooperate with them and treat them as, you know, people. Men are human beings which means like every other human being out there, they won't be perfect and will have flaws and are capable of hurting women. We gotta love them anyway, sisters in Christ, because God created men which means that men are essentially good. On the flip side, we can't treat men like we're entitled to have a relationship with them or use them as a way to fix something that only God can really help us out with.

She knew where her true value lied.

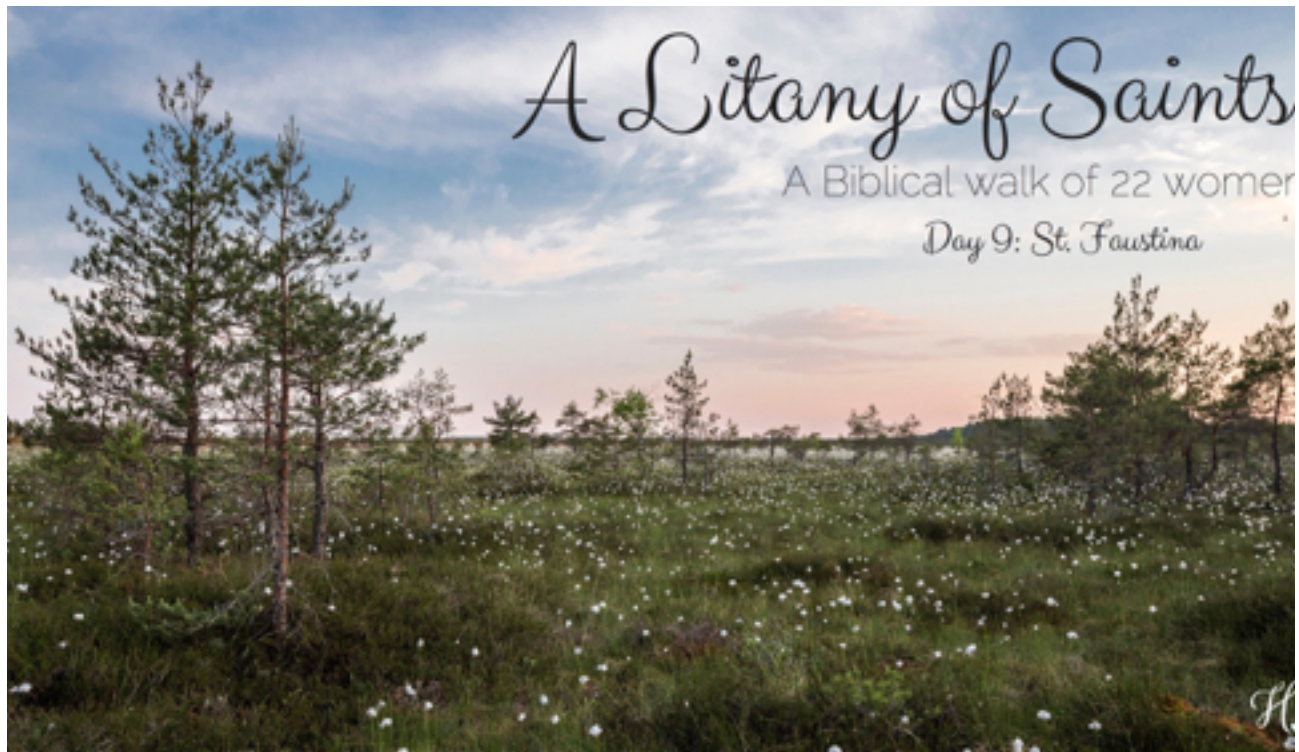
Joan always knew what she was fighting for. A great modern day example of this can be seen in the Season 1 finale of the show Agent Carter, in which the main character, Peggy, does not pursue taking the credit for New York from post-WWII terrorists. When one of her friends gets mad over her co-worker taking all the credit, Peggy says, *"I don't need a congressional honor. I don't need his approval or the president's. I know my value. Anyone else's opinion doesn't really matter."*

Do we see ourselves as the fearfully and wonderfully made women that we are, or do we put our value in the opinions of other men and women? One aspect of feminism is to love ourselves as the way that God made us. We are infinitely valuable the way that we are. That doesn't mean that we are entitled to anything, though. It just means that no matter what people say about us, we will find our delight in knowing that God will always love us.

She choose the right battles and the right ways to fight

Sometimes, the greatest victory is the battle not fought. I'm an advocate in fighting for self-defense. Never seek out fights or act aggressively. Fight to protect yourself, the ones you love, and what you stand for. Extreme comments on social media and people who will never change their minds aren't worth attacking. Instead, pray for them. Don't ever think you have to battle alone, either. Find people who will support you, from both men and women. And always remember that the God of angel armies is always by your side.

Joan of Arc is still one of my favorite saints because I love her courage. She taught me what it means to be fearless. In spite of the fact that college wasn't all fun and games, getting to know the Saint of Orleans is still one of the



[Romans 5:20, Psalm 136, Proverbs 3:5](#)

Like a lot of other Catholic college students I was a member of my college's pro-life group. I distinctly remember the first time that I ever prayed in front of an abortion clinic. One prayer that my classmates and I prayed was the Divine Mercy Chaplet. In spite of my Cradle Catholic upbringing, I never prayed the Divine Mercy Chaplet before then. It quickly became one of my favorite prayers.

Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska was born in Poland. From an early age she felt a strong calling to be a religious sister. On August 1, 1925, she joined the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. Shortly after she began her novitiate, she began to receive visions of Jesus as Divine Mercy. Almost ten years later, she kept a diary about the visions of Jesus that she received.

The task that Faustina was given wasn't always easy. One early entry in her diaries recounted an incident where one of Saint Faustina's superiors scoffed at the young nun for her close relationship with Jesus. The older nun called

Faustina delusional because *“the Lord Jesus only associates in this way with the saints and not sinful souls.”*

Saint Faustina taught me to always put Jesus first and to trust Him completely with my life, no matter what anyone else thinks. I know that she seems like a very intimidating kind of saint. So much of her life was filled with things we can't even begin to comprehend. As I said before, though, we don't have to do extraordinary things in order to be a saint.

In her Diary, Saint Faustina said:

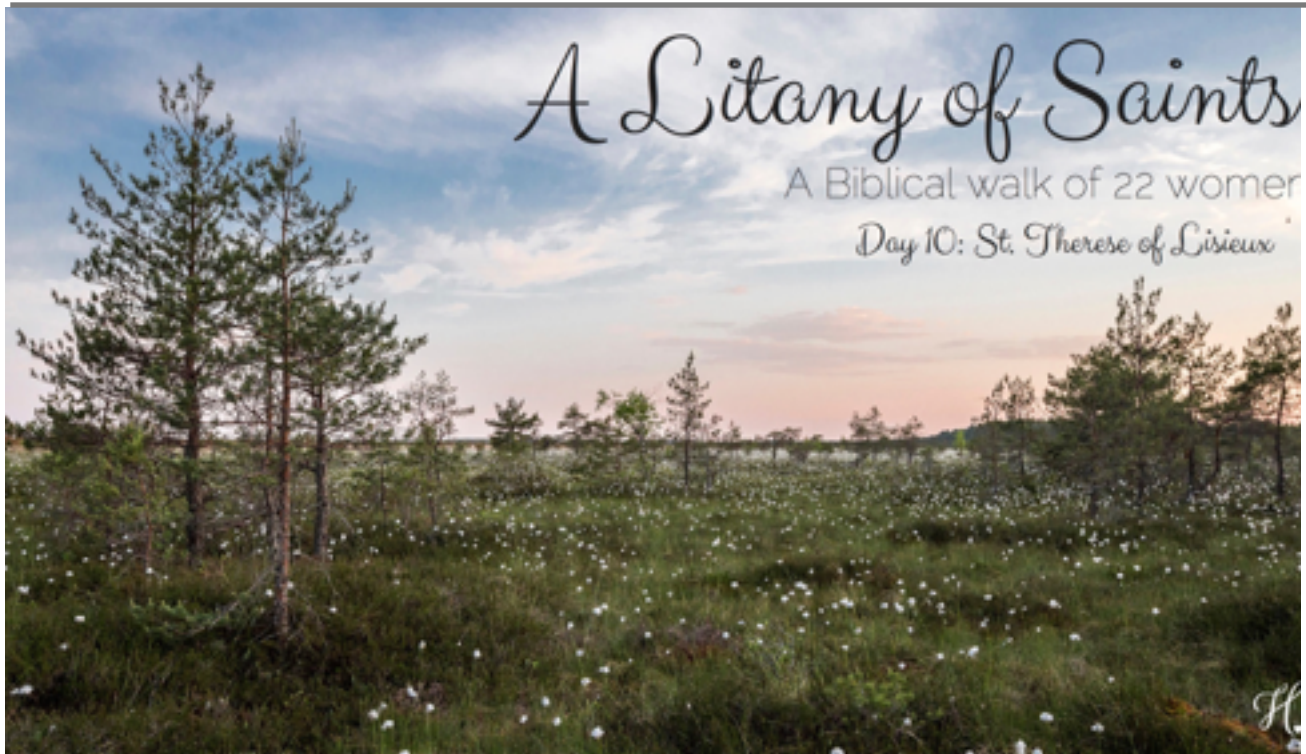
“Neither graces, nor revelations, nor raptures, nor gifts granted to a soul make it perfect, but rather the intimate union of the soul with God. These gifts are merely ornaments of the soul, but constitute neither its essence nor its perfection. My sanctity and perfection consist in the close union of my will with the will of God.” (Diary 1107)

College life wasn't so easy for me. I started developing anxiety during my later college years. I graduated but didn't have any job offers. The worst thing, though, was that after college my friends were all scattered to the winds, and it was really hard for me to find work. I had to trust that God had a plan for me. While my life is that of an everyday laywoman, I've come to find that like Faustina, God wants to work His way into my life through my writing. She also introduced me to the devotion of Divine Mercy, which is still my favorite way of seeing Jesus. *-Monique*

I hope that learning about Saint Faustina inspires you to get into Divine Mercy and that your trust in Jesus will increase.

Reflect: What is the hardest thing for you to trust Jesus with?

Reflect: What are your perspectives on God's mercy?



[Proverbs 9:4, Isaiah 66:12, Matthew 19:14](#)

Saint Therese's life seems so perfect at first glance. She was a young girl from France, but she never led any wars like Joan of Arc. She wasn't a great intellectual and her life was seemingly idyllic and perfect, even if she ended up dying of tuberculosis at the age of 24. However, as I got to know her after my college years, I found that she and I had a lot in common. We didn't really fit in at school. We both loved to write. She wrote poetry and acted in a play that she wrote. She admired other saints, especially Joan of Arc and Mary Magdalene. (The fact that she and I both played the role of Joan of Arc at about the same age is not lost on me.) What struck me the most, though, was that we both had an overactive imagination. We were both moody and had a tendency to get caught up in our emotions.

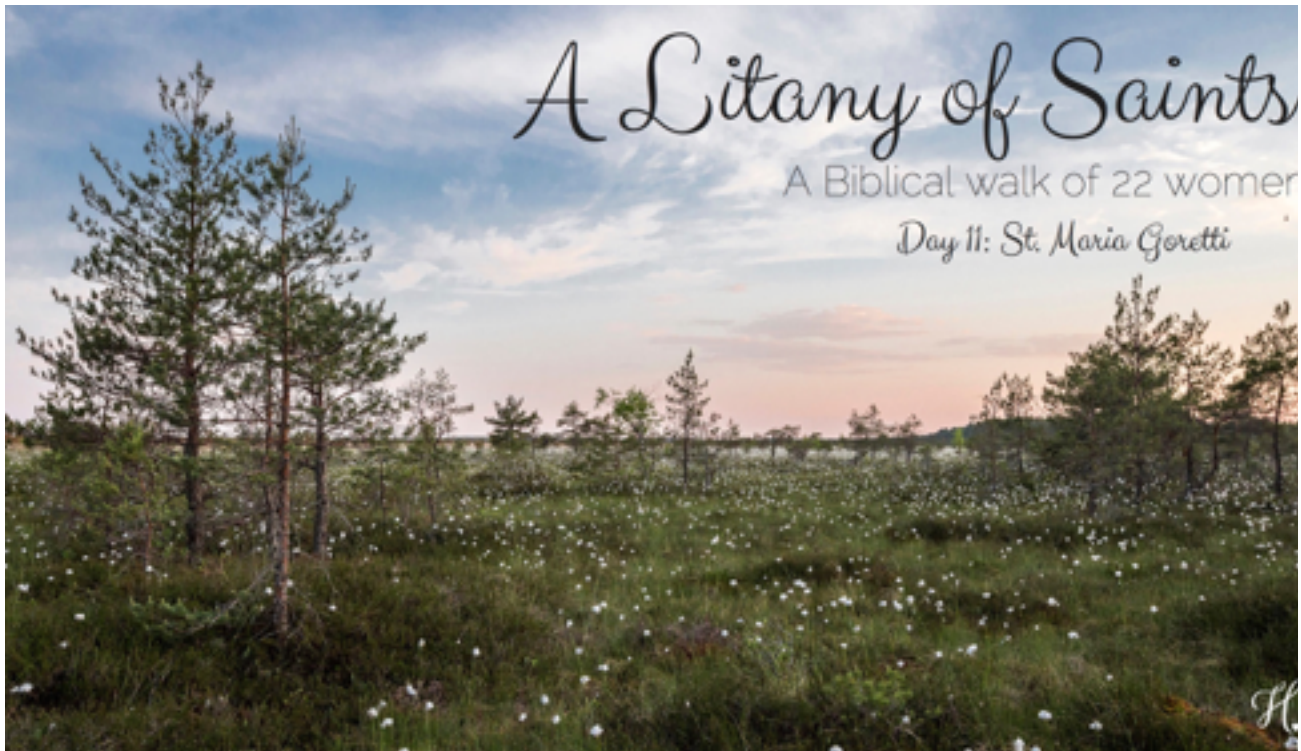
For Therese, that emotional immaturity would change one Christmas night when she was just thirteen years old. To most people, this may not sound important, but when you keep in mind how a thirteen year old may typically

react, this little Christmas Eve story becomes majorly important. After coming home from Midnight Mass, Therese was getting ready for bed, anticipating Christmas morning, when she overheard her father, the man she held dearest in her heart, tell her uncle that this would be the last Christmas in which he would fill the shoes with candy and presents as was the tradition in France. Her father was obviously tired and didn't mean for his daughter to overhear. But instead of pitching a fit or crying, Therese chose to remain emotionally composed. For the first time, Therese put the needs of others ahead of her own. Given that this was the equivalent of a kid finding out there's no such thing as Santa Claus, you have to

give props for Therese's composure, especially when you consider how other young children her age might've reacted otherwise.

Therese's life is, in my opinion, a great example of everyday sainthood. Most of us won't have visions or get stigmata or suddenly have the ability to bilocate or levitate. Therese knew that her dreams of being a missionary and performing heroic deeds in God's name would never really happen. She compared herself to the saints and found herself short. However, she knew that she wanted to be a saint more than anything else. This led to the creation of what is called her "*Little Way*." The Little Way is, as Mother Teresa described it, doing small things with great love. Therese lived her contemplative life with the joy and appreciation of a child, being grateful for all the little things she did.

This kind of gratitude, the appreciation for all the small things, played a big role in helping me to overcome the anxiety I had after I graduated college. For a few years, I kept a daily gratitude journal. I would do this by taking a picture of something or writing a list of things I was grateful for. Most of these photos were of ordinary things, but these little things revealed an extraordinary



[Psalm 105, Matthew 5:1-12](#)

Maria Goretti is a very misunderstood saint. Many people think that she represents an impossible ideal because she's too "perfect." They forget to look at how much Maria and her family suffered. When you have a hard life, it's easy to hide behind that and blame the world. The Goretti family, however, have a story that stands in contrast to the victim mentality. In fact, each aspect of what happened to Maria Goretti and her family follows the Beatitudes.

Let's travel back in time to the late 1800s. Maria Goretti's father was a farmer, but he didn't own any land, so he hired himself out to a wealthy landowner. Unfortunately, Maria Goretti's father died of malaria two years after he started working on the farm, leaving behind his wife and six children, with Maria being the eldest. Since the mother took over the farmwork, it was up to Maria, who was no more than a child at the time, to do the housework and take care of her siblings. So already, Maria Goretti and her family were living out the Beatitude of being poor in spirit.

Maria Goretti was a girl who was pure in heart. It's a hard concept to put your head around because we tend to see purity as something fragile or impossible to maintain. According to Bishop Robert Barron, however, being pure of heart means having a heart that desires only to please God. That desire was clearly evident by how hard Maria worked to adjust to her new life as surrogate mother and housekeeper. However, she also kept her guard up, especially around her neighbor, 19-year-old Alessandro Serenelli.

Tell me if this sounds familiar: An older guy acts all nice to your family in the hopes of getting something from you. He harasses you when nobody's around and there's nothing you can do to get him to stop. Then when you don't give that guy what he wants, he beats the living crap out of you. Sisters in Christ, Maria Goretti suffered all that and then some. Alessandro attacked Maria with a sharp weapon and left her alone and unconscious. When Maria regained consciousness and tried to escape, Alessandro was quick to return to finish the job once and for all. Thankfully, those who hungered and thirsted for righteousness were satisfied when Alessandro was sentenced to prison for killing Maria.

Now you think that would be the end of the story. In fact, it's only the beginning. Six years into his prison sentence, Alessandro had a vision where he saw Maria Goretti picking 14 lillies in a garden. Then she gave those lilies to him one by one. What he didn't realize until that moment was that when Maria Goretti died, her last words were "I forgive Alessandro Serenelli and I want him with me in Heaven forever." In that act of forgiveness and in that vision, Maria Goretti made peace with her killer.

So what happened after that? For starters, Alessandro began to change his life for the better. When he was released from his thirty-year prison sentence, he made amends with Maria's family. Then he joined an order of Capuchin friars and remained there for the rest of his days.

In spite of the fact that Maria's brothers and sisters were taken away from their mother after the death of their sister, the Goretti family still lives on. Maria's brothers emigrated to America and had families that have continued on to this day. So even though the family started out with humble origins, they eventually inherited a new home in a whole new country.

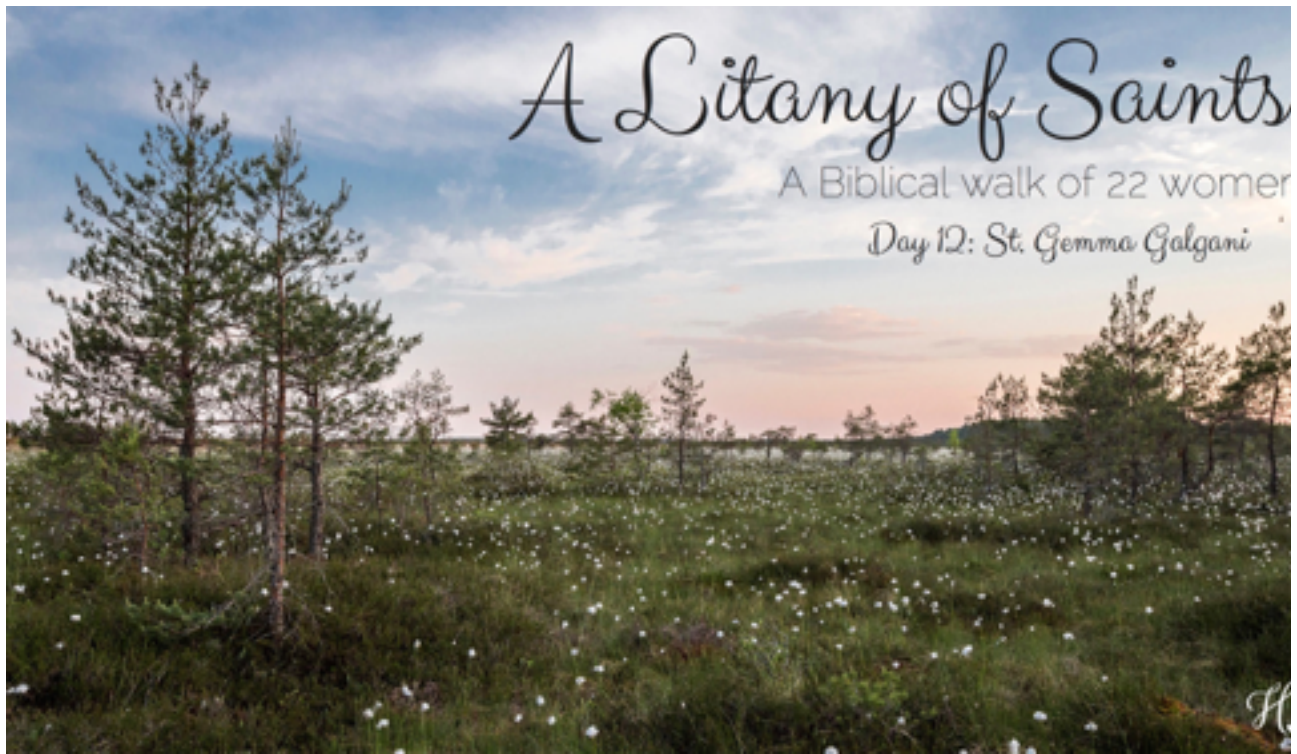
One of the descendants of Maria's brothers was at the Mass I attended the night I venerated Maria's relics. It was my first time really meeting Maria Goretti. During the homily, the priest who celebrated the Mass asked everyone to pray a litany asking St. Maria Goretti to help them forgive the people who've hurt them and to most of all forgive yourself. I prayed this litany during the Offertory hymn. It was a powerful experience for me because I have no idea if the people who've hurt me were even sorry for what they did. And yet through forgiving them, I chose to let my anger go.

A couple of weeks after I venerated her relics, I went out with my friends. Towards the end of my night out, I passed by somebody who looked like a person who triggered my first anxiety attack in college. As I went home later on, I thought to myself *"How would I feel if it actually was that person?"* The answer was *"Nothing."* Never have I ever thought that feeling nothing towards a person would ever be a good thing, but in this scenario, it's a major milestone. This peace that I feel, the fact that I could look the person who hurt in the eye and feel absolutely nothing at all is better than revenge. It's a release. It's a new kind of strength. It's a very beautiful thing. I hope that through the intercession of Maria Goretti that you find the strength to forgive whatever has been hurting you, especially if you need to forgive yourself.

-Monique

Reflect: Which Beatitude is the hardest one for you? Why?

Reflect: Who or what situation do you find hard to forgive? Why haven't you let go of it yet?



[Psalm 145:10-12, James 3:13-18, Colossians 1:24,](#)

[Philippians 4:13](#)

I was first introduced to Saint Gemma from my friend Amy. Before that, I only knew her name and not much about the lady herself. Gemma is not as famous as the other saints I've talked about before and her life is not easy to relate to. But like all the other saints, I found parts of Gemma's life that resonated with mine.

One thing I struggle with a lot is a fear of uncertainty. I always want something to be certain. I make plans and backup plans and assume that everything will work out somehow. Of course, as they say, the best laid plans are more than likely to go awry. Nothing in my life really worked out the way I thought they would, for better or for worse. One thing about Saint Gemma that I noticed right away was that she had a lot of uncertainty in her life.

Gemma Galgani lost her mother when she was 8, her brother when she was 16, and became an orphan at the age of 18. Since she came from a poor

family, she also lost her home. It would be three years before she found a new family to live with. In those three years, she suffered from spinal issues and tried to enter into religious life, but was turned down. Then, when she was only 24 years old, she contracted tuberculosis and suffered for seven months before she died on April 11, 1903 at the age of 25.

I also forgot to mention something else. Throughout her life, Gemma would have constant mystical experiences: visions, psychological and emotional suffering, and attacks from the Devil. It's basically like experiencing the strongest, most irresistible temptations mixed in with panic attacks and nightmares 24/7. The last battle she had was the worst because she experienced a heartbreaking desolation towards the end of her life.

In spite of all this, she never gave into her fears or the temptations that plagued her. Instead, she persevered. She kept to her resolve, her loyalty, her devotion to Christ. It's no wonder that I call her "my little ninja" because while her life wasn't anything that would stand out in worldly terms, she fought evil in the shadows. Gemma taught me perseverance and integrity. In spite of her poor health, she dedicated her life to serving God. She stayed single and lived the life of a lay Passionist since she was denied being a Passionist nun.

The best thing we can learn from Saint Gemma is that no matter how bad our lives get, we can never give up our faith in God. Through whatever nightmares, anxieties, and temptations we suffer, we can endure all things through Christ who gives us strength. I hope that Saint Gemma can help you persevere in whatever uncertainties are affecting your life. -Monique

Reflect: How did God help you through a period of suffering? Did you ever give up on God because of hardships?

Reflect: Which aspect of Saint Gemma's life do you relate to the most? What do you find difficult to understand?

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