



OUR LADY OF MERCY PARISH

Boca Grande, Florida

Father Jerome A. Carosella, Pastor

Mailing Address:

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Mass Schedule:

Daily (except Saturday)	8:00 A.M.
Saturday Vigil	5:00 P.M.
Sunday	9:00 & 10:30 A.M.
Confessions: Saturday	4:15 to 4:45

Online Giving <https://dioceseofvenice.org/ways-to-give/parish-donations-online/>

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

JULY 9, 2023

NEW PASTOR ANNOUNCED

In his letter to the parishioners of Our Lady of Mercy dated June 30th, Bishop Dewane announced that Fr. Anthony Hewitt, currently pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Ft. Myers, will become pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Parish effective Monday, July 17. Until then, Fr. Carosella will remain pastor through Sunday, July 16th. Fr. Carosella wishes to acknowledge the many expressions of gratitude and well wishes that he has received and continues to receive from parishioners and friends of Boca Grande.

PROGRESS ON THE ROOF

The new roof on the rectory is essentially completed except for the small section above the front entrance and gutters and downspouts. I am told that this should be finished within a week. Due to a delay in the manufacture of roofing material for the church, construction of the church roof will not begin until sometime in August.

ST MARIA GORETTI (1890 - 1902)

Maria Goretti was the third of seven children of a poor peasant family living near Corinaldo in the province of Ancona in Italy; owing to extreme poverty the family later migrated to a village near Anzio.

In order to make ends meet, Maria's father entered into partnership with a man called Serenelli, and shared a house with him and his two sons, one of whom was called Alessandro. Her father died in 1900, when Maria was ten.

Maria impressed everyone with her radiant purity. She was naturally pious, kind, and helpful. She was also outstandingly beautiful – and Alessandro Serenelli was an outstandingly passionate and undisciplined man. She resisted his attentions, which only made her the more desirable, and narrowly managed to escape a serious sexual assault, which he made her keep secret by means of threats of murder.

A month later Alessandro arranged things so that he would be alone in the house with Maria; and he had a dagger. She tried to resist, begging him to have care for his immortal soul, but he thrust a handkerchief into her mouth to prevent her from crying out, tied her up, and threatened her with the dagger. She could, the theologians say, have consented then, with no danger to her soul; but her love of purity was too great. Alessandro, enraged, stabbed her fourteen times.

She did not die, though her entrails were hanging out from one of her abdominal wounds. She was taken to hospital, seven miles of bad road in a horse-drawn ambulance and was operated on for more than two hours. She lived for twenty hours more, became a Child of Mary, received the Last Sacrament, and specifically forgave her murderer. She died in the afternoon of 6 July 1902, at the age of eleven years, eight months, and twenty days.

Alessandro narrowly escaped being lynched and was tried and sentenced to thirty years' penal servitude with hard labor. For the first seven years or so he maintained a cynical and defiant attitude, but he repented, and dreams of Maria herself figured largely in his repentance. (You might say, he pretended to repent so as to get his sentence reduced – but the most skeptical experts were convinced, and he had to remain in prison for another twenty years, which is a long time to sustain a pretense).

Maria was beatified in 1927. Alessandro was released in 1928; and he and Maria's mother received Communion side by side on Christmas Day 1937, and they spent Christmas together. Maria was canonized in 1950. Her mother was present at the ceremony, the first time this has ever happened. Some people say that Alessandro was there too, others not; but it is certain that he spent his last years in a Capuchin monastery: he died in 1970.

The trouble with purity nowadays is that we don't believe in it – or at least we say we don't. When we read of one saint or another that he or she was a virgin, we are more inclined to deride than to admire. And that is sad: here is not the place for a long disquisition on sex but suffice it to say that sex is a valuable thing that should not be squandered or used trivially; any more than one should use champagne for cleaning floors.

Even if we find it difficult to admire virginity as such – even when it is a positive virtue and not a negative one – we should still, even as pagans, admire purity. For whatever alternative set of moral standards, one may adopt, purity, decency, and self-respect are all-important and always will be. (The *standards* of what is or is not decent may be different – in Victorian times it is said that it was indecent to let ankles be seen, while a few centuries earlier large codpieces were the fashion for men – but *decency itself* is always there, however the ways of measuring it may change).

One may admire or praise Maria Goretti for all manner of other things if one likes – some people have a great fondness for sentimentality, melodrama, and wet plaster saints – but at the end of it all, the heroic virtue that she exhibited was a blazing affirmation of purity and integrity. Even if her standards are not ours, we must still have standards of some kind; and if we are faced with a threat to them, we must defend ourselves with the same passion that she showed. To behave otherwise, to tell ourselves “well, it doesn't matter really,” is to commit slow moral suicide.