

1. Read — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.
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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

# Quick Connect

**What is the Gospel saying? John 12:24-26** — Page 1

**What is the Church saying Past and Present?** Pages 1-3

**What is God saying to you through this passage?** Page 4

## Gospel Reading

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (Jn. 12:24-26)*

Jesus said to his disciples: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him. "

## Spiritual Reading

*From a homily at the canonization of Saint Maria Goretti by Pope Pius XII*

*I have no fear, for you are with me*

It is well known how this young girl had to face a bitter struggle with no way to defend herself. Without warning a vicious stranger burst upon her, bent on raping her and destroying her childlike purity. In that moment of crisis she could have spoken to her Redeemer in the words of that classic, *The Imitation of Christ*: "Though tested and plagued by a host of misfortunes, I have no fear so long as your grace is with me. It is my strength, stronger than any adversary; it helps me and gives me guidance." With splendid courage she surrendered herself to God and his grace and so gave her life to protect her virginity. The life of this simple girl - I shall concern myself only with highlights - we can see as worthy of heaven. Even today people can look upon it with admiration and respect. Parents can learn from her story how to raise their God-given children in virtue, courage and holiness; they can learn to train them in the Catholic faith so that, when put to the test, God's grace will support them and they will come through undefeated, unscathed and untarnished. From Maria's story carefree children and young people with their zest for life can learn not to be led astray by attractive pleasures which are not only ephemeral and empty but also sinful. Instead they can fix their sight on achieving Christian moral perfection, however difficult and hazardous that course may prove. With determination and God's help all of us can attain that goal by persistent effort and prayer. Not all of us are expected to die a martyr's death, but we are all called to the pursuit of Christian virtue. This demands strength of character though it may not match that of this innocent girl. Still, a constant, persistent and relentless effort is asked of us right up to the moment of our death. This may be conceived as a slow steady martyrdom which Christ urged upon us when he said: *The kingdom of heaven is set upon and laid waste by violent forces*. So let us all, with God's grace, strive to reach the goal that the example of the virgin martyr, Saint Maria Goretti, sets before us. Through her prayers to the Redeemer may all of us,

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each in his own way, joyfully try to follow the inspiration example of Maria Goretti who now enjoys eternal happiness in heaven.

### **Introduction to the Chastity Packet – Lesson and Discussion**

Please read the following summary, while looking at the chastity chart which can be viewed or printed at [http://www.linktoliturgy.com/documents/Activity%20Sheets/ACycle\\_OT30\\_Chastity\\_Chart.pdf](http://www.linktoliturgy.com/documents/Activity%20Sheets/ACycle_OT30_Chastity_Chart.pdf)

1. **What is Chastity?** Many times we think the answer is “don’t have sex”, “be pure”, etc. It is good to go straight to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Chastity is the successful integration of the sexuality within a person...a complete and lifelong mutual gift.

2. **What is our sexuality and why is our sexuality the gift of our self?** Sexuality is not only how we give ourselves to others, but what we give to others. We are spiritual, physical, intellectual, creative / communicative, and emotional beings. We give the gift of ourselves through all of these areas. As soon as we segregate these areas, we are not practicing chastity. Once we integrate these areas, giving them all, in the correct way, we are practicing chastity.

3. **Who are we ultimately giving the gift of our self too?** God. This is important. To be chaste is the desire to give the gift of self (all components) to God. This is the first priority. Read Luke 10:27 and Matthew 5:8 at the bottom of the chastity chart.

4 & 5. **So how do we give the gift of ourselves to God? How do we integrate all the components of the gift of self?** We can think of two things: a filter and a funnel. **What does a filter do?** A filter purifies. In the case of chastity, it progresses through stages or filters. **Why do the components need to be purified?** Due to concupiscence, we have the tendency to not direct our selves toward God but rather a way from God. This turning away from God leads to impurity in all areas rather than purity. It is our family, friends, close friends, and state in life that helps filter and thus purify the gift of self. **What does a funnel do?** A funnel keeps something going in a direction. If we are putting oil in a car or liquid in a bottle, we use a funnel so that none of the oil or liquid spill over, but rather reaches the destination. “Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. How may your water sources be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let your fountain be yours alone, not one shared with strangers...” Our water sources is our sexuality and it cannot just be given to anyone, it cannot “be dispersed abroad” or “spill over”, but rather should be directed toward God and given to those God intends us to give it to, and always in purity. Chastity is both the filter and funnel. It is the virtue that purifies the gift of self and ensures that it is directly toward God.

6. **What is the purpose of the sexual act and how do we know when we are using the sexual act or sexual activity contrary to its purpose?** The sexual act is a part of the bigger picture of chastity. In the chart we see that the sexual act should only take place in the state of life called marriage. Marriage is only one of the seven stages in the filter

and funnel. The sexual act, which tends to be the primary focus in chastity talks properly, finds its place and purpose within marriage. This packet goes in depth into section 2352 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church which states: “The deliberate use of the sexual faculty for whatever reason outside of marriage is contrary to its purpose.”

7. It was mentioned in section 4 & 5 that the gift of self should not “spill over”. **What happens when the gift of self is misused or “spills over”?** What does that look like? Section 2351 to 2356 gives a description of what it looks like when the gift of self is not funneled or filtered. These nine offenses against chastity are serious sin and segregate our sexuality, thus perverting it and directing it not toward love of God, but rather a false love of self. Instead of the person being a gift, they are an object in which to be used and disposed of.

**Who is Maria Goretti?** Saint Maria Goretti was born on October 16, 1890 in Italy. Her family was a poor farm working family, and much of her childhood was of great struggle. At the age of six her, along with her family, were forced to sell their farm and move to work for other farmers to make ends meet. Maria Goretti did not have a traditional school education because they needed all hands to help with the essentials for the family. Around the age of nine, Maria’s father died of Malaria. This put even greater stress on the family. Maria’s mother and older siblings would go out and work in the fields while Maria would stay at the home to do house chores and watch after her younger sister. The house they lived in was shared with another family and in that family there was a young man named Alessandro Serenelli.

### **Maria’s martyrdom**

On July 5, 1902, Maria, who was eleven at the time, was on the front steps of the house sewing when Alessandro, who was nineteen, came after her to rape her. He drug Maria into her mothers bedroom and threatened to kill her if she did not comply. Maria, who was devout and faithful to God and His Church, cried out to Alessandro not to do it because it would be a mortal sin and he would go to hell. For several minutes there was fierce fighting and Maria continued saying, “No! It is a sin! God does not want it!” After abusing her, choking her to near death, and seeing she would not submit, Alessandro stabbed Maria fourteen times with a ten-inch dagger. She was stabbed in the throat, heart, lungs and diaphragm. After stabbing her, he quickly ran away. Alessandro later stated he did not complete the assault and Maria died still with her virginity. Maria’s mother and Serenelli’s father rushed her to the hospital, but the injuries were too severe and there was nothing they could do. The following day, nearly twenty hours after being stabbed, she forgave Alessandro and said she wanted to have him in Heaven with her. She died that day while gazing upon a picture of the Blessed Mother, and holding a cross to her chest. She was eleven years old.

**End Notes**—Proverbs 5:15-17