

St. Maria Goretti (October 16th 1890 – July 6th 1902)



Born in 1890 in Corinaldo, Italy, the third child in a very impoverished family.

By the age of 10 she had lost her father.

By the age of 12 she had died a martyr's death.

Beatified in 1927 – just 25 years after her death.

Canonised in 1950 – a mere 48 years after her death, with her mother present for the Canonization.

It is also said that her repentant and reconciled murderer, Alessandro Serenellis, was also present.

Our Theme this Year – *St. Maria Goretti : With us on our Pilgrimage of Hope*

The late Pope Francis declared the year 2025 to be a *Year of Jubilee*, something which happens every 25 years. The theme of the Jubilee Year is "*Pilgrims of Hope*", and is intended to be a year of hope for a world suffering the impacts of war, the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a climate crisis.

The theme reflects, and builds upon, the Vatican II understanding of the Church as a *Pilgrim People*.

Like all the saints, Maria Goretti journeys with us on our pilgrim path through this life. Today's modern world can learn much from the profound and deep faith of this twelve year old child whose virtuous life was acknowledged with beatification 25 years after her death and, later, with canonisation some 48 years after she endured a martyr's death on July 6th 1902. In honouring St. Maria Goretti each year, we strive to follow her example as well as continuing to seek her guidance and intercession as a fellow *Pilgrim of Hope*.

Our Guest Speakers

Bishop Kevin Doran – was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Dublin in 1977 on the Feast of Maria Goretti (July 6th). He was appointed Bishop of Elphin in May 2014. On February 16th 2025 he was appointed Bishop of the diocese of Achonry, following Bishop Paul Dempsey's appointment as an Auxiliary Bishop in Dublin in April 2024.

Laura Giblin - is a native of Foxford Parish in Mayo and works as a Speech & Language Therapist. Laura has worked on several administrative and evangelistic initiatives both at parish and diocesan level.

Gerry Glennon – is a very well-known broadcaster. He has worked in news, current affairs, light entertainment, religion, farming, drama, youth programming and outside broadcasts. He has anchored election counts, guided listeners through landslides, hurricanes and power outages and commentated on some of the most historic moments in the west of Ireland history over the past 25 years. We are delighted to welcome him back to the Novena again this year.

Fr. Pat Lombard is Parish Priest of St. Anne's Parish in Sligo. Fr. Pat is no stranger to our Novena. This year he will lead our Reconciliation Evening.

Niamh McCann – is a Westmeath native and now lives in Ballaghaderreen. She has worked as a sports journalist, at GAA headquarters in Croke Park, an English and Irish teacher, and has recently completed a Masters in Guidance Counselling. Niamh and her husband Joe lost their beloved son, C.J., at the age of 21 months in October 2023 from an aggressive form of childhood brain cancer. To recognise the huge support the McCann family received from the charities in the childhood cancer community, they set up *CJ's Rainbow Charity Cycle*, from Malin to Mizen Head in August 2023, and raised over a quarter of a million euros for *Hand in Hand* and *Oscars Kids* charities.

Louise McGuinness - is a Catholic mum, from Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo. For 30 years she and her mum ran their very successful *Catholic Montessori Preschool* in Galway City. In September 2020, Bishop Kevin Doran appointed Louise and her husband, Deacon Frank McGuinness, as Directors of *Our Lady Star of the Sea Retreat & Conference Centre* in Mullaghmore.

Dana Rosemary Scallan – needs no introduction. As an 18 year old schoolgirl, she won the Eurovision Song Contest in 1970 with the song "*All Kinds of Everything*" which went on to become a huge hit all over Europe. It was the first of many hits which were to follow. After marrying and starting a family, she turned to Christian music, writing one of her most memorable songs "*Totus Tuus... Totally Yours*". In 1999 Dana became the first ever woman to be elected to the European Parliament for the constituency of Connacht-Ulster. Upon leaving politics, she returned to her first love of music.

Fr. Tomas Surlis is a native of Tubbercurry. He is a former President of St. Nathy's College in Ballaghaderreen. He is now Rector of the National Seminary in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth.