

St. Paul was an unusual man and he wrote some very unusual things. Listen to this, “I boast gladly of my weaknesses.... for when I am weak, then I am strong.” How does that make any sense? Well let me try to explain!

Spiritual writers explain over and over again that our own ego, our own self centeredness is frequently getting in the way of our union with God. In promoting our own ego we often separate ourselves from God. St. Paul tells us in today’s reading that Jesus gave him a thorn in the flesh to settle him down. This often happens to us as well.

A few years ago I discovered a true story of an 11 old saint, Maria Goretti, that stunned me. Her feast day was yesterday July 6. She was born in Southern Italy more than 100 years ago. Her father died of malaria when she was very young so her family had to share a house with another family. There was an older teenage boy in the other family who had become addicted to pornography and attempted to rape Maria. She resisted and so he stabbed her 14 times.

It took more than 24 hours for Maria to die. She kept repeating to him, “Alessandro, I forgive you, I forgive you.” Some months later he was found guilty. Before sentencing the judge asked the people in the court room, had they anything to say before he sentenced him. Maria’s mother stood up and said, “Yes, I forgive Alessandro.” The court room erupted in anger.

Six years later Alessandro was in a prison near Messina, Sicily, when an earthquake struck the region. More than 75,000 people died. The prison where Alessandro had been imprisoned was totally destroyed but he was unharmed. He had been a terrible prisoner. The night after the earthquake Maria appeared to him. She said to him, didn’t I tell you I would come back to you. From that night on Alessandro became a model prisoner and was released early from prison.

When he was released from prison Maria Goretti’s mother took Alessandro into her home. Subsequently Alessandro became a Franciscan lay brother and lived to see St. Maria Goretti’s canonization.

St. Paul’s words ring so true in the life of this 11 year old child and saint, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness... for when I am weak then I am strong.”

Let us strengthen ourselves in the Body & Blood of Jesus this morning. Trust Jesus with your whole heart.