

**Grade 10 Safe Environment Lesson Plan**  
*Grade 10 Theological Concept – Holy Choices*

**(to be used in addition or in place of the Praesidium video)**

**Objective:** There are special people in our Catholic heritage who made holy choices. We can use them as models for building good habits, for making good choices, and for discerning good and evil.

**Resources:** Information on Maria Goretti, Pier Giorgio, and Pope John Paul II

**Estimated Time:** 30 minutes. This could be covered during confirmation training in discussion of choosing a confirmation saint or choosing a confirmation sponsor.

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**INTRODUCTION / LESSON:**

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“Bishop Jackels has asked us to pray a Hail Mary every day to have the grace and courage to make holy choices, so let’s pray a Hail Mary for that today. Are there any special intentions you would like to lift up at this point?”...*prayer time*

**DISCUSS:**

- “Today we’re talking about making holy choices, and the people we know who make choices. Who do you know in your life that you admire for making good choices?  
*Suggest sponsors, priests, etc. if they have a hard time identifying people.*
- “We also know several saints that made holy choices, especially when it was the hard thing to do. Who can you think of that you think is a good example of holy choices?”
- *If you already presented Maria Goretti and Pier Giorgio, review information about them, otherwise present now as another good example: Maria Goretti and Pier Giorgio said “No” to people with authority in order to choose the good. Maria said “No” to someone older and stronger than she. Pier Giorgio chose to resist the political powers of his day in order to serve the poor. How do you recognize evil? How do you react when you recognize evil? When and to who would you choose to say, “No?”*
- How did these saints make these choices? How did they choose the good instead of evil? Was it a one time event, or a gradual process? How do we build up good habits?
- “How do your choices affect your safety? What are some choices that can put you at risk? What are some choices that help you?”

- “Sometimes our choices are not a one-time event, but they are lifestyle choices. What choices do you make when you deal with stress? *Allow for answers.*
- One of the best modern examples of coping with both stress and illness is John Paul II. What do you know about John Paul II’s struggles?”  
*Parents dying, living under communism, losing brother, accepting the grave responsibility of becoming pope, Parkinson’s disease, dying.*
- How did he cope with these struggles?  
*Mass, prayer, adoration, uniting sufferings to Christ, patience.*
- What can we learn from his example? What are some ways to deal with stress appropriately?
- What would you change about the way you cope with difficulties, based on these examples? What unhealthy choices do you make?

#### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

Offer up what you can change in your life, based on the example of these people. Close with another Hail Mary.

*Note: spend as little or as much time explaining the saints as you have time or resources to do. If possible, watch a video or listen to a presentation on Pier Giorgio, Maria Goretti, or John Paul II.*

## **The Story of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati**

More information is available at <http://www.bettnet.com/frassati/>

Are young men who smoke, play "extreme" sports, get into fist-fights, and play pranks on others worthy models for Christian boys to imitate? They are if their wild spirits flow from a generous devotion to God-like Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati of Turin, Italy.

He was born more than 100 years ago, on April 6, 1901, to wealthy secularists in Turin, Italy. His mother was a painter, his father a prominent liberal journalist. Pier had trouble in school, failing test after test until he entered a Jesuit academy-where extra help got him through. Young Pier wasn't a "brain." If anything, he was a jock.

Athletic, handsome, and bounding with charisma, young Frassati gained a reputation as a practical joker. His pranks included short-sheeting priests' beds. He would sign letters to his friends as the murderous French revolutionary "Robespierre," adding the motto "Terror conquers all."

### **The Sinister Ones**

Pier organized expeditions in the Alps for a band of boys he dubbed I Sinistri "(the Sinister Ones)", adopting the slogan: "Pochi ma buoni come macaroni" (roughly translated, that's: "The Few, the Proud, the Macaroni"). Frassati led his Sinister Ones on arduous mountain-climbing expeditions, leading them in the Rosary as they ascended. He urged them upward with the cry: "Higher and higher-there you can hear the voice of Christ!" For every climber who prayed, Pier agreed to grease his boots (a nasty but necessary mountaineers' chore). The climb would be followed by a wild ski-race down the mountainside.

When he wasn't risking life and limb, Frassati enjoyed theaters, museums and the opera, delighting in Italian, Christian culture. Widely read, with literary flair, Pier engaged his friends in long, lively discussions about Jesus, Heaven and hell-enriched with passages he'd memorized from Dante's Divine Comedy and St. Paul's letters.

### **"Around the Poor I See a Special Light"**

Each day, Pier received Communion; many nights he spent sleepless in silent Adoration-with his skis at the ready for dawn adventures. Pier filled his life with little sacrifices for the poor, whom he saw every day.

When friends asked how he could stomach the smelly environs of Turin's slums, Pier said: "It's to Jesus I go. Jesus comes to me every morning in Holy Communion and I repay Him in a very small way by visiting the poor. All around the sick and all around the poor I see a special light which we do not have."

His frugal father gave Pier a small allowance-which the boy promptly passed on to the needy. This usually included his bus fare, reports Frassati's niece, Wanda Gawronska. "My grandfather was very stern about punctuality at meals, so Pier had to run all the way home, if he wanted to eat."

Pier would often skip family vacations, so as not to leave behind his friends among the poor. When asked why he rode third class on trains, he'd answer, smiling, "Because there is not a fourth." Although his father owned a major newspaper, La Stampa, Frassati studied to work as a mining engineer, so he could "serve Christ better among the miners."

As Domenico Bettinelli, Jr., writes: "When [Pier] was a child, a poor mother with a boy in tow came begging to the Frassati home. Pier Giorgio answered the door, and seeing the boy's shoeless feet, gave him his own shoes. At graduation, given the choice of money or a car, [Pier] chose the money and gave it to the poor. He obtained a room for an old woman evicted from her tenement, provided a bed for a consumptive invalid, and supported three children of a sick and grieving widow... Only God knew of these charities; he never mentioned them to others." (from "Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati-a Saint for the Youth of the '90s".

Frassati didn't just dispense pocket money to the poor, reports Wanda Gawronska: "He

would do everything for those families-carry coal on his back to them, find the men jobs, buy them all shoes. Above all he gave them himself."

### **Charity is Not Enough**

Pier also acted to challenge the system that had neglected the poor. "Charity is not enough: we need social reform," he liked to say. In 1919, he entered the Catholic Student Federation and Catholic Action-two organizations that would soon be suppressed by Mussolini's regime. Frassati also joined Italy's pro-Catholic Popular Party. Later, Pier Giorgio helped found a Catholic daily newspaper *Momento*, devoted to spreading Catholic social teaching-especially the principles of Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.

Pier helped lead marches of Catholic youth-a dangerous task in the wild streets of 1920s Italy. The Catholics were attacked by leftist Reds, by the anti-clerical Royal Police, and then by Mussolini's blackshirts. Frassati fought back in self-defense, landing several times in jail.

When his father's liberal politics antagonized Mussolini, Fascist "squadristi" raided the Frassati home. Pier single-handedly ejected the thugs and chased them down the street. Pier reassured his friends, "It is not those who suffer violence who should fear, but those who practice it. When God is with us, we do not need to be afraid."

Frassati used to say that "God gives us health so that we may serve the sick." He visited invalids in hospitals and at home, bringing medicine and food. In 1925, he contracted polio, which struck him swiftly. He would die in only five days, at the age of 24. As Pier lay on his death-bed, he handed his sister Luciana some pawn tickets to redeem for some poor people. His last note, written with a nearly paralyzed hand, concerned the Converso family, who depended on him to pay for shots.

At Frassati's funeral, his family was shocked to see more than 1,000 mourners from Turin's lower classes. These poor, in turn, were amazed to discover the true identity of their long-time benefactor. As Frassati's story became well-known, it inspired Catholics across the world-including a young Polish student, Karol Wojtyla-now Pope John Paul II.

To this day, Frassati's body remains incorrupt: "When they opened Pier Giorgio's tomb in 1981, his body was perfectly preserved," recalled one witness. "He had a smile on his face and a rosary in his hands. It was like meeting him for the first time."

Pier Giorgio Frassati was not the son his worldly parents expected-nor was he the somber contemplative many Catholics expect in one called "blessed." Among the mildest of his adventurous habits was smoking a pipe. As the public announcement of his beatification was being prepared, some well-meaning devotees had the pipe airbrushed out of the official Vatican photo.

The truth is that the man Pope John Paul beatified on May 20, 1990 -calling him, "a man of the eight Beatitudes"- was a pipe-smoker, prankster, daredevil, and lover of God.

# The Story of St. Maria Goretti

Taken from: **Saint of the Day (5<sup>th</sup> revised Edition) Lives, Lessons and Facts**  
by Leonard Foley, OFM. Revised by Pat McCloskey, OFM.

St. Anthony Messenger Press: Cincinnati, OH.2006 *Used with permission.* Also available at  
<http://americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay/default.asp?id=1436>

She was the daughter of a poor Italian tenant farmer, had no chance to go to school, never learned to read or write. When she made her First Communion not long before her death at age 12, she was one of the larger and somewhat backward members of the class.

On a hot afternoon in July, Maria was sitting at the top of the stairs of her house, mending a shirt. She was not quite 12 years old, but physically mature. A cart stopped outside, and a neighbor, Alessandro, 18 years old, ran up the stairs. He seized her and pulled her into a bedroom. She struggled and tried to call for help, gasping that she would be killed rather than submit. "No, God does not wish it. It is a sin. You would go to hell for it." Alessandro began striking at her blindly with a long dagger.

She was taken to a hospital. Her last hours were marked by the usual simple compassion of the good—concern about where her mother would sleep, forgiveness of her murderer and her devout welcoming of Viaticum. She died about 24 hours after the attack.

Her murderer was sentenced to 30 years in prison. For a long time he was unrepentant and surly. One night he had a dream or vision of Maria, gathering flowers and offering them to him. His life changed. When he was released after 27 years, his first act was to go to beg the forgiveness of Maria's mother.

Devotion to the young martyr grew, miracles were worked, and in less than half a century she was canonized. At her beatification in 1947, her mother (then 82), two sisters and a brother appeared with Pope Pius XII on the balcony of St. Peter's. Three years later, at her canonization, a 66-year-old Alessandro Serenelli knelt among the quarter-million people and cried tears of joy.

## **Comment:**

Maria may have had trouble with catechism, but she had no trouble with faith. God's will was holiness, decency, respect for one's body, absolute obedience, total trust. In a complex world, her faith was simple: It is a privilege to be loved by God, and to love him—at any cost. As the virtue of chastity dies the death of a thousand qualifications, she is a breath of sweet fresh air.

## **Quote:**

"Even if she had not been a martyr, she would still have been a saint, so holy was her everyday life" (Cardinal Salotti).