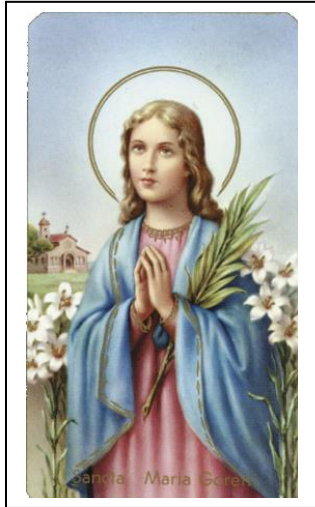


# The Maria Goretti Network



Due to the long lasting and devastating effects of child abuse, many survivors feel isolated. However, survivors are not alone in this experience. Though the effects of abuse may vary from individual to individual, there is a shared experience. That shared experience, if used the right way, can become a tool for healing. For that reason, the Archdiocese of San Antonio is proud to have become a partner with the Maria Goretti Network, a support group for all victims of abuse.

The Maria Goretti Network was co-founded by Miguel Prats, a survivor of clergy abuse, to provide a spiritual approach towards healing. The group believes that the healing powers of Jesus is essential for a full recovery from abuse. Miguel's journey towards healing led him to several support groups that fed off of the participant's anger and rejected the idea that the Church can assist in the healing process. Through spiritual direction and support by Fr. Gavin Vaverek, Miguel developed the idea for the Maria Goretti

Network.

The support group is named after Maria Goretti, who in 1902, was an 11 year old girl living near Rome. She was approached by her 20 year old neighbor who attempted to sexually assault her. She was able to prevent the rape but was brutally stabbed several times. As she lay dying, in a sign of great compassion, she forgave her attacker and stated "I forgive him... and I want him with me in heaven forever."

While in prison, her attacker received a vision of Maria forgiving him for his attack. From that moment on he turned his life around repented for his crimes. After serving 27 years in prison, he begged Maria's mother for forgiveness and eventually became a Franciscan lay brother. In 1950, Maria Goretti was named the youngest saint.

The power of forgiveness is the foundation for the Maria Goretti Network. Forgiveness does not excuse the abuse, but forgiveness is the way towards healing. Hate and anger feed off of each other and prevents a full recovery. Forgiveness is not an easy process, it takes time and prayer. That is the purpose of the support group; to assist in the healing process through Jesus Christ.

Within the Archdiocese of San Antonio, the Maria Goretti Network meets on:

**The third Wednesday of the month  
St. Peter Prince of the Apostles located at 111 Barilla Place (in the Mark/Luke Room)  
Meetings begin at 7:00pm.**

For more information:

- Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment at 210-734-7786
- Miguel Prats, Founder of the Maria Goretti Network at 713-851-3708
- Maria Goretti Network website: <http://www.mgoretti.org/>