

Image of the Week

Where in the diocese can it be found?



Last issue's image...



The image, which was featured on page 3 of the September 24 issue of *The Catholic Spirit*, can be found at St. John the Evangelist Parish, Dunellen.

The winner is...

As of press time, no one has correctly identified the image.

To be a winner, you must call (732) 562-2424 after **9 a.m. Monday**. The first caller to correctly identify the image and its location will receive a one year subscription, renewal or gift subscription to *The Catholic Spirit*. **Those who correctly identify an image are not eligible to take another guess for 90 days.**



Lessons in Mercy

Confirmation class inspired by saint at veneration, Mass

By Tracy Liston
Correspondent

St. Maria Goretti is known as the Little Saint of Great Mercy, so as Catholics around the world prepare for the Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy her major relics began a two-month national tour. Its first stop was the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, Sept. 21. Among the first pilgrims to view the relics was the confirmandi class of St. Augustine of Canterbury School, Kendall Park.

The 46 eighth-graders viewed presentations about the life of St. Maria, venerated her relics, and also had the rare opportunity to attend Mass in the crypt chapel. Father Robert G. Lynam, pastor of St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish, celebrated the liturgy. Father Edmund A. Luciano III concelebrated and gave the homily.

"I wanted our confirmation candi-

dates to experience her life," Father Lynam said. This is the first time St. Maria Goretti's relics have traveled to the United States and only the second time they have been taken on pilgrimage outside of Italy, St. Maria's native land.

"The saints are our companions on our journey of faith, and their lives speak powerfully to us," Father Lynam told the confirmation candidates. Known as "The Little Saint of Great Mercy," Maria died at age 11 while defending herself in an attempted rape (see page 8). While on her deathbed, she forgave her attacker and demonstrated complete mercy toward him.

Before Mass, the students viewed the inside of a glass-sided casket in which lay a wax replica of St. Maria that contains her skeletal remains. St. Maria's body is not incorrupt, and none of the sacred remains are visible. The Catholic tradition of venerating relics is not worship, but rather a way to honor and draw near to the saints, and to petition for their prayers. (CCC 2132)

In his homily, Father Luciano, a graduate of St. Augustine of Canterbury School who serves as director of the diocesan Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, shared stories of St. Maria's life with the students and focused on the importance of forgiveness and mercy.

"How was Maria able to forgive her attacker?" he asked. "She stayed close to Jesus. If we stay close to Jesus Christ we can become like him, too."

Father Luciano encouraged the confirmation candidates to think about a person they have had a hard time forgiving in the past. "Remember that Maria was able to forgive Alessandro Serenelli because God helped her to do it," he said.

"Today's pilgrimage inspired me to be a better witness

Students pose with Father Robert G. Lynam, right, Father Edmund A. Luciano III and Religious Teachers Filippini Sister Mary Louise Shulas in the crypt chapel of the Cathedral Basilica in Newark.

to the Gospel," said student Alyanna Alcaraz. "Sometimes it is hard for me to forgive people that have hurt me. The fact that a little girl was able to forgive her own killer is completely inspiring. St. Maria Goretti will always be my role model."

A fellow student, Greg Muraski, described his experience at the veneration. "When I went up to touch the relic of St. Maria Goretti, I felt that she was truly there in our midst," he said.

Most students said they were very moved by St. Maria's story.

"What impressed me was that she was able to keep her faith and forgive the man who killed her," said Maria Mauro. "Most people would not have forgiven him."

The Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy is scheduled to begin Dec. 8. The visit of the major relics of St. Maria is an effort on the part of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, her Pontifical Basilica, and Treasures of the Church, to prepare and catechize the faithful for the celebration.

In a statement on the St. Maria Goretti relics tour, Companions of the Cross Father Carlos Martins, director of Treasures of the Church and an ecclesiastically-appointed curate of relics, said God always "shows up" at an exposition.

"It is a most wonderful thing to see a parish, school, or prison renewed after an exposition. That is the basis for this ministry's existence, and I can't wait to see where St. Maria will take it," he said.

Martins added that hundreds of physical healings also have been reported to him during his 20 years of ministry with relics.

For a complete listing of exposition dates and locations, visit www.MariaGoretti.com.



Eighth-graders from St. Augustine of Canterbury School process into the Cathedral Basilica.

— Tony De Bari photos