



League of St. Gerard

SPRING 2004

NEWSLETTER

THE REDEMPТОRISTS • ONE LIGUORI DRIVE • LIGUORI, MO 63057-9999

*O my God,
I wish to convert
as many sinners
as there are grains
of sand in the sea
and on the land,
as there are leaves
on the trees,
blades of grass
in the fields,
atoms in the air,
stars in the sky,
rays in the sun
and moon,
creatures on the
whole earth.
Amen.*

A Model for All Missionaries

DAVID WERTHMANN

*I*t is easy to recognize the missionary activities of St. Gerard. He traveled through many parts of Italy, converting lots of people—even whole towns and villages—bringing them to the sacrament of reconciliation. But there is something inside a person that gives him or her that type of spiritual energy and missionary intensity.



A true missionary allows him- or herself to be inhabited by that greatest of all missionaries who was sent by God to convert the whole world: Jesus Christ. Such persons allow themselves to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. And that Spirit is the one who inspires and animates all their words and actions.

In Gerard's case, he was not a great preacher. The miracles he is reported to have performed certainly drew people and left them in awe. But it was the reality of God's presence within Gerard—the

presence that attracted Gerard so strongly to our Lord in the first place—that allowed him to become a “living memory” of Christ. For those who encountered him, Gerard was Jesus living, breathing, and walking around among them. That’s what made his work as a missionary so powerful.

God’s Law of Love

In coming to earth, then dying and rising for us, Jesus gave us the new law of love. At the Last Supper he told us, “you also should do as I have done” (John 13:15). He meant that we should love one another. In Baptism each of us has received the Holy Spirit, who fills us with God’s love. Anytime we perform some act of kindness or show love in any way, it is Christ’s love inside us that is at work. Thus, we also become living Christs for others. That is the mystical dimension of our lives, and it was how Gerard

lived all the time. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can live like that too, at least most of the time.

Among Gerard’s personal resolutions we read, “My continual prayers, communions, and so on, are always on behalf of the poor sinners, offering them to God in the precious blood of Christ.” For Gerard, his dedication as a religious Brother was like a continuous Eucharist or sacrifice offered entirely to Jesus for the sake of others.

He wanted to aid even those who are on the right path in general, but who are occasionally tempted by their own weaknesses. “When they tell me that a person lives according to the will of God and that in one moment he

believes he can no longer bear up and seeks help, I will pray to God for him.” In cases like this Gerard united himself to

the person who was in temptation, offering his prayers so that through such a communion of love, the

person might overcome his or her struggles.

The Driving Force in His Life

Gerard’s spiritual life did not follow any specific program of development toward a life of perfection as commonly prescribed by spiritual directors. Rather, Gerard simply tried always to do what seemed to him to be most perfect. Thus, Gerard made his own path and followed it toward God, who was constantly drawing him closer.

From 1752, when Gerard made his vows as a Redemptorist, until he died in 1755, he did necessary work for the upkeep of the monastery, as all Brothers did. But he also was very effective in apostolic outreach to others, as well. Perhaps his favorite places to be were among the Carmelite nuns, with Mother Maria Celeste and the nuns of the Most Holy Savior, or visiting a group of Poor Clare

*May God’s love
possess our hearts
forever.*

*W*hen I know or hear of anyone who is being greatly tried by the Divine Will and has no longer the courage to suffer and ask for divine help, I will pray to God for him for three whole days at least and offer up all I do in order to obtain for him holy conformity with God’s will.

nuns. When any of these holy women asked permission to have Gerard speak to them, the local bishop answered, "A conversation with Brother Gerard is worth more than an entire Lent with the fathers of his Congregation."

But his missionary activity was aimed more at sinners than those who lived virtuous lives. Gerard had an unexplainable fervor for the salvation of every person, and he dedicated all his prayers and actions toward that cause. Fortunately, he witnessed a change of heart in many through his efforts. Sinners felt a greater sense of conversion each time they talked with Gerard. People frequently asked him to come help some soul in need. Even employers asked him to come when they realized one of their workers was in a troubled state. Whenever Gerard left the house, even just to go to the market or someplace similar, he seldom returned without having brought someone back to God's good graces. Now that's the sign of a holy missionary!

God's love filled Gerard's own life to such a capacity that he was like a vending machine freely dispensing grace to anyone who came near. We might envy a person like that, yet we must remember it was not Gerard who did those things on his own. It

Il mio gusto

St. Alphonsus Liguori

*Your good pleasure,
not my own.
In you, my God, I love alone;
And nothing I desire of you
But what your goodness
wills for me.*

*O will of God! O will divine!
All, all our love be ever thine.*

*In love no rival can you bear,
But you are full of tenderest care;
And fire and sweetness all divine
To hearts which are wholly thine.*

*You make crosses soft and light
And death itself seems sweet and bright.
No cross nor fear that soul dismays
Whose will to you united stays.*

was the Holy Spirit filling Gerard's life and acting through him to touch the hearts of others. Gerard was merely open to God's love and grace, and willing to allow God to use him as an instrument in whatever way was needed.

That is no different for us. God's spirit renews itself in us each time we participate in the celebration of the Mass or receive any sacrament. God's grace is powerful, and we are

not always aware of how it works in and through our lives. Like Gerard, we must strive to be open, trusting, and grateful to God for his presence with us. Then God's love will shine through to others without much effort on our part.

Adapted from "The Christocentrism of Saint Gerard" by Domenico Capone, C.Ss.R., in *Saint Gerard Majella, His Writings and Spirituality*, Noel Londoño, C.Ss.R., editor, Liguori Publications.



O God,
you raised up
St. Gerard Majella
as friend
of the sinner
and the poor.
By his prayers,
may we become
more faithful disciples
of Jesus
who came
not to be served
but to serve.
Amen.



The Heart of the Matter

From the Internet

My husband and I have been trying to conceive for over two years now. I've had two miscarriages in that time and have lost a little faith with each one. A friend introduced me to St. Gerard about a year ago, and I have been praying ever since. I've been through so many emotions...sadness, anger, desperation. My husband is my rock—he helps me to have hope and faith every day. He holds me when I cry and makes me laugh when I'm angry. I do look at the blessings God has given me in my life: my husband, my health, family and friends, and a great career, but I feel my life isn't complete without children. I want them more than ever and I will continue to pray for St. Gerard's help. I will not give up on God. I'll pray for all the requests I've read in the newsletter.



I am pregnant for the second time and unfortunately I've had complications. I have had to stop work and then go on strict bed rest.

When you are praying, please add my intentions of being healthy through the remainder of my pregnancy and delivering a healthy baby.

I had prayed to St. Gerard before and during my first pregnancy, and also continue to pray to St. Gerard during this pregnancy.

Thank you for your support and prayers.

Please send your prayer requests and thanksgiving letters to the address on the front page or to miss-spon@liguori.org.