



# Saint Gerard

Mother's Day Issue • 2016

NEWSLETTER

## From Beginning to End: My Mother's Day Letter

*How do you tell your mother of your love for her? Whether she is nearby, miles away, or is now together with Jesus, that loving connection is something you will always share. Redemptorist Brother Bruce Davidson shares his love through a letter to his dearly departed mother.*

By Brother Bruce Davidson, C.Ss.R.

**D**ear Mama, happy Mother's Day! Our last Mother's Day together was in May 2008, and one week later you surrendered your earthly life and now enjoy an eternal life with Jesus and his saints. I never missed sending you a Mother's Day card while you were present to Robert, my twin brother, and me. This year

I decided to write you a letter and recount some of the stories you related to us about our early years.

I began life in August, 1956. You and Daddy brought us home from the hospital when we each tipped the scale at five pounds. Now it is unimaginable, one hundred fifty pounds later, that Robert and I were so small.

We were a handful: feedings, changings, colic, teething, colds, and then later mumps, rubella, chicken pox, all ingredients for many sleepless nights. Aunt Agnes to the rescue! She made the journey from London to the U.S. and cared for all of us for two years. Prayers are always answered in either obvious or unexpected ways.



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### Dear Friend of St. Gerard,

I am pleased to present our Mother's Day edition in which Brother Bruce Davidson remembers his own mother and her devotion to St. Gerard. Also, Fr. Joe Dorcey tells the stories that establish St. Gerard Majella as the Mothers' Saint and what they teach us about God, St. Gerard and ourselves. I hope these articles, together with the testimonials, will provide inspiration for all the Friends of St. Gerard.

I take this opportunity to greet and bless all mothers for Mother's Day. May all mothers be especially blessed not only this day, but every day, so that they have all the graces they need to fulfill their wonderful vocation and mission in life.

Please share this newsletter with family and friends. Tell everyone about [St. Gerard's website](#) and [Facebook](#) page dedicated to praying for and bringing hope to all mothers.

In solidarity with St. Gerard and all mothers,  
**Fr. Allan Weinert, C.Ss.R**  
Redemptorists of the Denver Province



## Letter *continued*

You and Aunt Agnes were as vigilant as night watchmen (watchwomen?) once we began to crawl. Kitchen cupboard doors must lead to secret passageways; electrical outlets, hmmm, if we only could poke our little fingers into the holes, what surprise would we find? Electrical outlet covers had not yet been designed to prevent curious little fingers from exploring the dangers that lurked within the house walls. Whatever happened to the knobs from the RCA television set? I guess only The Shadow knows! The terrible twos persisted well beyond two, but with two babies everything is doubled.

I do recall your creative efforts to keep us within your watchful gaze while you prepared the evening meal. Newspaper hats and we were little generals, or pirates, Stanley & Livingston, I presume? Do you remember filling a large mixing bowl with papier mâché, placing the bowl and a large section of cardboard on the kitchen table? We were free to create. I do not know what Robert's and my imaginations prompted us to build. Maybe we were constructing a float for Carnival, but more likely it resembled a papier mâché volcano which, mercifully for you, never erupted.

You used to prepare fresh pastry. The Formica kitchen table was an ideal surface for rolling dough. You cut two pieces of dough, handed the dough to us and we became master pastry chefs, Robért and Bruno! We expertly rolled the dough on the table and any other surface that made contact with it as it fell off of the table. After a few minutes the dough had lost its pasty white color and turned battleship gray. You placed each piece of dough in two small pie tins and baked our "pies" in the oven. Is it possible that these times spent with you in the kitchen sparked our interest in cooking?

You sewed our play clothes. I distinctly recall the clothing patterns, cutting the fabric, and the whirring of the Singer sewing machine as you stitched the pieces of fabric together to make

pants and shirts. I know that granddad was a tailor and you and your three sisters all learned how to sew. I can sew buttons, but that is the extent of my sewing abilities.

**L**ife was not always light-hearted. I recall my hospital stays as a child and that you and Daddy were always there. I remember the boredom and the Jell-O diet. Ugh! Even now, I do not like Jell-O! During my last stay at Baptist Hospital as an adult I recall awakening after surgery and seeing you and Daddy seated at the foot of the bed anxiously waiting for me to awaken and speak. I remember seeing you and, reassured that you were there, falling back asleep.

You and Daddy cared for Robert and I. We were never left wanting for any necessities, and we were pleased to be able to do the same for Daddy and you as you each became frail from age or illness. You prepared us to live justly and honorably. Robert is married and



has raised a daughter and son and I chose religious life. These vocations became realities because of our upbringing. You and Daddy wanted us to be happy as you were happy and this encouraged us to follow our callings. You commented to me one afternoon shortly after you entered hospice that mothers of priests and religious were destined for heaven. Hmmm! Do you recall my reply? "Maybe so, but don't begin a life of dissipation now."

I know that you asked for divine help while raising us. Why else would we walk to church after lunch so that you could pray? What a wonderful example for us. Daily prayer before the tabernacle and an intercessory prayer before the altar of one of the many saints who adorned the side altars of Mater Do-

lorosa. St. Joseph was one of your favorite intercessors, St. Gerard Majella, our Mother Mary—each saint hearing your pleadings and then inspiring you through their prayers. I visited Materdomini during the summer of 2013. Countless parents have journeyed to the shrine or have written to St. Gerard trusting in his ability to intercede for them and their children. I believe that he prayed for me during my hospital stays as a child. Did you ask him to pray for Robert and me? We are no longer children, but I believe that St. Gerard continues to intercede for us.

St. Gerard was devoted to our mother Mary. Jesus gave His mother to humanity as he hung, dying on the cross. We are beneficiaries of Mary's perpetual care, Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Each day I make an effort to follow St. Gerard's example and honor Our Mother through Marian devotion. His life was simple and faithful, and is well worth emulating.

St. Gerard's mother devoted herself to raising her son in Muro Lucano, a small village situated in the mountains of southern Italy. The family was poor and suffered many hardships, but Gerard thrived as a young man and a Redemptorist.

Frequently I turn to St. Gerard and other Redemptorist saints as well as Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St. Joseph asking for guidance just as you taught us. Each night you and Daddy listened to us pray before turning off the lights and tucking us in for the night. These early experiences of prayer remain with us and are practiced daily. I am grateful for these spiritual gifts. Thank you, Mama!

Mama and Daddy, St. Gerard, Mary, Our Mother of Perpetual Help, pray for us.

All my love, Bruce.

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*Bro. Bruce Davidson, C.Ss.R. professed perpetual vows as a Redemptorist in October 2014. He currently serves with the Evangelization Team in Minneapolis, MN.*



*All our stories are important to the extent that they testify to the ongoing truth of God's plentiful love, present with and within us.*

## (Do You Know) How St. Gerard Became The Mothers' Saint?

By Fr. Joe Dorcey, C.Ss.R.

**S**tories teach us about the meaning of life and the events of life. They help us remember important truths, lessons, events and other things that are important to remember. Sharing stories can help us learn and make sense of the world.

For this reason, on Mother's Day, it seems appropriate and important to retell the stories that establish St. Gerard Majella as the Mothers' Saint.

Gerard's own birth was probably a difficult one for his mother, Benedetta. Pregnancy, birth and a child's first year of life were not easy in southern Italy in the 18th century. There were no maternity hospitals, and medical knowledge of everything to do with reproduction was elementary. There were no drugs to alleviate labor pains and little appreciation for the importance of basic hygiene. Sickness caused by infection at the time of birth was an ever-present threat to the life of both mothers and their children. Perhaps only three of every four babies reached its first birthday. Mothers often died in childbirth.

This is the general background that sets the stage for Gerard Majella, the wonder-worker. Several stories are told concerning Gerard and families expecting babies. One of the earliest is about a father, Gerard's friend, whose wife was expecting. Alexander Piccolo, the watchmaker of Muro, Gerard's hometown, lost his young wife and remarried shortly afterwards, but his new bride was taken seriously ill soon after the marriage. During a retreat at Materdomini, Alexander had the opportunity to tell Gerard of his woes. Gerard told him, "Cheer up, your wife is already six weeks pregnant and it will be a little boy." Alexander was delighted when soon thereafter he discovered that Gerard was right. He was then determined to call the baby Gerard. While waiting for the birth, Alexander would quietly whisper, "Gerard, Gerard," and feel the baby move in reply.

Two miracles stand out as especially significant in confirming Gerard as the patron saint of expectant mothers. The first was singled out, detailed and accepted in the process of his canonization. It took place in Senerchia, where a woman was dying in childbirth. Her husband and family knew Gerard from his missionary work and so they begged him to pray for them. He did pray and the mother and baby survived.

But the most famous story, that contains the second miracle, recalls an incident that happened in August of 1755, less than two months before his death. Gerard was well known and had many friends in the town of Oliveto, some miles from Materdomini at Caposele, where he lived. He went there to pay a farewell visit to the Pirofalo family. As he was leaving the home of his friends, his handkerchief fell to the floor. One of the daughters saw it, and called after him and hurried to return it to him. In a moment of prophetic insight Gerard said, "Keep it. It will be useful to you some day. The handkerchief was treasured as a precious souvenir of Gerard.

**Y**ears later, that same girl was expecting her first child and was dangerously ill. It was feared that neither mother nor baby would survive. Suddenly she remembered the handkerchief and words of St. Gerard. She cried out for it in prayer

and no sooner was it brought than she began to get better. The danger passed and her baby was born healthy, without further trouble. This story has come down to us from her grandson who recalled how his grandmother treasured the handkerchief as a precious relic. From then on all the pregnant women in the surrounding areas began to request the handkerchief. It was soon torn into smaller and smaller strips so that many mothers in danger could have it with them during difficult or complicated deliveries, and thus the original handkerchief was lost.

*Such stories first of all speak to us about God's closeness, care, concern, mercy and loving providence.*

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## Do You Know *continued*

So what do these stories teach us about God, about St. Gerard, about ourselves? Such stories first of all speak to us about God's closeness, care, concern, mercy and loving providence. They speak to us of the God of Jesus Christ, a warm, kind, compassionate, understanding, merciful and patient God who sees and hears us and is always ready to act in our favor, to forgive, heal and protect.

These stories also tell us important things to remember about St. Gerard. First of all we see Gerard as a friendly person, among and with the people. He had friends. He visited their homes. He knew and related to people. He was often sought out for advice and help. He was not aloof and distant. Like God, he was lovingly close to people. He cared about people and their concerns, problems, difficulties and troubles. Gerard Majella was, and continues to be beloved and dear to many people. In many respects, St. Gerard's virtues are worthy of imitation.

These stories tell us that we can and should have faith, hope and confident trust in St. Gerard Majella. He is trust-

worthy and we should feel confident placing our trust in him. He is our friend. He is close to us too, just as he was close to others, in other times and places. He will come to where we live and visit us in our homes. St. Gerard is very close and dear to God's heart. He has a special relationship with God and his intercession is powerful, especially with regard to all things to do with mothers. God has chosen St. Gerard to be a very special advocate for mothers in all their needs. He is undoubtedly the Mothers' Saint.

All our stories are important, to the extent that they testify to the ongoing truth of God's plentiful love, present with and within us, filling us with new life and carrying on the re-creative work of redemption.

Let us continue to share our experiences and tell our stories about the wonderful things St. Gerard Majella has done in our lives.

*The author gratefully recognizes his reliance upon information in the work of Fr. Brendan McConvery, C.Ss.R., Saint Gerard Majella – Rediscovering a Saint, Redemptorist Communications, Dublin, 2010.*

# Testimonials



**A**lmost every day we get messages from people giving witness to St. Gerard Majella's powerful intercession: overcoming infertility, receiving the gift of motherhood, getting through a difficult pregnancy, a safe delivery, a healthy baby, a relationship restored, healing and health recovered, to name a few. We want to share a sample of these messages here because they inspire three things we all desperately need: faith, hope and love.

### THANKSGIVING FROM JENNIE

Dear Saint Gerard, my little princess will be one month old on February 12th. I pray that she will always be healthy and will grow up active and smart. I would also like to give

thanks for all your prayers, most especially to Saint Gerard for giving me my little princess. Thank you so much and God bless.

### ANONYMOUS TESTIMONY FROM A DEVOTEE IN THE PHILIPPINES

I remember, during the delivery of my first baby, I had a grueling 18 hours of labor pains and almost 2-3 hours of pushing my baby. Before I used up all my energy I remembered my St. Gerard medal, which I had



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## Testimonials *continued*

pinned to my clothes, near my chest. I touched it and murmured a prayer, and in an instant I was able to push hard and the baby came out. For my second delivery I'm planning again to pin the medal and use the St. Gerard handkerchief on the big day. Thank you.

### THANKSGIVING FROM PEGGY

Miracles do happen every day! I had severe cervical cancer when I was only 29 years old and my gynecologist strongly suggested that I have a hysterectomy, but that was not in Almighty God's plan for me. My gynecologist treated me for dysplasia by freezing the cancerous cells. Five years later I had to have a hysterectomy and today my precious, one-and-only son is now 31 years old and starting a family of his own. St. Gerard I love you and thank you for hearing and answering my heartfelt prayers. I know St. Gerard will intercede for all who are praying for his intercession. God bless you all!

### AMAZING TESTIMONY FROM ANGELIN

Dear Saint Gerard Majella, thank you so much my dear Mothers' Saint. This is Angelin who posted a prayer request last week, asking all the 42,000+ Prayer Angels to pray for me and my eight-week old, unborn baby, asking for a miracle to happen. Well, yes, the miracle happened, and I want to thank each and every Prayer Angel in this group who prayed for me and my now nine-week old, unborn baby. Just now I am back from the hospital. Last week the doctor told me my baby sac was empty, without any growth. This week again that sac remained empty, but instead they found another sac in my uterus with a fetal pole! I am so really happy to share this wonderful news with all my fellow Prayer Angels. Please keep us in your daily prayers. Please pray that my baby will be healthy and we will reach the full-term of my pregnancy. Amen.

### THANKSGIVING FROM PAULINA

Dearest St. Gerard, thank you so much for all your prayers, love and guidance during my pregnancy. I gave birth to a healthy baby boy yesterday! Please continue to pray for him that the Lord Jesus always has him under his wing and protects him and always keeps my son healthy. Amen! God bless all who prayed for me. Thank you for all your help, prayers and love.



### THANKSGIVING FROM JENG

Thank you for all the prayers. I gave birth to a healthy baby last March 7th. Thank you, St. Gerard. The photo is my baby with the St. Gerard pin. Thank you so much for the prayers.

### A THANKSGIVING/PRAYER REQUEST FROM FRAN & VINCENT

Dear Saint Gerard, first of all we would like to thank you for hearing our prayer last August. I had just had a miscarriage back then and was asking for



## Prayer to St. Gerard

Dear St. Gerard on this day dedicated especially to mothers, we ask you to obtain special blessings and extraordinary graces for all mothers to live their vocation and fulfill their mission of giving and nurturing life.

What a special calling, what a tremendous mission: to generate life, to care for it, to nurture, comfort, console and challenge, to be attentive and concerned, to protect and to educate.

Bless all mothers with good husbands and children who will return their love. May all mothers be able to provide both milk and honey, both sustenance for staying alive and the sweetness and joy of being alive.

May they be calm and have confidence that you are with them, taking them by the hand and guiding them safely through life. May all mothers have the strength, wisdom and courage to be truly life-giving people.

Amen.



## **Testimonials** *continued*

prayers and comfort and, if it were God's will, another baby. The next month God blessed us with a positive result and this time the baby had a heartbeat! Now, through God's grace and your intercession, I am already in my 35th week and the baby and I are doing well. I would like to ask for prayers for a safe delivery and a healthy baby without any complications. God, Mama Mary and you have been with us through this journey and we are very grateful that the past months have been great for us. We cannot wait to see our son and bring him to church to thank you. I also pray for all those women who are due, that they may also experience a healthy and happy pregnancy and enjoy every moment with God's greatest blessing, children. Thank you again Saint Gerard and please intercede for me and my family.

### **THANKSGIVING FROM GISELLE**

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and thanks to everyone who prayed for my baby and me; from the time my husband and I were trying to conceive (six years), all throughout my high risk pregnancy, preterm labor, and hospital bed rest, up until I delivered my baby through C-section. And even if she was born prematurely and had to be in the NICU for a while, we were finally able to take home a healthy baby! Thank you Saint Gerard Majella for your intercession! May our journey serve as an inspiration to everyone praying for a child and the gift of motherhood. Always have faith, for God makes all things beautiful in God's time. Once again, thank you so much! All praise and glory to God! I pray that through sharing this good news, hope will be given to someone out there who is also praying for a miracle. Thank you so much and God bless us all.

### **TESTIMONY FROM CAROL**

My husband and I were signed up with two adoption agencies in the late 1970's, after being married for seven years. At a shrine, I came across a St. Gerard medal. I

prayed to him very devoutly and left everything up to God. Eighteen months later I became pregnant and Michael Gerard was our firstborn. Keep praying and leave everything up to God. God bless you!

### **THANKSGIVING FROM IFUNANYA**

I want to thank the Holy Trinity and our Mother Mary, through Saint Gerard Majella, for answered prayers. My sister who had complications after child-birth is completely healed. She and the baby are in perfect health, thanks to God almighty. I'm grateful for all the prayers. May God bless you all and meet you at the point of your needs. Amen. Please publish this so that it will encourage others seeking the intercession of Saint Gerard to have faith.

### **THANKSGIVING FROM FRANCES**

Thank you, Saint Gerard. I had an emergency C-section after almost twelve hours of labor, but everything went well and my baby and I are both safe. This is despite having preeclampsia. We are very grateful to you for being our intercessor. Praise God!

### **THANKSGIVING FROM CHIAMAKA**

I am here to thank our Lord Jesus Christ, my mother Mary, my dear Saint Gerard and all the Prayer Angels. My happiness has no bounds. My pregnancy result was positive. My husband and I are so happy after so many years. Please may all continue to pray for us so that my pregnancy will reach full-term. Once again thank you Lord!

### **THANKSGIVING FROM FRANCESCA**

I would like to offer a prayer of thanks!! Since the last message I sent you in August, my husband and I did conceive after three years and have just welcomed a beautiful, healthy little girl, named Victoria, on April 10th! We cannot thank you all enough for the prayers as I know this would not be possible without them.