

TRIDUUM IN PREPARATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. GERARD MAJELLA

DAY ONE: OCTOBER 13, 2020



REDEMPTORIST CONFERENCE OF NORTH AMERICA PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION



Gerard levitating in ecstasy as a favourite melody is played by a blind piper. Mosaic in Mount St. Alphonsus, Limerick.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE 29 YEARS CAN MAKE!

St. Gerard Majella was born on April 23, 1726 at Muro, Italy. He was the son of a tailor who died when Gerard was 12 years old. Gerard's family was very poor, and so the young Gerard was sent out to work, following the trade of his father.

Gerard tried to join the Franciscans, but was rejected a number of times. He was young, and in poor health. In 1749, Gerard heard the preaching of the members of a new religious community, the Redemptorists, and it captured his imagination. He wanted to be one of them. His mother must have known that her son was tempted to join this dynamic group, for she locked his bedroom door that night. But that did not deter Gerard. In a move straight out of fiction, he knotted together the bedsheets and made his escape. He presented himself to the head of the mission band as a candidate. Unconvinced of the value of this sickly tailor to the mission of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the preacher sent him on to the Redemptorist house at Deliceto carrying a note presenting this "useless lay brother."

Gerard was accepted as a Redemptorist lay brother, and was professed by St. Alphonsus Liguori, founder of the Redemptorists, in 1752. Over the next years, he served as a sacristan, gardener, porter, infirmarian and tailor. He proved himself far from useless.

Gerard was noted for his observation of the Redemptorist rule, and collecting money for the material needs of the community. His presence to people who were weighed down by poverty and illiteracy was a sign of hope to them. Gerard had great empathy and testified to trust in the love and the compassion of God.

It was said that Gerard "could read hearts." He became known for his great piety, holiness, extraordinary wisdom, and his gift of reading consciences. Because of this, he was permitted to counsel communities of religious women.

Gerard died of tuberculosis on October 16, 1755 at the age of 29, at Materdomini, Italy, where his shrine can be visited today. His spirit is captured by the words he had printed and posted on the door of his cell: "Here the will of God is done, as God wills, and as long as God wills."



Painting of the same scene. In the midst of the poor who crowded around the door, St. Gerard is transfixed by the joyous song of praise played by the piper.



Gerard was beatified by Leo XIII on January 29, 1893, and canonized by Saint Pius X on December 11, 1904. He is invoked as patron of mothers, especially in time of pregnancy. Couples hoping to conceive a child also seek Saint Gerard's intercession. His feast is October 16.

Just how Gerard came to be invoked by parents seeking to conceive and by women experiencing difficulty in pregnancy is not certain... but we will explore this part of the story tomorrow, on the second day of our Triduum.

FOR YOUR REFLECTION...

Gerard Majella's life was short in terms of length of days, but long in terms of the shadow it has cast over our history as a Redemptorist Family and in the Church at large.

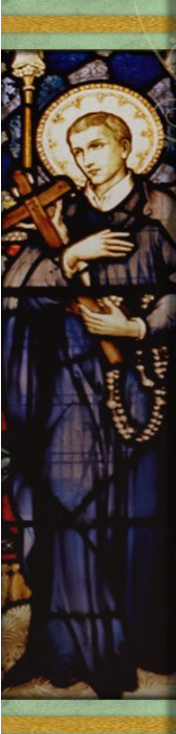
- What aspects of Gerard's life speak to you?
- Gerard's simplicity could be deceptive, and still can be! How do you understand the virtue of simplicity in the life of Gerard? ... in your own life?
- Gerard was a brother in the Redemptorist community, and a brother to all he met. How are you sister or brother to those you meet along life's roads? How do you accompany your travelling companions?

THE WORDS OF GERARD

"It is true that sometimes we find ourselves confused and weak. But there is no confusion with God, there is no weakness with God's power, because it is certain that in our battles the divine majesty helps us with his powerful arm. And so we can be joyful and grow in strength [by accepting] God's will. And we bless his most holy works for all eternity."

From a letter of Saint Gerard, January 22, 1752

AND SO, WE PRAY OUR NOVENA PRAYER ...




Novena Prayer

Almighty God,
from his boyhood years
you blessed St Gerard with generosity of soul,
and led him to do your will in heroic ways.

By your race he lived his brief life
in intense love for you
and for those in need.
Hear his prayer for us
and for all poor souls in trouble.

St Gerard, friend of sinners,
friend of the poor,
friend of mothers and children,
it is our joy and consolation to come to your
Novena to remember the goodness of your life,
your burning sense of God,
your tender love for Our Lord and his mother,
Mary, your kindness and care
for everyone in need.



Pray for us now in our time of need.
Pray for us in our sickness.
Pray for us in our confusion and despair.
Pray for us in our struggle with life
and its mysteries.

Remember especially those who long for
Children and mothers about to give birth.
Remember those who have wandered
from the practice of the faith
and need the grace of reconciliation.
Remember all of us poor sinners in our
particular needs

Pause and make your own intention.

Amen.

