

# TRIDUUM IN PREPARATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. GERARD MAJELLA

DAY THREE: OCTOBER 15, 2020

REDEMPTORIST CONFERENCE OF NORTH AMERICA PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION



Gerard dancing with joy at the tune played by a piper. The story has been told that the tune was one composed or sung by St. Alphonsus.

## GERARD MAJELLA: JOYFUL WITNESS TO AND FOR LIFE

Today, St. Gerard Majella is most often invoked as the unofficial patron of people wishing to conceive, and of women experiencing difficulties in pregnancy. How did this come to be? There are a number of stories that date from Gerard's earthly life that point to him as an intercessor for life. Some say his frail health gave him compassion for ailing mothers-to-be. Others cite his miraculous prayers for troubled pregnancies. Italian women called him *il santo de felice parti*, "the saint of happy childbirth." Perhaps the most probable cause for this invocation of St. Gerard lies in a simple event that later took on great meaning. Leaving a house after a visit, Gerard dropped a handkerchief. A daughter of the house ran after him to return the item, but Gerard refused to take it, saying, "Keep it; you might have need of it later." Later, in childbirth, this same woman was experiencing complications. She remembered the words of Gerard, and asked for the handkerchief to be placed on her abdomen, and the baby was safely delivered.

We are aware that being pro-life involves cultivating and maintaining an attitude of joyful engagement in life, and of standing with and advocating for all those for whom life is a challenge: people who are poor, on the margins of society, without access to the resources that would allow them to live a free, healthy and productive life. If we look deeply into the life of St. Gerard, we can see that he was a witness to this joyful engagement in life, and of constant gratitude to God, the Giver of Life. A schoolmaster reported that Gerard had been 'always cheerful' in class, and there are countless other examples of his joyful approach to life. As the domestic servant of an irascible bishop, he had managed to 'keep a good smile on him.' He maintained this reputation for merriment through his years in the Congregation: questioned about a rumour that had been taking a dip in the sea, 'Gerard replied with a laugh...'; hearing the music of a village flute-player, 'he began to leap and dance'; sitting with the archbishop's secretary, 'he laughed at his jokes...'; on someone's beginning to play an air from a modern opera on the recreation room harpsichord, Gerard seized an astonished Father 'and danced round the room with him.' He was even caught grinning towards the Lord in the Tabernacle as he passed through the chapel.



Today, St. Gerard's joyful engagement in life, and his charitable outreach to the most abandoned people of his day leads us to consider him a saintly advocate and intercessor for life.



## THE WORDS OF GERARD

"*Stay cheerful*," Gerard commanded Maria di Gesù when she was not re-elected prioress at Ripacandida.

Letting Maria Celeste dello Spirito Santo know that he has as at last located a copy of the songbook for which she had been asking all year, he tells her '*sing in your cell*,' that way, he declares, she will become a great saint.

His immediate response to Fr. Caione's anxious enquiry about his health is to say, "*You really must cheer up, my dear Father*."

## FOR YOUR REFLECTION...

- Do you know of people—or have you yourself—turned to St. Gerard for intercession in pregnancy or childbirth?
- How does Gerard's joyful attitude to life—even in the face of challenges—speak to your heart?
- How do you see yourself as a witness to and advocate for life in the spirit of St. Gerard?

Today, we offer the prayer being prayed as part of the online Triduum in preparation for the Feast of St. Gerard by the Baltimore Province.

## AND SO, WE PRAY OUR NOVENA PRAYER ...

Loving God, we rejoice to celebrate Gerard Majella, early saint of the Redemptorist Community, who loved to refer to You as the "thief of hearts."

With Gerard, we yearn to give our hearts to You ever more intensely, for You never cease pouring Yourself into our hearts.

Grateful for Gerard's companionship, may we, in his words, "re-create ourselves in the immensity" of Your Being, and serve more faithfully the poor and wounded, as he says, who are "the living images of Jesus Christ."

For it is in that Christ we lift our prayer to You, Source of all goodness, through the fire-light of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

The Most Blessed Sacrament  
is Christ made visible. The  
poor sick person is Christ  
again made visible.

