



League of St. Gerard

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2001

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

St. Gerard Majella: Instrument of Christ's Healing

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In the New Testament we experience Jesus as preacher and healer. Page after page of the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are filled with healing miracles. Jesus sent his disciples out two-by-two to preach the Good News and to heal the sick. "So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them" (Mark 6:12-13).

The Church continues Jesus' healing ministry through the centuries. Through the sacramental life of the Church this same Jesus Christ continues to offer us healing and reconciliation.

We seldom think about healing except when we or a

loved one are afflicted with illness. When this happens our lives are suddenly filled with anxiety.

When we are in need of healing for ourselves or others we have an opportunity to encounter Jesus in a special way. Through our suffering we are often forced to see the ordinary in a different light. Things that we otherwise would not give much attention can suddenly grasp our attention for better or for worse. In such times we call out to God more often, sometimes even in anger. Yet there is another experience that suffering can invite us to. It can lead us to turn toward Jesus Christ with total dependence and trust.

This road toward trust and dependence is a call to live life

with surrender. To live with surrender is no easy feat; it requires faith and courage. Daily, even hourly, turning our lives over to the power of God becomes our daily food and strength. In the act of surrender we find the strength to get through yet another day with suffering and illness.

On February 16, 2000, our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, before praying the Angelus, had this to say about living with sickness. "Illness helps us to understand the human mystery. Like the leper mentioned in this Sunday's Gospel, when we are ill we experience human frailty and feel a strong desire to recover. In Jesus, who is moved to compassion for us, we find support and the answer to our deepest longings. In his cross every form of suffering can become meaningful; illness never stops being a trial, but it is enlightened by hope."

By his example, the Pope, understanding the burden and worry of sickness, gives us the strength to bear the cross of illness. He has declared the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11, as the day of the sick. Linking the experience of Lourdes with its history of

healing to a universal day of prayer.

Throughout the Catholic world there are celebrations of healing Masses inviting all the sick of the parish to come for anointing and prayer. This recognition of the importance of prayer and ritual for the sick gives us courage to see sickness and suffering in the light of redemptive action. United with Jesus' own passion, death, and resurrection, we surrender our suffering to Jesus. Our suffering as the Pope says, "...never stops being a trial, but it is enlightened by hope."

St. Paul, in his letters to the early Christian communities under his care, was quick to address the problem of suffering. "We are left without answer, but do not despair; persecuted but not abandoned, knocked down but not crushed. We carry everywhere in our person the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us" (2 Corinthians 4:9-10).

Both St. Paul and Pope John Paul II point to this "enlightened hope." It is an enlightened hope when we unite our sufferings to the paschal mystery of Jesus. His dying and rising become the power in our lives.

It is in this mystery of redemption that the healing presence of the Risen Christ comes to heal us. In the Eucharist, Jesus gives to us his broken body for our sake. It is in the mystery of his Eucharistic

broken body that we have the power of healing our sick and broken bodies. This was the source of St. Gerard's extraordinary power to heal. He grasped the mystery of the Eucharistic Christ, which had a transformative effect in him. He suffered from sickness himself and did not necessarily experience the removal of his own suffering and illness but because of his union with the suffering Jesus, became an instrument of healing to others.

If we are suffering from any illness we should pray for healing. We should ask for the healing power of the Risen Christ to cover us in the radiance of his healing presence. If we have loved ones who are ill, we are required in charity to remember them in prayer. We can offer our prayer and concern to the Lord asking for his healing and compassion to be present in the one we love.

I know that there are miracles happening all the time because I receive letters weekly thanking St. Gerard for healing and answered prayers. St.

Gerard continues to be the agent of God's loving anointing in the lives of so many.

Peace and tranquility are often manifested in the lives of people praying for healing and other needs in ways that were beyond their imagination. God is moving and acting in the lives of people in wonderful and loving ways.

Conversion and reconcili-

ation are graces granted to many who did not expect such a response to their prayers. The surprise and unexpected turn of events in the lives of many who are devoted to St. Gerard are happening at this very minute as you read this newsletter.

What about prayer that is not answered in the way we hoped it would be? What about prayers for the healing of a terminal disease that seem to go unanswered? What about unanswered prayer to St. Gerard for the gift of conception or the healing of a child that is afflicted with sickness? I get letters of this kind also. Letters from people feeling hurt and unloved because they seem to not get the answer they are looking for.

I really don't have the answer for why this happens. But I do know that in the midst of our most difficult circumstances there is the presence of the living Christ. I have experienced this in my own life and have seen it present in the lives of others. In all the anguish of grief and suffering if we surrender our desperation to the mercy of Christ, we do experience healing.

Sometimes we have to walk through the lonely valley of the shadow of death as the psalmist sings in Psalm 23. "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me" (verse 4). In times like these we feel that God is far from us. I know from my own experiences and the experiences that others have shared with me that we have more

For the suffering, Christ is the Door to life.

John Paul II

faith and confidence than we think. In our surrendering we do know that God is with us, with his rod and staff to comfort us.

St. Gerard would encourage people to keep on praying and trusting in the goodness of God. His example is an encouragement to us. In his own perseverance through illness he kept his eyes on the Crucified Christ. He became in his sickness the very image of Jesus crucified.

St. Gerard's acceptance of his illness teaches us another profound lesson. We are tempted to excuse him as favored by God and therefore he didn't have to face illness like we do. Gerard was well aware of life around him. He did not want to be sickly and weak, he was too much in love with life. His constant meditation on the passion of Jesus brought him to the understanding of what St. Paul wrote to the Colossians. "I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am

completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church" (1:24). There is a call in illness to allow Jesus to continue in us, through our sufferings, the healing and redemption of the world.

This is an invitation from Christ to allow ourselves to become healing compassion for others. This was the power behind St. Gerard's miracles. How many of us have met suffering and ill people who have had this same effect on us. We often leave the sickbed of some people feeling that they have ministered to us.

I receive many beautiful letters in which people share with me experiences in which they have received healing in ways that never entered their minds. The loss of a loved one or a child that is taken from them often brings couples and

families closer together.

Living through the pain of seeing those we love suffer in illness often brings those who are not sick into a place of conversion and turning toward God in deep and life-giving ways.

St. Gerard is honored as a great miracle worker.

Visiting his shrine in Materdomini was an inspiration for me. I saw all kinds of people coming to the healing Mass. The walls where he is buried are covered with written notes of petition and thanksgiving. I felt I was in a very sacred and powerful place. I couldn't help thinking, all of this from one simple man who was madly in love with Jesus Christ.

I wonder if this is not the most important message of Gerard Majella—the reality that love can accomplish so much. Do we sometimes miss the message of this wonderworker? Is not his greatest miracle to teach us that loving Jesus Christ with all our mind, heart, and soul is the miracle of miracles? And the good news about all this is the simple fact that all of us are capable of such a miracle.

Once Brother Gerard entered the house of a sick man, the doctor made it very clear that nothing could be done by saying, "He cannot recover, the lung is too far gone." Gerard looked at things from a different point of view. "The lung may be decayed; but do you believe that God who is the

In the Cross all suffering finds meaning.

John Paul II

Petitions To Pray For

Dear League Members,

- Please remember in your prayers many intentions for sick children undergoing treatments for chronic illnesses, for their healing and for strength for their loved ones.
- For couples who are trying to conceive a child.
- For those who are troubled and worried about having a safe delivery free from complications.
- For those who are adopting a child that all may proceed without problems.
- Remember all those who are discouraged and depressed at this time.

St. Gerard, come to our aid and beg the Lord's blessings on our most urgent needs!

creator of all things could not supply a sound lung or restore one to its former healthy condition? May it be pleasing to God to work this miracle in order that confidence may be instilled in the hearts of his faithful, and they may be encouraged to call on him for help, from whom alone they can obtain it!"

The message that St. Gerard gives is one of faith and trust in the Lord. If we let the Lord enter into our sorrow and pain we can experience the power of the Risen Jesus, which brings amazing graces into our lives. Our own prayer and the powerful prayer of others will bring us courage and strength. That is why I often include petitions in this newsletter for all of us to pray for. There are miracles happening all the time. Let us pray that we may have our eyes opened to see the saving action of Christ moving in our lives and in the lives of our loved ones and friends.



*Everything
comes
from Christ,
but since we
belong to him,
whatever is ours
also becomes his
and acquires
healing power.*

John Paul II

The Heart of the Matter

From New Jersey

I wish to share with you the joys and gifts received from our Father through the intercession of St. Gerard.

Last year I asked you to please pray for our daughter and her husband. Their hearts were longing for a baby but, due to many previous surgeries and illnesses, the doctors gave little promise for any success. However, through prayers and personal sacrifice I wish to share with you the birth of my grandson, Matthew.

With God's graces, both he and his mother are doing exceptionally well. All who know him call him "the miracle baby." He is a reconfirmation of our Lord's blessings, our blessed Mother's love, and St. Gerard's intercession. Thank you.

From the Internet

We have previously had two miscarriages and eventually adopted two children because we were unable to have any of our own. We recently found out my wife is pregnant. Although we weren't expecting this, we are most certainly grateful and happy that God has blessed us with this opportunity. Please pray for a healthy pregnancy, healthy delivery, and healthy, happy, spirit-filled child.

From California

I and my dear ones have been so blessed by the intercession of St. Gerard. I suffered two miscarriages after the birth of my daughter in 1986 and I was so heartbroken. My grandmother enrolled me in the League of St. Gerard, and not at all long after that, I gave birth to a beautiful, healthy son.

My friend also suffered two miscarriages. Subsequently, I enrolled her for prayers to St. Gerard. Not long after that, she had beautiful twins. Another dear friend and her husband have been yearning for a family. I enrolled her and she recently discovered she is expecting. I beg St. Gerard's continued intercession on her behalf, and his blessing upon her so that she might have a healthy and safe pregnancy.

St. Gerard's life and works are so inspiring. I feel his presence keeping me and my family safe. This is to let you know that he is working miracles—we are so blessed with our beautiful children and extend our deep, deep thanks for his miraculous intercession on our behalf.