

League of St. Gerard

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2001

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

In July I participated in a meeting of my Congregation held in the Netherlands. The site that was chosen for our meeting was our Redemptorist community in Wittem, located in the southern tip of the Netherlands near the Belgium border.

Wherever Redemptorists plant themselves they share with the local people their treasures of devotion: Our Mother of Perpetual Help and of course our saintly brother, St. Gerard Majella. So it is in the little village of Wittem, where attached to our monastery is the *Gerarduskappel*, the chapel of St. Gerard.

I was amazed when I heard the history of this place of pilgrimage. Buses of pilgrims from everywhere in Holland come to this tiny village where a simple Brother once again allows himself to be the agent of the healing presence of Christ, touching so many people.

What is the common thread in this expression of devotion? It is the same that I encountered in Italy at the

shrine of St. Gerard in Materdomini—the saint who is a friend and healer.

As I watched people come and go at the chapel in the Netherlands I noticed the same simple faith. Ordinary people lighting a votive

times of need. Some come out of loyalty for his help throughout the years. The glow from hundreds of tiny votive candles flickers in a symphony of brightness casting large shadows of praise and thanksgiving on the wall and ceiling.

I was filled with emotion as I watched this procession of humanity in this tiny corner of the world. It renewed within me a certain holy pride about the life of a simple man of faith who lived in the eighteenth century. I was filled with joy to know that I share the same heritage as this holy Brother. It renewed my vocation as a Brother in the Church and as a member of the same Congregation as the wonder worker, St. Gerard Majella.

I voiced a little prayer to my saintly confrere, Gerard. I asked that I might continue to live my life in closeness with Jesus Christ, the loving Redeemer of the world. I asked for a small portion of the Spirit that was so powerful in his life to be present in me.

St. Gerard: *Our Friend and Helper*

BROTHER DANIEL KORN, C.S.S.R.

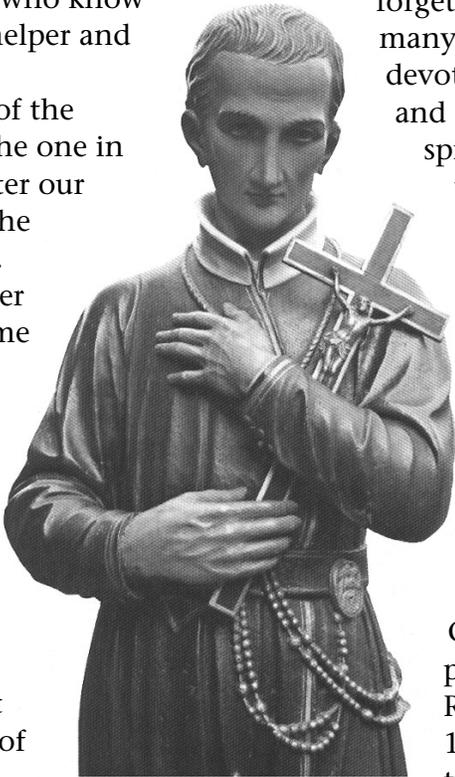
candle or standing recollected before the simple statue of St. Gerard in profound silence and prayer. Who knows the thoughts that run through the minds of these people. How can one guess as to the intent of their prayers? Some come with a heartfelt “thanks” to this friend of God who came to their aid in

I also remembered the many people who have devotion to St. Gerard throughout the world. As I lit my small votive candle, I felt a unity with all those who know St. Gerard as helper and friend.

This issue of the newsletter is the one in which we center our attention on the feast day of St. Gerard, October 16. It is the time in which we collectively offer our prayers to this friend and helper. Throughout the year, hundreds of letters are sent to the League of St. Gerard at

Liguori. The special requests are collected and sent to the monastery of our Redemptoristine Sisters who lay them at the feet of a statue of St. Gerard. Our Sisters remember all these intentions daily. I am grateful to these Sisters for accepting the many petitions that come into our League office. Their contemplative life is a safe haven for all the requests that come our way. In the presence of these contemplative nuns, the incense of intercessory prayer arises to the throne of God.

St. Gerard was very close to the Redemptoristine nuns; he would often go begging for them. He sent many women to enter their community and he helped the women to find



the necessary support they needed to enter the religious community. However, Brother Gerard did not just fill convents with bodies and forget them. We have many letters from him devoted to encouraging and giving sound spiritual advice to these women long after their entrance into religious life.

Throughout his life he was a personal friend of the foundress, Venerable Maria Celeste Crostarosa. St. Gerard Majella was professed as a Redemptorist in 1752. He lived for a time in the monas-

tery at Deliceto, which was close to Foggia where the convent of the Redemptoristines was located. It was in this convent that he had several meetings with *The Holy Prioress*, as he would call her. St. Gerard loved to converse with Sister Maria Celeste. These two souls were deeply in love with God. Between the two of them there was a mutual esteem from which grew a spiritual friendship.

Maria Celeste supported Gerard with her prayers and loyalty during the difficult period of the accusation that was given against him. From her own sufferings at the hands of others she well knew the terrible pain Gerard was

exposed to through the untruths of others. The bond between these two holy souls was one of respect and support. Special graces are given to those who live their lives in deep union with Christ. This was definitely the case with St. Gerard and the Venerable Maria Celeste Crostarosa.

The venerable Mother Superior of San Salvatore was sure that Brother Gerard Majella was a living example of her own ideals. These two souls were so closely united to Christ that while Gerard was sick in his own bed of suffering on September 14, 1755, he told the brethren that were surrounding him in his room; "In Foggia today the beautiful soul of Mother Maria Celeste took its flight to heaven."

St. Gerard's holiness was attractive. Many serious people who were walking the path of holiness often found in Gerard Majella a companion with them on the journey of life. He would visit the convents encouraging the Sisters. He was a gifted spiritual director and freely shared his insights on the spiritual life with the Sisters.

He was often asked to pray with Sisters who were sick and dying. St. Alphonsus Liguori, the founder of the Redemptorists, was well aware of Gerard's activities. In an action previously unheard of, he permits Brother Gerard to become the spiritual director of three convents, one of which is the convent of the Most Holy Savior, at Foggia.

Gerard, whose holiness is unmistakable, becomes in-

volved in their convent life. He becomes a spiritual friend to many of the Sisters. There is the story of him hearing the singing of the nuns as they celebrated Vespers (evening prayer) and praising God, Gerard was transported into an ecstasy of holy joy, crying aloud for all the nuns to hear; "My Sisters, let us love God! My Sisters, let us love God!"

The relationship between the Redemptoristine nuns and Gerard Majella has been continued by many Redemptorist Brothers throughout the years. It seems that places in which a Redemptorist house is close to that of a Redemptoristine convent, usually one of the Brothers continues the tradition of Gerard in assisting the Sisters.

I have always felt that the prayers of the Redemptoristines to St. Gerard find a favorable response. I know that he holds them very close to his heart. So it is a natural fit that we ask you to send your requests to our Sisters for the private novena that is offered in preparation for St. Gerard's feast day. We ask that you pray nine days of prayer with us on October 8-16, for all the requests that we receive from you. It is a great act of charity that we offer when we take the time to pray for others. Please join us in prayer during this time. We include a novena leaflet with prayers for you to offer. Pick one of these prayers and pray it daily during the days of the novena. I know that many

graces will be showered down upon all of us during this time.

This year I wish to follow the "Gerardian" tradition in begging you to remember our Redemptoristine Sisters in your prayers. Sometimes we forget that those who pray for us also need the assistance of special prayers. They have many needs at the present time. I ask you especially to pray for vocations to their

way of life. I am sure that your prayers to St. Gerard for this intention will touch the heart of our beloved friend and helper.

St. Gerard, our friend and helper, come to our aid and beg the Lord's blessing on our most urgent need. St. Gerard, pray for us!

In Time of Trial

*St. Gerard, whose heart went
out to the unfortunate,
who relieved so many poor,
healed so many sick,
comforted so many afflicted,
I am worried and troubled as
I kneel at your feet.*

*In vain do I seek this world's
help and consolation.*

*Graciously pray for me,
St. Gerard, that, being freed
from this trial or strengthened
to bear it for the love of God,
I may praise and thank God
and serve him with greater
love and fervor.*

Amen.



The Heart of the Matter

From the Internet

My husband and I are eager to start our family. Within the past year I have experienced two miscarriages. This February I realized that my life had been missing something. My wonderful parents have redirected me to the path to Christ our Lord. I am ever grateful. I am growing in faith every day and I ask that you please pray with me for the desire to get closer to God, for the intercession of our dear St. Gerard to bless me with a full-term healthy pregnancy for both the child and myself, and for my marriage and family to be that of Christ. I thank you and will pray for you as well that the Holy Spirit may fill you with his presence and bless you and yours.

From Indiana

My husband and I have a beautiful two-year-old daughter who was born after a year of trying to conceive. We had prayed several novenas to St. Gerard and many people prayed for us. We are again trying to conceive and it has been over a year. We are asking for the intercession of St. Gerard to bless us with another child.

From Washington

After suffering through two miscarriages my wonderful mother-in-law enrolled me in the League of St. Gerard. Our families prayed daily for God to bless my husband and me with a baby. I became pregnant and we all anxiously awaited the arrival of our baby.

After a few scary incidents during the pregnancy, we were richly blessed with our beautiful daughter. She is now eight months old and such a joy in our lives.

Every day I thank God for our healthy precious little girl. Prayers are answered in God's time. Never underestimate the power of prayer and the love and support of family.

From the Internet

I am requesting prayers to be said for my husband and me. We have been trying for over three years to have another child. We have a son who is almost four and I miscarried a baby in February. I have been wearing St. Gerard's medal every day and I pray to him faithfully. I would appreciate any prayers on our behalf that we may become parents again. I will keep other members of the League of St. Gerard in my prayers also.

From the Internet

Please give my husband and me peace as we struggle with the trials of infertility, dear St. Gerard. If it be God's will please bless us with a baby. I leave my worries in your hands, I cannot bear the weight on my shoulders anymore. Please help my husband who I worry about more than myself. He is so sure we will have a baby. If we don't, please let him be okay.

From New York

My wife and I prayed to St. Gerard for years to help to bless us with a child. My father and sisters also prayed to St. Gerard on our behalf. Last April, after trying for four years, we became pregnant. Our doctor told us the pregnancy was a miracle as the egg attached in the only place possible in the uterus due to my wife's medical problems. Throughout the pregnancy our doctor commented on his surprise, he could not believe how well my wife and the baby were doing.

In December we had a beautiful baby boy. The doctor confided in us that he thought the baby would not have made it and at best would have been born early. During the entire pregnancy we prayed to St. Gerard.

