



League of

The Redemptorists

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# ST. GERARD

W I N T E R 2 0 0 4

Newsletter

*Year of  
St. Gerard  
Majella*

October 2004-  
October 2005



*100 Years  
a Saint*

Canonized by  
Pope St. Pius X  
December 11, 1904



*250 Years  
With God*

St. Gerard died  
October 16, 1755

## *From His Holiness, Pope John Paul II*

*On the announcement of the special “Year of St. Gerard Majella”*

“TRULY GERARD MAJELLA is one of the little ones in whom God has made shine the power of his mercy! He entered the Institute of Redemptorist missionaries at a young age with the express intention ‘to become a saint.’ The cheerful and confident ‘yes’ to the divine will, supported by constant prayer and a strong penitential spirit, produces in him a charity ever attentive to the spiritual and material needs of his neighbor, especially the most underprivileged. Even without any formal education, Gerard penetrated the mystery of the Kingdom of heaven, which, because of his simplicity, shown to all who approached him. He felt compelled by the urgency of the conversion of sinners and worked for this untiringly...

“The fame of his holiness and confidence in his intercession continued to grow after his death. Even today his tomb is the destination of numerous pilgrimages from Italy and from many countries on all the continents. Countless believers turn to him confidently in their times of trial.”

### **The Holy Father writes:**

“Saint Gerard Majella also nurtured a particular care for newborn life and expectant mothers, especially those in physical and spiritual difficulties. This is why even today he is invoked as special Protector of pregnant women. Such loving concern, which is so typical of him, constitutes...for all faithful believers an incentive to love, defend and always serve human life.

“The threats that continue to arise against life are well-known, especially those that menace life at its very beginning. We must reflect, above all, on the worrisome spread of a ‘culture of death’ that pushes a large sector of public opinion to justify crimes against life in name of the rights of personal freedom and, for that reason, claims its legitimization by the State (cf. *Evangelium vitae*, 4).

“I hope that the Year of St. Gerard may contribute to make even more convincing the effort of Christians to oppose this culture of death and bring about concrete and persuasive gestures that serve the culture of life.”

GIVEN AT CASTEL GANDOLFO, AUGUST 6, 2004

# And the greatest of these is love...

(1 CORINTHIANS 13:13)

DAVID WERTHMANN

## Love for God

If you ever read any of St. Gerard's letters, you will immediately be struck by the depth and spontaneity of his constant communion with God. He never sounds the least bit self-centered in his writings. Even when he was experiencing great difficulty or misunderstanding, he always lived in intense and loving communion with his "dear God," as Gerard called him.

When Gerard was beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1893, a Redemptorist testified that no one who ever lived with him ever reported a single instant when Gerard was not focused on God. In fact, he seemed so totally immersed in divine contemplation that he was able to speak about some of the deepest mysteries of our faith—like the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of Jesus—as if he were a profound theologian.

Merely gazing for a moment at a picture of Christ or a statue of the Virgin Mary could cause him to fall into ecstasy. Sometimes he would suddenly break into exclamations of love and faith with such vigor that it startled those who were with him. Yet his constant communion with God did not cause him to forget the practical needs of his brothers. And even there, in the most strenuous daily chores, he perceived Christ's salvation at work.

In his letters, he always exhorted those to whom he wrote to have faith. "Anyone who does not have faith is missing God." In a particular letter to a nun he once wrote, "How could we live if we didn't love our dear God from the heart?"

## Love for Neighbor

For a true believer it is not possible to separate love for God from love for neighbor. In my early years as a teacher I became concerned because I believed that I was performing my teaching duties, not so much because I loved God and wanted to do his will, but because of how much I cared for the welfare of my students. But my spiritual director wisely told me that love for people always leads to love for God, and vice versa.

Thus, knowing how much St. Gerard loved God, it is not surprising to see how much love and compassion he held for people, as well. Gerard never tired of praying for others or of promising prayers for those who wrote to him. His sensitivity to others caused him to work for the needs of the simplest people. In fact, his great charity toward the poor was often interpreted as miraculous.

*"I wouldn't care if my troubles were eternal. It would be enough for me that I loved God and pleased him in everything."*

The winter of 1754—the year before he died—was a particularly harsh one. During the intense cold there were extreme shortages of food and fuel for warmth. It is said that over a hundred poor people flocked to Brother Gerard's door every day. With great charity, Gerard had pity for them and got whatever help he could for them. He would then console them with his usual heavenly words, instruct them in the faith, and give them alms. Each person would leave feeling much comfort from his or her visit with Gerard, no matter how

brief it may have been.

As Pope John Paul II mentions in his letter printed on the previous page, St. Gerard was "one of the little ones" whom God used in great ways. He cheerfully and confidently followed God's will because of his constant prayer. And that is what

strengthened him to offer so much charity to others.

I often think that St. Gerard would tell us that if *he* could do it, so can *we*. If we stay close to God in prayer and love him every day, we will also find sincere love in our hearts for our fellow human beings who have great needs. The lesson for us is this: always begin with prayer. The rest will follow on its own.

Adapted from "Gerard's Spirituality" by Sabatino Majorano in *Saint Gerard Majella, His Writings and Spirituality*, edited by Noel Londoño, C.Ss.R.

Liguori Publications

**From a letter dated November 1, 1754  
To Sister Maria Celeste, foundress of the Redemptoristine Nuns**

*Most venerated sister in Christ,*

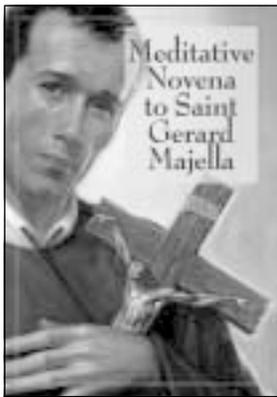
*You are in a state more dear to God than any other. Open your eyes and each morning venerate this divine goodness that grants you so many graces.*

*Courage, become a great saint, since, by God's mercy, you find yourself in such a holy circumstance.*

*Always, always pray to God for me and tell him, for kindness' sake, to make me a saint, because I am losing time. Oh my God what bad fortune is mine, that I uselessly let pass so many moments and hours and days, without knowing how to make good use of them. Oh how much I waste. May God pardon me.*

Your Reverence's most unworthy servant and brother in Jesus Christ,  
Gerard Majella of My Dear Redeemer

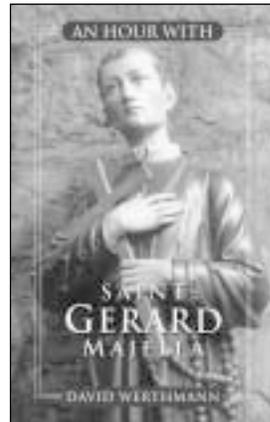
**Liguori Publications has recently produced two new devotional pamphlets to commemorate this special year of celebration in honor of St. Gerard.**



***Meditative Novena to Saint Gerard Majella***

This beautiful 32-page deluxe pamphlet leads you through nine reflections on the life and spirituality of St. Gerard. Individualized prayers selected by the reader allow this novena to be used by those seeking to

become parents, or by any devotee of our favorite saint with other needs. Each reflection is illustrated with scenes from Gerard's life. The cost is \$1.95.



***An Hour with Saint Gerard Majella***

This pamphlet includes a brief spiritual biography of the Mother's Saint followed by down-to-earth reflections on Gerard's spirituality and questions that can be applied to our own lives today. Using this pamphlet will refresh your spirits as if you had

made a miniature retreat. The cost is \$1.00.

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Clip this order form and mail with check or money order to Order Administration, Liguori Publications,  
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*Almighty and  
loving Father, I  
thank you for giving  
St. Gerard to us  
as a model and  
powerful friend.  
By his example,  
he showed us how  
to love and trust you.*

*You have showered many  
blessings on those  
who call upon him.  
Please grant me the favors  
that I now ask in his name.*

*(Here mention them privately.)*

*And you,  
my powerful patron,  
intercede for me  
before the throne of God.  
Draw near to God and  
do not leave  
until you have been heard.*

*O good St. Gerard,  
to you I address  
my fervent prayers.  
Graciously accept them and  
let me experience,  
even if only  
in some small way,  
the effects of your  
powerful intercession.*

*Amen.*

# The Heart of the Matter

## *From Illinois*

My husband and I are so grateful for the amazing gifts we've received in our lives: loving families from which we were raised and continue to share so much with, a beautiful son of our own (who is two and a half), and, most recently, the double blessing of twins, which we are expecting this spring. I thank God for these gifts and cherish what he has bestowed upon me. I pray to St. Gerard that he watch over my family and this pregnancy and continue to protect us and keep us healthy.

But I wouldn't be writing this now nor would I be the same person I am today or have as strong a conviction in my faith or St. Gerard, were it not for my mother-in-law. During my first pregnancy, she told me about St. Gerard as she kept me in her prayers to him. After being a school teacher for over thirty years, raising a beautiful family of her own, and touching the lives of countless friends, family members, neighbors, and even strangers, I feel as though she is the closest thing to a saint I will ever know. To our great sadness, my mother-in-law was diagnosed a year and a half ago with breast cancer. Since that time, she has undergone a myriad of tests and treatments, many of which have caused her pain and suffering. She continues to battle this awful disease with her strong faith in God and the many saints she prays to every day. At this time, I kindly request that prayers be said for her and for my father-in-law, who is her wonderful rock of support. Please pray that they may continue to be strong during this battle so that she may overcome this illness and enjoy her family for years to come.

## *From the Internet*

My husband and I have been married for fourteen years and have been blessed with our five-year-old daughter. We have been trying to conceive for the past two and a half years. During this time, I have had two miscarriages. Because I am forty years old, I have been told that my chances of conceiving naturally are three percent. This has been an extremely stressful time in our lives and we draw strength from the many couples we've met who have endured the frustration of infertility. Please pray that we will be successful. I have prayed to and will continue to pray to St. Gerard to bless us with another child.

Please send your prayer requests and thanksgiving letters to [miss-spon@liguori.org](mailto:miss-spon@liguori.org) or to the address on the front page.