

# THE LEAGUE OF Saint Gerard



PRAYERS • DEVOTIONS • MEMBERSHIP • GIFTS • RESOURCES • SUMMER 2011



endure: the morning sickness, the physical toll, the pains of birth, the early morning feedings, the changing of diapers, the around-the-clock care when a child is ill, and the time and effort to ensure a child's education and well-being. With the occurrence of broken families, even grandmothers often continue to sacrifice to help rear children.

### Spiritual motherhood

Motherhood, however, goes beyond giving physical birth. Consider all the women who adopt children, become foster parents, or work in day-care centers and schools. And lest we forget, we all have spiritual mothers to help us in our times of need.

Spiritual mothers offer their prayers, their education, their support, and their encouragement. Oftentimes, these sacrifices come at inconvenient hours, in stressful situations, and at some of our weakest moments. Our lives have all been made more complete by directors of religious education, university professors, hospital chaplains, parish administrators, spiritual directors, consolers, doctors, nurses, and countless other ministries that have been accomplished with great love and care through our spiritual mothers.



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May 8, 2011, was a very special day. It was the annual observance of Mother's Day in the United States. On this day we honor not only our physical mothers but our spiritual mothers as well. It is also a day on which we ought to remember Saint Gerard, the patron saint of mothers. Motherhood is a very special calling, and the Church has proclaimed Saint Gerard a spiritual assistant in fulfilling this vocation.

Saint Gerard was known for his great compassion, and this virtue is the font

from which Saint Gerard is able to help mothers. The word *compassion* means "to suffer with." A compassionate person goes beyond sympathy to empathy. A person of sympathy feels sorrow when another person is in pain or is suffering. A person of empathy actually takes another's pain upon themselves. Indeed, a person of compassion is willing to undergo suffering to alleviate the suffering of another, to bring good things to another, or to assist another person in need.

True motherhood is rooted in compassion. Consider the suffering a mother must

# True motherhood is rooted in compassion.

In each of these cases, our physical and spiritual mothers guide, educate, nourish, support, and encourage the most vulnerable members of society—not just children, but all the vulnerable of the world. Mothers assume the role of empowering those most in need.

## The mothers' saint

In her great wisdom, the Church proclaimed Saint Gerard the patron of expectant mothers, but he could be called the patron saint of all mothers for the same reason—his compassion for the poor and most abandoned.

The story is told of how Saint Gerard visited a young woman who was experiencing a very difficult pregnancy. Saint Gerard's father had died when he was very young, and Gerard was forced to work in terrible conditions in a tailor shop to assist his mother and the family. He had seen his mother's great faith, had grown close to her, and had seen how she'd helped him in his times of need.

Now it was Gerard's turn. He had been

shown great compassion, now he was to be a man of compassion. Seeing the suffering of the young woman, he prayed with her, blessed her, comforted her, encouraged her, and then went so far as to leave his handkerchief with her so that she could wipe her tears after he had gone.

Gerard's handkerchief became a constant source of comfort to the woman. More than a piece of cloth, it was a statement of Saint Gerard's great compassion. He left no detail unattended to ensure the woman did not suffer. Indeed, the remainder of her pregnancy was devoid of any complication.

News of the handkerchief soon spread throughout the countryside. Women who were having difficulties bearing children sought to hold Gerard's handkerchief, establishing his fame as the patron of expectant mothers.

## A source of strength

The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and the sufferings of his own mother had taught Saint Gerard that a person can

take on the suffering of another and bring hope and peace in a time of need. What is more, he never neglected the smallest detail to ensure that those who suffer for another receive consolation and grace for their efforts.

And so, while our physical and spiritual mothers continue to sacrifice and suffer on our behalf, they can receive grace and consolation from one who is willing to suffer for them. Saint Gerard stands as a source of strength and encouragement when a mother feels she is unable to continue. Saint Gerard continually intercedes with Jesus for all mothers to have the inner fortitude to persevere in their vocation.

He will neglect no detail to assist a mother in time of need. He offers encouragement, consolation, and compassion. He is willing to bear the sufferings of any mother so that she may continue to be present in the lives of her children.

Thus, as we honor our physical and spiritual mothers, may we also honor Saint Gerard, who is always ready to assist them in their time of need.



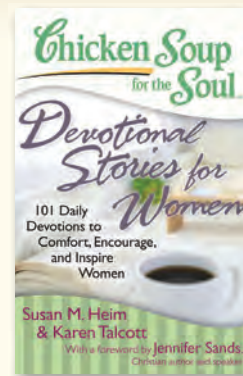
## Prayer

Dear Saint Gerard: Your compassion for mothers was so great that you would attend to even the smallest detail to bring comfort and hope to those who give us comfort and hope in our times of need. May all mothers in times of trial, exhaustion, anxiety, pain, or suffering seek your compassion. May you always intercede for them and give them the inner gifts they need to continue to persevere in their vocation so that they may continue to be a shining witness and example of the great compassion that God bears to us all. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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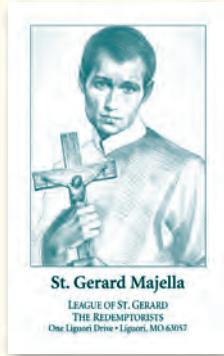
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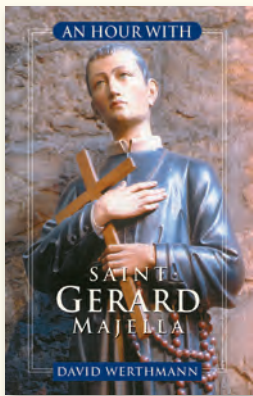




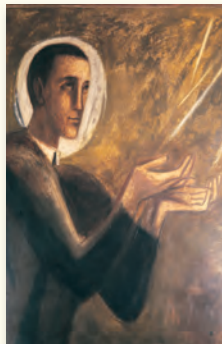
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Each enrollment is \$10.00 and includes a certificate, an aluminum Saint Gerard medal, a wallet-sized picture of Saint Gerard, a prayer leaflet, and the booklet *Gerard Majella: The Mothers' Saint*.

**Enroll me in the League of Saint Gerard.**  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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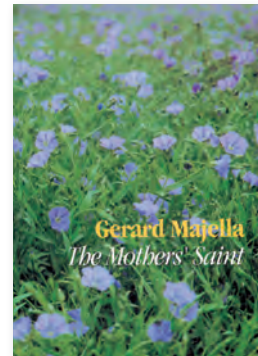
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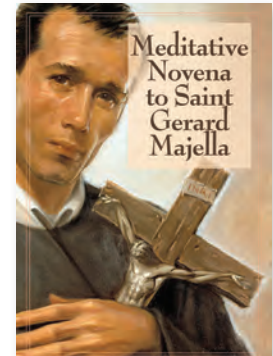
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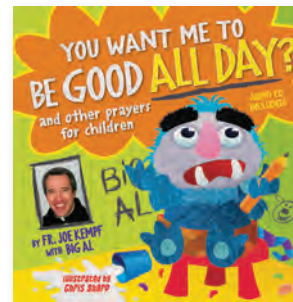
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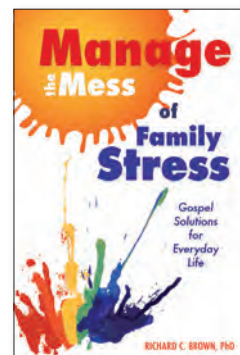
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