



Saint Gerard

Mother's Day Issue • 2014

NEWSLETTER

Dear Friend of St. Gerard,

We remember our Mothers during May. As Redemptorists, we have a particularly special reverence for mothers because our ministries are under the protection of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Each year, we hold a Novena of Masses for Mother's Day to all those who have shown motherly love and care.

Would you like to include your mother in our Masses for Mother's Day? Please send me your mother's name, as well as sisters, aunts, grandmas or anyone whom you have loved as a mother. I and my fellow Redemptorists will pray for them and place their names at the altar in our chapel at the provincial office.

In Christ the Redeemer,

Fr. Allan Weinert, C.Ss.R

Redemptorists of the Denver Province



The Mother's Day Saint

Once again we celebrate Mother's Day, a day especially dedicated to remembering our mothers who carried us in the womb and delivered us, often at great risk. She is the one who nourished us, often with milk from her own breasts. She is the one who taught us so many, many important things about life, about being human, about being a decent human being. Perhaps she was the first to teach us to believe in God and to pray. She is the one who made countless sacrifices for us, giving up so many other possibilities in order to do that which only a mother can do. She is the one who nourished us with milk for sustenance and, to some degree, with honey, that we might know the sweetness of life. It is only right and just that

we should honor these fine women every day and especially today.

It is also true that our mothers are human beings, with vulnerabilities, weaknesses, faults and limitations. They are not angels. They are women with a history, a story, a life with some good and some bad. They are not perfect women. They are, like all human beings, flawed and wounded in some way. Some of these women were better mothers than others. But we believe that they all did the best they could with what they had. It's just that sometimes they might not have had everything, for there is no woman who has everything, just as there is no mother who has nothing. So Mother's Day might also be a day for deeper under-



standing, acceptance and appreciation, and for forgiveness and reconciliation.

St. Gerard Majella's mother was called Benedetta, a name which means "blessed." She married Dominic Majel-

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la when she was about 25 years old. We don't know much about her, other than that she was a country girl from just outside the town of Muro, in southern Italy. The Majella family was poor. St. Gerard's father, Dominic, was a tailor who scratched out a living as best he could to support his family. There were five children, three girls and two boys. Gerard was the youngest of the four surviving children. His younger brother died in infancy. The Majella family lived in at least two different places. Both were small, cramped houses, little more than a single room that served as kitchen, living room, bedroom and tailor's shop. Dominic and Benedetta were simple, religious people who tried to do the best they could for their children, while never being far from the brink of poverty.

We don't know many details about St. Gerard's relationship with his mother or how much she influenced his personality and character. We can surmise, based on what we know about St. Gerard, that she must have been a good woman and a good mother, a positive influence on young Gerard and his three sisters. When Gerard's father died, when or at what age we don't know, Benedetta was forced to take Gerard out of school, cutting short his education. Gerard was probably about



12 when he was apprenticed to the tailor, Martin Pannuto, and later to the bishop, Claudio Albini, in Lacedonia, about 15 miles away, in order to help

support his family.

There isn't space here to tell the whole story here of how St. Gerard eventually left his mother to the care of his three sisters and ran off to join the Redemptorist missionaries. But so he did. His piety and sanctity were quickly noted. And his fame spread as a miracle and wonder-worker. But how did St. Gerard Majella come to be known as the Mothers' Saint?

There are several stories concerning Gerard and families expecting babies. One family treasured a story of how Gerard's handkerchief fell while visiting them. One of the girls of the family ran after him with it, but Gerard only smiled and said, "Keep it. You may need it someday!" Years later, when giving birth to her first child, in difficult labor, she remembered the handkerchief and had it brought to her. Her labor immediately became more peaceful and she gave birth to a healthy baby. From then on all the pregnant women of the neighborhood requested the handkerchief and it was eventually torn into strips to satisfy the need of so many. Today there are St. Gerard handkerchiefs that have been touched to a first class relic of St. Gerard, blessed and bearing an image and a prayer of St. Gerard.

and thus began St. Gerard's heavenly vocation as the special protector and intercessor for women trying to conceive, living through the months of pregnancy or at the time of delivery, in short, for all mothers of every kind and in every situation. It may seem a little odd that a male religious should be the Mothers' Saint, but it is interesting that this devotion began and has survived, not so much because it was promoted by the Redemptorists, but because many mothers have promoted it and passed it on to their daughters, from one generation to the next, beginning in Italy and now spreading to the ends of the world.

We, Redemptorists and devoted women and men, continue to promote this devotion to the powerful and loving intercession of St. Gerard

Majella for all mothers: those desiring to be mothers, those having trouble conceiving, pregnant women with a difficult pregnancy or delivery, for safe deliveries and for healthy babies. We try especially to promote this popular piety through:



- The League of St. Gerard
- This newsletter
- TheMothersSaint.org web site with: Testimonials, Helpful Resources, Virtual Candles, and the St. Gerard novena booklet
- The St. Gerard Facebook page, where a large group of people have formed an online prayer community.

This prayer community prays daily for all the various intentions that are recommended to it. Each day there is prayer for some particular group of mothers. Prayer Requests and Prayer Flowers with the names of people who have requested prayer for some special intention are posted occasionally.

Undoubtedly Gerard had great love, respect and honor for the Blessed Mother of Jesus, his own mother, and all mothers he encountered. This is still true today as we see how many lives he continues to touch with God's graces. On this Mother's Day we ask the Mothers' Saint to bless all mothers.

By Fr. Joe Dorcsey, C.Ss.R.

With gratitude to Brendan McConvery, C.Ss.R., Saint Gerard Majella – Rediscovering a Saint, for some of the information in this article.



*The warmest and strongest memories
are not from holidays and vacations, but
rather from the daily activities we shared.*

Mothers Are A Unique Gifts

You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb."

(Psalms 139:13)

I realized many years ago that God didn't just give you and me a mother – he gave each of us our own unique mother. My mother and your mother were specifically chosen for us by God. While I was growing up, I rarely took time to ponder his miraculous gift. I certainly did not value his gift in the midst of a scolding! Did you ever feel your mom was a little too strict, or maybe her expectations for you were too high? As a child, I know I did. It was only once I moved out on my own that I realized my mom was exactly the right mom for me.

My mom – Ursula Grile - was the youngest of nine children. She and Dad then proceeded to have four of us of their own, so Mother's Day always meant a lot in our family. Today families take Mom out for brunch or dinner. We couldn't afford that, and we kids weren't much as cooks, but we always made sure she didn't have to do the dishes that day!

I surprise myself each time I stop to recall memories of my mom. The warmest and strongest memories are not from holidays and vacations, but rather from the daily activities we shared. I recall so well mom getting me up in the morning so I would be on time to serve Mass, or nagging me get to school work done. I remember my mom saying night prayers. She worked very hard to instill in me the virtues of faith, hope and love. She was warm, and I knew she loved me. She is the one who ignited my faith in God.

The story in Acts 3 comes to mind, where Peter and John come across a beggar. Peter says to the man, "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, rise and walk." In this one sentence God is telling us the hope, faith, prayers and love we offer are infinitely more valuable than any material thing. How blessed we are to receive God's gift of our earthly mother – as well as our Heavenly Mother Mary - to guide us along life's journey!

I along with my fellow Redemptorists will be offering a series of Masses throughout the month of May for all mothers, living and deceased. I plan to enroll my Mom and I want to include your mother. Please send me her name. You may also include other special women in your life – grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and friends who showed you mother-like love. The more you send, the happier your mother will feel because of the added company.

At all these Masses we will pray that Mary, Our Mother of Perpetual Help, will watch over and protect you, your mom, and all your loved ones.



Testimonials

Almost every day we get messages from people giving witness to St. Gerard Majella's powerful intercession: overcoming infertility, receiving the gift of motherhood, getting through a difficult pregnancy, a safe delivery, a healthy baby, a relationship restored, healing and health recovered, to name a few. We want to share a sample of these messages here because they inspire three things we all desperately need: faith, hope and love.

Cheryl Golden

I just want to share in thanksgiving as St. Gerard's intercession is very powerful! Kathleen, who was on the Saint Gerard Prayer Flower, delivered a beautiful, healthy baby girl, naturally instead of by C-section! She was scheduled for C-section and went into labor the night before! Thanksgiving to St. Gerard's intercession! All Glory to God!

Alexa Martinez

I just wanted to thank you for all your prayers and to update you about my situation. I finally got a positive pregnancy test this morning! All the prayers worked! Thank you so very much! Please continue to pray for me that I have a healthy pregnancy. Thank you!

Colleen Vidal

Thank you for including me in your Prayer Flower. I gave birth to a healthy baby girl this past March 18th through normal, spontaneous delivery. Thank you St. Gerard for granting all my prayers, throughout my pregnancy up to birth. I've been so blessed to have had a safe and happy delivery even though I suffered from a low-lying placenta in my 7th month and, before I gave birth, my amniotic fluid was decreasing. Thank you to all who prayed! Thank you!

Karen Saavedra-Del Rosario

I'm so glad that you came up with this Facebook page, where people gather and pray for each other. I'm blessed to be part of this group.

Maria and Paul Holmes

I would like to thank and praise St. Gerard. I wrote to your page last year saying that my husband and I had been trying to conceive for nearly four years. When we were offered IVF last December, we turned it down and decided to go with NAPRO Technology, a more natural method approved by the Church. We started in January of this year and we just found out that I am seven weeks pregnant. We are totally over the moon and I do believe it was through prayer to St. Gerard and St. Anne. There were many people praying for us. I would like to ask you to pray for a healthy pregnancy and baby. We will raise it to honor God's name. Thank you so much.

Anonymous

I just want to say THANK YOU to St Gerard and this page and my faith for letting me experience conception. I just found out yesterday, after 6 years of trying that I am 2 weeks pregnant and it happened naturally. I love this page and think of everyone in the same situation as me and I pray for all these women to have the strength and family support I did to get me to this day. I carry St. Gerard with me everywhere and I keep him under my pillow. I pray now that he keeps my unborn baby safe inside me until he/she is ready to meet us. Please look after us and keep us in your prayers!



Prayer to St. Gerard

Dear St. Gerard,
we ask your
special blessings
on all women
seeking to be mothers.

We ask that the love
of those couples
who seek
the fruit of the womb,
a child for whom
they can be good parents,
might be fertile ground
for new life.
Amen.

