

Saint Gerard Majella

Gerard Majella was born in a modest family in Muro Lucano, Potenza, in 1726. His father was a tailor and died early, leaving him with his mother, a pious woman who imparted him the awareness of the love of God for all the creation. Gerard heard the religious call since he was young, which pushed him to find his way in the world. At the beginning, he tried to enter the convent of the Capuchin Friars in his town, but his delicate health pushed the friars to reject his request. He showed a joyful spirit and a tireless will, besides obedience, mortification and devotion. He gave all he had to the poor with joy and love, and people everywhere began loving him. He faced life with bravery, patience and endurance, even when he was unjustly accused of conducting an illicit relationship with a girl (the accuser herself will set him free later) and when tuberculosis forced him into bed. On the door of his cell, he had the writing: "Here the will of God is done, as God wills, and as long as God wills."



He died in 1755 at only 29 and after only a few years of religious life, but those years were enough to make him beatified by Pope Lion XIII in 1893 and sanctified by Pope Pious X in 1904. Saint Gerard Majella became soon the patron of pregnant women and children. His existence was shaped on obedience, humiliation and hard work, on the will to live in Christ and for Christ, doing His will every day and with joy. Those who knew him told about inexplicable healings happened thanks to him, and soon he was famous as a thaumaturge, healer of body and soul.

Gerard grew up with three older sisters. His mama, Benedetta, told him ever since he was little how amazing and overwhelming God's love was. Gerard grew up with a loving heart, confident in God's love. His dad died when Gerard was only twelve, and Gerard was apprenticed out to a tailor. He eventually became a journeyman tailor, the halfway-there spot in an apprenticeship. Soon after, he set up his own shop, run out of his mama's house. He ran a good business, and after he had set aside some of the profit for his mama and sisters, he donated the rest to the poor and to donations for prayers for the souls in purgatory.

The working Man

When Gerard was twelve, the sudden death of his father made it necessary for him to leave school and to begin to work. His mother apprenticed him to a tailor so that he could follow the trade of his father. His employer took a strange dislike to him and often showered him with blows and curses. Gerard accepted the persecution as being permitted by God for his spiritual good. Once he was seen to smile even while he was being beaten, and when asked about this, he said: "I was smiling because I saw the hand of God striking me." After his apprenticeship as a tailor, Gerard served for some time as a houseboy for the Bishop of Lacedonia, who was recuperating in Muro. Again he manifested the virtue of patience by silently bearing the irascible temper of this otherwise worthy man. During this time one of his early miracles took place. One day he accidentally dropped the key of the house in the well. With saintly simplicity he lowered a small statue of the Infant Jesus into the well. To the amazement of the onlookers, when Gerard raised the statue the lost key was held in its hand.

Miracles of Saint Gerard

1. Since he was a child, Saint Gerard loved to find shelter in places of cult. One was particularly dear to him, the Chapel of the Virgin in Capodigiano. Gerard said that in that place the son of a mysterious beautiful Lady used to give him a piece of white bread, leaving his mother to go meet him. Once the saint was grown up, he will understand that the boy was Jesus.
2. Another miracle happened when the Saint was still very young was the burning hay barn. At that time Gerard, who lost his father short before, worked as an apprentice in the workshop of a tailor, Martino Pannuto; there, the other apprentices constantly persecuted him. One night a hay barn burst into flames and Gerard, who was inside with the young child of his employer, crossed himself and muttered a prayer. The flames ceased immediately.
3. The handkerchief of Saint Gerard Majella

It is said that while the young man was in Oliveto Citra for health reasons, he went to meet the Pirofalo family. While he was leaving, the youngest of the

daughters ran after him to give him back the handkerchief he forgot. He smiled to her and told her to keep it, that one day she might need it. Many years later, the girl became a woman and was having a risky delivery. Remembering Gerard's words, she asked for the handkerchief he gave her. The women with her laid it on her belly, the pain stopped, and she gave birth to a healthy infant. Since then, pregnant women invoke Saint Gerard and the sanctuary of Materdomini is blooming with colorful bows that recall the pregnancies that ended well thanks to his protection.

He frequently fell into ecstasy while meditating on God or His holy will and at such times his body was seen raised several feet above the ground. There are authentic records to prove that on more than one occasion he was granted the unusual miracle of being seen and spoken to in two places at the same time. Most of his miracles were performed in the service of others. Such extraordinary happenings as the following begin to seem commonplace when one reads his life.

4. He restored life to a boy who had fallen from a high cliff.
5. he blessed the scanty supply of wheat belonging to a poor family and it lasted until the next harvest; several times he multiplied the bread that he was distributing to the poor.
6. One day he walked across the water to lead to the safety of the shore a boatload of fishermen threatened by the stormy waves.

Many times, Gerard told people of secret sins on their souls which they had been ashamed to confess, and brought them to penance and forgiveness. God made marriage a Sacrament and thereby promised to provide every Christian married couple with all the graces necessary to fulfil the laws He had made for marriage.

7. One of Gerard's greatest virtues was trust, and his favourite slogan was "God will provide." Once while he was on a pilgrimage with some clerical students, he used the last few coins to buy some flowers for the altar. When he placed the flowers before the altar he said: "Lord, I have taken care of

You. Now you take care of my students and me." And the Lord did provide sufficient money for the rest of the trip. When the false accusation was made against him, to all the entreaties of friends to defend himself he replied: "It is for God to see to that." In poor health and in danger of death his trust in God did not waver one bit. Thus Gerard showed himself as a model that mothers can imitate in the confidence in God on which marriage must be based, if they are to avoid the forces of "anti-life."

Death

Always frail in health, it was evident that Gerard was not to live long. In 1755, he was seized by violent hemorrhages and dysentery and his death was expected at any moment. Between midnight of October 15, early morning of the next day his innocent soul went back to God.