

St. Gerard Majella

Feast: October 16



Facts

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Patron: of expectant mothers

Death: 1755

Beatified: January 29, 1893, by Pope Leo XIII

Canonized: December 11, 1904, by Pope Saint Pius X

St. Gerard Majella is the patron of expectant mothers. He was born in 1726 in Muro, Italy to a family of seven. Majella grew up in a poverty with a great respect for the poor. As he was just 12 when his father passed away, he was forced to grow up fast. Shortly after his father's death, his mother sent him away to live with his uncle and learn to become a tailor, like his father. After a few years of working as a sewing apprentice, Majella took on a job with the local Bishop of Lacedonia as a servant.

Once Majella began earning money as a journeyman at the age of 21, he split his earnings with his mother, the poor of Muro and the rest in offerings for the poor souls. As the days passed, Majella began to grow pale and thin, often fasting and in prayer at a nearby Cathedral.

He applied to the Capuchin monastery at Muro twice, but was turned down both times. Majella was told his health was not well enough for such a strenuous life. However, Majella did not give up. In 1749, at the age of 23, he joined the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer and just three years later became a professed lay brother.

Majella lived with the three vows of Poverty, Chasity and Obedience. He stayed close with the poor and worked very many different jobs. He served as sacristan, gardener, porter, infirmarian, and tailor. However, because of his great piety, extraordinary wisdom, and his gift of reading consciences, he was permitted to counsel communities of religious women. Majella was often called on by the poor and the sick. Wherever his presence was demanded he graciously presented himself. He was there to "do the Will of God."

This humble servant of God also had faculties associated with certain mystics including, levitation, bi-location and the ability to read souls. His charity, obedience, and selfless service as well as his ceaseless mortification for Christ, made him the perfect model of lay brothers.

Throughout his years of life, several reported miracles are tied to Majella including, restoring a boy's life after he fell from a high cliff; blessing a poor farmer's crops, ridding it of mice; blessing a poor family's supply of wheat, causing it to last until the next harvest; and he multiplied bread for the poor on several occasions.

Along with his miracles effected through prayers for woman in labor, Majella's last recorded miracle is one that many credit toward his becoming the patron of expectant mothers. Shortly before his death, Majella encountered a young girl. He had dropped his handkerchief and she set out to return it, only to be told to keep it. Majella told her she "may need it someday." Years after Majella's passing, the young girl became married and with child. She unexpectedly went into labor and was on the verge of losing her baby. She called for Majella's handkerchief to be applied to her. Almost immediately, her pain abated and she proceeded to give birth to a healthy child, something very rare during that time.

His prayers are sought for the children, unborn children, women in childbirth, mothers, expectant mothers, motherhood, falsely accused people, good confessions, lay brothers and Muro Lucano, Italy.

Even as Majella became ill with tuberculosis, he only desired to live in God's will. His one last request was that a small placard be placed on his door stating, "Here the will of God is done, as God wills, and as long as God wills." Majella was told the Will of God wanted him to get better, and almost at once he became well. However, this only lasted for a month and quickly he became very ill once again. St. Gerard Majella died of disease on October 16, 1755 at the age of 29, living in the religious life for six years.

Due to the numerous miracles performed through Majella's prayers, proceedings for his canonization began shortly after his death. In 1893, Majella was beatified by Pope Leo XIII and on December 11, 1904, Pope Pius X canonized the man of God.

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