

# THE MOTHERS' SAINT

**St. Gerard Majella**

**Rev. John Hogan, C.S.S.R.**

Letters arrive daily at our monasteries in Australia, and overseas with these requests: a medal of St. Gerard Majella; the loan of his relic; prayers for a sick child or an expectant mother; to be enrolled in the League of St. Gerard. They come from mothers and sometimes husbands. Mothers write for their married daughters. Friends write on behalf of friends.

There are letters of thanks, too. Plenty of them. Thanks to St. Gerard for a successful confinement; thanks for the recovery of a sick child; thanks from a childless couple that their prayers have been heard.

Why this worldwide chorus of prayer and thanks to St. Gerard Majella? Why so many children with the names Gerard and Majella?

Because St. Gerard Majella, a Redemptorist Brother, is universally acclaimed as the Patron of Mothers, the Mothers' Saint: a title to which he has proved his right thousands of times over.

How did this devotion originate? How is it that one who is a man and a religious should be the Patron of Mothers? How explain that so many of the favours granted are truly miraculous?

The answers to these questions are to be found in the interesting and extraordinary life of the saint.

## GERARD MAJELLA

Domenico Majella and his wife, Benedetta, lived in the small town of Muro in Southern Italy. Their first child, Gerard, died when only ten days old. Then they were blessed with three girls. The devout couple must have prayed for a son to take the place of their first-born; for, when he arrived on April 6, 1726, they gave him the same name, Gerard. It looked as though he would share the same fate, too, because he was so delicate that he had to be baptised straight after birth. Somehow he managed to survive; but remained sickly for the rest of his days.

### Childhood

Little is recorded of him until the age of six. Then it was brought home to the family that Gerard was a child specially favoured by God.

It happened this way. Two miles outside Muro stood an old church in which was a statue of Our Lady nursing the Divine Infant. People often went out there to pray. Gerard got into the way of going by himself. On his return he used to hand his mother a small loaf of bread. It was such good bread and so white that Benedetta was intrigued. "Who gives it to you?" she asked. "A beautiful boy," was the reply.

One day his sister Anna, unable to restrain her curiosity any longer, followed him. The extraordinary story she told her mother induced Benedetta to go and see for herself. So she hid in the church before Gerard was due to arrive on his usual visit. Imagine the mother's surprise when she saw the Divine Infant come to life in His Mother's arms, climb down on the floor and play with the little boy. Before Gerard left, his Playmate handed him a small loaf. Now she knew where the bread was coming from and who the beautiful boy was.

Similar incidents were witnessed by quite a few people, including a priest.

But Gerard hungered for a better bread. He was refused it because at that time children had to be ten years old before making their First Communion.

The boy was only eight. However, such was his longing to receive God into his heart that one Sunday he went up to the altar rails with the people. The priest, recognising him, passed him by. Bitter were the tears he shed. He was still crying that night as he dropped off to sleep. Suddenly he was awakened by a light in the room: not the risen sun, as he thought, but the brightness of an angel. The Archangel Michael had come to give the boy his First Communion.

That this was no child's dream is evident from other incidents, all fitting into the same pattern.

Gerard had now begun school. He was a general favourite, we are told, with both teachers and class-mates. Games do not seem to have appealed to him. His whole interest was in the church, in saying his prayers and in playing at

priests. Such piety might well be put down to a child's fancy caught up by the sound and the stir of the sacred ritual. Not so his innumerable little sacrifices and acts of self-denial. Benedetta, fearing that he would undermine his already frail constitution, had to insist that he eat his meals. Yet, good mother that she was, she sensed his holiness. As she said herself in later years, "he was born for heaven." So, with many a heartfelt "bless you my son", she gladly cooperated with the Divine Artist in the moulding of a saint.

### **Wage-earner**

God, Who had so far lavished such favours on this child of grace, was now to give him a share of the Cross. As gold is purified by fire, so Gerard's true worth was to be put to the test in the crucible of suffering.

Schooldays were brought to an abrupt end by the death of his father—a shattering blow to the Majella's as to any other family. Although only twelve Gerard had now to make his contribution to the upkeep of the home. So he followed his father's trade, becoming apprenticed to a tailor.

That was hard on a boy of such tender years; and life was not as easy then as it is today. Hours, too, were long and conditions bad.

To make matters worse the foreman took a dislike to the youngster. So much piety irritated him. He bullied and beat him unmercifully. During one of these thrashings Gerard kept smiling. Unable to take the smile off the boy's face, the brutal man asked him what he had to smile about. "I'm smiling," replied Gerard, "because in your hand I see the hand of God striking me." Which, of course, only infuriated his assailant the more.

This ill-treatment went on for a long time without the employer being aware of it. Chancing one day to come on such a scene he woke up to the situation and instantly dismissed the foreman.

Before he finished serving his time Gerard volunteered to become valet to a bishop. His Lordship had servant trouble. No wonder. He was so exacting and so hard to please that no one stayed in his employ more than a few weeks. - One would need the patience of a saint. Gerard showed he had that by sticking to the job for three years. He left only when released by the bishop's death.

During this time a charming incident occurred which shows on what familiar terms Gerard stood with God. His Lordship was out, so the valet decided to go to the public well to draw water. He locked the door and put the key in his pocket. By some mischance it fell into the well. "What a storm there'll be this time," he thought. Without further ado he rushed over to the cathedral, took a statue of the Divine Infant from one of the cupboards in the sacristy, tied a rope around it and lowered it into the well. When the statue was hauled up, to the amazement of the curious bystanders it had the dripping key in its hand. The well is still called "Gerard's Well."

### **G. Majella..... Tailor**

On the death of the bishop Gerard went back to tailoring. He started a business of his own. The name "G. Majella" over the door must have attracted many of his father's former clients because orders came rolling in. Never was a business run on more unbusinesslike lines. Money seems to have been his last concern. He never charged the poor and allowed himself the barest margin of profit. This he divided into three parts: one-third he gave to his mother for household expenses; one-third was given to the poor; and with the rest he had Masses said for the souls in purgatory.

Tailoring, however, was only a side-line. The affairs of his soul were his main preoccupation. Every morning he heard or served several Masses in the cathedral. After work he was back there again kneeling for hours before the tabernacle. Often he spent the whole night in adoration. He was able to do this because the sacristan was a relative and gave him the keys. Sometimes he refused to hand them over out of concern for the youth's health. Not to be denied Gerard would then climb in through a window.

### **Divine Call**

A question that now arises is: if this saintly young man was more interested in the affairs of his soul than in the things of the world, why did he not think of leaving it?

He did, many times. The priesthood was out of the question. For one thing he was not equal to the studies since he had had to leave school at the age of twelve. Besides, where was he to find the money to see him through the long

seminary course? What he wanted to be was a Coadjutor Brother, a religious who looks after the temporal needs of the monastery.

When he was sixteen, and again at eighteen, he applied to the Capuchins. Despite the fact that he had an uncle in the Order able to put in a good word for him, he was turned down each time for the good reason that his health would never stand the rigours of Religious Life.

He even tried becoming a hermit. When his companion in the adventure deserted after a few days of starvation in the forest, Gerard also had to give up the idea.

Yet, behind these set-backs the designs of God were slowly working out.

The would-be hermit was twenty-three when the Redemptorists arrived in Muro to give a mission. They belonged to an Order recently founded by St. Alphonsus Liguori. With them was a Brother or two. Here was Gerard's chance. He asked to join the Brothers. Like the Capuchins before him, the superior of the mission, -Father Cafaro, needed only one glance at the pale, gaunt figure to reach a decision. His answer was: "Definitely no! You are not strong enough for our kind of life." This time Gerard was not going to take "no" for an answer.. He kept up his pleas all through the mission.

Strange that God should obviously be calling him into Religion, and yet place such obstacles in his way! A soul of weaker calibre would soon have given up the struggle. Not so Gerard.

"If you won't accept me," he said to Father Cafaro, "then I'll follow you. I'll live on your doorstep and you'll have to take me in."

The priest took the hint. He told Benedetta what time the missionaries would be leaving the town. "Before then," said he, "lock him in his room."

The anxious mother did not need to be told twice. Gerard foiled the ruse by making a rope out of the bedclothes and lowering himself from the upper-storey window. The brief note of farewell that he left on the table was prophetic. It read: "I have gone to become a saint."

### **A Useless Brother**

The missionaries, who were proceeding on foot to the next town, had not gone far along the road when they heard someone running behind them. To their dismay it was the "ghost of Muro"— the nickname they had given Gerard.

The argument started all over again. Then Father Cafaro had a brain-wave. The best way to get rid of this importunate young man was to give him what he asked. And all he asked for was a try-out. So he was handed a note and told to deliver it to the superior of the nearby monastery of Iliceto. "I am sending you a useless Brother," Father Cafaro had written.

Unflattering credentials! but they gained him admission. And now that he was inside God's House he meant to stay. When the door closed behind him, it was farewell to the world forever. His first act was to throw himself on his knees before a statue of Our Lady to thank her for this triumphant answer to his prayers.

The community looked askance at the new recruit. With many wise nods to one another they predicted he would have to give up in a week or two. And such enthusiasm! That couldn't possibly last.

How wrong they were! Father Cafaro was the first to admit it. And Redemptorists had admitted it ever since. The "useless Brother" whom they tried to bar from the Order became one of its greatest glories.

### **REDEMPTORIST BROTHER**

Gerard spent only six-and-a-half years in Religion, What the Church says of such youthful saints as an Aloysius, a Stanislaus Kostka and a John Berchmanns— "in a short time he fulfilled a long time"— was true also of Gerard Majella. His few years as a Redemptorist were crammed full of holiness and crowned by countless miracles.

However, it was not ecstasies and prophecies that made him a saint. It was the unremitting performance of his duties as a Brother, accompanied by the assiduous . practice of the Christian virtues, that led him to the goal of sanctity.

### **Model Workman**

The vocation of Redemptorist Brothers is a lowly but sublime one. They perform the household tasks of the

monastery— such as cooking, cleaning and sewing—thus leaving the priests free for the work of the ministry. Theirs is a vital contribution to the missions. By combining the labours of Martha with the prayers of Mary, they not only sanctify themselves but bring down countless graces on the souls of others.

On being admitted to the monastery at Illiceto the obvious way for Gerard to prove his usefulness to the community was by tailoring, at which he was expert. Instead, he was assigned to the garden. The spade and the hoe were a far cry from the needle and the scissors. Nevertheless, he tackled the backbreaking job with superhuman energy. The same earnestness and thoroughness he displayed in all his occupations. For he knew that God is not so much interested in what we do, but in why we do it and how we do it. And Gerard certainly performed all his humdrum duties for the love and glory of His Divine Master.

He was in turn gardener, sacristan, cook, tailor, doorkeeper, and at one stage clerk-of-works when a new building was being put up.

### **Saintly Religious**

The Religious Life gave full scope to his soul's yearnings for high sanctity. He practised the ordinary Catholic devotions and the ordinary virtues, but with this difference—he excelled in them. The Will of God was the object of his special homage. "O Will of God, O Will of God," he wrote, "Thou and I have become one and the same thing." Later, when dying, he had this notice tacked to his door: "The Will of God is done here, as God wills it and as long as He wills it."

Like all the saints his heart was aflame with love for Jesus and Mary. His prayers before the tabernacle he often prolonged far into the night. The Sacred Passion was the favourite subject of his meditations. He thirsted to become like his Crucified Lord. Those who lived with him relate that during Passiontide and especially on Good Friday he seemed to suffer in his soul the agonies of the Crucifixion.

Even before he entered Religion he had lost his heart to the Blessed Virgin. Once during a novena in honour of her Immaculate Conception, he was seen to rise from his seat in the cathedral of Muro and place a ring on the finger of her Our Lady's statue. To those nearby he said: "The Madonna has stolen my heart. See, I am now betrothed to her." As a religious he tried to instil in the hearts of others his own love for Mary. The mere sight of her picture was enough to throw him into ecstasy. That happened on one occasion in the home of the Scoppa family at Melfi. The lady of the house showed him a painting of the Madonna she had hanging on the wall. Brother Gerard rose in the air to the height of the picture and seized it rapturously in both hands. The good woman, who had never before seen anyone in ecstasy, fainted. Few of the saints surpassed him in his love for Mary. His reward was to be a vision of her standing by his deathbed.

### **Virtuous Life**

Obedience, humility, poverty, fraternal charity...all the virtues shone in his life. Purity he cherished above them all. From childhood he kept his body and soul unsullied. By the vow of chastity he consecrated this innocence to God. How painful, then, it must have been to be reported to St. Alphonsus for a grave fault against this vow! When charged he remained silent. This seemed like an admission of guilt. The penalty was equally painful. He was forbidden to receive Holy Communion. Later his accuser fell ill and retracted the lie. Asked by St. Alphonsus why he had not spoken up in his own defence, he replied: "How could I, Father? Does not the Rule forbid us to excuse ourselves?" It was like an echo from the trial of Christ Himself.

After the example of the saints Gerard was ruthless in chastising his own body. In some pictures of him a bunch of chords is seen hanging over the end of a table. With those he scourged himself every day, frequently to blood. Around his arms and legs he wore chains bristling with sharp points. He fasted on bread and water several days a week, and always on Saturday in honour of the Blessed Virgin.

Yet, for all his austerities Gerard was far from being a sour-faced ascetic. Full of good humour, he radiated cheerfulness wherever he went. Truly, a joyous and lovable saint, whom the Catholic world has taken to its heart.

## **Wide Apostolate**

God raised up Gerard Majella, called him into the cloister and made him a saint, not for his own sake only, but also for the benefit of others. As a Redemptorist he was pledged to work for the salvation of souls. However, it was not merely as an instrument of conversion and salvation that God used him. He sent him forth among the people, like the Redeemer Himself, performing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. For this end he opened up to the saintly Brother a wide apostolate that had a tremendous impact because of all the striking miracles which accompanied it.

## **Porter**

We might say that his apostolate began at the monastery door because when answering the bell he came in contact with people of all kinds, especially the poor. The beggars that besieged the monastery were legion. There were the blind and the lame, the aged and infirm, the ragamuffin and ne'er-do-well. The Brother loved them all, even the imposters. In a bad season as many as two hundred would come daily begging for bread. He managed to feed them all though it often meant multiplying his meagre supplies, as Christ multiplied the loaves and fishes.

However, it was in the world far beyond the monastery door that he carried on his real apostolate. Gerard often accompanied the priests on missions, as was the custom for Brothers in those days. Besides, he was also sent on collecting tours because the Order was practically destitute. In these ways he met vast numbers of people, amongst whom he went about doing good.

On missions hardened sinners were his principal target. Good Shepherd that he was he went in search of these stray sheep. By his persuasiveness he usually succeeded in leading them back to the fold. One case was of a man who had led a notoriously bad life, and although he was dying obstinately refused to have the priest. On entering the room Gerard simply knelt down and recited the "Hail Mary" aloud. Before he finished the man was pleading to go to confession. The prayer of the saint won for him the grace of a happy death.

## **Apostle of the Careless**

To one class of sinners he was particularly drawn: those who were in the habit of making bad confessions. Theirs is perhaps the saddest plight of all, because they turn what is meant to be a remedy for the soul into a deadly poison. Of a sacrament they make a sacrilege. Gerard had the gift of being able to read a person's conscience. Thus, he could mention to the guilty ones sins that they had been concealing in confession for years: sins that were known only to themselves and Almighty God. Such a revelation of their innermost secrets usually had the desired effect. Many such cases are related. One must suffice.

Gerard and a priest went into a shop in Naples to buy some medals and rosary-beads. The shop-keeper, anxious to push his wares, indulged in a lot of pious prattle. Gerard could see behind the facade of hypocrisy. Calling the man aside, he confronted him with the sacrilegious state of his soul, because of such-and-such a sin he had been ashamed to tell. The poor fellow was so thunderstruck that when Gerard had stalked out of the shop he blurted out the whole story to the priest, and, we are told, lost no time in putting his conscience right.

The pious were also the object of his zeal. Many priests and nuns consulted him on the affairs of their soul. To all of them he proved an able spiritual director. Young people sought his advice about their vocation. He dispelled their doubts and persuaded many of them to consecrate their lives to God. In fact, he was like a recruiting officer for the convents. He believed in keeping them well filled because there, shielded from the temptations of the world, nuns could so easily become holy. To one convent in Saragnano he personally conducted seven postulants. To another at Foggia he sent no fewer than fourteen.

## **Ministry of Healing**

The ills of the body struck a responsive chord in his heart, as they did in the heart of his Divine Master. On behalf of the sick he performed many of his most striking miracles.

For instance: a youth lay dying in Iliceto from advanced tuberculosis. Gerard was asked to visit him. The doctor happened to be there when he arrived. An argument ensued. "I tell you," declared the doctor bluntly, "there is no hope for him unless he gets a new pair of lungs." "And can't God give him new ones?" was the rejoinder. Gerard took leave

of the boy saying, "I'll pray for you." There and then the patient began to get better. The doctor was the first to admit that the boy's recovery was miraculous.

Like his Divine Master, Gerard had a special affection for children. He could not bear to see them suffering. His powers of healing were often employed to restore them to health. Like the little girl in Auletta. She was a helpless cripple from birth. On going to see her Gerard simply said: "Get out of bed and come here to me." The child obeyed and the mother watched spell-bound as she took a few unsteady steps and then ran over to the Brother.

### **Help to Mothers**

Above all, he is justly renowned for the help he gave to expectant mothers, especially those in danger. At Senerchia a mother was dying in childbirth. Gerard was asked to pray for her. At once the danger passed and she safely gave birth to her child. This was evidently regarded by all as miraculous, because it figured in the cause of his canonisation.

Once when leaving the home of the Pirofalo family in Oliveto, a girl ran out with a handkerchief he had dropped in the house. "Keep it," he said, "some day it may come in handy." Sure enough it did. She later married and was at death's door in her first confinement. Then, remembering the handkerchief that she had treasured, she asked for it to be brought to her. No sooner had she clutched it than she was safely delivered. All the mothers around the district insisted on getting a shred of it as a relic.

From what has been said it can be seen that Gerard's whole life was a chain of miracles. Besides those already mentioned, he made prophecies, which came true; he was seen in several places at the same time; he drove out devils from the possessed; he walked across the waters of the Bay of Naples to rescue a fishing boat; and he did so many other extraordinary things that he became known as "The Wonder-worker of the Eighteenth Century."

### **Death and Canonisation**

His short but saintly life came to an end in 1755. Consumption, a malady which had been his constant companion, at last gained the upper hand. Weakened by frequent haemorrhages and wracked by fierce pain, he resigned himself to the Will of God. "I do not wish to live, nor do I wish to die. I only wish what God wishes." The call came towards midnight, October 15th. He yielded up his pure soul into the hands of Our Lady, whom he saw at his bedside waiting to receive it.

The people's esteem for Gerard did not end when the slab was placed over his tomb. He lived on in their hearts and memories. Great as had been his influence with God when he walked among them, they knew it was far greater now that he was in heaven. So they just kept on doing what they had done when he was alive. They brought to him their worries and troubles, their ailments and their sorrows.

His life was spent in a small district of Southern Italy. Once he was in heaven, all barriers of time and place disappeared. As devotion to him spread from country to country, so did his miracles increase.

At last, Rome, impressed by the worldwide devotion to Brother Gerard and by the innumerable favours granted by him, approved the introduction of his cause.

He was beatified, January 29th, 1893; and canonised by St. Pius X, December 11, 1904. His Feast is celebrated on October 16th.

### **PATRON OF MOTHERS**

Saints are given to us by God and the Church for our imitation and our intercession.

It might be thought that because Gerard's life was one long chain of miracles, he is beyond our imitation. The miracles did not make him a saint. They were God's seal of approval on his sanctity. We can become saints like him without the miracles. We may not be able to follow his way of life as a religious nor practise his austerities; but we can imitate his virtues. These are what made him a saint and will make saints of us.

Gerard did, although to an heroic degree, what all of us are commanded to do: he loved God with his whole heart and with his whole soul and with his whole mind and with all his strength. Look at his ardent love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, his tender compassion for the sufferings of Christ and his childlike love for Mary. He had his trials— bitter ones they were, more so than ours. But he was never cast down, he never lost heart. Always and

everywhere he had serene trust in Divine Providence and abandoned himself entirely to God's Will. We can all do that. Yes, Gerard's life preaches most eloquently to all of us— do as I have done and you will become saints.

### **A Powerful Intercessor**

As an intercessor in heaven St. Gerard is all-powerful. We have seen how God favoured him even from his tenderest years. Then, too, the number and extraordinary nature of the miracles he worked, show what power he wielded over the heart of God. Now that he is in heaven, he is still God's favourite and his prayers for his clients are even more efficacious. Proof of this is the countless letters of thanksgiving that pour into our monasteries the world over. How often we meet people who say to us with heartfelt gratitude: "St. Gerard has been a good friend to me"! And knowing from experience what a powerful intercessor he is they are fired with zeal to spread devotion to him amongst others.

While St. Gerard is only too ready to help everybody who prays to him and to grant every kind of request, there are some more than others in whom he has a special interest. The reason for this is to be found partly in his own life and partly in the arrangements of Divine Providence, Which entrusts certain classes of people to particular saints.

Because of the difficulties he had in following his own vocation, he is specially helpful to young people to know what theirs is and to follow it; hence, he is invoked as Patron of Vocations. Because by his gift of reading consciences he was able to induce many who had concealed sins to make a good confession, he is invoked as Patron of a Good Confession. Because he was so devoted to manual labour, giving the world an example of conscientious and painstaking toil, he has been hailed as the Patron Saint of Workingmen. Above all, because of his special help to mothers and their children, he has become widely known as the Patron Saint of Mothers— the Mothers' Saint.

### **The Mothers' Saint**

Who, we ask, have greater need of a Patron than mothers? Theirs is a noble vocation because they cooperate with God in giving existence to human beings, who are to live forever. It is a responsible vocation for mothers have to train their children to be good citizens in this world and future citizens of heaven. And it is a difficult vocation because mothers have problems, disappointments and sorrows unknown to most others.

For example, a mother needs courage to go on having babies when she knows it might cost her her life; she needs someone to help her carry her cross when she finds that her child is delicate or deformed; she needs someone to give her strength to nurse a sick child back to health; and she needs someone to give her confidence in bringing up a family today in the face of all the evil influences of a pagan world.

Yes, mothers need that someone— someone who is sympathetic, someone who is **all-powerful with God**.

Now, it is well known that that someone, the friend of mothers, is St. Gerard Majella. Although he has not yet been officially declared by the Church to be the Patron of Mothers, still he is universally invoked by them; and they know from experience that he is indeed their heavenly friend and protector.

But why, it may be asked, should St. Gerard be singled out? After all, he was a man and a religious.

One way of answering the question is simply to say that God has arranged it that way and seems to have entrusted St. Gerard with the care of mothers. However, if we examine the matter more closely we see that there are other reasons.

When he learned in after years of the sad fact of his little brother's death and of the danger that he himself was in, his heart must have ached for the anxiety and sorrow experienced by his own mother. Perhaps that is why he is so compassionate towards other children and other mothers in similar danger. During life he showed a particular affection for children, and that together with his own childlike innocence makes him a fitting patron to watch over them. During life, too, as we have recorded, he worked several miracles in favour of expectant mothers who were in danger. Those miracles multiplied enormously after his death, so that he became known in Italy as "The Saint of a Happy Delivery."

In fact, as one of the saint's biographers wrote in 1804, there was not an expectant mother in Foggia and the surrounding district who did not invoke Brother Gerard for a safe and successful confinement. That he has lived up to his reputation is amply proven by the extraordinary assistance he still renders such cases, some of which we are about to relate. It will be noted, too, that as The Mothers' Saint, his intercession is also particularly efficacious for sick children and for those whose marriage has not been blessed with a child.

## **Favours Granted**

The following are a few of the favours granted by The Mothers' Saint.

The, first three are recorded in biographies of the Saint. They occurred overseas and evidently before he was canonised.

The Bishop of Surinam, in South America, tells of the wife of a local doctor who collapsed ten days after the birth of her baby. Three of his colleagues were called in. They pronounced the case hopeless. When the woman was already in her agony a friend touched her with a relic of Brother Gerard. At once she opened her eyes and began to feel better. The doctors who verified the cure were all non-Catholics, and all agreed that it was beyond medical possibility.

In a village some miles from Liege, Belgium, an infant died without baptism. The heart-broken mother called on Brother Gerard, promising that if he restored her child to life she would call it after him. To the amazement of the doctor the baby began to breathe. He was baptised and little Gerard lived to gladden his parents.

There was a doctor in Luxembourg whose four-year-old son could neither walk nor talk. The father read the life of Brother Gerard. Impressed by the wonderful cures related in the book and at the same time saddened by the sight of the little cripple beside him on the floor, he murmured a prayer: "Brother Gerard, show your power and cure my son." Instantly the child jumped and threw himself into his father's arms exclaiming, "Papa, papa." From that moment he was as lively and as talkative as any other little boy of his age.

The following are extracts from letters received from people here in Australia. They are reprinted from "The Majellan."

## **Motherhood**

Dear Rev. Father,

I'm sure your prayers to St. Gerard were answered. I am so proud to be able to tell you that I am the mother of a little daughter after waiting fourteen years. The doctor expected to operate, but all was over before he was ready to start. He was very surprised.

Yours sincerely, W.J.

Dear Father,

We wish to thank St. Gerard for a great favour. For ten years both my husband and myself prayed for the blessing of a fruitful marriage and our prayers have now been heard.

All praise to our Saint.

Sincerely, C.G.

## **Safe Delivery**

Dear Editor,

I have great reason to thank our Patron of Mothers, St. Gerard. Some time after I married, an eminent specialist told me that I would never safely deliver a child.

In my distress I told a Redemptorist Father, and he told me to pray to St. Gerard. Well, after thirty-six years of married life I'm proud to tell you that I had nine healthy children and boast twelve lovely grandchildren.

My eldest son is named Gerard, and one of my little grandchildren is named Josephine Majella.

Yours sincerely, H.E.McD.

The Majellan,

My sister was pregnant and a non-Catholic doctor told her that she could not have a child as her health could not stand it. A well known Catholic doctor was called in, and after many prayers and Masses she had twins—a boy and a girl—I forgot to state that the non-Catholic doctor said that he would give myself £10,000 if she had a child. He was so sure it was not possible. The Catholic doctor said she was every bit as bad as the first doctor said, but prayer could

do it. Thanks to God and St. Gerard, it did.

Yours faithfully J.M.

### **Children Cured**

Dear Father,

Many thanks for all your assistance by Masses, prayers, relic, etc., in the fight to save our little son's life. I'm delighted to be able to tell you that thanks to our intercessor in heaven our baby is progressing most satisfactorily. The doctors and nurses here tell us that Michael Gerard is a lucky little man to be alive, as this is the first person in Australia to recover from this operation (a four-hour operation when he was one day old).

They are very thrilled with their success but they don't know the prayers that we have offered to St. Gerard for his help. The Mothers' Saint has been a great consolation to me in his month's illness, as I never lost faith. I felt that Almighty God would not refuse the pleading of St. Gerard and our Holy Mother.

Yours sincerely, M.B.

Dear Father,

I would like you to know how marvellous St. Gerard has been to us. He has always helped us very much and especially in May last year.

I had no idea of the prayer for a sick child until, on 20th May, our little baby son contracted Influanzal Meningitis. He was very precious to us as we had four little daughters, and he was our baby boy. He was just 19 months.

A friend gave me a medal and I joined the League. We started the prayer and in June our baby returned home completely cured. We still say the prayer every night for him.

Sincerely yours, T.H.

Dear Father,

My girl is aged eight. She is strong and intelligent. But at the age of two years she developed a mysterious disease which completely baffled the doctors. The child would frequently fall into a state of coma, which would last for about two hours. However, we had recourse to our heavenly patron and friend, St. Gerard, and made his novena. Gradually the mysterious illness disappeared and she became quite healthy.

Yours sincerely, a Client of St. Gerard.

### **THE LEAGUE OF ST. GERARD**

The League of St. Gerard was founded in Canada. It was established in Australia in 1944. Its aim is to make St. Gerard Majella known, loved and invoked as The Mothers' Saint. By membership mothers obtain the saint's powerful help in their responsible task of bearing and rearing children.

At the same time, the League is a crusade to defend the sanctity of marriage, the dignity of motherhood and the integrity of the family. Today these christian values are being assailed by the evil practice of birth prevention, which, by specious arguments and insidious propaganda, has established itself as a cult—the cult not of a golden idol but of gilded lust.

Even Catholics can be led astray and try to excuse themselves for practising something which in the eyes of God can never be excused for any reason at all.

Against these forces of anti-life, St. Gerard Majella as the Mothers' Saint, is a God-given leader. By uniting under his banner, mothers are inspired to uphold christian ideals and to become what they were meant to be—the saviours of Society.

### **Privileges of the League**

At each League Centre a Mass is said every month for the intentions of members, and local Directors give them a memento in their daily Mass. Moreover, the prayers of all members are shared by any member in time of special need.

## **Membership of the League**

All may join the League, not only mothers but anyone interested in the crusade to save Christian Society. Membership is free. In Australia there are well over 100,000 members, including single and married, fathers and mothers, priests and nuns. Apply to any centre listed below.

## **PRAYERS TO ST. GERARD**

### **For Motherhood**

O good St. Gerard, powerful intercessor with God, and Wonder worker of our day, I call upon thee and seek thine aid. Thou, who didst always fulfil God's designs, help me to do the Holy Will of God. Beseech the Master of Life, from Whom all paternity proceeds, to render me fruitful in offspring, that I may raise up children to God in this life and heirs to the Kingdom of His glory in the world to come. Amen.

### **For an Expectant Mother**

O Everlasting and Almighty God, Who through the operation of the Holy Ghost didst prepare the body and soul of the glorious Virgin Mary to be the worthy dwelling of Thy Son, and through the same Holy Ghost didst sanctify St. John the Baptist before his birth: listen to the prayer of thy humble servant who implores Thee through the merits and intercession of St. Gerard Majella, to protect me (her) in the dangers of motherhood and to safeguard against the evil spirit the child whom Thou hast vouchsafed to grant me (her), so that by Thy saving hand it may receive Holy Baptism. Grant, also, that after living as good Christians in Thy love and service here on earth, both mother and child may attain to everlasting happiness in heaven. Amen.

### **For a Sick Child**

Good St. Gerard who, like our Divine Saviour, didst show children such loving tenderness and didst deliver so many from various diseases and even from death: graciously look down upon distressed parents who implore thee to restore their child's health (if such be the Will of God), promising to bring it up a good Christian and to safeguard it by constant vigilance from the leprosy of sin. We implore this favour, O compassionate Brother, through that early love with which Jesus and Mary surrounded thy childhood. Amen.

### **For Your Family**

O glorious St. Gerard, entrusted by God with the special protection of mothers and their children, I confidently invoke thy powerful intercession for myself and my family: strengthen us to carry our daily Cross, fly to our aid in every danger to soul and body, gladden our home with the blessings of divine peace, and grant that by the faithful practice of our Holy religion in this world, we may all merit to be reunited around God's throne in heaven for ever and ever. Amen.

### **For Mothers**

O good and gracious St. Gerard, invoked throughout the world as the Mothers' Saint, well dost thou know the joys and sorrows, the fears and longings of a mother's heart. Look down with tenderness, we beseech thee, upon all mothers. Wipe away their tears and cheer them with radiant hope. Shield their virtue from the corrupt influence of a pagan world. Keep them true to the example of Mary, the model of mothers. Obtain for them the graces of their noble state in life, that by bringing up their children in the fear and love of God they may deserve to have those same children for their everlasting joy and crown. Amen.

### **In Time of Trial**

O saintly Brother Gerard, whose heart went out to the unfortunate; who relieved so many poor, healed so many sick, comforted so many afflicted; behold me worried and troubled as I kneel at thy feet. In vain do I turn to men to seek consolation and help. Therefore, do I have recourse to thee, who art so powerful in heaven. Graciously assist me, St. Gerard, that being freed from this trial or strengthened to bear it for the love of God, I may praise and thank God and serve Him with greater love and fervour. Amen.

### **For Good Health**

O God, Who didst bestow on St. Gerard the power of healing all kinds of infirmities, deign to glorify Thy servant, who was so merciful to human misery, by delivering me from my present sickness. Grant also that, being strengthened in body, I may take greater care to avoid sin and overcome my evil passions, the spiritual diseases that drag so many to everlasting death. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

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