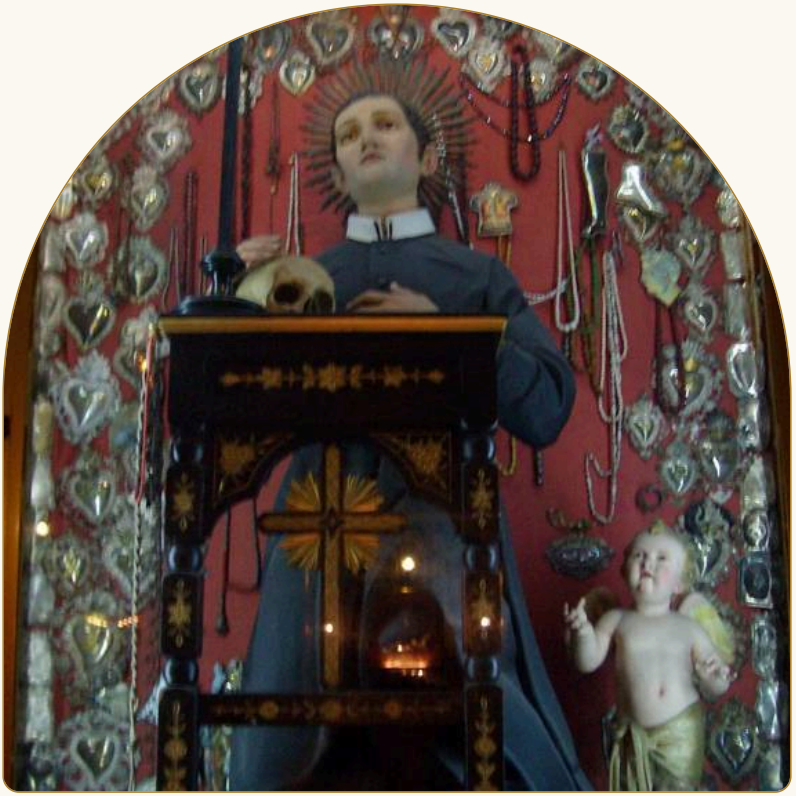


BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Gerard Majella

Life, prayer, novena and pilgrimage

Feast day: October 16

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IN BRIEF

Saint Gerard Majella

Italian Redemptorist lay brother, invoked by mothers, expectant mothers and the falsely accused.

Feast day	October 16
Born	April 6, 1726, Muro Lucano, Basilicata, Italy
Died	October 16, 1755, Caposele, Campania, Italy
Canonized	December 11, 1904, by Pope Pius X
Era	18th century
Patron saint of	mothers, expectant mothers and childbirth, unborn children, the falsely accused, lay brothers, Muro Lucano

In this booklet

Life

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Novena to Saint Gerard Majella

Materdomini Sanctuary, Tomb of Saint Gerard Majella

Credits and sources

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LIFE

Saint Gerard Majella

Saint Gerard Majella was an Italian Redemptorist brother, born on April 6, 1726, in Muro Lucano, in Basilicata, who died of tuberculosis on October 16, 1755, in Caposele, at the age of twenty-nine. A tailor by trade, turned down by the Capuchins because of his health, he became a lay brother in the congregation founded by Saint Alphonsus Liguori. Falsely accused, he kept silent. He is invoked by mothers, expectant mothers and people who are falsely accused, and his feast is on October 16.

Who was Saint Gerard Majella?

Gerard was born in Muro, a small town in what is now the province of Potenza, then part of the Kingdom of Naples. His father was a tailor, who died when Gerard was twelve, leaving the family in poverty. The boy had to start working early, as an apprentice tailor. His mother spoke of his early piety: "From his earliest years his greatest delight was to go into the church and pray before the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. When he was there, praying before the sacred Host, he even forgot to go and eat."

His life was very short and outwardly unremarkable: sacristan, gardener, infirmarian and tailor in the houses of his congregation. Yet the depth of his prayer, his obedience and his charity struck everyone who knew him. Pope Leo XIII, who beatified him, saw in him one of the most angelic young men God had given to the world as an example.

Key dates in the life of Saint Gerard Majella

- **April 6, 1726**: Born in Muro Lucano, in Basilicata.
- **c. 1738**: His father dies; he becomes an apprentice tailor.
- **Youth**: The Capuchins turn him down because of his frail health.

- **1749**: Accepted as a lay brother by the Redemptorists.
- **1754**: Falsely accused by a young woman, he remains silent.
- **October 16, 1755**: Dies of tuberculosis at Caposele (Materdomini).
- **January 29, 1893**: Beatified by Leo XIII.
- **December 11, 1904**: Canonized by Saint Pius X.

A child in love with the Eucharist

In Gerard's time, the influence of Jansenism led many of the faithful to receive Communion only rarely. Yet his confessor, seeing his fervor, allowed him from the age of ten to receive more often, up to once every three days. The Eucharist and the cross of Christ would be the center of his whole life.

As a young man he wanted to join the Capuchins, but his frail health led them to refuse him. He worked as a tailor, then in the service of the Bishop of Lacedonia, a man known for his difficult temper, whom he served with patience. He shared his earnings with the poor and prayed for long hours before the tabernacle.

Redemptorist brother

In 1749, during a mission preached in his town, Gerard asked to follow the Redemptorist missionaries. The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer had recently been founded in the Kingdom of Naples by Saint Alphonsus Liguori to evangelize the poor of the countryside. The fathers hesitated to take in this frail young man, but he was finally received as a lay brother.

He served in turn as sacristan, gardener, infirmarian and tailor. He also went with the fathers on their missions, where his simple words touched hearts. Alphonsus Liguori regarded him as "a model of obedience" and even as "a

saint." His contemporaries attributed extraordinary gifts to him: reading consciences, bilocation, healings and multiplying food for the poor. These accounts, handed down by his first biographers, explain his great popularity.

Slander and silence

In 1754 a young woman who was pregnant accused him of being the father of her child. Deeply hurt, Gerard chose to remain silent, like Christ before his accusers, so as not to crush the woman who accused him. Alphonsus Liguori, troubled, imposed penalties on him, including being deprived of Communion. Some time later the accuser withdrew her words and acknowledged his innocence. This trial, lived in peace, did much to make him the patron of the falsely accused, and also of mothers and pregnancy.

In his cell he had written on a small card: "Here the will of God is done, as God wills and for as long as God wills." Stricken with tuberculosis, he died on October 16, 1755, at the convent of Materdomini in Caposele, at twenty-nine.

Why is Saint Gerard Majella the patron saint of mothers?

After his death, his reputation for holiness spread quickly through southern Italy. Beatified in 1893 by Leo XIII, he was canonized by Saint Pius X on December 11, 1904. Pius XII later held him up as an admirable model for brothers in religious communities. The calumny he endured about a pregnancy, borne in silence and peace, is at the root of his role as protector of motherhood, and the gratitude of countless mothers has kept it alive. He is invoked for childbirth, for unborn children, for mothers, for people who are falsely accused and for the grace of a good confession. He is also the patron of his hometown, Muro Lucano.

Devotion to him is especially strong in the United States, where Italian immigrants brought it, and many expectant mothers entrust their pregnancy and the birth of their child to him. Gerard shows that holiness can flourish in

the humblest tasks. He was neither a priest nor a superior, and he lived barely thirty years. But he made every service an act of love, and he bore slander without defending himself, surrendering to the will of God.

To pray with him, you can use the prayer to Saint Gerard Majella for mothers and unborn children, or follow the novena to Saint Gerard from October 7 to 15, so that it ends on the eve of his feast.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Gerard Majella in art

- **The Redemptorist habit**: a black cassock, often with a rosary at the belt.
- **The crucifix**: which he gazes at or holds, a sign of his love for the Passion.
- **The lily**: purity of heart, recalling his innocence in the face of slander.
- **A skull**: sometimes at his side, a reminder of his surrender to God's will to the very end.

Where to pray to Saint Gerard Majella

- **Caposele** (Italy): the Shrine of Materdomini, where he died and where his body rests.
- **Muro Lucano** (Italy): his hometown, of which he is the patron.
- **Newark, New Jersey** (United States): the National Shrine of Saint Gerard in Saint Lucy's Church.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Gerard Majella for Mothers and Unborn Children

Many prayers to Saint Gerard Majella are in circulation, especially for mothers and expectant mothers, but their wording varies and their origin is rarely given. Saintspedia therefore offers an original prayer inspired by the saint's life: the humble and obedient Redemptorist brother, the slandered man who kept silent, the protector of mothers and unborn children.

A saint of trust and motherhood

Gerard Majella lived only twenty-nine years, serving his brothers in the simplest tasks. Falsely accused of being the father of a child, he kept silent until the truth came out. Ever since, mothers and families expecting a child have entrusted themselves to him, in Italy, in the United States and around the world.

Prayer to Saint Gerard Majella for mothers and unborn children

Saint Gerard Majella, you who sought the will of God in all things, teach me to surrender to him with trust, in joy and in trial.

I entrust to you mothers and women who are expecting a child. Protect them during pregnancy and at the moment of childbirth. Watch over unborn children, and give peace to families who are hoping for a child.

You who were falsely accused and kept silent, support those who suffer slander or injustice. Give them patience, and let the truth come to light.

You who loved the Eucharist so much, obtain for me a pure heart and the grace of a good confession. I also entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

With Saint Alphonsus and all the Redemptorist saints, pray for us to Christ the Redeemer. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

A short prayer before childbirth

Saint Gerard, protector of mothers, stay close to me in the hour of giving birth. Ask the Lord to keep my child and me safe, to guide the hands of those who care for us, and to fill our home with thanksgiving. Amen.

This short prayer is also an original text by Saintspedia.

When to pray this prayer

Saint Gerard Majella's feast is on October 16, the day of his death in 1755. You can pray to him during pregnancy, before childbirth, for a couple longing for a child, after the loss of a baby, or when you are the victim of an unjust accusation. To get to know him better, read the life of Saint Gerard Majella, or pray the novena to Saint Gerard from October 7 to 15.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Gerard Majella

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, inspired by the life of Saint Gerard Majella, an eighteenth-century Redemptorist brother. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his feast, begin on October 7; it ends on October 15, and the saint is celebrated on October 16. It can also be prayed at any time during a pregnancy, or whenever you face an unjust accusation.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the short meditation, say the prayer of the day, then an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be. The small act suggested for each day carries the prayer into daily life. You can also say the prayer to Saint Gerard Majella every day. An expectant mother can pray it with her husband or her family.

Day 1: A child of a poor family

Gerard was born into a tailor's family in Muro. At twelve he lost his father and knew poverty. God draws near to families that are tested. The hardships of his childhood taught Gerard early to rely on God and to work with his hands for the people he loved.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you poor families and children who have lost a parent. Be their support.

Today: Make a donation to a charity that helps families in difficulty.

Day 2: Before the tabernacle

As a child, Gerard forgot to eat, so much did he love praying before the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharist was the source of his whole life. All his later strength, in service and in trial, came from these long moments of silent adoration.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, present in the Eucharist, draw me to you and increase in me the desire to receive you.

Today: Spend a few minutes in silence before the tabernacle of a church.

Day 3: Refused, but not discouraged

The Capuchins turned Gerard down because of his health. He did not lose heart and went on seeking the will of God. A refusal is not the end of the road; sometimes it is the door to the path God has prepared.

Prayer: Lord, support those who have known failure or rejection. Show them the path you are opening for them.

Today: Encourage someone who is going through a disappointment.

Day 4: Serving in little things

Sacristan, gardener, infirmarian, tailor: Gerard served his brothers in humble tasks, with love. Nothing is small when it is done for God. The care he put into mending a habit or tending the sick was already a prayer.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to carry out my daily tasks with care and with love.

Today: Do a quiet service for someone at home or at work.

Day 5: Joyful obedience

Saint Alphonsus saw in Gerard "a model of obedience." For him, obeying did not mean making himself less, but welcoming the will of God through his brothers. His obedience was not servile: it came from trust.

Prayer: Lord, give me a willing heart, able to listen and to give up my own will when necessary.

Today: Gladly agree to a request that costs you something.

Day 6: Silence before slander

Falsely accused, Gerard kept silent so as not to crush his accuser, like Christ before his judges. In the end the truth came out. His silence was not weakness but a strength rooted in God, who sees what is hidden.

Prayer: Lord, I entrust to you people who are slandered and who suffer injustice. Give them peace and let the truth come to light.

Today: Refuse all gossip today, and speak up for someone who is absent.

Day 7: Mothers and unborn children

For generations, mothers have entrusted their pregnancy and the birth of their child to Saint Gerard. Every child is a gift from God, known and loved before birth.

Prayer: Saint Gerard, protect expectant mothers and the children they carry. Obtain for them a safe and happy delivery.

Today: Pray for a pregnant woman you know, or offer her practical help.

Day 8: Couples who hope

Many couples suffer because they cannot have a child, or grieve a child they have lost. Saint Gerard accompanies them with his prayer. Their pain is not forgotten by God.

Prayer: Lord, comfort couples who are waiting for a child and those who mourn a child they have lost. Keep them in hope.

Today: Reach out gently to a couple going through a trial.

Day 9: The will of God

In his cell Gerard had written: "Here the will of God is done, as God wills and for as long as God wills." He died in peace on October 16, 1755, at twenty-nine. His short life shows that it is not length of years that makes a life full, but love.

Prayer: Lord, may your will be done in me. Help me to surrender to you, today and at the hour of my death.

Today: Write Saint Gerard's sentence on a card and keep it near you.

Closing prayer

Saint Gerard Majella, at the end of these nine days I entrust to you the intention I carry. Watch over mothers and the children they carry, comfort couples who hope, and defend all who are falsely accused. Obtain for me a humble heart, a love for the Eucharist and a joyful trust in the will of God. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Gerard Majella and pray the prayer to Saint Gerard for mothers and unborn children.

PILGRIMAGE

Materdomini Sanctuary, Tomb of Saint Gerard Majella

On the heights of Caposele, in the province of Avellino in Campania, the Materdomini sanctuary keeps the tomb of Saint Gerard Majella, who died on October 16, 1755, in the Redemptorist fathers' monastery. Dedicated to the Virgin Mary under the title *Maria Santissima Mater Domini* and to Saint Gerard, it is one of the great pilgrimage sites of southern Italy, much visited by families and expectant mothers.

The monastery of Saint Gerard

Materdomini is a hamlet of the municipality of Caposele. The Redemptorists kept a house there, where Gerard spent the last part of his life. It was there that he died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-nine. His tomb quickly drew pilgrims, who came to ask his intercession for the sick, mothers, and children.

Two churches for pilgrims

With the pilgrim numbers growing considerably, the old church was supplemented in 1974 by a large church dedicated to Christ the Redeemer, more than 150 feet tall. The two buildings now form the heart of the sanctuary, where people come to pray before the saint's tomb.

A sanctuary of life

The sanctuary includes many facilities for welcoming pilgrims, a place reserved for confessions, a theater, and rooms that display objects that belonged to Saint Gerard, as well as the votive offerings given over the centuries. Many bear witness to graces received for a pregnancy, a birth, or a healing.

Praying at Materdomini

Before you come, you can reread the life of Saint Gerard Majella. At his tomb, a time of prayer is a chance to entrust a pregnancy, a child, a family, or a person who has suffered injustice. The prayer to Saint Gerard Majella can accompany this moment, and the novena prepares for a pilgrimage around October 16. These suggestions are offered by Saintspedia.

Practical information

Materdomini is in the municipality of Caposele, in the mountainous interior of Campania, in Irpinia. It is reached mainly by car or pilgrimage bus. The sanctuary is entrusted to the Redemptorists. Times for Mass, confessions, and the celebrations of Saint Gerard's feast may vary: ask the sanctuary before you come.

Credits and sources

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