

SAINTS ALIVE! OCTOBER 16: ST. GERARD MAJELLA



Gerard Majella was born at Muro, Italy, in 1726. He died 29 years later of tuberculosis

Saint Gerard Majella is invoked as a patron of expectant mothers as a result of a miracle effected through his prayers for a woman in labor.

October is Respect Life Month. The theme of the U.S. Bishops' 42nd Annual Respect Life program comes from Pope Francis: "Open your hearts to life!"

October 6 is Respect Life Sunday. Respecting life, however, does not end with one rosary or one homily. Respecting life – opening our hearts to life – is a life-long commitment.

We can open our hearts to life by acknowledging that each individual is unique and deserving of human dignity as a God-given right. We can become sensitive to the uniqueness of each individual instead of looking upon them as commodities.

How? Gerard Majella gave us the way: "I see in my neighbor the Person of Jesus Christ."

Instead of seeing Jesus in our neighbors, we have begun a culture where people have become commodities, not valued but replaceable. A Catholic Culture of Life erases the grey existence of isolation and builds a life of relationships. No man is an island; we live together, we share a common morality, and we respect that individual decisions ripple through our society of brothers and sisters.

"Human life, the person is no longer perceived as a primary value to be respected and protected, especially if poor or disabled, if not yet useful - such as the unborn child - or no longer needed - such as the elderly." Pope Francis

The culture of death begins and flourishes in a culture of rejection. It begins with seeing oneself as the person whose ideas, interests and wishes should prevail over others. To open our hearts we must first overcome our tendency to reject people.

Opening our hearts to life means that we reject the killing of human beings from the moment of conception to their natural death. Opening our hearts to life means opposing the death penalty, as well as slavery, human trafficking, terrorism and unjust war. Opening our hearts to life means that we work to eradicate the conditions that prevent our brothers and sisters from realizing their full human potential, including poverty, domestic violence, and the grief and guilt the father and the mother carry for years after an abortion.

Opening our hearts to life means that we are pained when we learned that Planned Parenthood referred only 2300 customers to adoption agencies last year. Opening our hearts to life means that we recoil when we learn that last year Planned Parenthood committed 333,964 abortions.

Jesus told us that that the second greatest commandment – "Love your neighbor as yourself" – was like the first – "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." The second commandment is like the first because the Person of Jesus Christ is in every one of us. That alone is the reason to appreciate that all life is to be cherished, not easily disposed of.

St. Gerard Majella, pray for us.



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