



**28th Sunday Ordinary Time (Year A)
Feast of Saint Gerard Majella**

Homily

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

**St Gerard Majella Catholic Church, Mirrabooka
Sunday 15 October, 2023**

In preparation for what I am about to say, when it comes to the internet, you will be very, very happy to know that Saint Gerard Majella Parish, in Westminster, Australia, is in Wikipedia.

So, - we've made it – at long last. It's there among other parishes from around the world, with colleges and schools that are named after Saint Gerard Majella. One thing that I didn't know about is sometimes you find some things that are true in the media.

One thing I didn't know about the saint is when Saint Gerard died, they were wondering whether he left a little documented testament, or a will, as we would call it today. Then they found keys to the door of his room, these words. "Here, the will of God is done, as God wills, and as long as God wills." So, I assumed that this would have been sort of like the motto that Gerard lived by throughout his life. And it certainly sums up that extraordinary life of a man who lived to not quite make 30 years of age, but had in many ways, shown a deep faith, and that faith was able to work extraordinary things for other people.

As I said, at the beginning of the Mass, he is the patron saint of children and the unborn child especially. Women who are about to give birth, expectant mothers, and motherhood in general. And interestingly, is the patron saint of a good confession. He had the ability apparently to be able to look within a person and to see the truth that lies beneath the surface.

One thing that he is also patron of, is people who have been falsely accused. Because this was an experience that he himself had very close to the end of his life, he was 27, when this happened, where a pregnant woman came forward and accused him of being the father of a child. And what was the response that Gerard made, it was a response that was customary for him, and that was to remain silent. The founder of the Redemptorists, St. Alphonsus Liguori interrogated him, and Gerard would say nothing. That reminds us of Jesus before Pilate, He remained silent when he was asked the questions. As it played out, many years later, the woman confessed that she had



lied. But I am not sure how long it was. St. Alphonsus had imposed a penalty on him and that was he should not receive Holy Communion, because he died only two years later. I am not sure whether that was how his life ended without the comfort of receiving Holy Communion. Wikipedia might be able to help me next time I go through.

Gerard, I think, has a very, very special part to play in the life and the history of each of us in this parish. Gerard himself was only 12 when his father died, and that left the family in a very desperate situation, and they were very poor. So, his mother sent him to his brother to learn a trade, and that was to be a tailor. And this is where you get that first sense of Gerard's humility. It was in that formal training to be a tailor he was put under the authority of a foreman, who was very abusive to him and again, Gerard said nothing. It was later that it became evident that he was being bullied and he was obviously also being physically abused.

There are a lot of many stories that we have not shared and all of them obviously points to his Imitation of Christ. The Imitation of Christ's humility, the imitation also of Christ's perpetual care for the poor, and the way in which Jesus would mix with the poor. And he then was able to preach the gospel, that he had come to preach the gospel about the Kingdom of God to the poor, especially those who welcomed him, because it offered them hope, hope for their lives and for the situation that they were in, as it does for us. This is why I think Gerard has become such a welcome patron for this community.

As we celebrate the feast today, and as we reflect also the Word of God that has been given to us, which really points to firstly, that feast on a mountain, that feast where people, all people from all nations are pulled together, and to receive from the Lord, all that they need for their lives, meant to be really joyful and happy, because of what the Lord provides.

Then we hear the gospel about the wedding feast, that, finally some did come to that wedding feast, I suppose, in a very important way, is about the Kingdom of God. Question is, what is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God, fundamentally, is that presence of God in our lives. That very close presence of God to each and every one of us, Gerard was always able to show and demonstrate to the people that this is why he lived the way that he lived, because he was always joyful and always thankful, because the Lord was there, and he could trust in that presence of God.

He drew strength from it, he drew courage from it. And that kingdom of God, the presence of God among us, is obviously shown by signs. Today as we gather for the Eucharist, the sign that we see today in the bread and the wine brought to the altar and to be consecrated, is the sign to us of that presence of God. And it says that the second example, the sign of that presence of God



and certainly different ways in our lives, nourishing firstly, providing faith, that nourishing that faith and encouraging us with those various beautiful ways in which the Lord is present to us throughout our lives, especially as we get older, and we need the comfort of the sacrament of the healing of the sick.

So, the presence of God means that, it is shown to us, and demonstrated to us in various signs. The older ones here among perhaps have experienced many times that presence of God in a prayer that's been answered, that presence of God that has become clearer to us, because when we pray to Saint Gerard, for that, same insight that he has had, that same connection he had with the Lord, and that same trust he had with the Lord, that the Lord would make things right.

So, as we celebrate this Eucharist today, let us bring to the Lord the prayers in our hearts, those special prayers that we have for our families, for our marriages, those special prayers for healing that we might have for ourselves or for others. We ask the Lord to help us above all, to be able to see his presence in our life each day, so that we can trust in that presence of God. Saint Gerard Majella is one of those remarkable saints.

Saint Gerard Majella is one that we can model our own lives upon, because as we look into his story, we can see in so many ways parallels to our own lives. So, we ask for an intercession of the saint, this humble saint, the saint who identified so very, very clearly and closely to those who struggle. May he help us as we come near to this Mass, in order to have our faith escape, as we in our own way try to be faithful to that call that God has given to us in our baptism, to live in faith and to live in trust.