

THE WONDER-WORKER OF OUR DAYS

LIFE, VIRTUES, AND MIRACLES

OF

ST. GERARD MAJELLA

LAY-BROTHER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE
MOST HOLY REDEEMER

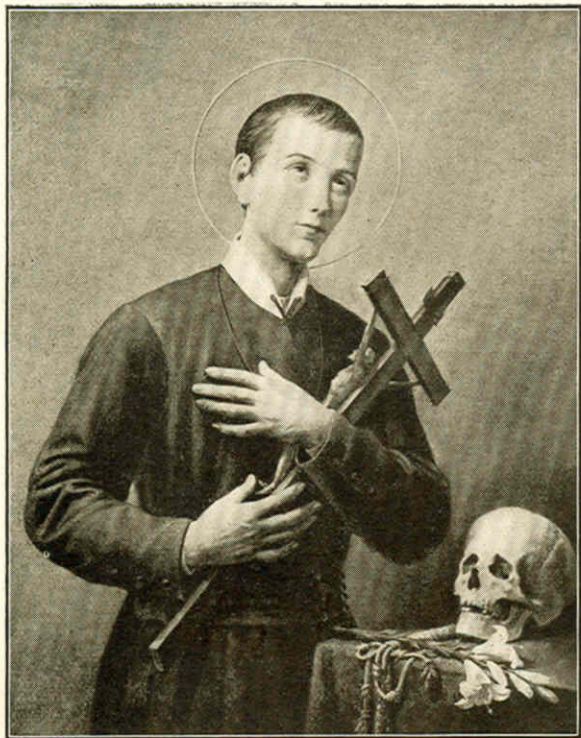


TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF
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MISSION CHURCH
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PRESENT FROM THE
PURGATORIAN SOCIETY,
Church of the Most Holy Redeemer,
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PORTRAIT OF ST. GERARD MAJELLA IN ECSTASY
AT THE HOME OF DON SALVADORE AT OLIVETO
—REPRODUCED AFTER HIS DEATH,
AS IF BY A MIRACLE

Nihil Obstat.

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Archiepiscopus Bostoniensis.

The publication of "The Life of St. Gerard
Majella" is hereby duly sanctioned.

WILLIAM G. LICKING, C.S.S.R.,
Provincial.

Baltimore, feast of St. Gerard, 1907.

“**A**MONG the number of the most renowned heroes of God’s Church, who shine as beautiful lights, and, in these important times, serve as models and examples to the Christian people, may justly be classed the Venerable servant of God, Gerard Majella, professed lay-brother of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.”

—LEO XIII., POPE.



TO THE READER :

This biography was taken by Father Saint-Omer from the beautiful Italian edition which appeared at the Beatification of the great servant of God, entitled: *Vita del Beato Gerardo Majella . . Roma, Tipografia Vaticana, 1893.* We here produce it in full, with the addition only of the chapter on the glorification of the saint.

“We do not pretend,” wrote Father Saint-Omer, in 1893, “to put forth a learned work. Our intention is to offer to the public an inexpensive book, so desirous are we to see the Life of Brother Gerard penetrate into the humble homes of the poor for their encouragement and edification. Our hero was a child of the people, an apprentice, a servant, a workman, a humble lay-brother, whom grace transformed into a saint. If we put aside the purely gratuitous supernatural gifts, which God gives to whom He pleases, what Gerard became, every child of the people may become as well as he, by the practice of virtue, by suffering, and by conformity to the will of God.”

PREFACE.

SOME REMARKS ON THE MARVELLOUS IN THE LIFE OF ST. GERARD.

SOUND reason, reason unbiassed by prejudice, cannot but admit the *possibility* of miracles in general; and when a miraculous *fact* is proved, to reject it because it *is* miraculous and inexplicable to our feeble intelligence, is not the part of a wise man, since the purely natural order is full of facts admitted by every one, although no one, not even men of genius, can explain them; for instance, the germination of seed. Now, a miraculous fact is proved just as an ordinary one.

We have said that right reason cannot help admitting the possibility of a miracle: "No man making use of his reason," writes Cardinal De-champs, "will reject the marvellous found in the Lives of the saints under the plea of impossibility. Only the unthinking dare to say that miracles are impossible and, by reasoning as absurd as it is impious, put a limit to the almighty power of God. Miracles are phenomena which interrupt the laws of nature and surpass the force of all natural causes. Reason alone is needed to make a man understand that God, whose power is infinite, can, when it so pleases Him, interrupt nature's course

directly by Himself or indirectly by the ministry of His creatures." (*Dissertation upon the Marvellous in the Lives of the saints.*)

St. Augustine, that sublime genius, had said long before: "All nature is full of miracles. We are not astonished at them, because we are used to seeing them; their repetition makes them familiar to our eyes. Behold why God has reserved to Himself others out of the course of nature, that they may strike us by their novelty." (*De Civit. Dei, L. X.*)

But for the Christian, the possibility of a miracle is not a question; it is a point of Faith which he professes every day when he says: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty," and which springs from these words of the Gospel: "Nothing is impossible to God" (Luke I, 37); and from these others: "He that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do." (John XIV, 12.)

But is it, indeed, certain that God has at times performed miracles?

The affirmative is here, as above, of Faith for every Christian. What is, in truth, the whole history of the people of God, a history written under the dictation of the Holy Ghost, but a series of miracles? —the plagues of Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud, the manna which fell from heaven every morning for forty years in sufficient quantity to feed several millions, etc.

Can God communicate to saints the power to work miracles?

Yes, since He is all-powerful. In fact, when a miracle is performed, it is always God who performs it at the request of a saint.

Has He at times done so?

Yes, answers Holy Scripture. How many miracles were performed by the Apostles and their disciples under the eyes of all! To enumerate some: a paralytic cured at the gate of the Temple, Tabitha raised from the dead, the shadow alone of St. Peter curing the sick, etc. Long ago it was said: "To suppose that the pagan world would have become Christian without being influenced thereto by the sight of great and numerous miracles, is to suppose a miracle greater than those that fill the Lives of the saints.

Did God give St. Gerard this power of performing miracles?

Yes, the history of his life proclaims it, a history as credible as any other history, that of Napoleon, for instance. The facts related had witnesses who were able to prove for themselves their genuineness, for the Life of Brother Gerard appeared a short time after his death.

Besides, the Acts of Beatification may be taken as a guarantee of their evidence. It is an enormous folio volume containing the depositions of a crowd of sworn witnesses.

In fine, the Holy See itself has already juridically confirmed some of those miraculous facts. It first submitted them to the most severe examination, by minutely interrogating the witnesses and requiring the opinion of the most able physicians. It proceeded with its proverbial slowness in order to take time to examine the cause, and only after these proceedings, did it pronounce.

Never do our tribunals of justice act with so much consideration, nor take so many precautions, even in questions of life or death.

But the marvellous, some say, in the Life of Brother Gerard is so extraordinary that it scandalizes even good Catholics!

Scandalizes them? No. Surprises them? Yes. They are astonished, but not scandalized, because they know that God is all-powerful, that He is the Master of His gifts, and that His love for souls most faithful to Him sometimes far exceeds the greatest maternal tenderness.

After all that has been said, I ask whether there is a man of sense who will exclaim: "The marvellous plays too great a part in the Life of this saint. I will have none of it!"

No, but he will kneel down humbly before his Creator, and say: "O Thou to whom everything is possible, Thou art worthy to be our God! I adore Thee! Have pity on me, dust and ashes that I am!"

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