



League of St. Gerard NEWSLETTER

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In 1975 Pope Paul VI wrote a beautiful apostolic exhortation called "Gaudete in Domino" (Rejoice in the Lord). In this letter he instructs us to call upon the Holy Spirit asking for the gift of joy. He understands joyfulness as an instrument of evangelization.

Pope Paul VI tells us, "This joy of living in God's love begins here below. It is the joy of the kingdom of God. But it is granted on a steep road which requires a total confidence in the Father and in the Son, and a preference given to the kingdom. The message of Jesus promises above all joy—this demanding joy; does it not begin with the beatitudes?"

In Luke 6:20-23 we find the beatitudes. "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who are weeping now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy."

Saint Gerard Majella: Model of Christian Joy

BROTHER DANIEL KORN, C.S.S.R.

It is a call for us to be a joy-filled blessing in life, following the gospel in such a way that we are transformed into the image of Christ. The gift of the Holy Spirit, given to us in our baptism and confirmation, is the power that enables us to be transformed into a blessing, a beatitude, a sense of joy to all around us.

In the waters of baptism we died with Christ and rose with him. Christ continues the pattern of his passion and resurrection in each of us as St.

Paul writes, "We carry everywhere in our person the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us" (2 Corinthians 4:10). This paschal mystery, alive in us who believe, should create in us the resurrection joy even in the midst of hardships.

Pope Paul VI writes, "In a mysterious way, Christ Himself accepts death at the hands of the wicked and death on the cross, in order to eradicate from man's heart the sins of self-sufficiency and to manifest to the Father a complete filial obedience. But the Father has not allowed death to keep Him in its power. The resurrection of Jesus is the seal placed by the Father on the value of His Son's sacrifice: it is the proof of the Father's fidelity...Father... glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you. This is why the disciples were confirmed in an ineradicable joy when they saw the Lord on Easter evening."

So it is with us. After we have come through a period of trial, we surprise ourselves with the sense of tranquility that comes to us in time. There

seems to be a certain energy and strength that enters our lives.

The example of the martyrs comes to mind when we read the testimonies that were written of how their faces shone with joy and peace in the midst of their martyrdom. This appearance of joy encouraged many to seek out the Christian way of life.

The gift of joy from the Holy Spirit is sometimes reflected in the form of tranquility, serenity, or peacefulness. There are people for whom we have great admiration because of how they handle life. They encourage us in our own living.

I am reminded of my own mother, who continues to be a source of admiration for me. I

remember her sitting with me in the waiting area of the airport at the end of a holiday visit. I noticed that she was looking around the room with a gentle smile on her lips. One might conclude that she was people watching. I happen to look down at her mitten-covered hands. They were moving slightly in a circular motion. I asked, "Mother what are you doing?" She responded, "I am shooting blessings to everyone. You never know the difficulties others might be going through at this moment." There was a sense of joy and serenity in her answer.

I often thought about how my mother, who was making her journey toward eternal life, could be so easy about life.

After her death I was going through her prayer books and discovered several prayers that she favored. They were prayers to the Holy Spirit for the gift of peace, joy, and love.

The message and witness that my mother left me was a great lesson. Prayer to the Holy Spirit does bring us to that joyful experience of the paschal mystery that Pope Paul VI talks about in his letter "On Christian Joy."

There is a beautiful sequence taken from the Mass of Pentecost, called "Come, Holy Spirit," that is a good prayer to say anytime. It calls on the Holy Spirit for his presence in our lives to comfort, heal, and bring joy to our hearts. I include it for your prayerful use.

COME, HOLY SPIRIT

*Holy Spirit, Source of light,
From the clear celestial height
Your pure beaming radiance give.*

*Come, Protector of the poor,
Come with treasures which endure;
Come, you light of all that live!*

*You, of all consolers best,
You, the soul's delightful guest,
Do refreshing peace bestow;*

*You in toil are comfort sweet;
Pleasant coolness in the heat;
Solace in the midst of woe.*

*Light immortal, light divine,
Make our hearts your own lifeline,
And our inmost being fill.*

*If you take your grace away,
Nothing pure in us will stay;
All our good is turned to ill.*

*Heal our wounds,
our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away.*

*Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide those steps that go astray.*

*We confess you, and adore,
You sustain us evermore,
And your seven gifts do send.*

*Give us comfort when we die;
Give us life with you on high;
Give us joys that never end.*

It was a great teaching that my mother gave me on that cold January day. I realized that a life lived in confident faith and hope blossoms forth into a powerful tranquility. The Holy Spirit was truly active in my mother's life, even in the midst of her dying.

Pope Paul VI continues in his exhortation "On Christian Joy" with a very clear statement about this paschal (Easter) joy. "Paschal joy is not just that of a possible transfiguration: it is the joy of the new presence of the Risen Christ dispensing to His own the Holy Spirit, so that He may dwell with them. The Holy Spirit is given to the Church as the inexhaustible principle of her joy as the bride of the glorified Christ....The Holy Spirit stirs up in the Church divine life and the apostolate.

"Thus the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son and is their living mutual love, is henceforth communicated to the People of the New Covenant, and to each soul ready for His secret action. He makes us His dwelling-place."

What a wonderful presence the Holy Spirit is in our lives. How many times have we wondered how we did something that seemed impossible for us at the time. How did we

*Be certain that
the Spirit
of Our Lord
is in you and
wants to
act in you
as it pleases
the Father.*

*The Spirit wants
to produce in you
the feelings and
attitudes of
the heart
of Jesus.*

Francis Libermann

get through a difficult period of our lives when everything around us seemed hopeless. At such times we cried out in a prayer of desperation and experienced heroic strength to face what laid before us.

The longer we live the older we become and the more experiences we gather into our lives. Sometimes

we become sour about life or we can feel that we were given a raw deal in life. This can create within us an attitude of remorse. Negativity can enter into our lives and we are blinded to the many wonderful things happening all around us. All we tend to see is cloudiness in every facet of our life.

There is a way out of this foginess. We can pray for an increase of joy. We can choose to live our lives differently. We can ask the Holy Spirit to flood us with comfort and joy. This is the way many of the saints chose to live. Surrendering their lives over to God.

Our patron, St. Gerard, is an example of one who, in the midst of some very difficult circumstances, did not allow negative energy to have power over him. He chose to see the hardship before him as an invitation to conform his life to Christ. He asked himself, what is the Christ-like response toward the moment? We can

sometimes cut ourselves short by thinking we don't have the strength to live like the saints. The Holy Spirit is within each of us. All we have to do is give in to his presence.

St. Gerard had to deal with depression many times in his life. It wasn't easy to be part of a newly founded Congregation. Life was at times very demanding and overwhelming. One day as he was walking down the corridor he was heard murmuring to himself, "I can bear it no longer." A friend hearing this as he passed Gerard was shocked to hear this coming from the usually cheerful Gerard. Catching up with Gerard he knew what he needed. After inquiring of Gerard what the problem was he made the Sign of the Cross on Gerard's heart and gave him a hug. With that gesture of encouragement, Gerard was freed from his discouragement and resumed his usual cheerfulness.

It seems that people loved to be in the presence of St. Gerard because of his cheerful nature. What a wonderful example we have in this holy man of God. There are many stories of how he would do funny and silly pranks in order to bring laughter to a sometimes overly serious event.

We have many of St. Gerard's letters in which he encourages people to see the lighter side of life. St. Gerard teaches us to allow the joyfulness of God's spirit to influence our lives. "Be cheerful" he would say to a young religious

"Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God." Leon Bloy

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Sister who was having a hard time because she missed her music book with its favorite tunes. The next time Gerard was able to get to the city of Naples he would find the music and send it to the saddened Sister with a funny note saying, "play joyfully for the Lord."

Taking a closer look at the source of St. Gerard's joy we find that it stems from his going out of himself toward the needs of others. Regardless of his own feelings, reaching out toward others always brought joy to his heart. We could say the less we center on our own needs and wants and the more we center on the needs of others produces the joy of God in us.

Let us ask St. Gerard to pray to the Holy Spirit for us that we may awaken within ourselves the "joy of the Holy Spirit."

Pope Paul VI reminds us in his letter "On Christian Joy" of the importance of this Pentecostal gift. "It is the Spirit of Pentecost who today leads very many followers of Christ along the paths of prayer, in the cheerfulness of filial praise, towards the humble and joyous service of the disinherited and of those on the margins of society. For joy cannot be dissociated from sharing. In God Himself, all is joy because all is giving."



The Heart of the Matter

From the Internet

Please pray for my husband and me. We are desperately trying to have a baby. We have been trying for two years. I had two miscarriages and I am looking for help.

We are good people and we would be loving and caring parents. I have been praying to St. Gerard constantly and ask all of you to please ask him to hear our prayers and give us the precious gift of parenthood. Thank you very much. I will be praying for you.

Please pray for me to have a baby, I have been married for ten years with four miscarriages. I have been praying for a child for a long time. Please help me to pray also. Thank you.

Please pray for me and my baby. I am four months pregnant and have been told there are problems with the baby. We can only pray between the weekly checkups that all will be fine and we will have a healthy baby.

Please pray that the foster child we have had for three years stays with us as a forever child. Pray that all parties making decisions for his life keep his best interests at heart. I thank God for all the blessings in my life.

Please pray for my brother's family who are in a crisis situation. May they draw upon God and one another for strength.

From Texas

We have previously had two miscarriages and believed we were unable to have any children of our own. We recently found out my wife is pregnant. Although we weren't expecting this, we are most certainly grateful and happy God has blessed us with this opportunity. We pray for a healthy pregnancy, healthy delivery, and healthy, happy, spirit-filled child.