



League of St. Gerard

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Drawing Close to God

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When I was a young boy, I remember my mom asking if I wanted to be a saint. Without hesitation I answered, "Of course!" Even though the experiences of life have placed various distractions before me, I still have that desire, yet I must admit, not always with the same enthusiasm.

Young Gerard always wanted to be a saint, too. But he never wavered in his determination to attain that status before God. Gerard lived *in God*, and the thought of God was his life, his breath. Gerard was so attracted by God that his whole life was immersed in the greatness of God.

He was always contemplating the love of God for all of creation. One of the gifts that resulted from his constant reflection on God was an ability to understand and express clearly some of the most difficult theological lessons, even though he was basically uneducated.

Another gift, however, was the realization of how small and insignificant he was in comparison to the immensity of God, and of the sinfulness in his own life compared to God's goodness.

We also know that Gerard was able to read people's minds, especially in regard to their spiritual state. Those living in sin could not deny what Gerard knew, and they repented when he confronted them. When he met someone leading a holy life, he could not contain himself and so he rejoiced and encouraged them.

Once he was a guest in the Capucci home in Lacedonia. The family had three beautiful daughters. While Gerard was conversing with the girls,

their mother thought it was improper for a religious Brother to speak so freely with such young women. Gerard knew what she was thinking. So he turned to her and said, "I am speaking to your girls from the heart of God. But as a prudent mother, you need to be concerned about the company your daughters keep, and I don't blame you for that."

Gerard was not being taken in by the beauty of the three young ladies. Rather, he recognized the presence of God in their spirit. He

knew that God loved them very much, and that they loved God in return.

Gerard considered the virtue of prudence to be supremely important.

That's why he praised Mrs. Capucci for her concern. He also counseled a newly elected Mother Superior to

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***My steps have held
fast to your paths;
my feet have
not slipped.
I call upon you,
for you will
answer me,
O God;
incline your ear
to me,
hear my words.
Wondrously show
your steadfast love,
O savior of those who
seek refuge
from their adversaries
at your right hand.
Guard me as the
apple of your eye;
hide me in
the shadow of your
wings.***

PSALM 17:5-8

“be full of infinite prudence” while dealing with the issues of the nuns in her monastery.

Gerard saw and judged things as God does. Because of that, he lived in complete serenity, no matter what happened to him. His closeness to God left him totally free to act as he believed God wanted him to.

As we know, Gerard was once mistakenly given a severe penance by St.

Alphonsus for an alleged impropriety. Gerard knew the accusation was false, and struggled greatly spiritually during the duration of the penance. Yet, in his freedom and outward serenity he was still able to see God in the face of the superior because he knew God loved the man. Upon meeting him in the hallway, Gerard remarked, “My father, you have the face of an angel. Every time I see it I feel totally consoled.”

The Will of God

Gerard submerged himself in the contemplation of God. The Scriptures tell us that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Gerard came to visualize God simply as a *will to love*. In other words, God wants to do nothing else but love. For a person, then, to follow the will of God, he or she also must want to love, and must in fact, *love* others. God has shared his love with all of humanity so we can do just that.

That is how we become holy—by getting on the same wavelength as God; by willing what God wills. We do that by prayer and by regular reflection on God.

In a letter to a nun, Gerard wrote, “The center of true love for God consists in surrendering totally to him, conforming in everything to his divine will, and being that way for all eternity.” That is a wonderful definition of obedience, which for Gerard was another preeminent virtue.

The heroic nature of Gerard’s obedience to his superiors released unimagin-

able energies in his exhausted body. In 1755, the construction needs of the monastery in Materdomini were great. The archbishop had instructed priests of the diocese to welcome any Redemptorist taking up a collection in their parish. Since Gerard was popular among the people of the area, they wanted to send him. But Gerard was in bed, gravely ill. Even so, he offered to go gladly. The superior feared such a trip would be too much for Gerard. So he placed his hand upon Gerard’s head and prayed silently, “I want you, in the name of the Holy Trinity, to be well.”

Gerard began to smile—a little at first, but then gradually more and more—until finally he began to giggle. The superior was perturbed at this and demanded to know why he was laughing. Gerard answered, “Yes, sir, I wish to obey. I wish to be well.” The priest was astonished that Gerard had read his thoughts, and even more amazed that he actually got up and went on the journey to beg for alms.

It was also the beginning of a journey that led to Gerard’s death. It might be said that his obedience was also his martyrdom. He obeyed, literally, to the point of shedding blood since tuberculosis was the cause of his death.

Heroic Obedience

Where did Gerard’s incredible power to obey so radically originate? In his love for God! In his personal “rules” for life he included:



**“Love God greatly;
be always united to God;
do everything for God;
love everything for God.
Conform to his holy will.
Suffer everything for God.”**

It was his *love for God* that gave birth to his desire to carry out God’s will so perfectly. In a letter to some Carmelite nuns Gerard wrote, “When the will of God is at stake, everything else takes second place.” He wrote further, “I cannot understand how a spiritual soul, consecrated to God, can...not wish to please always and in all

things the beautiful will of God....”

One time, the superior sent him on a journey to a nearby town and told him to take the donkey with him. Gerard walked the entire distance, leading the donkey by its reigns. Upon his return, seeing how worn out he was and the terrible condition of his feet, the superior asked why he hadn’t used the donkey as instructed. Gerard said, “Your Reverence ordered me to take the donkey along, not to ride it.”

Gerard’s obedience in instances like this one seemed

extreme. Yet his aim for perfect and absolute obedience came from his perfect and absolute love for God. Everything he did was for God. And he tried to follow instructions down to the very letter, in order that everything he did might be done as perfectly as possible. This is an example of totally surrendering one’s own will, even one’s common sense, for the sake of doing what someone else (in this case, God) wants.

His perfect love for God translated into a perfect love for his fellow human beings, as well. Because he was so close to God, he knew the will of God so intimately that he could call upon God to care for others as if it was his own will. In a letter about a young nun who was quite ill, he wrote to one of her sisters, “I don’t want her dead. Tell my dear God that I want her to become more holy and die very old...And this time may God let it be done as we wish.” While these words sound presumptuous, Gerard could write them only because he already knew that it was God’s will, too.

Personal Mysticism

That was the mystical side of Gerard. Does it seem too far above our own spirituality? It’s not, really. All of us are called to the same deep love for God. Loving God brings us to a profound knowledge of the God who lives in the depths of our own hearts, and of his will. And it sets us free to do great and courageous things for God. It makes our personal desires the same as God’s.

Such love is already mystical, even if it doesn't seem to be, because it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. That's the great lesson St. Gerard teaches us about loving God and about the mysticism in our own lives. It's not up to us to achieve high degrees of mysticism on our own—only the Holy Spirit can do that for us. But God wants us to have it, if we are willing and open to it. St. Gerard will help us:

O dear Brother Gerard, pray to God whom you loved with such great ardor. Pray for me. Make my heart burn in the love of Jesus Christ.



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EDITED BY NOEL LONDOÑO



O God,
who wished
to draw Gerard
to yourself,
even as a youth,
and has made him
conform to the image
of your crucified Son,
grant that by
following his example,
we too may be
transformed into
the same image.

The Heart of the Matter

From Mississippi

I am writing to share my wonderful story. Two years after my husband and I got married we decided to have a baby. I got pregnant and had a miscarriage. We were very sad. Six months later I was pregnant again only to lose that baby, too. The doctor advised us to wait a year. That was the longest, most trying year. When I was in the hospital earlier, my priest came to see me and introduced me and my family to St. Gerard. We all prayed faithfully for us to have a baby. Three years after my first miscarriage we had our first healthy boy and two and a half years later we had our second. I will forever be grateful to St. Gerard for our two healthy, happy sons. How blessed we truly are.

From California

Many years ago I promised to write my story in thanksgiving. My son was born with brain damage and could barely talk at six years of age. With many prayers to St. Gerard he has improved greatly. He will never be one hundred percent, but he has accomplished so much.

From the Internet

I would like to submit a prayer request to help my three-year-old son regain his full health and vigor. He has been sick and we would like to have St. Gerard intercede for our family at this time of need.

From Colorado

My husband and I have been together for sixteen years. God has blessed us with the gift of each other and for that I am very thankful. We have been together through a lot of ups and downs in our lives. We have tried to have children for a very, very long time. I have no problem being able to conceive, I am just not able to carry a full nine months. The doctors have no answers. They say I am totally healthy and everything in my system seems to be working the way it should.

I try to keep my faith and I always try to keep my husband filled with hope and faith. I have had the misfortune of having four miscarriages and two tubal pregnancies. I wrote this letter to ask for prayers. We very much need the prayers of everyone right now. I love the St. Gerard newsletter—it is so uplifting. Besides, I won't take "no" for an answer from God. I am a little bit like St. Gerard!