

April 19

St. Gianna Beretta Molla

1922–1962 • Italy

Gianna Beretta was the tenth of thirteen children. Her family was very devout and passed on to Gianna the gift of the Catholic Faith. Together as a family they prayed a daily Rosary, attended daily Mass, and consecrated themselves to the Sacred Heart.

As a child, Gianna spent much of her time outdoors and loved to go hiking and skiing. She also felt a special call to serve others. She was active in her Catholic youth community and did volunteer work to take care of the poor through the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Her call to serve others was so strong that she went to medical school to become a doctor. When she opened her own clinic, she was most drawn to serving mothers, children, the poor, and the elderly. Gianna viewed her practice of medicine as a mission from God.

After much prayer, Gianna realized that she was called to the vocation of marriage. She wanted to raise a Christian family where her children could learn to love God and become holy. She married Pietro Molla, a Catholic engineer, and had three children. The happy couple called their children their “treasures.”

When Gianna became pregnant a fourth time, the doctors discovered that Gianna had a deadly tumor in her uterus. To get rid of the tumor, the doctors gave Gianna three options. The first two options would get rid of the tumor, but they would also cause the death of her unborn child. The third option would remove the tumor and leave her child unharmed, but that would make giving birth dangerous. Gianna was a strong Catholic and a doctor dedicated to saving lives. She knew that the life of her unborn child was sacred and precious to God. She bravely chose to only remove the tumor and save the life of her child, despite the potential danger to her own life.

When the time came for Gianna to give birth, she heroically told the doctors to save her child’s life over her own if they had to. She gave birth to a healthy baby girl and was so happy to see her! Sadly, Gianna died a week later due to complications from her pregnancy, even though the doctors tried very hard to save her.

Gianna Beretta Molla was canonized on May 16, 2004 and stands as a witness to life and the importance of family. Pietro Molla attended her canonization and is the first husband to attend the canonization of his wife. St. Gianna Beretta Molla, bless all the pregnant mothers that I know!

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