



**A Message from the Superior General  
On the Occasion of the Feast of St. Gerard Majella – 2012**

My fraternal greetings to my dear confreres, sisters, lay associates and friends,

*For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)*

1. Again we celebrate the feast of our saintly Brother Gerard Majella. For us members of the Redemptorist family, the liturgical memorial of St. Gerard is a happy, festive day because we celebrate the holiness of God manifest in the life of our confrere. We must not forget that every celebration of our sainted and blessed confreres is an occasion for us to renew our joy in being able to continue the Redeemer in the announcement of the Gospel to poorest and most abandoned. That is how they lived and how we are called to live.

From the years of our formation in the Redemptorist live, we have learned much about Gerard: his infancy and adolescence in Muro Lucano, this meeting of the Redemptorists in a mission, the way he escaped his home, his constant prayers and penance, his great love for Jesus Crucified. St. Gerard was indeed a very special person! In his life there are many signs but I would like to recall only two characteristics in his way of living out his sanctity: obedience to God and closeness to the little people.

2. The maxim found in his spiritual journey is confirmed by his life: “Love God very much, unite oneself always to God, do all for God, love all for God, conform myself completely to his holy will, suffer much for God.” (*His Rule of Life*) Likewise, whoever goes to his shrine in Materdomini still can see above the portal to his cell: “Here the will of God is done, as God wishes and as long as God wishes.” Gerard knew obedience as doing the will of God in everything. He is an eloquent example of obedience, not as the declining of responsibility or fear of the risks of freed, as some might think. Gerard lived as if Christ himself lived because his obedience was born from the liberty of his heart as Son. Indeed, Gerard’s identification with Jesus was a reality that was so natural that, like Christ, he did God’s will happily, even joyfully. It was not onerous for him to obey because his heart was free, conquered and renewed by Gospel liberty.

Thus, a new heart that lives the liberty of the Son of God no longer feels the need of conforming itself to the well-to-do of this world, since the logic of his life is different. In fact, we see in the life of our dear Brother Gerard a Christian liberty that has not made peace with dominant power, but which centers itself on the simple and the poor. He was so close to the



littlest people that everyone felt ease in asking him for anything. Even today, St. Gerard is closest to the people as seen in the great number of those devoted to him.

3. Brothers and sisters, we *were called to freedom (Galatians 5:13)*. The consecrated life of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer that we have embraced is a road of identifying ourselves with the filial life of Jesus the Redeemer, and so it is our task to always grow in this liberty. Free in Christ, Gerard teaches us, obedience to the will of God will be the great joy of our life.

Therefore, let us renew in our hearts and joy of our Christian vocation: we are the beloved children of God called to live as brothers and sisters. With renewed hearts, we can surely revive our hopes and our structures to become closer to the poor and abandoned. Our evangelical mission to do the Will of our "Dearest God," as Gerard used to say, will be our joy. I pray that the intercession of St. Gerard will always accompany us so that we may never lack joy in our missionary life!

4. St. Gerard is a model for all of us in how to follow the Redeemer. But he is a special model for our religious Brothers, as General Statute 05 reminds us. We cannot overlook the many confreres who, like Gerard, have lived and now live as Brothers in our communities. Their presence in our Redemptorist mission is a reason for joy and a lasting sign that the freedom of the Gospel is alive in our fraternity. Indeed, it is urgent that our vocation promotion proclaims the life of the religious Brother as a path for living our Redemptorist life to the fullest.

I greet especially all our Redemptorist Brothers who, like St. Gerard Majella, are the daily reminder the religious profession of Redemptorists makes us all to be true missionaries (Constitution 54). I want to repeat that your presence in our life and mission is very important, for otherwise without you our religious family would not be a true family. So then, I ask you to show everyone your joy in being a Brother among brothers, so that by doing so many young men will discover the beauty of religious life. May God encourage and bless you always!

West End, October 6, 2012

**Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.**  
*Superior General*