



THE LOVING CHOICE

ARCHDIOCESE OF DETROIT NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 9 - Issue 4

October 2003

The Mothers' Saint, 1726-1755

Saint Gerard was born at Muro in 1726. Sickly at birth, he was baptized that same day. He became a tailor like his father, and entered the Redemptorist Order as a lay brother in 1752. As porter of the house at Caposele he daily fed and clothed hundreds of the poor, apparently in a miraculous fashion. Other miracles were attributed to him during his lifetime. He is known to have raised a young boy from death, to have multiplied food for a poor family, to have saved fishermen in stormy weather.

Always in poor health, St. Gerard died shortly before midnight of October 16, 1755 at the age of 29. He was beatified by pope Leo XIII in 1893, and canonized in 1904 by pope St. Pius X.

Many miracles happened after he died. A young mother, close to death at childbirth, touched a handkerchief that St. Gerard had given to her years before when she was just a young girl. Both she and the child lived. Other mothers were helped by the intercession of Saint Gerard. He is venerated as the patron saints of mothers.

Mothers and mothers-to-be are encouraged to enroll in the League of St. Gerard; to do so write to:

The Redemptorists,
One Liguori Drive
Liguori, MO 63057-9999.

Send articles, questions, suggestions, letters, to the editor, Dorothy Stapel by: phone: 313-237-4679 or 313-292-1294 or fax: 313-237-5867 e-mail: nfp@aod.org
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Detroit, MI 48226-2605

Children are forever

There are many more miscarriages than assumed. Three in four fertilized eggs do not implant. After implantation, especially if it occurs late (after 12 days), one of three babies does not live past the third week of life. Such an early loss is usually experienced as a late, heavy period, while the woman may not even realize that she was pregnant. After three weeks the survival rate goes up to 90%, after six weeks to 95%, and after three months to 97.5%, while during the last three months it rises to 99%.

The survival rate of medically confirmed pregnancies is six out of seven. If the first pregnancy resulted in a miscarriage the survival rate for the next one is four of five; this rate goes down quickly with each unsuccessful attempt. Yet well over half the women with recurrent miscarriages can have a successful pregnancy later.

Some miscarriages are caused by a mismatch of genes of the man and woman; others are caused by a medical condition. General health considerations, such as enough rest, good nutrition, vitamin and mineral balance, and moderate exercise, with little or no tobacco, alcohol, coffee or drug consumption can improve chances of a baby's survival.

Although many women experience a miscarriage, it is a taboo subject, and women feel that they are not allowed to share their experience without censure. Fortunately this situation is changing and support groups are forming. Giving the baby a name, or a memorial service for the baby, a tree planted in the baby's memory, a book or box with keepsakes, and prayer are ways that can help with our grief.

The Lord opens the womb

Infertility in the United States, as in some other developed countries is rising at an alarming rate. Our population is not replacing itself, but is growing only because of immigration. The lower birth rate may be self induced by the pill, the IUD, the condom, abortion, or/and sterilization.

It may also result from the environment we live in. Dual income couples often experience high stress because of work environment or schedule changes. Some exercises and lack of nutrition through use of processed foods may compromise a couple's fertility. The hormones, chemicals, vibrations, noise, heat, light and radiation in and around our homes, cars, work place, stores, and farms can affect our fertility.

About a third of couples with infertility concerns have been able to conceive after being taught an awareness of fertile mucus. Some couples, whose temperature chart indicates a need for medical intervention have been helped by a doctor's prescription for a natural progesterone product immediately after ovulation. Others whose fertility is compromised by their work environment have found that a long vacation, or a complete change of job has made conception possible.

Of course, it is God who opens and closes the womb. Many couples have found that the impossible happens with prayer (1Sam 1:1-2:11; Lk 1:5-80). Every year the Archdiocese of Detroit celebrates a mass for couples who wish to conceive. This year the mass is scheduled for Sunday October 26 at 10:00 AM in Blessed Sacrament Cathedral with Bishop Earl Boyea as the celebrant.