

Gianna Beretta Molla

(1922-1962 AD)



April 27



St. Gianna Beretta Molla

Gianna Beretta was born on October 4, 1922, near Milan, Italy. She grew up in a Christian home, and her parents carefully passed on to her their Catholic faith. As a teenager, she was active as a member of Catholic Action groups. When she was sixteen, she made up her mind that she would rather die than commit a mortal (very serious) sin, and that she wanted to do everything for Jesus.

Her parents' deaths, four months apart in 1942, were a heavy blow to Gianna, who was just beginning medical school at the University of Milan at that time. After six semesters, she continued her preparation at the University of Pavia, where she earned a doctorate in medicine on November 30, 1949.

Gianna opened a clinic in 1950. She soon had many patients. In addition to her work as a physician, Gianna also devoted her time to community projects. She continued to be an active member of Catholic

Action groups too. She organized talks and retreats, hikes and social events, and was very successful in reaching out to young people. Pietro Molla, a prosperous engineer, who belonged to one of the Catholic Action groups, was impressed with this dynamic young doctor who cared so much about others. Gianna had been planning to become a medical missionary sister in Brazil. Her brother was a priest there, and she knew he would be happy to have her help him. But once she got to know Pietro, Gianna wondered if it was God's will for her to marry him and start a family. After much prayer, she asked the advice of her confessor. The priest answered her, "If every good Catholic girl became a nun, there would be no Christian mothers!"

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Pietro and Gianna were married on September 24, 1955. Gianna was thirty-three. In 1956, their first child, Pierluigi was born. Mariolina was born in 1957, and Laura came along in 1959. After that, Gianna lost two more babies before they were born. But she became pregnant again in 1961. After two months, she started to experience pain, and her doctor found a tumor in her uterus. Before undergoing the necessary surgery, Gianna gave her surgeons strict orders to keep her unborn child safe. The following April, just before the baby was to be born, Gianna told her doctor, "If you have to choose between my life and the life of the baby, I demand that you save the baby's life." As a doctor herself, Gianna was well aware of the risks she was facing, and she wanted her wishes known.

On April 21, Gianna had a healthy baby girl, who was baptized Gianna Emanuela. But Gianna was dying from complications in the delivery. She asked Pietro to take her home so she could die in her own room. There, on April 28, 1962, Doctor Gianna Beretta Molla died. Her daughter, Gianna Emanuela, who has been called the "living relic of her mother," followed in her



mother's footsteps and became a doctor. On April 24, 1994, with understandable joy and pride, she was present at the beatification ceremony for her mother, who selflessly gave her own life so that she could live. Gianna was named a saint ten years later in 2004.

Jesus said, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for a loved one" (John 15:13). That's exactly what St. Gianna Beretta Molla did. Let's ask this brave and unselfish saint to help everyone understand the sacredness of human life.