

January Holy Hero

St. Gianna Beretta Molla

Feast Day April 28

Patron of mothers, unborn babies

By Stephanie Purcell for the Catholic Identity Committee



In January, we celebrate respect-life month, so this is a wonderful time to learn about a brave and faithful working mother, wife, doctor and saint. Gianna Beretta was born in Italy in 1922, the 10th of 13 children. She loved God very much from the time she was a little girl. She studied very hard in school and was very generous in helping the elderly and poor in her community. Gianna became a doctor in 1949 and opened a small town clinic that gave special help to mothers, babies, the elderly and the poor. She knew her job as a doctor was a special gift from God and even gave her help free to those who could not afford to pay.

Gianna married Pietro Molla in 1955 and looked forward to raising a truly Christian family. Gianna and Pietro were blessed with three healthy children. They loved family life and enjoyed activities such as mountain climbing and skiing. Gianna lived her busy life in a simple and faithful way.

Gianna and Pietro were happily expecting their fourth child when Gianna learned she had developed a cancerous tumor. Gianna refused any treatments that would harm the life of her unborn baby. Instead, she put her own health and life at risk in order to give her baby the best chance of survival. She prayed and trusted the Lord during this frightening time in her life. She told her family and the doctors that if they had to save either her or the baby, she wanted them to save her baby.

On April 21, 1962, Gianna Emanuela was born. Although the doctors did all they possibly could to save both mother and baby, and after repeating, "Jesus, I love you, Jesus, I love you", the loving mother died from a severe and painful infection. She was 39 years old. Gianna Beretta Molla was proclaimed a saint by Pope John Paul II on May 16, 2004. Her husband and her daughter, Gianna, who also became a doctor, were present at her canonization.