



Gianna Beretta Molla Wife, Mother,
Medical Doctor. She lived 1922-1962

Gianna Francesca Beretta was born in Magenta in Italy. She was the tenth of thirteen children in her family, only nine of whom survived to adulthood. When she was three, her family moved to Bergamo, and she grew up in the Lombardy region of Italy.

In 1942, Gianna began her study of medicine in Milan. Outside of her schooling, she was active in Azione Cattolica. She received a medical diploma in 1949, and opened an office in Mesero, near her hometown of Magenta, where she specialized in pediatrics.

Gianna hoped to join her brother, a missionary priest in Brazil, where she intended to offer her medical expertise in gynecology to poor women. However, her chronic ill health made this impractical, and she continued her practice in Italy.

In December 1954, Gianna met Pietro Molla, an engineer who worked in her office, ten years older than she. They were officially engaged the following April, and they married in September 1955.

The couple had Pierluigi, born in 1956, Maria Zita, in 1957 and Laura, was born in 1959. Gianna suffered two miscarriages after this.

In 1961, Gianna was once again expecting. During the second month, Gianna developed a fibroma on her uterus. After examination, the doctors gave her three choices: an abortion, which would save her life and allow her to continue to have children; a complete hysterectomy, which would preserve her life, but take the unborn child's life, and prevent further pregnancy; or removal of only the fibroma, with the potential of further complications. Roman Catholic teaching would have allowed her to obtain a hysterectomy, but would forbid an abortion. Wanting to preserve her child's life, she opted for the removal of the fibroma.

After the operation, complications continued throughout her pregnancy. Gianna was quite clear about her wishes, expressing to her family, "This time it will be a difficult delivery, and they may have to save one or the other -- I want them to save my baby."

On April 21, 1962, Good Friday of that year, Gianna went to the hospital, where her fourth child, Gianna Emanuela, was successfully delivered via Caesarean section. However, Gianna continued to have severe pain, and died of septic peritonitis 7 days after the birth.

Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, and officially canonized as a saint on May 16, 2004. Gianna's husband Pietro and their last child, Gianna, were present at the canonization ceremony.

The miracle recognized by the Roman Catholic Church to canonize Gianna Molla involved a mother, Elizabeth Comparini, who was 16 weeks pregnant in 2003 and sustained a tear in her placenta that drained her womb of all amniotic fluid. Because a normal term of pregnancy is 40 weeks, Comparini was told by her doctors the baby's chance of survival

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was "nil."

Through praying to Gianna Molla and asking for her intercession, Comparini delivered by Caesarean a healthy baby despite the lack of amniotic fluid for the remainder of her pregnancy.

In his homily at her canonization Mass, Pope John Paul II called Gianna "a simple, but more than ever, significant messenger of divine love."

This article is from Catholic Online

http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=6985

And the following from the Vatican website, with audio link to Pope John Paul II homily at her canonisation:

Gianna Beretta Molla (1922-1962)

Gianna Beretta was born in Magenta (Milan) October 4, 1922. Already as a youth she willingly accepted the gift of faith and the clearly Christian education that she received from her excellent parents. As a result, she experienced life as a marvellous gift from God, had a strong faith in Providence and was convinced of the necessity and effectiveness of prayer.

She diligently dedicated herself to studies during the years of her secondary and university education, while, at the same time, applying her faith through generous apostolic service among the youth of Catholic Action and charitable work among the elderly and needy as a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

After earning degrees in Medicine and Surgery from the University of Pavia in 1949, she opened a medical clinic in Mesero (near Magenta) in 1950. She specialized in Pediatrics at the University of Milan in 1952 and there after gave special attention to mothers, babies, the elderly and poor.

While working in the field of medicine-which she considered a "mission" and practiced as such-she increased her generous service to Catholic Action, especially among the "very young" and, at the same time, expressed her joie de vivre and love of creation through skiing and mountaineering. Through her prayers and those of others, she reflected upon her vocation, which she also considered a gift from God. Having chosen the vocation of marriage, she embraced it with complete enthusiasm and wholly dedicated herself "to forming a truly Christian family".

She became engaged to Pietro Molla and was radiant with joy and happiness during the time of their engagement, for which she thanked and praised the Lord. They were married on September 24, 1955, in the Basilica of St. Martin in Magenta, and she became a happy wife. In November 1956, to her great joy, she became the mother of Pierluigi, in December 1957 of Mariolina; in July 1959 of Laura. With simplicity and equilibrium she harmonized the demands of mother, wife, doctor and her passion for life.

In September 1961 towards the end of the second month of pregnancy, she was touched

by suffering and the mystery of pain; she had developed a fibroma in her uterus. Before the required surgical operation, and conscious of the risk that her continued pregnancy brought, she pleaded with the surgeon to save the life of the child she was carrying, and entrusted herself to prayer and Providence. The life was saved, for which she thanked the Lord. She spent the seven months remaining until the birth of the child in incomparable strength of spirit and unrelenting dedication to her tasks as mother and doctor. She worried that the baby in her womb might be born in pain, and she asked God to prevent that.

A few days before the child was due, although trusting as always in Providence, she was ready to give her life in order to save that of her child: “If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child - I insist on it. Save him”. On the morning of April 21, 1962, Gianna Emanuela was born. Despite all efforts and treatments to save both of them, on the morning of April 28, amid unspeakable pain and after repeated exclamations of “Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I love you», the mother died. She was 39 years old. Her funeral was an occasion of profound grief, faith and prayer. The Servant of God lies in the cemetery of Mesero (4 km from Magenta).

“Conscious immolation», was the phrase used by Pope Paul VI to define the act of Blessed Gianna, remembering her at the Sunday Angelus of September 23, 1973, as: “A young mother from the diocese of Milan, who, to give life to her daughter, sacrificed her own, with conscious immolation”. The Holy Father in these words clearly refers to Christ on Calvary and in the Eucharist.

Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, during the international Year of the Family.

Homily of John Paul II