

Feast Day: April 28

Patronage: Doctors, Unborn children, Mothers

Death: April 28, 1962



Saint Gianna Beretta Molla

Gianna Beretta was born to a very devoutly Catholic family. One of her siblings is a Servant of God (Enrico Beretta), and two of her other siblings went into religious vocations. Her uncle was a Monsignor. Gianna moved around a bit when she was younger, and was an active member of the parishes she was a member in. She completed the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in 1938, and she also had a few bouts of health complications that caused her to take breaks in her studies.

In 1942, Gianna entered into her studies to become a doctor. She went to medical school in Milan and after graduating in 1949, she opened up a pediatric practice in Mesoro, Italy, close to her hometown. She specialized in pediatrics with continued education at the Milanese college starting in 1952. She had a deep desire to join her brother, the priest, in his mission in Brazil, but her health problems prevented her from doing so.

She met her future husband, Pietro Molla, an engineer, in December 1954, who was also from a very devoutly Catholic family. They were married the next year in 1955 and had 4 children together. During the second month of her fourth pregnancy, Gianna developed a fibroma, or a tumor, on her uterus. Her doctors gave her three options: remove the fibroma alone, which could cause a lot of health complications, remove the entire uterus, killing the unborn child in the process and preventing Gianna from having any more children in the future, or aborting the child, which would have allowed her to continue to have children in the future but would remove the fibroma and kill her unborn child as well. Though Catholic teaching would have permitted Gianna to remove her uterus in a hysterectomy, she told the doctors to put the child's life above her own. She opted to remove only the fibroma. She endured many complications after this surgery and throughout the remainder of her pregnancy, and she remained steadfast in her vocation as both a mother and a doctor.

When it came time to deliver her child, Gianna prayed that the child would not be in pain. She made her wishes very clear that the baby must be saved above her own life. On April 21, 1962, her daughter, Gianna Emanuela Molla, was delivered via C-section in perfect health. Despite the doctor's best efforts to save both lives, Dr. Gianna Beretta Molla died a week later due to septic peritonitis. The two miracles that she interceded for were both for expectant and new mothers. She was canonized on May 16, 2004 in the presence of her husband and children, including her daughter Gianna, and this was the first time a husband ever witnessed his wife's canonization.