

# THE IMMACULATA



## Father talks on Abigail, a woman of wisdom

Abigail had a husband, Nabel who was churlish and ill natured, Abigail however was a very prudent woman. It came to pass that Nabel had an argument with the future King, David. David set out with an army to destroy Nabel, Abigail heard about this and without telling her husband, set out with supplies and gifts to meet David. Upon meeting David, she implored him not to destroy her husband even though he was a foolish man. David accepted the request of Abigail.

On returning home to her husband, Nabel, she found him drunk. She didn't tell him what had happened until the following day, which upon hearing, Nabel had a heart attack and subsequently died. When David heard that Nabel had died he took Abigail as his wife.

We can derive from Abigail's story a woman of strength, courage, intelligence, integrity and wisdom. Her husband was a man of wealth, but also a hard headed arrogant fool. Abigail understood her place as wife was to protect her husband and his property. Nabal was thoughtless, self-absorbed and arrogant.

Abigail was reasonable, wise and prudent in both her words and action. Abigail didn't waste time fretting over what to do, or bad mouthing her husband. She simply went to work to try to rectify the situation. This tells us several things about Abigail. She immediately went to work putting a plan into action to save her family. She knew it would do no good to go to Nabal and scold him for being such a fool. No, she understood that she must act decisively if there was any hope of saving her husband's life. Abigail set to work pulling together an impressive gift for David and his men.

Abigail sought to bring good to a husband so foolish that he was bent on harming himself. She was courageous. She understood that her husband's life and the lives of every man in her household were at stake. It would have been easy and even natural for fear to overtake Abigail in this setting. But Abigail was no quitter - she faced the oncoming disaster decisively and without apparent fear.

She was wise. Abigail's wisdom shines through over and over again in this story. Her decision to wait for the right moment to inform Nabal of her actions demonstrates wisdom and great restraint. She very wisely chose to wait until he was sober to inform him of how close he came to death. True wisdom is rare these days.

She was submissive. When she approached David, she honoured him. She acknowledges David's reputation as a

great leader, a future king and one who honours God in everything he does.

Her humility and courage calls David to a higher level of thinking and action, one more consistent with his own values. Submission is possibly the most important take away from the story of Abigail. The concept of Biblical submission is one of the most misunderstood teachings of the church.

Submission is not passive. The doormat image of a submissive wife is not a Biblical one. Abigail demonstrates what a true "help mate" looks like in this situation. Nabal and all the men of his household would have been dead without her help.

Biblical submission carries with it the intent of looking out for the best interests of others. The picture that comes to mind is of two people rowing a boat. If the stronger of the two always uses his or her full strength in rowing the boat would go around in circles and neither would get to their destination. Submission is give and take; the weaker leans on the stronger, the stronger surrenders and adapts to the weaker. When one is tired, the other takes over for a while. True submission and unity are inseparable characteristics of a good marriage.

Abigail did not react out of self-protection or self-promotion. Silence is not synonymous with submission. Amazingly, while technically she is in no way at fault, she takes the blame for this cultural faux pas. "My lord, let the blame be on me alone."

Her words remind David of who God says he is and his heart is turned to praise God because of her. She paves the way for God to deal with Nabal as He will. And God does deal with Nabal.

Abigail wisely chooses to tell Nabal when he has sobered up from his celebrating, he suffers a heart attack right on the spot. He lingered for ten days and then the Lord struck him and he died. This is a vivid reminder that God is a righteous judge.

God will not tolerate arrogance. Those men and women who do not possess a healthy fear of God will ultimately be punished. Abigail demonstrates an amazing combination of confidence and humility that is much needed in women leaders today. She was calm and purposeful in every decision. She maintained dignity, compassion, humility, strength, wisdom and grace in the middle of an oppressive and volatile situation. Stepping out with confidence and bowing low in humility— an invaluable combination of strengths.

## Miracles of the Brown Scapular

A priest relates that one day in a town near Chicago he was called to the bedside of a man who had been away from the Sacraments for many years.

"The man did not want to see me: he would not talk. Then I asked him to look at the little Scapular I was holding. 'Will you wear this if I put it on you? I ask nothing more.' He agreed to wear it, and within the hour he wanted to go to Confession and make his peace with God. This did not surprise me, because for over 700 years Our Lady has been working in this way through Her Scapular." On the very day that Our Lady gave the Scapular to Saint Simon Stock, he was hurriedly called by Lord Peter of Linton: "Come quickly, Father, my brother is dying in despair!"

Saint Simon Stock left at once for the bedside of the dying man. Upon arrival, he placed his large Scapular over the man, asking Our Blessed Mother to keep Her promise. Immediately the man repented, and died in the grace of God. That night the dead man appeared to his brother and said, "I have been saved through the most powerful Queen and the habit of that man as a shield."



### The Imitation of Christ by St Thomas à Kempis

My son, do not take it to heart if others think ill of you, and say unpleasant things about you. Consider yourself to be even worse than they imagine, and regard yourself as the weakest of men. If your inner life is strong, you will not pay much heed to passing words. A wise man remains silent when beset by evil; he turns to Christ in his heart, and is untroubled by man's judgements. Do not let your peace depend upon what people say of you, for whether they speak good or ill of you makes no difference to what you are. True peace and joy is to be found in Christ alone. He who is neither anxious to please nor afraid to displease men enjoys true peace. All unrest of heart and distraction of mind spring from disorderly affections and groundless fears.

### Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
taking, as He did, this sinful world  
as it is, not as I would have it;  
trusting that He will make all things right  
if I surrender to His Will;  
that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with Him  
forever in the next.  
Amen.

## *The Art of Giving Children Faults by Fr Raoul Plus SJ*

There are two great means of developing faults in children: first by giving them a bad example; second, by spoiling them.

**Giving them a bad example:** All men are imitators. Children are more exposed than others to the appeal of imitation. They love to imitate adults, and by preference those within their immediate circle, particularly their parents who appear to them as exceptional beings in whom there is nothing reprehensible.

Is the mother vain? The daughter too will be vain; she will speak, act, dress, not for an ideal of beauty in keeping with her condition or her station, but for the favourable opinion of others. She will strive to surpass all her companions, her friends, by the cut of her clothes and the extremes of style.

She will attach a considerable, yes even an exaggerated, importance to the tiniest details of her appearance. She will suffer a severe attack of jealousy when she believes someone outshines her.

Is the father proud? Does he try to exaggerate his good points and belittle those of others or refuse to recognize them? His son will be a snob, disdainful of others, self-sufficient, pretentious, arrogant, obstinate, and will manifest no understanding whatever as far as others are concerned.

Do the parents tend to gossip? Are they contentious? Sharp in their speech? Their children will be intemperate in speech, quarrelsome, envious.

Are the parents deceitful? The children are in danger of becoming liars.

Are the parents generally indiscreet in conversation, passing judgments thoughtlessly? The children, already too much inclined to judge everything from the height of their grandeur, will pass snap judgments, unjust and untimely criticisms.

Do the parents manifest their love of ease, of wealth, even a thirst to acquire riches by any means? The children are likely to be selfish, attached to their own comfort, even cheaters on occasion.

**Spoiling them:** Some parents are too harsh and do not encourage their children at all. Others, by far the greater number, are too indulgent, flatter their children, and satisfy all their whims. Parents who spoil their children do not seek their good, or love them for their sakes. No, it is a form of self-love; the parents seek themselves in the child. Such parents cannot put firmness into the education they try to give; they cannot punish when necessary; prevent escapades; secure obedience; they cannot defend themselves against any caprices.

“But if I lack kindness,” you say, “my child will withdraw from me; in difficult times he will avoid speaking to me; I shall not have his confidence. If on the contrary I have multiplied my kindnesses to him, he will remain open; I shall keep a hold on him.”

There is no question here of failing in kindness; it is a question of forbidding oneself any weakness. Far from having to fear the loss of the child's confidence, if one is judiciously firm, the parents shall win the child's confidence because they are wisely strong.

When the children understand that in the marks of affection their parents bestow on them they are not seeking something personal but only the good of their children, the children will be quick to realize that in the severity their parents inflict on them, there is likewise no trace of caprice, but only the desire for their good as before. It is precisely that realization which has educational force—this contact with strong and detached souls.



## *The Mother's Saint*

Gerard Majella was born at Muro, in Southern Italy, April 6th, 1726. His parents were an ordinary hard working couple, rich only in their faith. So delicate was the new comer at his birth that he had to be baptised immediately. However, instead of going to join the angels, he survived to spend a short life as an angel on earth.

Divine favours were lavished on Gerard even during childhood. For instance it was the great Archangel St. Michael, who miraculously gave him his first Holy Communion.

At the age of twelve, owing to the death of his father, Gerard had to become the bread winner for his mother and three sisters. He followed his father's trade; tailoring. As an apprentice tailor and later as a bishop's valet he had to put up with a lot of harsh treatment but he bore it all with heroic fortitude and without complaint. On the death of the bishop, Gerard opened a tailoring business of his own. But he was not meant for the business world. God was calling him.

Twice he applied to become a Capuchin. Each time he was rejected on account of his frail health. Then the Redemptorist Fathers came to preach a mission at Muro. He stormed them with his entreaties to become a lay-brother. In vain.

Knowing that he would follow the fathers as he had threatened to do, his mother, when the time for their departure came, locked him in his room. He escaped through the window and left a brief note, "I have gone to become a Saint."

On overtaking the Fathers, the argument started all over again. At last in sheer desperation the superior of the missionaries sent him to the Novitiate House, with the covering note. "I send you a useless brother".

Gerard proved those unflattering credentials to be hopelessly wrong. Far from being useless he actually did the work of several. He was made for the religious life; so much so that his period of probation was shortened.

He spent only six years in religion. But how glorious they were! By his penances, his humility, his obedience, he showed himself a true disciple of his Crucified Master. When accompanying the Fathers on missions he outstripped them all in his zeal for souls. His life was one big prayer - one long act of ardent love for Jesus and Mary.

Little wonder then, that it received the divine stamp of miracles. So numerous and astounding were the prodigies performed by Gerard that people called him the "Wonder Worker". In particular he had the gift of reading consciences and by the startling revelations that he made to people of their own secret sins, he induced many to obtain forgiveness by a good confession. Many a sick child, many a poor cripple, he cured merely by a command. Several cases are recorded of miraculous help given to expectant mothers who were in grave danger. So enormously did this particular favour multiply after his death that he became known as "The Saint of a Happy Delivery".

Gerard died at midnight, October, 15th, 1755, aged twenty-nine years and six months. He was canonised by Pope Pius X, December 11th 1904 and October 16th was fixed as his feast.

From his place in heaven, our saint is still a wonder-worker; more so than ever, for he now has the whole world as the theatre of his operations. His faithful clients everywhere cannot find words to express their gratitude to their heavenly intercessor and patron.

Because of the difficulties experienced in following his own vocation, he is invoked as the Patron of vocations. Because of his gift of reading the consciences of others he is hailed as the Patron of a Good Confession. And because of the special protection he gives to expectant mothers and to sick children he is acclaimed throughout the world as the Patron of Mothers - the Mother's Saint.

