

# Learn About the Saints

## St. Gianna Beretta Molla

### Biography

St. Gianna Beretta Molla (1922–1962) was born in northern Italy, near Milan. Her parents were both Third Order Franciscans, and she was the 10th of 13 children. At just 12 years old, Gianna became a member of Catholic Action, a movement that advocated for a more intense spiritual life for Catholic laity. She would continue as a member and leader of the movement for the rest of her life.

In 1942, both of Gianna's parents died, only four months apart. Despite the loss, she continued to be active, joining the St. Vincent de Paul Society, serving the elderly and sick. In 1949, Gianna completed her degrees in Medicine and Surgery from the University of Pavia. She opened her own medical office in 1950. Two years later, she earned a specialty in pediatrics. While medicine was her calling, she also enjoyed skiing and mountaineering, the theater, the opera, and concerts.

She and Pietro Molla fell in love and were married in September 1955, fulfilling Gianna's vocation. Their first child, Pierluigi, was born the next year. By 1959, they had been blessed with two more children, Maria Zita and Laura. Gianna was pregnant with her fourth child in 1961 when unusual pains revealed a uterine tumor. She elected to have a surgical procedure to remove the tumor, but continued the pregnancy. This was incredibly risky for her at the time, but she insisted that whatever happened to her, the child should be saved. Gianna carried the baby to term, and Gianna Emanuela was born by C-section in April 1962. One week later, the saint succumbed to septic peritonitis, giving her life for her daughter's.

Gianna is the first woman doctor and working mom to be canonized. She was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, and officially canonized on May 16, 2004. St. Gianna Beretta Molla, pray for us!

