

FEAST OF SAINT GIANNA BERETTA MOLA - April 28, 2009

Gospel: (John 20: 19-31)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “*Peace be with you.*” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.*”

Reflection:

Blessed Gianna Beretta Molla was born in Italy on October 4, 1922, the tenth of thirteen children. In March 1950 she obtained her degree in medicine and surgery from the University of Pavia, the same school where Blessed Frederic Ozanam’s father had obtained his degree in medicine. It was during medical school that Gianna became an active member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Gianna made a pilgrimage to Lourdes seeking discernment in her vocation. Upon her return, she fell in love with Pietro Molla, and taking this as an answer to her prayers they were married on September 24, 1955. Gianna opened a clinic along with her brother Ferdinando, also a physician. The clinic was located in a small town of two thousand people, and she was especially generous to the poor sick, providing medicine and money for those in need.

Vincentian Meditation:

Gianna and Pietro had three children. Each pregnancy was a risk because of her fragile health. After a number of miscarriages, Gianna became pregnant with her fourth child. Toward the end of the second month she began to experience pain, and a fibrous tumor in the ovary was diagnosed. As a doctor, she knew the risk she was running. She kept her suffering to herself. On the way to the hospital on April 20, 1962, Gianna told her husband Pietro: “**If they should ask which of the two lives they should save, do not hesitate...first, the life of the child.**” On April 21 she delivered a baby girl, but septic peritonitis set in, and she died on April 29, 1962. Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, in the presence of her husband and four children. Blessed Gianna has been called a “mother – martyr for the love of God and in obedience to his commandment...” Gianna was a true Vincentian!. (US Manual, P.188-190)

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence)

How can the Society celebrate and imitate its own Saint Gianna?

Closing Prayer: (Words of Gianna’s son, Pierluigi, at her beatification)

“My mother knew how to live her earthly, daily existence with simplicity, balance and constant service, all in a beautiful harmony, first as a young student and profession person, as a woman, then as wife and mother. Her generous commitment to and involvement in Catholic Action and to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, along with her joie de vivre, was crowned with her love of piano, painting, tennis, mountain climbing, skiing, the symphony, theatre and traveling.”

Saint Gianna, intercede for us!