

Gemma was introduced to the priest overseeing the cause for Brother Gabriel's canonization, Father Germano. He became her spiritual director. Meanwhile, Brother Gabriel appeared to her, promising that she would also wear the Passionist habit.

Jesus allowed Gemma to see her guardian angel. She and her angel would sometimes hold contests to see who could praise God more fervently. 'He' taught her, consoled her, and even delivered letters to Fr. Germano when she had no money for stamps. The priest, who for some time lived in Rome, was surprised that her letters began 'appearing'. After he prayed for an answer as to how this was happening, the next letter was delivered by a boy who knocked and asked for Fr. Germano.

In May 1901, he ordered her to write an autobiography. She entrusted the 93 handwritten pages to Mrs. Giannini, who placed it in a drawer for safekeeping. Afterward, Gemma saw a demon steal the notebook, tempting and taunting her. As her spiritual director had told her to report anything supernatural to Mrs. Giannini, her foster mother checked the drawer and saw the notebook was gone. After learning all this by letter, Fr. Germano went to Brother Gabriel's tomb and performed an exorcism on the demon. Afterward, Mrs. Giannini found the notebook returned, but the pages were "smoked and some parts were burned, as if each one had been separately exposed to strong fire. Yet, they were not so badly burned as to destroy the writing."

Gemma died on Holy Saturday. Her body was clothed in the habit of the Passionists. Not even two years later, the pope granted permission for a Passionist convent to be established in Lucca. Soon, Euphemia Giannini entered, taking the name Sister Gemma Magdalena. Saint Gemma's body now lies in the convent's new chapel.

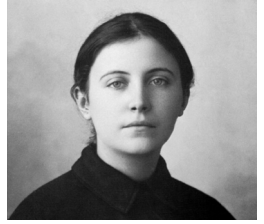
*I am happy in every way that Jesus wills, and if Jesus wants the sacrifice of my life, I give it to Him at once. – St. Gemma Galgani, Pray for Us!*

Sources include: StGemmaGalgani.com, The Passionists, Given Institute, Idaho Catholic Register



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## St. Gemma Galgani



**Born:** 12 Mar. 1878 at Borgo Nuovo di Camigliano, Lucca, Tuscany, Italy

**Died:** Holy Saturday, 11 Apr. 1903 in Lucca

**Canonized:** 2 May 1940 by Pope Pius XII

**Feast Day:** April 11 (May 16 in the Passionist order)

**Patron** against temptations, the death of parents, and tuberculosis.  
Patron of paratroopers, pharmacists, those who suffer, and students.

After the family of pharmacist Enrico Galgani moved from their fertile Tuscan commune to the provincial city of Lucca in the late 1800s, they began experiencing hardships. The eldest child, Carlo, died from illness. Gemma, the eldest daughter, was sent to a private nursery school when she was two and a half years old, after her mother contracted tuberculosis (TB). Giulia Galgani, a younger daughter, also passed away.

Despite these sufferings, Aurelia, their mother, ensured that her children were formed in the Catholic faith. Little Gemma's enthusiastic reception of the Gospel convinced her mother to arrange for early Confirmation at age eight. Shortly afterward, Aurelia died of tuberculosis. Gemma became so desperate to receive her First Holy Communion that the parish priest convinced her father to allow this earlier than the other children.

Gemma quietly excelled in studying French, arithmetic, and music. Her studies were interrupted, however, when her brother contracted TB. To tend to him, she left school. Sadly, he, too, passed away. Aged 16, Gemma then developed an illness that left her bedridden for three months. After recovering, she decided to find work to try to help her father with his financial struggles. Enrico Galgani, heavily burdened and bankrupt, developed cancer, and died shortly after Gemma turned 19.

Suddenly, she found herself the guardian of her young siblings. An aunt assisted with their care. Although the extended family was now focused on Gemma's becoming married, she was determined to be a religious sister. She refused two marriage proposals, and decided to dress plainly, without jewelry or makeup, wishing to focus the attention of others and herself on Jesus Christ. Gemma's prayer life was deep and filled with

spiritual riches. She spoke regularly with her guardian angel, the saints, and with Jesus.

She began to suffer from spinal meningitis—a debilitating disease-causing fever, headaches, inflammation and curvature of the spinal cord. For more than a year, she suffered, including a painful surgery. One day, her aunt told her about Brother Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows, an Italian from the Passionist religious order who had died of tuberculosis at age 23 in 1862. She lent Gemma a leaflet about him, but it lay unread.

During her suffering, Gemma felt Satan tempting her to do his bidding in exchange for her restoration to health. She felt herself becoming weaker as these temptations continued. Finally, she remembered Brother Gabriel, and cried out for his help, making the Sign of the Cross over herself. At peace, Gemma finally picked up the biography and began reading.

As her health declined, it was suggested that she begin a novena (nine days of prayer) for the heavenly intercession of then-Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque—the French nun to whom Jesus had revealed his Sacred Heart. As Gemma began to pray the novena, she suddenly felt a hand on her forehead. A voice began to say the *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, and *Glory Be* prayers, nine times. The voice then asked: “Do you wish to be cured?” “It is all the same to me,” Gemma replied. “Yes,” he continued, “you will be cured. Pray with faith to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Every evening until the end of the novena I shall come, and we shall pray together to the Sacred Heart.” Gemma asked, “And what about Blessed Margaret Mary?” “Add the *Glory be to the Father*, three times in her honor,” the voice replied. She saw that it was Brother Gabriel. He came every evening to place his hand on her forehead and pray in this manner.

At the end of the novena, after Gemma confessed her sins and received Holy Communion, she found herself cured! From then on, Brother Gabriel (who much later was beatified and canonized as a saint) became Gemma’s close, spiritual brother. She reported that he appeared often.

Due to her ill health, religious orders refused Gemma’s applications for entrance. She finally decided to accept that her life would be different. Truly, it was! She described the following extraordinary events she saw in a vision on June 8, 1899, eve of the feast of the Sacred Heart:

“The Blessed Virgin Mary opened her mantle and covered me with it. At that very moment, Jesus appeared with his wounds all open; blood was not flowing from them, but flames of fire which in one moment came and touched my hands, feet and heart. I felt I was dying and should have fallen down but for my Mother (Blessed Virgin Mary) who supported me and kept me under her mantle. Thus, I remained for several hours. Then my Mother kissed my forehead, the vision disappeared and I found myself on my knees; but I still had a keen pain in my hands, feet and heart. I got up to get into bed and saw that blood was coming from the places where I had the pain. I covered them as well as I could and then, helped by my guardian angel, got into bed.”

Gemma appeared to suffer the wounds of Christ’s passion on her body—called the stigmata. A doctor who’d known her since childhood examined her and concluded that she was suffering from mental illness and had self-inflicted wounds. Someone else pointed to a sewing needle found by her bed. Many people close to Gemma ridiculed her, including family.

During the Jubilee Year, Gemma went to a parish mission that was presented by a missionary of the Passionist order. After speaking with her, he allowed her to make private vows as a lay member of the Passionists and introduced her to the wealthy Giannini family who were Passionist supporters. As word had spread about the stigmata, Gemma’s presence at her home had become a burden to family. Having learned this, the Giannini’s invited her to move in with them. She did.

Gemma’s holiness was not found in the stigmata nor in her ecstatic prayer experiences, but in her perseverance toward faith, hope, and love. Jesus taught her how to follow him through many graces. She wrote that in prayer, Jesus Crucified appeared to her saying, “‘Look Daughter, and learn how to love,’ and He showed me His five open wounds. ‘Do you see this cross, these thorns, these nails, these bruises, these tears, these wounds, this blood? They are all works of love, of infinite love. Do you see how much I have loved you? Do you really want to love Me? Then first learn how to suffer. It is by suffering that one learns how to love.’” She also wrote, “When I shrink from suffering, Jesus reproves me and tells me that He did not refuse to suffer. Then I say ‘Jesus, Your will and not mine.’ At last I am convinced that only God can make me happy, and in Him I have placed all my hope...”