

A Handkerchief and a Mission



Bishop Bruce A. Lewandowski, C.Ss.R.



In the mid-1700s, a Redemptorist lay brother, Gerard Majella, was visiting the Pirofalo family in Muro, a small town in Italy not far from Naples. On leaving the home, one of the Pirofalo daughters followed him, calling out that he had forgotten his handkerchief. Brother Gerard told her to keep it, simply saying, “It will be useful to you someday.”

The family kept the handkerchief as a remembrance of Brother Gerard and his visit. Years later, the same girl to whom he had given the handkerchief was in labor and in danger of death. Remembering Brother Gerard’s visit and his handkerchief, she requested that it be

placed over her belly. The danger passed almost immediately. She delivered a healthy child.

Very many expectant mothers have implored the powerful assistance of Brother Gerard. Praying for themselves and for their unborn children, often both have come through pregnancy and delivery safely. I’ve met many people named Gerard, Gerarda, and even Gerardine, a testament to the saint’s concern for expectant mothers and their babies, his powerful intercession, and the gratitude of very many mothers.

Perhaps a modern-day miracle, not performed with a saint’s handkerchief or a novena of prayers,

is the Catholic pregnancy center. With compassionate, professional, and faith-filled care, their dedicated staff and volunteers truly work miracles. These pro-life centers offer services such as free pregnancy tests, limited ultrasounds, counseling on options like parenting and adoption, and practical support like material assistance and referrals to community resources. They also provide emotional and spiritual support, guided by Catholic teaching on the sanctity of life.

Most centers are directed and lead by lay women and men who have answered the call to this ministry. At some centers, partner organizations like the Knights of Columbus and Catholic Charities contribute resources and support. The Knights support some 3,000 centers worldwide. Some 168 Catholic Charities agencies across the United States sponsor centers. Many, if not all, depend on the goodwill donations and volunteer hours of individuals who understand and believe in the mission.

Life itself is a miracle and is sacred at every moment and in all

circumstances, from conception to natural death, no exceptions. Catholic pregnancy centers do not offer, recommend or refer for abortions, abortifacients or birth control. They are committed to offering accurate information and practical support in a confidential, safe place to help women think through, reflect on and pray about their options.

The words, “you’re pregnant” aren’t always received as good news. When a woman is expecting unexpectedly, Catholic pregnancy centers offer much needed pastoral care and accompaniment. They offer life-affirming support to pregnant and parenting women in need. An unplanned or unwanted pregnancy that may have “negative” or unwanted implications for a woman’s physical and mental health, her relationships, her work and financial circumstances, doesn’t have to end in abortion. Catholic pregnancy center staff are “good news” when all seems bad. There is help and hope for abortion-vulnerable unborn children and mothers experiencing unex-

pected pregnancies.

You can help! Familiarize yourself with the Church’s Pro-life documents and teachings. “Evangeliū vitae: On the Value and Inviolability of Human Life” (Pope John Paul II, March 25, 1995) is a great starting point. Second, sign-up to participate in the Annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. The 2026 March for Life will be held on Friday, January 23, 2026, in the nation’s capital. The event is scheduled for the Friday closest to the anniversary of the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision. I hope to see you there.

Next, find the Catholic pregnancy center near you: donate, volunteer, and share their material and contact information broadly. Promote their efforts. They’re helping all of us remain faithful to the Church’s mission. Finally, October 16 is Saint Gerard’s feast day. Pray, asking him to intercede for all mothers, but especially those mothers in crisis, experiencing an unwanted pregnancy. Miracles can and do happen.

Food Fair & Bazaar

ST. BASIL LINCOLN, RI
15 Skyview Drive, Lincoln, RI

Saturday, October 25, 10 am - 6pm
Kitchen closes at 5pm

Sunday, October 26, 10 am - 4pm
Kitchen closes at 3pm

Middle Eastern Food & Pastry

Middle Eastern food sold in bulk and individual dinners

Syrian String Cheese • Candy • Pizza
Silent Auction • Penny Social • Raffles
Crafts • Jewelry & Much More

Come and Enjoy our delicious food and sweets with family and friends

We accept credit cards (\$5 min)

REMEMBERING OUR PAST,
BUILDING OUR FUTURE
THE BICENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN

WE ASK FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT IN OUR CAMPAIGN TO RAISE \$5 MILLION TO RESTORE THE ROOF AND STONEMASONRY OF OUR HISTORIC CHURCH.

- A place of faith & hope for ALL Rhode Islanders
- Church dedicated in 1852
- Rhode Island's oldest Catholic parish
- On the National Register of Historic Places
- Site of the 1953 wedding of John F. Kennedy & Jacqueline Bouvier

StMaryNewportRI.org • 401-847-0475

View or Purchase Prints from Rhode Island Catholic Photo Galleries

Browse Photo Archives at www.ricatholic.smugmug.com

Rhode Island Catholic