



Fort Worth Diocese Respect Life Mass to Be Celebrated on Feast Day of the Saint for Unborn

Bishop Michael F. Olson is elevating the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth's annual Respect Life Mass in 2020 by moving the celebration to April 28, the feast day of Saint Gianna Beretta Molla, an Italian pediatric physician, wife and working mother who chose life for her unborn child over her own life. Afterwards, St. Gianna's surviving child, Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla, will speak.

The 2020 Respect Life Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Olson at 6 p.m. on St. Gianna's feast day at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, 1000 Tinker Rd, Colleyville, followed by a presentation by Dr. Molla. A reception will follow the presentation.

Born in Magenta near Milano, St. Gianna was the tenth of 13 children born to Alberto and Maria Beretta. In her early life Gianna considered becoming a nun, but heard God's call to pursue the vocation of marriage and motherhood.

Franciscan Media describes in its "Saint of the Day" feature how St. Gianna, with great faith and courage, made the choice that enabled her daughter to be born: "Early in her sixth pregnancy, doctors discovered that Gianna had both a child and a tumor in her uterus. She allowed the surgeons to remove the tumor but not to perform the complete hysterectomy that they recommended, which would have killed the child. Seven months later in April 1962, Gianna Emanuela Molla was born (by Caesarean section) at the hospital in Monza, but post-operative complications resulted in an infection for her mother. The following week, Gianna Molla died at her home in Mesero, where she was buried."

Gianna was quite clear about her wishes, expressing to her family, "If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child. I insist on it. Save the baby."

Gianna was beatified on April 24, 1994, and officially canonized as a saint on May 16, 2004 by Pope John Paul II. Her husband and their children, including Gianna Emanuela, attended her canonization ceremony, making this the first time a husband witnessed his wife's canonization.

Catholic Online reported on the miracle that led to St. Gianna Molla's canonization: "In 2003, mother-to-be Elizabeth Comparini experienced a tear in her placenta when she was 16-weeks pregnant. Her womb was drained of all amniotic fluid. She was told the chances of her baby's survival was little to none. Elizabeth is said to have prayed to Gianna Molla and asked for her intercession. Elizabeth was able to give birth to a healthy baby."

Diocesan Respect Life Director Theresa Schauf says Bishop Olson conceived the idea to celebrate the diocesan Respect Life Mass on the feast day of St. Gianna Beretta Molla and to inaugurate the annual April 28 celebration with a presentation by St. Gianna's daughter, Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla.

Schauf says “There is no better way to call attention to the Bishop’s and Diocese’s deep commitment to protection of life from the moment of conception to natural death than to celebrate our Respect Life Mass on the feast day of the patron saint of mothers, physicians, and unborn children—the Feast of St. Gianna Beretta Molla.

“Bishop Olson has always made the diocesan Respect Life ministry among his most important priorities,” Schauf said. “It is fitting that on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Fort Worth, as we celebrate the ‘Eucharist Makes Us the Church,’ that Bishop Olson has elevated the importance of our Respect Life Mass to show the faithful, as well as our brothers and sisters throughout North Texas, that we value life above all.”

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Bishop Olson explains that “The feast of St. Gianna is an excellent time to renew our awareness of our need for God’s assistance in being grateful for the gift of life.”

“I’m delighted to welcome Dr. Gianna Molla to offer her very personal witness to human dignity and the right to life,” he said.

“The change of this date was prompted in part,” Bishop Olson said, “by the desire of many to be present at the National Mass and March for Life, including me.”

The Diocese, Schauf said, is in the midst of a number of Respect Life activities during the month of October. The 40 Days for Life ministry takes a determined, peaceful approach to showing the Fort Worth area communities the consequences of abortion. It puts into action a desire to cooperate with God in the carrying out of His plan for the end of abortion in America. 40 Days for Life began September 25 and ends November 3. During these 40 days, continual prayers by volunteers are conducted at Planned Parenthood, 6464 John Ryan Dr., Fort Worth. To participate, visit <http://40daysforlifefortworth.com/>.

40 Days for Life is part of Respect Life Month, which is celebrated each October and focuses on critical issues such as abortion, post-abortion healing, euthanasia, capital punishment, end of life, and bioethical issues. These topics are highlighted in liturgies and through special events which are hosted in local parishes throughout the Diocese.

To help parents whose children died before baptism heal, Father Maurice Moon celebrated Mass October 12 at St. Patrick Cathedral in Fort Worth. The intention of the Mass was to help the healing process for parents who have lost children before Baptism, through miscarriage, stillbirth, or abortion. Roses were provided for those parents who placed them at the Virgin Mary’s altar in memory of their children. This special Mass is planned each year by Mother and Unborn Baby Care of North Texas.

“As Catholics, we must remain the protectors of the unborn in a society that has come to place little value on unborn children,” Schauf said. “The Diocese of Fort Worth, with Bishop Olson leading us, is at the forefront of working to build a culture of life.”

For more information about the Diocesan Respect Life activities, visit <https://fwdioc.org/respect-life>.