

MI Monthly Guideline

Ongoing formation in Fr. Kolbe's Marian and Missionary Spirituality

Dear MI Members,

Beginning this year the MI National Office with the support of the Fr. Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculata in California wants to offer you further material to increase your faith and to deepen your love of the Immaculata and all people by entering more profoundly into Kolbean spirituality.

In order to take this spiritual journey, we'll follow the themes of the Monthly Prayer Intentions, focusing each month on some aspect of them. Our principal sources will be: the Holy Scripture, the Documents of the Church, the Fr. Kolbe's writings and the MI General Statutes.

This material will also include suggestions for prayer, apostolic discussion, evangelical projects and for applying the monthly subject to one's own situation. The MI Moderator can distribute this material at the scheduled monthly meeting of his/her group and can fit it to the members' needs.

Persevering in prayer and meditating on Holy Scripture and on examples of St. Maximilian's life should interact in our daily lives and flow efficaciously into a Christian background which expresses itself in thoughts, actions and real evangelical behavior.

In that way we can reach the essence of MI's goal: "Promote the extension of the Reign of Christ in the world through the action of the Immaculate, encouraging all Christians - the laity, religious and contemplatives - to place themselves at Her service in the mission that She has as Mother of the Church" (General Statutes, art. 3).

Let's begin this spiritual journey with renewed joy and eagerness, knowing that the Immaculata is our most loving Mother and that God has willed to entrust the entire order of mercy to Her.



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THE WAY OF HUMILITY

JANUARY

That contemplation of Jesus in the mystery of the Incarnation may help us to grow in humility and littleness

After the example of Jesus' poverty

Aim: to deepen our contemplation of God's Love, Who was made flesh, enabling us to live in joy and simplicity.

Begin the meeting with prayer as in your rule. The suggested reading for this month is a reading from the holy Gospel according to

Luke: 2:1-7.

It would be very helpful to follow the method illustrated on the third page.

Hints for contemplation

In this Lucan passage we contemplate God's Love that becomes flesh for us in His Son Jesus Christ. The Evangelist stresses the contrast between the human power that exalts itself [Caesar Augustus wants to know the extent of his Empire so he orders a census] and the weakness of God Who humbles Himself, hiding in a Baby. If the Son of God has come with power, in the magnificence of His glory, He would not have exposed Himself to the rejection of mankind. Everybody would welcome Him.

In these two quotations: *In those days* (Lk 2:1) and *while they were in Bethlehem* (v. 6) Luke offers us the historical and the geographic context of Jesus' birth. The Evangelist

places this central event of salvation history in a specific time: during the Empire of Caesar Augustus. That enable us to know that:

* Salvation is not abstract but is a history with real facts.

* The census is the exaltation of man's power over man.

The Messiah enters into this history of salvation as One Who serves (cf. Lk 22: 27), as an impoverished man with no place to lay his head (cf. Lk 9: 58).

To guide our steps on a way of peace, Jesus teaches poverty instead of wealth, service instead of power, humility instead of pride. In that way He radically opposes the power of evil and He overcomes it. Although He is born into poverty, impotence and humility, He is the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Son of God.

The census allows the fulfillment of God's plan: to give birth to the Messiah in Bethlehem. God had promised it to David (cf. Mic 5:2; 2 Samuel 7).

Mary and Joseph, obedient to Caesar Augustus' edict, are in Bethlehem when the time comes for Mary to have her baby, just in the place of God's promise.

She gave birth to her first-born son (Lk. 2:7): this event is the central fact of history. It “marks the moment when, with the entrance of the Eternal into time, time itself is redeemed, and being filled with the mystery of Christ becomes definitively ‘salvation time’” (John Paul II’s Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Mater*, March 25, 1987, No. 1).

Mary gives birth to One Who is the true light of the world. Mary devotes Herself to One Who is the source of every gift. The Most High hides Himself, the Almighty becomes needy, the Immortal One becomes mortal, to be welcomed and hugged by us. It’s the mystery of God’s Love that exposes itself to every lowness and humiliation to save mankind.

Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger (Lk. 2:7). God needs man’s help, He abandons Himself into our fragile hands. The cloth bands are the symbol of God’s hidden life; they veil His presence, so that His light won’t blind us. We will find these clothes again on the tomb’s floor, when the Lord Jesus rises from the dead (cf. Lk 24:12. Jn 20:5-7).

The manger is the symbol of poverty of all time. It’s futile to look for Jesus within the Palaces of power where the lot of mankind is decided. He is close to those who are homeless and stateless.

The manger is also the symbol of our rejection: “He came to his own country, but his own people did not receive him” (Jn 1:11).

Writing in Greek, Luke uses the same word that means “manger” which also means “tomb” when he says that “a man named Joseph, an upright and holy member of the

Sanhedrin... took the body [of Jesus] down, wrapped it in a fine linen, and laid it in a tomb hewn out of the rock” (Lk. 23:50-51,53).

Thus the Evangelist emphasizes the bond between the Incarnation and the Lord’s Passion. The evangelical scene of God Who becomes a helpless little Baby, put in our hands, is already an announcement of His Cross.



Mary “*laid him in a manger*” , Joseph from Arimathea “*laid it in a tomb*”: Jesus is not laid on a table to eat but in a place to be eaten that is the manger. Jesus our living Bread, a great gift sent from heaven, is laid in the place where animals eat. God gives Himself to us sinners as true food and true life.

Luke offers us the fundamental features of Jesus, humble, meek, needy, laid in a place where animals eat. He comes in our humanity because He loves us. He exposes Himself to rejection, but He is always present in our life, as a gift without conditions, because He loves us.

The Son of God chose to be poor. Poverty-humility is the definition of His essence. And with Him Mary also wanted to be poor. In our society we are often unduly influenced by consumerism, materialism and hedonism. The examples of Jesus and Mary invite us to rediscover the virtues of simplicity, poverty and humility. They don’t require us to give up our possessions but help us to learn how to moderate our wasteful consumption of our goods and how to share them with others. Nor do they ask us to abandon the improvement of our skills, but to avoid pride remembering that we are “*unprofitable servants*” (cf. Lk 17:7-10) who trust in God.

A Story

“A young man attended a school of higher learning. He was a leader in many phases of college life and enjoyed the respect of both faculty and students. One day a box arrived from home and that night he invited some of his friends to his room for a feast. During the festivities one of the young men noticed a motto on his desk. It contained the three words, “I am Third” and it was enclosed in a beautiful frame. ‘What does it mean, Bob?’ echoed a succession of voices. Finally, when Bob was sure that his friends really did want to know he began to explain: ‘I have one of the finest mothers in the world. She is a good Catholic. So is Dad. It has meant downright sacrifice to keep me in college. On the night before I left home she brought this little frame to me and asked me to keep it where I could see it every day. I shall never forget a word she said. ‘My son,’ she told me, ‘always remember that God is first; others are second; and you are third!’” (from: *The Vatican Weekday Missal*, St. Paul Editions, 1975, p. 1022).

Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate two thousand years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work: Did we not celebrate the Jubilee Year in order to refresh our contact with this living source of our hope? Now, the Christ whom we have contemplated and loved bids us to set out once more on our journey: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the “Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”’

(John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, No. 58).

Method of praying the Word of God

1. **Invocation of the Holy Spirit**
2. **MI Prayer of Total Consecration**
3. **Listening to the Holy Scripture**
(Someone proclaims aloud the suggested reading; all listen very carefully, if possible following in the Bible).
4. **Listen again to the Word of God, repeating the more important word or sentence** (Each person reads again a word or a sentence which has impressed him/her. At this time personal comments are not appropriate).
5. **Give the Lord sufficient time to speak to us** (Observe at least 5 minutes of silence/listening).
6. **Let us share what the Lord told us** (Each person explains briefly and simply what the Spirit suggested to him/her in the innermost self. Stick to the subject. Controversy, admonitions, engaging in ideological or theological discussion or speaking for others is not appropriate).
7. **Seek a common understanding and line of action** (What is the Lord asking of me? What does He want me to do in my daily life? What does He expect from our group? This may be a good time to consider any evangelical projects that the group may decide to pursue).
8. **A "Message for life"** (Choose a brief sentence from the reading that we have done and keep it on your mind and in your heart).

For Personal reflection

- * How to welcome the mystery of God Who humbles and lowers Himself and calls me to follow Him on the same path?
- * Is it a mystery that moves my conscience or that leaves me indifferent? Why?
- * On which virtues are my life, my relationship with God and my neighbor based?

Texts for further reflection

Ps 33 Mt 8:18-20 2Co 8:9
 Phil 2:5-8
 CCC 525-526 The Christmas mystery

St. Maximilian Kolbe's prayer



"O Immaculata, what did you think about when you for the first time laid Baby Jesus onto the hay? Or when you wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, took Him close to your Heart, and fed Him? What sentiments overflowed your Heart? You knew well Who this Child is, for the prophets had preached and announced Him. Already at the moment of the Annunciation, the Most Blessed Trinity clearly made known to you through the angel the plan of Redemption and awaited your response. You already knew what you were agreeing to, whose Mother you were to become. And now, He is before you as a helpless Baby.

What sentiments of humility, love and gratitude must have filled your Heart that night...when you looked upon the humility, love and gratitude of the Incarnate God toward you! Fill my heart, too, I beg you, with your humility, your love and your gratitude" (SK 1236).

Prayer

O blessed Lady, you found grace, brought forth the Life, and became the Mother of salvation.
 May you obtain the grace for us to go to the Son.
 By your mediation, may we be received by the One Who through you gave Himself to us.
 May your integrity compensate with Him for the fault of our corruption;
 and may your humility, which is pleasing to God, implore pardon for our vanity.
 May your great charity cover the multitude of our sins;
 and may your glorious fecundity confer on us a fecundity of merits.
 St. Bernard
 (Prayers to Mary, Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 1987)

From MI General Statutes

Art. 11 The members of the Militia of the Immaculate make their own the mission of the Church: "To bear the Gospel of Christ as a source of hope for all and a source of renewal for the society" (ChL 29).

Art. 12 Recognizing in the Immaculate "the new creature", the M.I. sees in Her, perfect disciple of the Lord, the model of the believer.

Abbreviations

ChL	John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, Apostolic Exhortation, 12/30/88
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church, 10/11/92
MI-GS	MI General Statutes, MI International Center, Roma, 10/16/97
NMI	John Paul II, Novo Millennio Ineunte, Apostolic Letter, 01/06/2001
RM	John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater, Encyclical Letter, 03/25/87
SK	Scritti Kolbe, Fr. Kolbe's writings
VWM	The Vatican Weekday Missal, St. Paul Editions, 1975

Dates to remember	8	Fr. Kolbe's birthday	22	Respect life
1	Solemnity of the Mother of God	18-25	The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	