

# MI Monthly Formation (6)

## In Fr. Kolbe's Marian and Missionary Spirituality

Dear MI friends,  
I was very happy for having had the chance to meet some of you last May at *Marytown*<sup>1</sup>(IL) for the MIU<sup>2</sup> meeting. As most of you know, MIU is a two-tiered "School of Faith" for MI members and for those who wish to become MI leaders. It is a great opportunity to learn more about the Church, the MI and our role in the new evangelization, and also to meet other people involved in the Movement and to share our experiences. I learned a lot from the conferences and also from listening to amazing experiences about MI promotion in different States. I think that the Immaculata is preparing a new springtime for the Movement in the US, but She needs people willing to collaborate in Her maternal and universal mission. Let us get ready to do our very best by praying and deepening our knowledge of Kolbean spirituality.

**June** is, religiously speaking, the "month of the greatest Love," because we celebrate the **Feasts** of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. All these feasts remind us of the divine and human love with which Jesus and Mary love us. It is a love that has all the qualities of the most warm and ardent human feeling and, at the same time, has much more, because it is the love of the Risen Lord and of the Mother of God.

On the back of the Miraculous Medal that everyone consecrated to Mary wears, we see a Cross interwoven with an M and two hearts: one inflamed and crowned with thorns, the other pierced by a sword. These signs symbolize the close relationship between Mary and Christ because of Her intimate participation in the history of salvation. Mary, in fact, "*devoted Herself totally ... to the person and work of her Son, serving under Him and with Him, the mystery of redemption.*"<sup>3</sup> She is the *cooperatrix* with the Redeemer, cooperating "*by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls.*"<sup>4</sup> These devotions, therefore, seek to direct our attention to Christ and to

the role of His Mother in the mystery of Redemption; and, though distinct, they are interrelated by reason of the enduring relationship of love that exists between the Son and His Mother. It is very important for us consecrated to the Immaculata to reflect upon this that is the very core of our spirituality, as Fr. Kolbe taught us. He emphasized that the finality of our consecration to God through the Immaculate is to "*extend as far as possible the blessed kingdom of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.*"<sup>5</sup> This was so important for him that he even refused any formulations where the divine Heart of Jesus was not explicitly mentioned<sup>6</sup>.

Also John Paul II has clearly taught on this subject that is very topical: "*If we turn to Mary's Immaculate Heart, she will surely help us to conquer the menace of evil, which so easily takes roots in the hearts of people of today, and whose immensurable effects already weigh down upon our modern world and seem to block the path towards the future. Our act of consecration to her Heart ... refers ultimately to the Heart of her Son, for as the Mother of Christ she is wholly united to His redemptive mission. As at the marriage feast of Cana, when she said "Do whatever he tells you," Mary directs all things to her Son, Who answers our prayers and forgives our sins. Thus by dedicating ourselves to the Heart of Mary, we discover a sure way to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, symbol of the merciful love of our Savior. The act of entrusting ourselves to the Heart of Our Lady establishes a relationship of love with her in which we dedicate to her all that we have and are. This consecration is practiced essentially by a life of grace, of purity, of prayer, of penance that is joined to the fulfillment of all the duties of a Christian, and of reparation for our sins and for the sins of the world.*"<sup>7</sup>

Dear friends, during this month as we look at the Miraculous Medal that we wear, we should take time to reflect upon these marvelous realities of our faith and to pray that we too may be reliable witnesses of this Love in our daily life.

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<sup>1</sup> Marytown is a "City of the Immaculata" placed in Libertyville – Chicago (IL) that is the National Center of the MI for US.

<sup>2</sup> MIU= Militia of the Immaculata University.

<sup>3</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 56

<sup>4</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 61

<sup>5</sup> Cf. SK 646; 1144.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. SK 206

<sup>7</sup> John Paul II, September 22, 1986

## THE WAY OF HUMILITY

JUNE Prayer Intention:

**That gazing upon the meek and humble of heart of your Son, we may learn the meaning of “It is mercy I desire, not sacrifice” (Hos 6:6).**

*Be poor in spirit in order to welcome God’s love freely*

**Aim:** To grow in the consciousness of the real condition of sinners and of the unlimited love of God.

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

### Luke 18:9-14

*“He then addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. “Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity – greedy, dishonest, adulterous – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.’ But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

As we suggested last time, contemplating the Word of God, following the method illustrated for January and February, would be very helpful. See it in the box reported in these two months’ formation.

### Hints for contemplation

In this parable, mentioned only in Luke’s gospel, the evangelist, contrasting the Pharisee and the Publican, presents two aspects of the human being and of his relationship with God. From these two individuals we observe the contrast between two types of justice: that of man, who thinks of saving himself by following the Law perfectly and that of God, Who shows His mercy to the sinner who acknowledges his sinfulness and thereby converts himself.

**The Pharisee** presumed himself righteous and despised others. This is because one who confides only in himself and in his own justice has room neither for others nor for God. The Pharisee is satisfied with himself and recounts his merits. That is why his prayer is long and its content is thanksgiving offered to God for his being different from and better than other men who are generally sinners, especially the Publicans. His prayer, therefore, is a prayer of self-satisfaction. He gives

thanks not to praise God, but rather to praise himself and to disdain his brothers.

The exact opposite of the Pharisee is **the Publican**, the public sinner, economically rich, who makes sin his trade. In the Jewish culture tax collectors were unscrupulous moneylenders and robbers and were regarded in the class of the seven cursed trades. Religiously, they were considered impure. The Publican comes to the Temple without any claims, only with his sins. **He comes before God with a contrite heart, he stands off at a distance.** He does not dare to raise his eyes because, **humble and conscious of his every sin, he beats his breast** as a sign of contrition, humbly begging for pardon.

The end of the story has the Publican return to his house justified, unlike the Pharisee. God made the Publican just and showed him His mercy. This is the key to the parable. The good news of the

gospel is in the affirmation that **God's justice is gratuitousness, love, goodness and mercy**. As St. Paul reminds us: *"All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 3:23-24). The Pharisee does not appear to notice the merciful face of God. He is closed to the experience of love, which is a free gift.

The false security of the Pharisee's feeling himself justified before God can be nested even in our Christian life. We too can fall into the temptation of feeling ourselves in the right because we faithfully adhere to the commandments and the precepts of the Church, because we are consecrated to the Immaculata, because we are capable of a gesture of charity. **Humility especially is capable of attracting the Most High.** *"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."* This reversal of the situation reveals an evident truth: one who exalts himself deceives himself, whereas one who humbles himself is conscious of his own misery and entrusts himself to the mercy of God. Humility is a prerequisite for an authentic understanding of oneself and of proper conduct. It is the conscious and serene acceptance of the real condition of one's poverty, of our littleness and even of our sins before God.

"The hardness of heart" is one of the most terrible aspect of the Gospel. While prostitutes and sinners come to be pardoned easily, even being able to enter the Heavenly Kingdom, the Pharisees on the other hand cannot do so because they cut themselves off from salvation.<sup>8</sup> Not recognizing the reality of creatures in the sight of God is the root of Adam and Eve's sin, which prevents God from dispensing His mercy. *"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble"* (Jas 4:6b). As He did in Mary: *"He has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness"* (Lk 1:48). **Mary is the first human being who fully recognized the true littleness and dependence on God.** For this reason God gave Himself to Her absolutely. Mary is like the nothing that receives the whole thing. Mary's fundamental merit was knowing that She deserved nothing on Her own for She is only the humble servant of the Lord.

## For Personal Reflection

- *"I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Mt 5:20). How do I personally perceive God's justice? How do I demonstrate justice to my neighbors?
- What do I think about humility, meekness and mercy? Are Jesus' words and acts a constant point of reference for me?
- In which way does my consecration to Mary draw me closer to God's merciful love, serving and loving my neighbors for His sake?

## Apply it

- Before beginning to pray, put yourself in a right disposition of mind, feelings and heart before God. First of all, thank God for the graces, both spiritual and temporal, that you have received this day.
- Try to discover and appreciate the good qualities of those with whom you live and of those with whom you work, thanking God for them.
- Try to be merciful and forgiving with all, as God is with you.

## Texts for further reflection

**Is** 66:1-2                      **Sir** 35:11-24                      **Mt** 6:1; 21:31  
**Lk** 1:45-54; 16:15      **1Cor** 4:7                      **Rom** 3:9-23  
**CCC** 218-221; 588; 1829; 2100; 2447 .  
**SK** 1160; 1145<sup>9</sup>                      **SK** 1168; 991; 339<sup>10</sup>

## Dates to Remember

- 2**      **MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST**
- 7**      **Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Solemnity**
- 8**      **Immaculate Heart of Mary, Memorial**
- 9**      **Nativity of Saint John de Baptist, Solemnity**
- 24**    **Saints Peter and Paul, Solemnity**

<sup>9</sup> *"Stronger than Hatred"*, New City Press, New York, 1991, pages 63-65; 29.

<sup>10</sup> *"The Kolbe Reader"*, Marytown Press, Libertyville, IL, pages 84-86; 97-100; 62-63.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jn 9:41; 8:23-24, 31-47; Mt 23:1-11

## On the Road with Mary

### The Maternal Presence of Mary in Our Daily Life

#### **A New Motherhood**

From the Encyclical Letter of John Paul II “Mother of the Redeemer”:

*“If through faith Mary became the bearer of the Son given to her by the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit, while preserving her virginity intact, in that same faith she discovered and accepted the other dimension of motherhood revealed by Jesus during his messianic mission. One can say that this dimension of motherhood belonged to Mary from the beginning, that is to say from the moment of the conception and birth of her Son. From that time she was ‘the one who believed.’ But as the messianic mission of her Son grew clearer to her eyes and spirit, she herself as a mother became ever more open to that new dimension of motherhood which was to constitute her ‘part’ beside her Son. Had she not said from the very beginning: ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word’ (Lk 1:38)? Through faith Mary continued to hear and to ponder that word, in which there became ever clearer, in a way ‘which surpasses knowledge’ (Eph 3:19), the self-revelation of the living God.” (RM 20)*

<sup>11</sup>**The Holy Spirit** was able to operate in Mary freely and make Her a mother because of Her prayer-life and Her attentiveness. For Mary, motherhood is the specific vocation She received from God and is also the fruit of the fullness of the Holy Spirit within Her. For this reason, St. Augustine could say that Mary conceived Jesus first in faith then in Her womb<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, Mary is a mother because She believed and because she answered ‘Yes’ to God. We can understand that in God’s kingdom, true motherhood is spiritual and is lived on the journey of faith<sup>13</sup>. *“Be fertile and multiply, fill the earth”* (Gen 1:28) is not only a biological commandment, but also calls for the

generation of children through spiritual motherhood, born from our love, faith and soul.

When we listen and say “Yes” to God’s will, we too can become “mother” as Mary and as the Church<sup>14</sup>. We will not only concern ourselves about our own family or community, but we will also open our hearts to everyone, giving life also to those whom we will probably never know. If we listen, pray and answer “Yes” to God, we will obtain eternal life. In heaven we may meet some unknown people who will tell us *“We are here because you accomplished your specific vocation in the plan of salvation and because of your “Yes” you became a mother to us.”*

Mary expresses Her motherhood through an attitude of offering. When She presented Jesus in the temple, She offered Herself with Her Son. Simeon told Her: *“And you yourself shall be pierced with a sword”* (Lk 2:35).<sup>15</sup> What does this mean for us?

Each of us possesses his own story. It is enough to meet a person and to feel all his sufferings. Sometimes we are tempted to ask why? We ask this question when we are surrounded by evil, moral and physical anguish, temptations, humiliations, darkness and when we are far from God. Our intellect cannot give us an answer. We cannot resolve the problem of sorrow with human arguments. We have to ask God for the answer, taking refuge in His will, and then we will obtain His answer. *“He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross”* (Phil 2:8) so that we *“might have life and have it more abundantly”* (Jn 10:10).

#### **Virgin Offering**

If we read the gospel, we find a woman who was free to choose whether or not to do God’s will. We see this woman accepting sorrow, and so we can find our answer also. When Mary presented Jesus in the temple (cf. Lk 2:22-35), Simeon spoke mysterious and inspired words. Mary didn’t question his prophecy but kept it in Her heart. Her offering was not only a ritual, but a disinterested offering, through which She offered Herself in union with Her Son to the Eternal Father for the salvation of the world. She understood that it was necessary to suffer and to shed blood because only

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<sup>11</sup> The following reflections were translated from a Homily of Rev. Fr. Luigi Faccenda, Franciscan Conventual, Founder of the *Fr. Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculata*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *De Sancta Virginitate*, III PL 40398; cf. RM 13

<sup>13</sup> In Lk 11:28 Jesus *“wishes to divert attention from motherhood understood only as a fleshly bond, in order to direct it towards those mysterious bonds of the spirit which develop from hearing and keeping God’s word.”* (RM 20)

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Redemptoris Mater* 43

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Ibid* 16

the blood of Her Son could reconcile mankind with God.

We see Mary fleeing into Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-15). Probably She wondered why; yet She kept everything in Her heart. She became closer to us when She was in the temple looking for Her Son. “Son,” She said, “*why have you done this to us?*” (Lk 2:48). Mary did not complain even if She did not understand and She did not use useless words. We see Mary following Her Son, Who spoke to the crowd and didn’t even stop to talk with Her (cf. Mk 3:31-35). She wasn’t surprised. She just did God’s will and listened to Her Son’s invitation to be perfect as our Father in heaven.

We see Mary following Her Son to Calvary without regrets, and at the foot of the Cross it seemed as if She were telling Him: “*Accomplish your mission, I am with you as I always have been with you.*” Mary was always with Jesus not only because She gave birth to Him (it is not difficult to become a mother in the flesh) but because She cooperated with Him. She suffered with Him and grew in virtue daily (cf. RM 18). She knew that only through His death would He be raised in glory and triumph, reuniting God with man. After the death of Jesus, Mary became mother of the living and mother of the Church because She understood that motherhood is an act of redemption, for which it is necessary to shed one’s blood.

We can understand, then, why Mary invites us to sacrifice and to do penance<sup>16</sup> when She calls us to become apostles. We need to pray to Mary for the strength to fulfill God’s will to the fullest; with Her help we can say “*My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet, not as I will, but as you will*” (Mt 26:39). In this way, as St. Paul says, “*In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.*” (Col 1:24).

Let us think about an image of the Immaculata in which Mary is depicted with open hands. For today’s society, whose ideals are egoism, pleasure and success, presenting the Virgin Mary in an attitude of offering with open hands, giving instead of receiving will be a great help.

Our motherhood will be fruitful and efficacious if we grow in an attitude of offering everything, following Mary’s example. Mary made Her life an

act of worshipping God. He created us to live in deep communion with Him, in a total and complete service to Him. Man’s entire life has to be oriented to God and to brotherhood. For many Christians it is difficult to balance their lives between God and the world. Many want to resolve society’s problems without God. But without Him, man is alone and naked.

**Imitating Mary’s example, let us try to make our lives an act of worshipping God, a commitment to do His will in our lives.**<sup>17</sup>



### St. Maximilian Kolbe’s Writings

*“I hope that you [O Immaculata] will take possession of me as quickly as possible and in the most perfect way, and that I may do the same with you. That as soon as possible I may be truly yours without limitations, without conditions, irrevocable, eternally, and you be mine. In the same way, I hope that you will possess every heart that beats everywhere on this globe, throughout the universe, and this as quickly, as quickly, as quickly as possible. I also hope that you will take possession of all the hearts living in the future, all together and each one in particular, and this, from the beginning of their existence and forever.”* (SK 1165)



### From MI General Statutes

**Art. 5** The spirituality of the MI consists in living the baptismal consecration in the light of the Immaculate, gift of the Redeemer. On Calvary, He accomplishes the first act of entrusting, giving Mary to the disciple and the disciple to Mary (Cf. Jn 19: 25-27). The life of the disciple is characterized by the presence of the Mother (cf. RM 45).

Father Kolbe lived that vital relationship with Mary in a unique way, understood as a “transformation in Her,” a “becoming Her” (SK 508) in order to reach a more perfect union with Christ.



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<sup>16</sup> Let us reflect upon Lourdes, Fatima and Fr. Kolbe’s teachings: cf. SK 486 in *The Kolbe Reader*, pages 79-83.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Marialis Cultus* (MC) 21