

MI MONTHLY FORMATION (1)
In Fr. Kolbe's Marian and Missionary Spirituality



JANUARY 2007 PRAYER INTENTION:

That God's love will challenge all Christians to witness to it by lives of mutual understanding and unity.

Dear Friends and MI Members,

It is a new year, a new beginning OR is it just another year that will come and go like all the rest. It is our decision how we will live it. We can't (and don't want to) control and dictate WHAT will happen, but we can decide moment by moment HOW we want to live and respond in the year 2007.

As MI's, totally and unconditionally consecrated to the Immaculate One, we are being invited this year to a **special symbiosis**, into a **contemplation** that will mark our **actions** (our response) by conforming our lives with the figures of Jesus Christ, Mary Immaculate, Holy Mother the Church, Fr. Kolbe, the saints, families of faith, and the sick and suffering.

The theme for 2007 is Symbiosis: Contemplation and Action.

For the past nine years I have been living and working as a Fr. Kolbe Missionary in Poland. Our Institute was invited in the early 1990's to build and establish, with the Conventual Franciscans of the Province of Krakow, an International Kolbean Center just a couple miles from Auschwitz concentration camp. My first home (three years) was across the street from Birkenau camp in a town of about 2,000, and for the remaining six years on the land of a sub-camp, Harmeze, with a population of 584. There was a particular silence that surrounded my life and our Center, drawing all our guests and me into a more contemplative state.

As I reenter the States, reassigned to our mission in California, to a city of over 90,000 inhabitants and living on a main street of the city, I wonder how to maintain that balance between contemplation and action. I wonder how the other missionaries and other believers maintain a balance in today's busy and over consumerist society.

Fr. Faccenda (founder of the Fr. Kolbe Missionaries) comments on two types of contemplation.¹

Contemplation can be *pure*: it begins and is consumed within the intimacy of the person. This contemplation reaches out to one's neighbor only invisibly and indirectly. The elements of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving prevail. This kind of contemplation is called *Joannine contemplation*, because St. John's contemplation seems to be typically a wisdom-oriented and circular one. It is a most active contemplation, yet centered around some focal truths in a continual back and forth interplay.

There is also the *apostolic* or *active* contemplation or *contemplation in action*. We see this in mothers; because of their love for their loved ones, they consume themselves for them. We can call

¹ Cf. Fr. Luigi Faccenda, O.F.M. Conv., *Symbiosis: Contemplation and Action*, West Covina, California: Immaculata Press, 1991), 10-13.

this a contemplation *for others*. From the conception of a child, a mother begins to contemplate the mystery within and to plan and prepare for the coming. Contemplation and action become one act of continual love for the beloved. This we can call the *symbiosis*: the intimate living together of two dissimilar elements in a mutually beneficial relationship.

In Fr. Kolbe we can see this symbiosis as his contemplation of the Immaculate One, the teachings of Holy Mother the Church, consume and drive him to found the MI for the salvation of all souls, as soon as possible. His life is a moving picture of this symbiosis.

This year, let us pray that we grow in this tremendous grace of the symbiosis of contemplation and action in our lives.

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PERSONAL REFLECTION AND READING:

- ❖ Look up the words symbiosis, contemplation and action in the dictionary and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church #2558-2561, 2566-67, 2709-19, 2742.
- ❖ Write down your current program of prayer.
- ❖ Compare this with your active life.
 - Am I praying too much and doing very little?
 - Am I too active and have no time for quiet with Our Lord?
 - Is my prayer life igniting me with a greater love for God and neighbor?
- ❖ Make a new year's resolution to balance your contemplation and action.
- ❖ Talk to your confessor or spiritual director (cf. CCC 2690) about this program.
- ❖ If you don't have a confessor...make a commitment to pray to Our Lady to indicate one to you.
- ❖ Read: Fr. Luigi Faccenda, *Symbiosis: Contemplation and Action*, Introduction to page 13.

Dates to Remember

- January -

- 1** Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. 40th World Day for Peace.
- 2** *The Most Holy Name of Jesus* (Franciscan calendar)
- 6** First Saturday of the Month
- 7** Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord
- 8** The Baptism of the Lord (Feast)
St. Maximilian Kolbe's birthday (1894)
- 9** Ordinary Time begins
- 18-25** Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- 19** March for Life in Washington, DC and San Francisco
- 22** USA. Particular day of **penance** for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and of **prayer** for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life. For more information: www.usccb.org/prolife
- 25** The Conversion of Paul, Apostle (Feast)

FEBRUARY 2-4

1st MI National weekend Retreat in Spanish at Marytown

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