

MI Monthly Formation (12)

In Fr. Kolbe's Marian and Missionary Spirituality

DICEMBER 2005 PRAYER INTENTION:

That richer nations have the courage to discuss openly their style of living and confront the growing economic disparity between rich and poor nations.

Dear friends,

The Advent season we are celebrating is a liturgical time to predispose ourselves to better welcome Jesus in our lives and in our homes. It's not just a time of "special" anxieties to return gifts as the consumer society that some of us live in compels us to believe. If this were the case, soon after Christmas day the decorations would be taken down and everything would be over. But it should not be so for us believers! We, people consecrated to Our Lady, are suppose to dispose ourselves for the coming of Our Savior as she did, by listening more attentively to the Word of God and by striving to act upon it.

The Liturgical readings of this time help us considerably. During the first weeks of Advent, the Church gives us daily readings from the prophet Isaiah. With the eyes of faith, these readings foretell the coming of the Messiah filling us with a sense of anticipation, expectation, hope and promise. And in the Gospel, especially in the second part of Advent (December 17-24), we find their fulfillment.

This year, let's try to really celebrate Christmas and the days that follow. Let's enter a new Season, which has its own spirit and desires and graces. Let us ask for a personal revelation of Jesus about his values, his hopes and dreams, his loves and sorrows. In this way, we may enter more deeply into the story of Jesus' coming to be one with our life and realize better how Jesus comes this year to bless each of us.

While we contemplate some Gospel scenes, let us use our imagination to see the people involved, hear what they say to one another, and

what they do. Then, we may take the place of one of the characters involved in the scene and try to enter into the Gospel narrative, savor and relish the truth which it contains. Thus, we get involved in the event, act in it a part of it and then let the event be a dynamic background of the day. In this way, united with the Virgin Mary, we will really experience that God-with-us is really "my Savior" (cf. Lk 1:47)!

Merry Christmas to all of you!

Rossella Bignami
Fr. Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculata
FKMinCAL@aol.com

Suggested Readings for the Month

From the Bible: Is 35; Lk 1: 26-38; 2: 1-14.

From the USCCB (USA Bishops):

Open the doors to the interactive web calendar for the 2005 Advent season. Visit

www.usccb.org/cchd/adventcalendar every day during Advent. Also, see the print version which can be downloaded at

www.usccb.org/cchd/advent.shtml

In order to continue to deepen the knowledge of the Eucharist as Living Bread for the peace of the world, I suggest that personally or with your group you take time to read and consider the message that our Bishops issued at the end of their General Assembly. The whole text can be downloaded from the Vatican website at www.vatican.va Here I offer you some parts of it.

From the Message of the XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops,

The Eucharist: Living Bread for the Peace of the World

1. “Peace be with you!” In the name of the Lord who appeared in the Cenacle of Jerusalem on the evening of Easter, we repeat, “Peace be with you!” (Jn 20:21). May the mystery of his death and resurrection bring you consolation and give meaning to the whole of your life! May he keep you joyful and full of hope! For Christ is living in his Church, as he promised (see Mt 28:20). He remains with us always until the end of the world. He gives himself to us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, along with the joy of loving as he loved. He commands us to share his victorious love with our brothers and sisters of the whole world. This is the joyful message that we proclaim to you, beloved brothers and sisters, at the end of the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has again gathered us as in the Cenacle, with Mary the Mother of God and our Mother, to recall the gift par excellence of the Holy Eucharist...

3. The fraternal sharing among the Bishops, the auditors, and also the ecumenical representatives, has renewed our conviction that the Holy Eucharist animates and transforms the life of the particular Churches of the East and West, as well as the many human activities in the very different circumstances in which we live. We have sensed a profound joy in experiencing the unity of our Eucharistic faith in the midst of the widespread diversity of rites, cultures and pastoral situations. The presence of so many Brother bishops has allowed us to experience, in a more direct way, the richness of our different liturgical traditions that makes the depths of the unique Eucharistic mystery shine forth.

We invite you, dear Christian brothers and sisters of every confession, to pray more fervently that the day of reconciliation, and the full visible unity of the Church might come in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in conformity with the prayer of Jesus on the eve of his death: “That all may be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you,

that they may be one in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me” (Jn 17:21)...

Discussion Box

- How does the mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection give meaning to my life?
- How do I share Christ’s victorious love with those with whom I live, work, etc.? May I articulate some examples?
- How often do I pray for the full visible unity of the Church in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist? What can I do to hasten the fulfillment of Jesus’ prayer “That all may be one..” (Jn 17:21)?
- Discuss with the members of your group what initiative can you take for the cause of unity.

Listening to the Suffering of the World

5. The meeting of the Synod has been an intense time of sharing and witnessing to the life of the Church in the different continents. We have been made aware of extreme situations and suffering generated by wars, hunger, different forms of terrorism and injustice, which touch the daily life of hundreds of millions of human beings. The explosive violence in the Middle East and in Africa has reminded us that the African continent has been forgotten by the public opinion of the world. Natural disasters, which seem to have multiplied, force us to look upon nature with greater respect and to strengthen our solidarity with those suffering peoples.

We have not remained silent before the consequences of secularization, present above all in the West, that lead to religious indifference and various expressions of relativism. We have remembered and denounced the situations of injustice and extreme poverty that are in evidence everywhere, but especially in Latin America, in Africa and in Asia. All this suffering cries out to God, and challenges the conscience of humanity. It challenges us all. What is becoming of the global village of our earth, the threatened environment that risks being ruined? What can be done so that, in this era of globalization, solidarity might triumph over suffering and misery? We also direct our thoughts to those who govern the nations that they take diligent care to provide access to the common good for all. We ask that they be

promoters of the dignity of every human being, from conception till natural death. We ask them to enact laws which respect the natural rights of marriage and the family. For our part, we will continue to participate actively in a common effort to generate lasting conditions for genuine progress for the whole human family, where no one is lacking his or her daily bread.

6. We have carried all these sufferings and these questions with us in our Eucharistic celebration and adoration. In our debates, listening carefully to one another, we have been moved and shaken by the witness of the martyrs who are still present today, as throughout the whole history of the Church, in many areas of the world. The Synod Fathers have recalled that the martyrs have always found the strength to overcome hatred by love and violence by pardon, thanks to the Holy Eucharist. (...)

Discussion Box

Fr. Kolbe believed that the total consecration to the Immaculata is a very effective antidote to overcome the consequences of secularization such as religious indifference and various expressions of relativism. Enumerate some manifestations of relativism visible around you. Do I feel challenged by the situations of injustice and extreme poverty that are in evidence everywhere? What can I do to bring about a genuine progress for the whole human family?

Challenges for a Eucharistic Renewal

12. The life of our Churches is also marked by shadows and problems which we have not ignored. In the first place, we think of the loss of the sense of sin and the persistent crisis in the practice of the Sacrament of Penance. It is important to rediscover its deepest meaning; it is a conversion and a precious remedy given by the risen Christ for the forgiveness of sins (see Jn 20:23) and for the growth of love towards him and our brothers and sisters.

It is interesting to notice, that more and more young people, suitably catechized, practice

confessing their personal sins, so revealing an awareness of the reconciliation required for the worthy reception of Holy Communion.

13. Nevertheless, the lack of priests to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist worries us a great deal and invites us to pray and more actively promote priestly vocations. Some priests, undergoing great difficulty, are forced to celebrate many times and to move from one place to another to best meet the needs of the faithful. They truly deserve our deep appreciation and solidarity. Our thanks goes also to those many missionaries whose enthusiasm for the proclamation of the Good News enables us to remain faithful today to the commandment of the Lord to go into the whole world and to baptize in his name (see Mt 28:19)...

16. We have also observed that in certain areas there is a lessening of the sense of the sacred that affects not only the active and fruitful participation of the faithful at Mass, but also the manner in which the celebration takes place and the quality of the witness that Christians are called to give. We seek to revive, by means of the Holy Eucharist, the sense and joy of belonging to the Catholic community, as an increasing number of departures from the Church is evident in certain countries. The fact of de-Christianization calls for a better formation to Christian life in families so that sacramental practice is revitalized and genuinely expresses the content of the faith. We therefore invite parents, pastors and catechists to work toward re-establishing a strategy for evangelization and education in the faith at the beginning of this new millennium.

17. Before the Lord of history and the future of the world, the poor of every generation and today, the ever-increasing number of victims of injustice and all the forgotten of this world challenge us. They remind us of Christ's agony, until the end of the world. These sufferings cannot remain extraneous to the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery which summons all of us to work for justice and the transformation of the world in an active and conscious fashion, on the basis of the social teaching of the Church that promotes the centrality and the dignity of the human person.

“We cannot delude ourselves: mutual love and especially the care that we show for those who are in need will indicate that we will be recognized as true disciples of Christ (see Jn 13:35; Mt 25:31-46). This is the criterion that will attest the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations” ([Mane nobiscum Domine](#) 28).

Discussion Box

According to you, what is the cause of the loss of the sense of sin and of the crisis in the practice of the Sacrament of Penance? Which solutions do you suggest to change this tendency?
Which initiatives could you take to promote priestly vocations? If someone in your family manifests the desire to discern his/her vocation to the priesthood or to the consecrated life, what would your reaction be?
How much and how often do you manifest your appreciation to and support of the priests that you know?
What can be done to increase the sense of the sacred in our youth?
We will be recognized as true disciples of Christ by mutual love. How do you care for those who are in need?

You Will Be My Witnesses

(...)

20. Dearly beloved brothers and sisters, we are called, in whatever form of life we find ourselves, to live our baptismal vocation, clothing ourselves with the sentiments of Christ Jesus (see Phil 2:2), matching one another in humility, following the example of Christ Jesus. Our mutual love is not only an imitation of the Lord, it is a living proof of his life-giving presence among us. We greet and thank all consecrated people, that chosen portion of the vineyard of the Lord who freely witness to the Good News of the Spouse who is coming (see Rev 22:17-20). Your Eucharistic witness in the service of Christ is a cry of love in the darkness of the world, an echo of the ancient Marian hymns, the Stabat Mater and of the Magnificat. May the Woman of the Eucharist par excellence, crowned with stars, and rich in love, the Virgin of the Assumption and of the Immaculate Conception, watch over you in your service of God and the poor, in the joy of Easter, for the hope of the world.

21. Dear young people, the Holy Father Benedict XVI has repeatedly said that you lose nothing

when you give yourselves to Christ. We take up again his strong and serene words from [his inaugural Mass](#) that direct you toward true happiness, with the greatest respect for your personal freedom: “Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life.” We have great trust in your capacity and your desire to develop the positive values in the world, and to change what is unjust and violent. Please count upon our support and our prayer so that we may together accept the challenge to build the future with Christ. You are the “sentinels of the morning” and the “explorers of the future.” Do not fail to draw from the source of divine energy in the Holy Eucharist to bring about the changes that are necessary.

To all young seminarians who are preparing for the priestly ministry, and who share with their generation the same hopes for the future, we wish to express our hope that their formation will be permeated by an authentic Eucharistic spirituality.

22. Dear Christian married couples and your families, your vocation to holiness begins as the domestic Church, is nourished at the Holy Table of the Eucharist. Your faith in the Sacrament of Marriage transforms your nuptial union into a Temple of the Holy Spirit, into a rich source of new life, generating children, the fruit of your love. We have often spoken of you at the Synod because we are conscious of the fragility and the uncertainties of the world today. Remain strong in your struggle to educate your children in the faith. You are the source where vocations to the priesthood and the religious life are born. Do not forget that Christ dwells in your union; he blesses it with all the graces you need to live your vocation in a saintly way. We encourage you to maintain the practice of participating as a family in the Sunday Eucharist. In this way, you bring joy to the heart of Jesus, who has said: “Let the little children come to me” (Mk 10:14).

23. We wish to address a special word to all the suffering, especially the sick and the handicapped, who are united with Christ’s sacrifice through their suffering (see Rom 12:2). In your suffering of

body and heart, you participate in a special way in the sacrifice of the Eucharist and you are privileged witnesses of the love which comes from it. We are certain that in the moment when we experience our own frailty and limitations, the strength of the Eucharist can be a great help.

United to the Paschal Mystery of Christ, we find the answer to the anguish of suffering and death, especially when sickness strikes innocent children. We are close to you all, and especially close to those of you who are dying and who receive the Body of Christ as Viaticum for their final journey toward the Kingdom...

At the end of this Synod we experience that Peace full of hope that the disciples of Emmaus, with burning hearts, received from the Risen Lord.

They arose and returned in haste to Jerusalem, to share their joy with their brothers and sisters in the faith. We hope that you will go joyfully to meet him in the Holy Eucharist, and that you will experience the truth of his words: "And I am with you until the end of the world" (Mt 28:20).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Peace be with you!"

Vatican, October 22, 2005

SK, *Scritti Kolbe (Fr. Kolbe's writings)*, in *Stronger than Hatred*, New City Press, New York, 1991. Or in: *The Kolbe Reader*, Marytown Press, Libertyville, IL, 1987. Or in: *Maria Was His Middle Name*, The Benziger Sisters Publishers, Altadena, CA, 1977.

Ideas for Advent & Christmas:

www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Advent

Dates to Remember

- 3 *St. Francis Xavier*, patron of foreign missions.
- 8 **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**, Patroness of the USA. Holy day of obligation. Plenary Indulgence for MI members.
- 12 **OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE** (USA).
- 16-24 **Christmas Novena**
- 24 **Christmas Season**, from Evening Prayer I of Christmas (Liturgy of the Hours) through the Baptism of the Lord (January 9, 2006).
- 25 **NATIVITY OF THE LORD**
- 26 *St. Stephen*, First Martyr
- 27 *St. John*, Apostle and Evangelist.
- 28 *The Holy Innocents*, martyrs.
- 30 **THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH.**

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"When the time of Christ's coming was fulfilled, the Triune God creates for himself exclusively an Immaculate Virgin, fills her with grace, and comes to live with her –The Lord is with you. And this most Blessed Virgin so moves the heart of God by her humility, that God the Father gives her his only begotten Son to be her Son. God the Son enters her virginal womb, and God the Holy Spirit forms within her the most sacred Body of the God-Man. And, so, the Word was made flesh, fruit of the love of God and the Immaculata."

St. Maximilian Kolbe