

MI Monthly Formation (3)

In Fr. Kolbe's Marian and Missionary Spirituality

MARCH 2005 PRAYER INTENTION:

**That youth recognize in Mary of Nazareth a witness of peace and trust
which flow from following God's plan.**

Dear Friends,

To contemplate the face of Christ and to contemplate it with Mary is the 'program' which the Holy Father set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, inviting her to put out into the deep on the sea of history with the enthusiasm of the new evangelization" (cf. Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 6).

On February 9, with the rite of Ashes, we began *Lent*, the liturgical season that reminds us every year of a fundamental truth: we do not enter eternal life without bearing our cross in union with Christ. As John Paul II reminded us on the first Sunday of Lent, February 13, during the Angelus, "we do not attain happiness and peace without courageously facing inner combat. This combat is won with the weapons of penance: prayer, fasting and works of mercy. All this must be done in secret, without hypocrisy, in a spirit of sincere love for God and our brothers and sisters."

As we make our Lenten journey with Mary we will celebrate with her the joy of Easter at the end of this month. Let us especially relive with Mary the Paschal Triduum by putting on her interior disposition. "Mary is a 'woman of the Eucharist' in her whole life. The Church, which looks to Mary as a model, is also called to imitate her in her relationship with this most holy mystery" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 53).

Let us ponder upon and savor once again some passages of the Encyclical on the Eucharist:

"If the Eucharist is a mystery of faith which so greatly transcends our understanding as to call for sheer abandonment to the word of God, then there can be no one like Mary to act as our support and guide in acquiring this disposition. In repeating what Christ did at the Last Supper in

obedience to his command: "Do this in memory of me!", we also accept Mary's invitation to obey him without hesitation: "Do whatever he tells you" (*Jn* 2:5). With the same maternal concern which she showed at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary seems to say to us: "Do not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If he was able to change water into wine, he can also turn bread and wine into his body and blood, and through this mystery bestow on believers the living memorial of his Passover, thus becoming the 'bread of life'".

In a certain sense Mary lived her *Eucharistic faith* even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that *she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God's Word*. The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the Annunciation Mary conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord's body and blood.

As a result, there is a profound analogy between the *Fiat* which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the *Amen* which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived "through the Holy Spirit" was "the Son of God" (*Lk* 1:30-35). In continuity with the Virgin's faith in the Eucharistic mystery, we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.

"Blessed is she who believed" (*Lk* 1:45). Mary also anticipated, in the mystery of the incarnation, the Church's Eucharistic faith. When, at the Visitation, she bore in her womb the Word

made flesh, she became in some way a “tabernacle” – the first “tabernacle” in history – in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating his light as it were through the eyes and the voice of Mary. And is not the enraptured gaze of Mary as she contemplated the face of the newborn Christ and cradled him in her arms that unparalleled model of love which should inspire us every time we receive Eucharistic communion?” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 54-55).

May Mary Most Holy, who in the midst of her daily tasks always kept in her mind and heart the mystery of her Son, guide us to carry out a fruitful Lenten journey and to experience the profound renewal of Christ’s resurrection.

Rossella Bignami
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Suggested Readings for the Month

1. From the Bible:

God Is in Charge of Growth (1Cor 3: 5-9)

Gen 1:26 - 2: 9 The Lord God planted a garden in Eden.

Ps 104: 24-31 You renew the surface of the earth

Rom 8: 14-25 Creation awaits with impatience the revelation of the Son of God

Lk 8: 4-15 It is those who hear the word ...and bear fruit

Commentary

Speaking to the people of Corinth, Paul uses an image familiar to them, of planting and growth. It is a rural image taken to illustrate the works of God, who is directly at work in their midst, calling forth servants who will collaborate in his work.

Like the Corinthians, we are called to be instruments, faithful servants who will be judged for the way in which we accomplish this work. It is an important task, both to be in this service and

to bear the responsibility of the work to be accomplished to the glory of God. We must offer our talents to him whom we serve through the Immaculate’s hands; and place our competence on the only foundation which is Christ, in order to build an edifice in the service of love.

God has made this world good. We see this in the first chapter of Genesis. Humankind has gone beyond the role given us therein; we have destroyed this perfect world. That is why we are called to a ministry of healing in the world (Rom 8). This multi-faceted ministry unites us. It consists of diverse facets, transcending confessional and cultural barriers. The world is wounded, in the same way as the traveler lying on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. We must not be afraid to touch what is broken in our world. God desires to heal through our intervention. Creation awaits with impatience the healing which will come from God.

Within the unity which is sought, Christians can exchange their own experiences to show that beyond being of Paul or of Apollos, they are Christ’s. Only Christ can help them grow in the love of the Father, in the service of the Spirit of holiness and of unity. Jesus, in fact, desires to save the world and its marginalized people.

Prayer

O God, we thank you for the confidence and blessing which you offer to those who work for the coming of your reign in this world. Help us to find new ways of carrying out your work in the service of those around us. May we serve, rather than seek to be served, and may your healing power be at work among us. United as one family of your only Son, may we be faithful stewards of your creation so that you may be known by all men and women, great and ordinary, by all things and all people, as the true living savior and creator of all. Amen.

2. From the Pope

John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Sick*, and the *Message for Lent*, that you can download from the Vatican web site:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/lent

See also the material that is available for the Year of the Eucharist in:

www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm

3. Kolbean Spirituality:

The MI: A Modern Way to Live the Gospel

In this part of the monthly formation, you will find some thoughts and reflections about the Militia of the Immaculata as it was intended and proposed by St. Maximilian and about Kolbean spirituality. This section may provide you with more insights and greater enthusiasm, giving you a better understanding of your true identity as MIer.

5. Consecrate Them in the Truth.

The Evangelist John gives us an account of Jesus' prayer to the Father during the Last Supper, when "his hour" had come.

"They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth" (Jn 17: 16-18).

Jesus asks the Father to consecrate his disciples in a similar way in which he was consecrated for a mission. The protagonist of this consecration is the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who consecrated Jesus for his mission and Mary for becoming the Mother of God and of humankind.

"To consecrate in the truth," means to communicate the Spirit who discloses the truth about God and about man. The heavenly Father consecrates us by sending the Holy Spirit and making us able to partake in his own life by giving us the power to become his adopted children in Christ.

Every consecration entails a mission. Christ is the consecrated one par excellence, he is the Messiah. Mary has been consecrated in order to cooperate in the fulfillment of the history of salvation. Regarding the Apostles, Jesus asks the Father to consecrate them so that they may continue his mission in the world: *"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole*

creation" (Mk 16: 15). Jesus asks his disciples to participate in what is his: his consecration and mission.

While in the Old Testament the consecration through anointing was received passively and bestowed a status, in the New Testament the consecration through the Spirit requires dynamism and cooperation.

On the part of God, consecration consists in enabling a person for the mission which God entrusts to him or her. On the part of the one who receives it, consecration is a commitment to carry out to the end, gradually and consistently.

Jesus' death made possible the disciples' consecration because it showed them the measure of Christian love. On the Cross Jesus testified to the Father's greatest love¹ and poured out the Holy Spirit.² The disciples were then consecrated and enabled to make their journey toward the Father with Jesus and like him until the end.

This consecration has been perfected and completed by the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, once again with Mary's presence.

Therefore, how can we see a competition between the consecration to Mary and the consecration of the Holy Spirit?

How can we talk about the consecration to God by excluding the presence of Mary and her role in it?

Moreover, how can we not recognize in St. Maximilian Kolbe's death, which was an expression of unlimited love, an analogy with Christ's death?

How can we not consider his heroic death as a mandate of his spiritual inheritance to each MI member?

We too have been consecrated by an act of total love so that we may learn to make our consecration a daily disposition to love and a permanent disposition to mission.

(5. To be continued)

¹ *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son"* (Jn 3: 16).

² *"And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit"* (Jn 19: 30).

For Personal Reflection

- * What propelled me to make my consecration to the Immaculata?
- * What was the aspect or the idea that has drawn me into St. Maximilian's spirituality and movement?
- * Is the link between Baptismal consecration to God and Marian consecration clear to me?
- * Do I have a clear understanding of the B. Virgin Mary's role in God's salvific project?
- * Am I capable of presenting the consecration to the Immaculata to others?

Resources

John Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine (Remain with us Lord)*, Apostolic Letter for the Year of the Eucharist, 10/7/04.

USCCB *Information Released On Worldwide Telecasts Of Holy Father's Good Friday And Easter Sunday Liturgies*, in:

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.

Dates to Remember

- 3** *St. Katharine Drexel*, virgin (USA).
- 10** Novena to St. Joseph begins.
- 17** *St Patrick*, bishop (USA).
- 19** ***St. Joseph***, husband of the Virgin Mary. Solemnity.
- 20** **Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion.**
- 21-26** ***Holy Week.***
- 25** **Good Friday of the Lord's Passion.** Fast & abstinence. Purim.
- 27** **Easter Sunday: the Resurrection of the Lord. *Alleluia!***
- 28-April 2** **Octave of Easter**