

MI Monthly Formation (11)

In Fr. Kolbe's Marian and Missionary

Spirituality

NOVEMBER 2005 PRAYER INTENTION:

**That the souls in purgatory might sustain us with
love and be in turn assisted by our prayers.**

Dear friends,

The Blessed Virgin Mary continues to accompany us in our spiritual journey as the liturgical year comes to its end. On November 21, the Catholic Church celebrates the memorial of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple (in Eastern usage: The Entry of the *Theotokos* into the temple). The inner meaning of this feast is to signify Mary's total dedication to God, in preparation for her future vocation as Mother of the Incarnate Lord. She is the new temple of God, as we read in the antiphon of the Magnificat, *Holy Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, you are the temple of the Lord and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Beyond all others you were pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ.* She was pleasing to God because she was perfectly obedient to his will and believed that the word of God would be fulfilled (cf. Lk 1: 45) in her and through her. Traditionally, on this day consecrated persons renew their vows to the Lord, in memory of the offering of Mary to the Lord's service, since, as St. Augustine said, *Mary was more blessed in her discipleship than in her motherhood.*

In this context, it may be useful to re-read art. 4 #2; 7 and 12 of the *MI General Statutes* and to comment on them during the group meeting; and also to share one's reflections with friends and parishioners.

Another Marian feast worthy of note is the memorial of the Miraculous Medal on November 27. This date corresponds to the second apparition of Our Lady to Sr. Catherine Labouré, a novice in the community of the Daughters of Charity in Paris, in 1830. The Virgin Mary entrusted to her a special mission, instructing her to *Have a medal struck upon this*

model. Those who wear it will receive great graces, especially if they wear it around the neck.

With approval of the Church, the first Medals were made in 1832 and were distributed in Paris. Almost immediately the blessings that Mary had promised began to shower down on those who wore her Medal. The devotion spread like wildfire bringing about marvels of grace and health, peace and prosperity. Before long people were calling it the "Miraculous" Medal.

There is no superstition, nothing of magic, connected with the Miraculous Medal. It is not a "good-luck" charm. Rather, it is a sign that shows the power of trusting prayer and of genuine faith. Its greatest miracles in fact are those of patience, forgiveness, repentance, and faith. God uses the Medal, not as a sacrament, but as one of his numerous means through which he stirs up our faith. Only faith, in fact, allows God to perform marvelous deeds.

Therefore, in preparation for this festivity, it can be very appropriate to re-read the brochure of the Miraculous Medal or other pertinent literature and to promote a campaign to spread it (cf. *General Statutes (GS)*, # 15). Anytime we offer a Miraculous Medal to someone, we should be careful to accompany it with faith and with an explanation of its story and spiritual value. Only in this way may it really become an act of evangelization. *In fact, the Militia essentially intends to promote the extension of the Reign of Christ in the world through the action of the Immaculata, 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 (GS # 3b).*

Let us also do our best to prepare ourselves and others to celebrate with faith the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (December 8). We may promote in our Parishes, groups and families a Novena to the Immaculata with St. Maximilian Kolbe, starting on November 29.

As we have seen, this month is full of occasions for deepening our understanding of Mary and for spreading a true love of her in our milieu.

May St. Maximilian inspire and direct all our efforts according to God's will.

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As usual, for your personal or group formation as MIr, I also recommend your reading the articles that are published in *Immaculata* magazine.

Suggested Readings for the Month

From the Bible:

Mt 12: 46-50; Psalm 33.

From the Pope:

From the Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, October 2, 2005

“The reading from the Prophet Isaiah [5: 1-7] and today's Gospel [Mt 21: 33-43] set before our eyes one of the great images of Sacred Scripture: the image of the vine. In Sacred Scripture, bread represents all that human beings need for their daily life. Water makes the earth fertile: it is the fundamental gift that makes life possible. Wine, on the other hand, expresses the excellence of creation and gives us the feast in which we go beyond the limits of our daily routine: wine, the Psalm says, *‘gladdens the heart.’* So it is that wine and with it the vine have also become images of the gift of love in which we can taste the savor of the Divine. Thus, the reading from the Prophet ... begins like a canticle of love: God created a vineyard for himself - this is an image of the history of love for humanity, of his love for Israel which he chose... God instilled in men and women, created in his image, the capacity for love, hence also the capacity for loving him, their Creator. With the Prophet Isaiah's canticle of love God wants to speak to the hearts of his people - and to each one of us. *‘I have created you in my image and likeness,’* he says to us. *‘I myself am love and you are my image to the extent that the splendor of love shines out in you, to the extent that you respond lovingly to me.’* God is waiting for us. He wants us to love him: should not our hearts be moved by this appeal? ... When we are celebrating the Eucharist... he comes to meet us, he comes to meet me. Will he find a response? Or will what happened to the vine of which God says in Isaiah: *‘He waited for it to produce grapes but it yielded wild grapes,’* also happen to us? Is not our Christian life often far more like vinegar than wine? Self-pity, conflict, indifference?”...

“God had planted the very best vines, yet they yielded wild grapes. Let us ask ourselves: what do wild grapes consist of? The good grapes that God was

hoping for, the Prophet sings, would have been justice and righteousness. Wild grapes instead bring violence, bloodshed and oppression that make people groan under the yoke of injustice...”

“*‘If you do not repent I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place’* (Eph 2: 5). Light can also be taken away from us and we do well to let this warning ring out with its full seriousness in our hearts, while crying to the Lord: *‘Help us to repent! Give all of us the grace of true renewal! Do not allow your light in our midst to blow out! Strengthen our faith, our hope and our love, so that we can bear good fruit!’*”

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You may also read the *Letter Of His Holiness Benedict XVI on the Occasion of the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, September 27, 2005, that you can download from the Vatican web site: www.Vatican.va/Holy_Father/benedict_xvi/letters/2005

From the Writings of St. Maximilian Kolbe

“Throughout history, the holy Virgin Mary has come to the assistance of her own children, offering them different ways to reach more easily their salvation and liberation from Satan’s yoke. Now, in the age of the Immaculate Conception, the holy Virgin has handed over to humankind her miraculous medal, which, by performing numerous miraculous healings and above all conversions, confirms its own heavenly origin.

Manifesting the desire to have this medal coin, the Immaculata herself promised abundant graces to all those who would carry it; and since conversion and holiness are divine graces, the Miraculous Medal is the best means to reach our goal. Therefore, the medal is the most effective weapon of the Militia of the Immaculata; it is the bullet with which the faithful MIr engages in battle with the enemy, that is, with evil, thus also saving the wicked from damnation.

Besides, the following spontaneous prayer is engraved on the medal: *‘O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us, who have recourse to you.’* The Immaculata herself has revealed and put this prayer on our lips recommending us to recite it. Therefore, let us put this recommendation into practice too.

Moreover, since some people do not resort to her, we add: *'And for those who do not have recourse to you.'*... In this way, every day, we launch an attack against the hellish dragon's body, but most of all, upon his head.

We are not to see now the effects of our work, or rather of our prayer; still, after our death we shall be able to see for ourselves how true the words of the Lord are: *'Ask and you will receive'* (Jn 16: 24); in fact, we can be sure that in this case what we ask is not contrary to God's will."

(SK 1248)

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

- 1** **All Saints.**
- 2** **The Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed** (All Souls).
- 13** **THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN OT.** *St. Frances Xavier Cabrini*, the first citizen of US to be canonized, patroness of immigrants and migrants.
- 17** *St. Elizabeth of Hungary*, patroness of the Franciscan Third Order and of Catholic charities.
- 20** **OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST THE KING.**
- 21** *The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*
- 24** *Our Lady of Montserrat.* Commemoration of All the Deceased of the Seraphic Order (Franciscans).
- 24** **Thanksgiving Day (USA).**
- 27** **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.** The New Liturgical Year begins. The Lectionary cycles are as follows: **Year B:** Sundays cycle. **Year 2:** Week-day cycle in Ordinary Time. *Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal*, Rue du Bac, 1830, Paris.
- 29** **Novena** in honor of the **Immaculate Conception of Mary** begins. Feast of All Saints of the Franciscan Order. On November 29, 1223, Pope Honorius III approved the Friars Minor's Rule.