
MI MONTHLY FORMATION (9 & 10)

In Fr. Kolbe's Marian and Missionary Spirituality

SEPTEMBER 2006 PRAYER INTENTION:

That, with your help and following your example, we promote in our community activities which are ever more attentive to the needs of those who suffer.

OCTOBER 2006 PRAYER INTENTION:

That every believer, following the example of apostle John, embraces you in order to be molded by you.



Dear Friends,

As August days have come very quickly to an end, I am sure we have all resumed our commitment to work or study. Hopefully the blessings of summer days of vacation and rest have energized us.

I would like to extend to all of you who have been faithfully looking forward to receiving this MI Monthly Formation, a special greeting from Rossella Bignami. As you had surely come to perceive month after month, she worked at this presentation with great passion and expertise. Now directress of our community at the motherhouse in Bologna, Italy, she continues to live her total consecration to God through the Immaculata in a new "field of mission," as St. Maximilian Kolbe would say. Be assured of her prayers for you and please remember her in yours as well.

In one of her first pieces this year, Rossella had shared her intention of providing us with material and resources to deepen our understanding and appreciation of our total consecration to the Immaculata. "Our desire to get closer and closer to God and thus find our true happiness, led us to consecrate ourselves to the Immaculata so that she could fully exercise her maternal role in our lives. As our spiritual Mother, she constantly calls us to conversion and helps us to raise the level of our spiritual life to the peak of holiness. For our part, we strive to imitate her attitudes toward God and toward others, especially: her interior life; her obedience of faith to God's will; her ardent, heroic charity; and her capacity for suffering out of love."

*After extensively meditating upon the first two "pillars" of our consecration, now I would like to offer you some hints for your further reflection drawing on the example of St. Maximilian Kolbe, who shines before us as a clear model of **heroic charity**, lived after the example of Jesus.*

Blessings on the "new" or continuing year!

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A Shining Similarity

Nothing can compare with the ultimate Sacrifice of Christ. Nonetheless, as the Church has never ceased to remind us, all Catholic priests deserve the magnificent title of alter Christus—another Christ. In his homily at the canonization of St. Maximilian Kolbe on October 10, 1982, our Holy Father John Paul II indicated a direct similarity between Saint Maximilian, priest and martyr, and Jesus, the Crucifix and Our Savior. Let us explore a few details of this similarity in some events that characterized the last months of Kolbe's life.

The evening before Father Maximilian's arrest was vividly engraved on some of his Brothers' memories. "That evening," Br. Marcellus Pisarek recounted, "during our recreation period, I had the joy of being with him in a small group off to one side from the main group. We were talking primarily of spiritual matters." Later that same evening, Kolbe asked some of the Brothers who had been with him from the earliest days at Grodno, to join him. "What a great grace it is to be able to seal our ideals with our own life," he said, making reference to the grace of martyrdom he would most probably be granted.

In a little conference with five of them, Father Maximilian shared his thought on the relationship of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the Holy Trinity. But what the Brothers recalled later, as a very special treat, Maximilian brought a small cake with him, which they all shared. Similarly, during the Last Supper, Jesus had broken and shared "the Bread" with his apostles!

The night before His Passion, Our Lord did not take any rest. Neither did Father Kolbe before his arrest. He went to his room but did not sleep, foreseeing that his "hour" was about to come. "It must have been between the hours of midnight and two in the morning when he

telephoned and awakened me," Brother Pelagius remembers. "He came to my cell. Reopening the spiritual conversation that we had during the day, he urged me to fidelity toward the Lord and devotion to the Immaculata." Then they prayed together. Around 4:00 am Brother Rufin also received a visit by his Superior. "He came to me, as I was sleeping. He awakened me and bending over me, he touched his heart to my heart."

According to this Brother's memories, Father Maximilian's expression was sober, and he had tears in his eyes. We may remember how anguished Our Lord's last hours were, He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground (Lk 22:44).

At the end of July 1941, a prisoner in Block 14, where Father Kolbe was also assigned, escaped from the concentration camp of Auschwitz. Reprisal was immediate: ten fellow prisoners were chosen and condemned to die in his place in the starvation bunker. Standing in the still ranks of those who had not been selected, Fr. Maximilian Kolbe made his decision. He then came forward and respectfully but firmly addressed the Commandant. "I want to die in the place of this prisoner," he said, while pointing to Francis Gajowniczek, the sobbing prisoner who had been previously chosen. "I have no wife or children...I am a Catholic priest." The unusual request was granted. Like Christ, Father Maximilian of his own free will entered his passion.

What a magnificent example of Christ-like sacrifice this modern day saint provides at a time when the world is in such dire need of a visible portrayal of an alter Christus. Maximilian is indeed a shining example to inspire us to turn to the Immaculata as a source of courage and strength to help us live and proclaim our faith for which Christ died.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER DEEPENING THE THEME

MI General Statutes

www.consecration.com/statutes.html

Article 7

After the example of Mary, Virgin in listening, Virgin in prayer, Virgin Mother, Virgin offering (RM 17-20), members of the Militia of the Immaculata recognize the fundamental value of listening to the Word of God, of the liturgical celebration, of prayer, of **charity** towards others, of offering one's own being, in order to collaborate with Christ in the salvation of the world.

Article 18

Members of the MI, according to the meaning of article 8, avail themselves of the means that Father Kolbe used with prophetic and Franciscan spirit, thereby becoming apostles "of the pen, the microphone, the screen or whichever other means" (SK 382). The members are active:

1. In the field of evangelization (announcing the Word, catechesis, care for the young people's world, missions for the people, courses in spiritual formation, updating, or Marian doctrine);
2. On the level of **charity** (human promotion, attention to emerging needs);
3. In the areas of mass media (editorial, radio and television. and data processing

MI Youth-Beat

From Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter
"Deus Caritas Est"

31.b. The Christian's program —the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus—is "**a heart which sees**". **This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.**

18. Love of neighbor is thus shown to be possible in the way proclaimed by the Bible, by Jesus. It consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, even affecting my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend. Going beyond exterior appearances, I perceive in others an interior desire for a sign of love, of concern... Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love which they crave.

Church's Teaching

From the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

388. What is charity?

Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Jesus makes charity the new commandment, the fullness of the law. "It is the bond of perfection" (*Colossians* 3:14) and the foundation of the other virtues to which it gives life, inspiration, and order. Without charity "I am nothing" and "I gain nothing" (*1 Corinthians* 13:1-3).

See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) #1822-1829 and #1844

From the Writings of Fr. Faccenda, Ofm Conv.

***Heroic Charity: Readiness to Give
One's Life for One's Brethren***

This is the heart of the Gospel, which calls us to love our neighbors as Jesus did:

"This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other. This is how all will know you for my disciples: by your love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35).

Heroic charity also characterized the whole earthly life of the Virgin Mother, as we can see in the Gospels: from the Visitation, to her solicitous presence at the wedding feast of Cana, to the Cenacle. She, who at the Annunciation called herself the "handmaid of the Lord", became the first of those who, by serving Christ in others, with humility and patience, lead their brothers and sisters to salvation. Now, in heaven, the glory of serving does not cease to be her royal exaltation as she continues to care for all of us (cf. *Lumen Gentium* #62 and *Redemptoris Mater* # 41).

She showed the highest expression of her maternal love at the foot of the cross

...where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his suffering, associating herself with his sacrifice in her motherly heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as a mother to his disciple, with these words: "Woman, behold your son" (*Jn. 19:26-27*) (*Lumen Gentium* #58).

Through our consecration to her we are called to share in her unlimited charity. This attitude of self-giving, however, such as the supreme offering of Fr. Kolbe in the concentration camp, implies a daily effort. It requires a continual giving of ourselves so as to become instruments of love and communion.

(Fr. Luigi Faccenda*, *One More Gift*, 1991, page 75-76).

* Fr. Faccenda, OFMConv. (1920-2005), is the Founder of the Fr. Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculata, men and women.

Dates to Remember

- September -

- 2 First Saturday of the Month
- 4 Labor Day (USA)
- 8 **The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Feast)**
- 12 *The Most Holy Name of Mary (Optional Memorial)*
- 14 **Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Feast)**
- 15 Our Lady of Sorrows (Memorial)
- 21 **Matthew, Apostle, Evangelist (Feast)**
- 29 **Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels (Feast)**

- October -

- 1 Respect Life Sunday
- 4 **Francis of Assisi**, religious. For the Franciscan Order: Solemnity
- 7 **Our Lady of the Rosary (Memorial)**
First Saturday of the Month
- 10 24th Anniversary of St. Maximilian's canonization.
- 16 Margaret Mary Alacoque, Virgin.
89th Anniversary of the Foundation of the MI. Plenary Indulgence for MIers.
- 18 **Luke, Evangelist (Feast)**
- 22 **World Mission Sunday**
- 28 **Simon and Jude, Apostles (Feast)**
- 31 1942: Pope Pius XII consecrated the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Do Not Forget Love

LEADER: With the recitation of this Rosary, we wish to prayerfully reflect upon five significant stages of St. Maximilian Kolbe's human and spiritual journey. May his witness of an unconditional love for God, the Immaculata, and all men lead us too to nurture a great passion for the Gospel. And may we too... never forget love!

PRAYER:

“My soul, be at rest in God alone,
from whom comes my hope.
God alone is my rock and my salvation,
my secure height; I shall not fall.
My safety and glory are with God,
my strong rock and refuge.
Trust God at all times, my people!
Pour out your hearts to God our refuge!”
(From Psalm 62)

FIRST DECADE: THE POWER OF PRAYER

“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me” (Jn 15:4).

“Prayer is the most powerful means to give peace to souls, fill them with happiness and bring them closer to God's love. Prayer gives rebirth to the world”

Our Father, 10 Hail Mary's, Glory Be

SECOND DECADE: THE FREE GIFT OF SELF

“This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35).

“The essence of mutual love does not consist in the fact that no one causes us grief, but that we learn to forgive one another immediately and always more perfectly.”

Our Father, 10 Hail Mary's, Glory Be

THIRD DECADE: THE JOY OF EVANGELIZING

“God who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4).

“Extending a hand to all and leading all men to God through the Immaculata is a beautiful mission worth living, working, suffering, and even dying for”.

Our Father, 10 Hail Mary's, Glory Be

FOURTH DECADE: THE GLORY OF MARTYRDOM

“If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (Jn 15:20).

“I wish I could be completely crushed for the cause of the Immaculata, for the cause of God. I would like that my ashes would be scattered in the wind in all directions. May nothing remain of me. Then alone my donation to the Immaculata will be perfectly accomplished”.

Our Father, 10 Hail Mary's, Glory Be

FIFTH DECADE: THE TOTAL GIFT OF SELF

“Remain faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev 2:10).

“Dear little children, in every trouble, in every darkness, in every weakness, in every discouragement, let us remember that paradise... paradise is drawing near. Every day that passes is one day less to wait. Let us brace ourselves, then. She is waiting for us there to clasp us to her heart”.

Our Father, 10 Hail Mary's, Glory Be

LEADER: On August 14, 1941, Maximilian Kolbe sealed his earthly journey with a total gift of self. He had worked for the Immaculata and now he died for Her. *“What a great grace it is to be able to seal with our own life our ideals!”*

ALL:

St. Maximilian Kolbe, we turn to you in prayer.

Help us live by faith:

may it be strong, especially in face
of suffering and trials.

Help us live by love:

may we learn to forget ourselves and see Our Lord
reflected in every brother and sister.

Help us live by hope:

may we never grow discouraged
when faced with difficulties and failures.

Help us to always look intently on Jesus,
who lived and died for love of us.

Amen.

