

MI Monthly Formation (6)

In Fr. Kolbe's Marian and Missionary Spirituality

JUNE 2004 PRAYER INTENTION:
**That families
feel supported by the Christian community in living their vocation.**

Dear Friends,

In creating man and woman, God instituted the human family and endowed it with its fundamental constitution. Its members are persons equal in dignity, with different roles and responsibilities. If they respond to their vocation faithfully, they can contribute in making our society, the Church and the world better places in which everyone can grow according to God's plan.

The Christian family also constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion; that is why it has been called a *domestic church*.¹ In fact, "In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and the sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task" (CCC 2205). What a powerful statement! Just taking seriously these few words, Christian families could transform the world, with God's grace and their efforts.

Furthermore, the Christian family should be a place of formation in the faith. In the Apostolic Exhortation addressed to the Christ's faithful people² we read: "Father and mother receive from the Sacrament of Matrimony the grace and the ministry of the Christian education of their children, before whom they bear witness and to whom they transmit both human and religious values. While learning their first words, children learn also the praise of God, whom they feel is near them as a loving and providential Father; while learning the first acts of love, children also learn to open themselves to others,

and through the gift of self receive the sense of living as a human being. The daily life itself of a truly Christian family makes up the first "experience of Church," intended to find confirmation and development in an active and responsible process of the children's introduction into the wider ecclesial community and civil society. The more that Christian spouses and parents grow in the awareness that their "domestic church" participates in the life and mission of the universal Church, so much the more will their sons and daughters be able to be formed in a "sense of the Church" and will perceive all the beauty of dedicating their energies to the service of the Kingdom of God."

That's really true! In fact, I too discovered my vocation to the consecrated and missionary life within my family, through the values and testimony that my parents and close relatives passed on to me. Still now, the witness of their life and their dedication to the family is for me a great encouragement in pursuing the goals of my vocation that are holiness and the efficacy in spreading the Good News of God's love and forgiveness.

Let us then pray and work for the good of families and for young people called to this vocation. May the Mother of Jesus, who at Cana obtained for the new married couple and for all the excellent wine of the new Covenant, intercede with Christ for the grace of holy and fruitful families, able to renew the world with the joy of the Gospel.

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¹ See *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

² John Paul II, *The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People*, Apostolic Exhortation, December 30, 1988, 62.

As usual, for your personal or group formation as MIers I recommend to use the articles

that are published in *Immaculata* magazine. As you know, this year many articles develop the different aspects of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the meaning of this grace for the here and now. The National center has also prepared a brochure on this subject that is very useful for a wider sowing of this truth so that, as Fr. Kolbe wished, *the Immaculata would as soon as possible become Queen of the whole world and of each and every soul.*³

The Immaculate Conception And the Holy Trinity in St. Maximilian Kolbe's Spirituality Part Four

St. Maximilian had profound insights regarding the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit. In his draft for a book he was about to write on this topic before being arrested, he explains:

“United to the Holy Spirit as his spouse, she is one with God in an incomparable way than can be predicated of any other creature. What sort of union is this? It is above all an interior union, a union of her essence with the ‘essence’ of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Immaculata, lives in her. This was true from the first instant of her existence. ...

*The Holy Spirit lives in the soul of the Immaculata, in the depths of her very being. He makes her fruitful, for the very first instant of her existence, all during her life, and for all eternity. (...) In the union of the Holy Spirit with her, not only do we have the love of two beings; in one of the two we have all the love of the Trinity itself; and in the other we have all of creation's love. Hence, in this union heaven and earth meet; all of heaven with all of earth, the totality of divine eternal love with the plenitude of created love. It is true summit of love.”*⁴

While studying and deepening these thoughts, Fr. Luigi Faccenda, a Conventual Franciscan who has known Fr. Kolbe's spirituality profoundly and who has founded two Institutes of

Consecrated Life, the *Fr. Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculata* (male and female), observed that:

*“In Fr. Kolbe's thought Mary appears as the new Ark of the Covenant in whom God the Trinity dwells and the Spirit enters without obstacles, filling her to the point of making her his spouse. From that moment the bond between her and the Holy Spirit is indissoluble. The Spirit dwells within her, fills her with Himself, and associates her with his sanctifying mission, so much so that one can say that the Spirit works “through” the Immaculata. This is to be understood in the sense that Mary, being the Spirit's dwelling, is not only the person in whom the Word takes on human flesh, but also the “place” of the Spirit's manifestation, the “place” where every other mystery is fulfilled and the fruits of divine grace mature.”*⁵

The Immaculata and Us: Called to Be Holy and Without Blemish Before God.⁶

The existence of each one of us is the fruit of the creative love of the Father. Each person comes to life because he is loved, first of all by God the Father Who from eternity has thought of him and in a certain time has called him into existence, through the love of two human beings...

How real are Jesus' words: “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you...” (Jn 15:16)!

The Letter to the Ephesians highlights the primacy of this divine choice. If we pay attention to the text, we notice that there are many parallels between Mary's vocation and election and ours.

[Read Eph 1: 3-14; 2: 1-10: the Father's Plan of Salvation].

Like Mary, we all are called “*to be holy and without blemish before God*” (Immaculata= “full of grace” / “without sin”).

The Greek verb *charit*__ occurs only two times in the NT: in the text of the Annunciation,

³ Fr. Luigi Faccenda, *Fr. Kolbe, the Immaculata, and the Most Holy Trinity*, Conference given in occasion of the Honoris Causa Doctorate, St. Bonaventura Pontifical Theological Faculty, Rome, May 17, 1995.

⁶ For this aspect, see the last part of the flyer *The Immaculate Conception* prepared by Marytown.

³ In *Maria Was His Middle Name*, p. 140.

⁴ SK 1318, in Manteau-Bonamy, *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, p. 1-5.

when the Angel hails Mary and reveals God's choice and election to her (Lk 1:28, 30),⁷ and in the Letter to the Ephesians, which speaks of our eternal predestination in Christ (Eph 1: 6).⁸

In Greek the verbs in __ are causative: they effect a change of something in the person involved. The verb *charit__* contains the root of *châris* = grace. Therefore, the use of this verb indicates that there has been a permanent change brought about by grace.

As Mary has been transformed by the grace of God, so have those who have been chosen in Christ been transformed by the same grace.

The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary says that God preserved her from sin and sanctified her in view of her vocation to be the Mother of the beloved Son.

Mary is the image of the divine choice for every creature. As we read in the Letter to the Ephesians, in fact, we too were chosen in Christ to become God's adopted children by welcoming and keeping the state of grace.

In other words, we ought to welcome that election which was made from eternity, and was totally free, mysterious, and loving. Mary is really the absolute model of what we all are called to become in God's plan.⁹

(4. To be continued)

Suggested Readings for the Month

John Paul II, *Messages, Homilies and Audiences* that you can download from the Vatican web site: www.Vatican.va/Holy_Father/John_Paul_II/messages.

John Paul II, *The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People*, 12/30/1988, n. 37

⁷ In Lk 1:28 "Hail, full of grace" or "Hail, favored one" / *Châire, kecharitomén_*; and in 1:30 "Do not be afraid, Mary, because you have found favor (*charin*) with God." Here the verb *charit__* means that Mary is already under the influence of God's favor and such she remains, she is filled with the gratuitousness of God's grace. See: *charitas*=charity; *charisma*=charism.

⁸ Eph 1: 6, "for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved."

⁹ We too like Mary "are the temple of God" in which the Spirit of God dwells (cf. 1Cor 3: 16).

CCC, Catechism of the Catholic Church, nn. 2201-2233.

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.

For those who prefer John Paul II's reflections, I suggest meditating upon his general audience of May 1, 1996, *Mary Responds to God with Spousal Love*, that you can find in *Theotókos, Woman, Mother, Disciple*, a collection of the Pope's Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God, edited by Pauline Books & Media, Boston, 2000, pp. 83-86.

Dates to Remember

- 5** 1st Saturday of the month.
- 6** THE MOST HOLY TRINITY. Solemnity.
- 13** **THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.** Solemnity.
- 18** THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS. Solemnity.
- 19** **The Immaculate Heart of Mary.**
- 20** TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME. Father's Day.
- 24** **The Nativity of St. John the Baptist.** Solemnity.
- 29** **Peter and Paul, Apostles.** Solemnity.

From St. Maximilian's Writings

"Love the Immaculata as your mother, with all the generosity of your heart; she loved you enough to sacrifice God's Son for you; in the Annunciation she welcomed you with all graciousness as her child.

She will make you like herself; will make you ever more immaculate; will nourish you with the milk of the grace. Just let yourself be guided by her; let yourself be ever more willingly shaped by her" (SK 1334).