



# There Is No Greater Love than to Lay Down One's Life

## Celebration in Honor of Saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe

(with his relic)

### Story of St. Maximilian M. Kolbe's Relic

During his March 1938 visit to Berlin, Maksymilian had seen the vulgar sheet, *Der Stürmer*. In this newspaper the Jew was stereotyped, often being depicted with a full beard.

"I'll shave my beard. Do you approve?" Maksymilian asked. "Yes, your Franciscan habit will be provocation enough," the Provincial answered.

After returning to Niepokalanow, Brother Kamil shaved Maksymilian's beard. It was difficult for Maksymilian to permit the razor to be placed on this full growth which he first had grown to enhance his missionary work in Japan. What had increased the prestige and respect for the Franciscans in Japan, under the coming tyranny of National Socialism would provoke ridicule and persecution. The brothers were shocked to see their Guardian without his beard.

"Father!" Brother Hieronim exclaimed, "with your beard you looked so patriarchal. Now you look strangely different, but why did you shave your beard?"

Maksymilian responded, "Beards provoke the enemy who rapidly is approaching our friary. Our Franciscan habits also will provoke him. I can part with my beard. I can't sacrifice my habit." After having shaved Maksymilian's beard, Brother Kamil placed it in a pouch.

Strands of the beard still are preserved in the Niepokalanow archives.

(Claude R. Foster, *Mary's Knight*, Marytown Press 2013, p. 586)

## WELCOMING CEREMONY

### Hymn

### Entrance Procession

The holy relic is carried in while a suitable hymn is sung.

### Placing of the Relic

The holy relic is placed on either side of the altar or in another appropriate location.

### Incensing

If a priest or a deacon is present, the holy relic may be incensed while the hymn is sung.

- C. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
– *Amen.*
- C. Blessed be the Lord God, Trinity of love: luminous are his works, merciful his ways. May every creature give Him praise. May all creation bless and exalt Him.  
– *Yours is the glory, honor and adoration, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.*

### Opening Prayer

- C. O God, who gave the Church and the world the priest and martyr Saint Maximilian Kolbe, burning with love for the Immaculate Virgin Mary and with apostolic zeal for souls and heroic love of neighbor, graciously grant, through his intercession, that striving for your glory by eagerly serving others, we may be conformed, even until death, to your Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.  
– *Amen.*

## PABIANICE: THE TWO CROWNS

### Reader 1:

*Saint Maximilian, your grand adventure began on the day when you, a youth, knelt with your face to the ground before the image of the Immaculata and promised you would fight for her. By that gesture, as a courageous knight, you consecrated yourself entirely to your Lady, ready to accomplish the most difficult tasks for her! Who could possibly be your Lady if not the only one worthy to have your whole heart, the most pure and beautiful one, who guarded your people as its Queen?*

### Reader 2:

I have always known Father Maximilian was going to die a martyr because of an extraordinary event in his childhood.

One time I didn't like something about him, and I said to him, "My little [son], I don't know what's going to become of you!" After this I never thought again about my remark, but I soon noticed that my child changed so much he was unrecognizable... so I asked him, "What's wrong with you?" I insisted, "You have to tell Mama everything."

Trembling and with tears in his eyes, he told me:

### Reader 3:

"When you said to me, 'What will become of you?' I prayed very hard to Our Lady to tell me what would become of me. Then the Virgin Mother appeared to me holding in her hands two crowns, one white and one red. She looked at me with love and she asked me if I would like to have them. The white meant that I would remain pure and the red that I would be a martyr. I answered yes, I wanted them. Then the Virgin looked at me tenderly and disappeared."

### Reader 1:

The extraordinary change in my boy showed the truth of the thing. He was always thinking about it, and whenever there was the opportunity, with a shining face he talked to me of his desire for a martyr's death....

(Patricia Treece, *A Man for Others*, Marytown Press 2013, pp. 1-2)

### Reader 2:

I am all and totally yours, both soul and body; my whole life, my death, my eternity belong to you forever; deign to do with me anything you please. I am fully satisfied. If it pleases you, deign to take me even this very instant. If you prefer later, then take me later. I am yours, my Loving Mother.

KW 988 H

### Let yourself be led...

Place no trust in yourself.  
In all things rely totally on God's mercy,  
which leads you through the Immaculata.  
Trust totally in the Immaculata.

*Let yourself be led...*

Do not worry about anything.  
Let yourself be led in peace;  
therefore, it is not you, but it is God's grace that should do all.  
Struggle incessantly with yourself to do not what you want  
but what God wants and because it is He who wants it.

*Let yourself be led...*

Trust without limits, for she will not allow you to be lost.  
Let yourself be led with confidence, faith and love.

*Let yourself be led...*

Be faithful to inspirations.

Work for the glory of God, according to your abilities.

Let yourself be led in peace and love by the Divine Mercy.

Let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit,

Then you will do much good, and render to God the greatest possible glory through the salvation of souls.

—St. Maximilian M. Kolbe

—While a hymn or canon is sung, a *white crown* and a *red crown* are carried to the foot of the altar.

## ROME: THE MILITIA OF THE IMMACULATA

### Reader 1:

*Saint Maximilian, you gave yourself completely to the Immaculata and for her you left the world in order to follow the way of St. Francis. Your superiors sent you to study in Rome and there you witnessed a large crowd marching and shouting against the Church. You felt called to respond with a concrete and urgent action of love. Thus, in the evening of October 16, 1917, with six of your confreres you gathered before a statuette of the Immaculata, offered yourselves completely to her and founded the MI, an army ready to fight courageously in defense of the Bride of Christ, the Church, under the patronage of the Immaculata herself.*

### Reader 2:

When the fire of love is ablaze, it cannot be constrained within the limits of the heart, but blazes forth and burns, consumes and absorbs other hearts. It conquers more and more souls over to its ideal, to the Immaculata.

The Militia of the Immaculata focuses on such love, which goes so far as to win the hearts of all those who live in the present and who will live in the future, and that as soon as possible, as soon as possible, as soon as possible.

### Reader 1:

The Knight of the Immaculata knows that, in the Immaculata and through the Immaculata, he shall soon and more easily become the property of Jesus, the property of God.

### Reader 2:

He knows that that is the only way to achieve the easiest and most sublime holiness, to render the greatest possible glory to God.

### Reader 1:

In a word, the Knight of the Immaculata is one who fights to win all the hearts over to her.

KW 1325

### Prayer: *Allow Me to Praise You*

*To be prayed by two choirs*

Allow me to praise you, O Virgin Most Holy.

Allow me to praise you with my commitment and personal sacrifice.

Allow me to live, work, suffer, be consumed and die for you, only for you.  
Allow me to bring the whole world to you.

Allow me to contribute to an ever-greater exaltation of you, to the greatest possible exaltation of you.  
Allow me to render such glory unto you as no one has ever rendered unto you so far.

Allow others to pass me in zeal for your exaltation, and grant that I may surpass them,  
so that in noble emulation your glory may grow deeper and deeper, faster and faster,  
more and more intensely, as the One wishes who raised you up so ineffably above all beings.

In you alone was God worshiped incomparably more than in all His saints.  
For you God created the world. For you God called even me into existence.  
Where does this fortune of mine come from?  
I pray you, grant that I may praise you, O Most Holy Virgin!

—St. Maximilian M. Kolbe

—While a hymn or canon is sung, the *MI Statutes* are carried to the foot of the altar.

## NIEPOKALANOW: THE MISSION

### Reader 1:

*Your missionary activity, Saint Maximilian, was tireless. And tirelessly you shared with your brothers, both in Europe and Japan, your humble amazement for the bountiful and wonderful fruits that Providence allowed you to harvest. You had suggested that, “In the hands of the Immaculata we are to become like a pen in the hand of a writer, like a brush at the service of a painter, like a chisel in the hands of a sculptor, so that she may do with us whatever she wants.”*

### Reader 2:

Our lodgings are wooden sheds, and we live by begging and even deprive ourselves of comforts that for the most part exist all around us. We—in addition to the practices of religious life that we do—tire ourselves out for the publication of the magazine, working sometimes over and above our forces, in the spirit of our vocation, in order to gain the greatest possible number of immortal souls for the Immaculata and in doing so raise them up and make them happy in the most authentic way... Our activity is a realization of the rule of St. Francis.

KW 180

### Reader 1:

Our community has a kind of life that is rather heroic, as Niepokalanow is and must be, if the purpose that has been set is to be achieved, namely, not only to defend the faith, to contribute to the salvation of souls, but with daring enterprise, not caring at all about ourselves, to conquer for the Immaculata one soul after another, one outpost after another, to raise her banner in the publishing houses of newspapers, the periodical and non-periodical press, of news agencies, via radio antennas, in artistic and literary institutions, in theaters, cinemas, parliaments, senates—in a word everywhere all over the earth.

KW 199

### Reader 2:

The sick are a blessing for the community. I entrust to them all the difficulties concerning the publishing work. The hospital is like a workshop where the soul is purified of its defects and weaknesses. This is the single activity that bears sure fruits at Niepokalanow, and this causes me to experience the greatest peace. Our sick brothers are a great treasure.

—St. Maximilian M. Kolbe

*O Lord make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred,  
Let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is error, truth;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled  
As to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved, as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

—While a hymn or a canon is sung a *brush* or a *globe* is carried to the foot of the altar.

## AUSCHWITZ: THE MARTYRDOM

### **Reader 1:**

*Saint Maximilian, during your entire life you had turned to the Immaculata as a child to his mother. Like Jesus did. Finally, your hour, the hour of glory, approached for you, as it did for Him.*

### **Reader 2:**

The heart of every Catholic institution is the chapel with its tabernacle housing the living God. From there, believers feel powerful, sweet radiations.

Auschwitz, too, had a spiritual heart from which radiated agony, despair and death. This was the prison within the prison, the penal block called the bunker.

It was here Kolbe entered like a sliver of light into a black pit. He who without prudery was so modest was naked.

### **Reader 1:**

The naked victims were in one cell near those dying in reprisal because of the two previous escapes. The foul air was horrible, the cell floor cement.

You could say Father Kolbe's presence in the bunker was necessary for the others. They were in a frenzy over the thoughts of never returning to their homes and families, screaming in despair and cursing. He pacified them and they began to resign themselves. With his gift of consolation, he prolonged the lives of the condemned who were usually so psychologically destroyed that they succumbed in just a few days.

### **Reader 2:**

To keep up their spirits, he encouraged them that the escapee might still be found and they would be released. So they could join him, he prayed aloud. The cell doors were made of oak.

Because of the silence and acoustics, the voice of Father Kolbe in prayer was diffused to the other cells, where it could be heard well. These prisoners joined in.

**Reader 1:**

From then on, every day from the cell where these poor souls were joined by the adjoining cells, one heard the recitation of prayers, the rosary, and hymns. Father Kolbe led while the others responded as a group. These fervent prayers and hymns resounded in all corners of the bunker. I had the impression I was in a church.

(Patricia Treece, *A Man for Others*, Marytown Press 2013, pp. 225-227)

**From St. Francis' *Canticle of Brother Sun***

*To be prayed by two choirs*

Most High, all powerful, good Lord,  
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor,  
and all blessing.  
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,  
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.

Praised be You, my Lord,  
through those who give pardon for Your love,  
and bear infirmity and tribulation.  
Blessed are those who endure in peace  
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord,  
through our Sister Bodily Death,  
from whom no living man can escape.  
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.  
Blessed are those whom death will  
find in Your most holy will,  
for the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord,  
and give Him thanks  
and serve Him with great humility.

—A brief pause for *silence* follows.

**OCTOBER 10, 1982: JOHN PAUL II PROCLAIMS MAXIMILIAN KOLBE A SAINT**

**Reader 1:**

*The Immaculata led you by the hand and took you to herself. In Rome, where you started your mission, and in the same St. Peter's Square, where the manifestation against the Church had taken place in 1917, you were proclaimed a saint. It was a day of rejoicing on earth and in heaven, for the wonderful blossoming of your ideal, which made you ready to give your life out of love. The Immaculata certainly smiled as she enfolded all her children under her mantle, in St. Peter's Square and all over the world.*

**From the Gospel according to St. John (15:12-17)**

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who

chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another.

### **From John Paul II's Homily** (October 10, 1982)

“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

From today on, the Church desires to address as “Saint” a man who was granted the grace of carrying out these words of the Redeemer in an absolutely literal manner. For towards the end of July, 1941, when the camp commander ordered the prisoners destined to die of starvation to fall in line, this man—Maximilian Maria Kolbe—spontaneously came forward and declared himself ready to go to death in the place of one of them. This readiness was accepted and, after more than two weeks of torment caused by starvation, Father Maximilian’s life was ended with a lethal injection on August 14, 1941.

Father Maximilian Kolbe, himself a prisoner of the concentration camp, defended in that place of death an innocent man’s right to life. Father Kolbe defended his right to life, declaring that he was ready to go to death in the man’s place, because he was the father of a family and his life was necessary for his dear ones. Father Maximilian Maria Kolbe thus reaffirmed the Creator’s exclusive right over innocent human life. He bore witness to Christ and to love. For the Apostle John writes: “*By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*” (1 John 3:16).

The Church has venerated Father Maximilian as “Blessed” since 1971.

By laying down his life for a brother, he made himself like Christ.

In a marvelous way the fruit of the tragic death of Maximilian Kolbe endures in the Church and the world! Maximilian did not die but “gave his life... for his brother.”

### **Reader 1:**

*I approach you, Saint Maximilian, longing to grasp the special gift that you represent for me and the entire world. I wish I could kneel at your grave and pray to you. But you have no burial place. Your body was reduced to ashes in the Auschwitz crematorium. Whoever wants to find you must look for you in the divine realm of love.*

—While a hymn or a canon is sung, the faithful approach to venerate the holy relic.

### **Prayer to St. Maximilian**

Saint Maximilian,  
we approach you asking for your intercession.  
May our hearts be ablaze  
with the same love  
and passion for the kingdom of God  
which pervaded your life  
and urged you to set out on a mission.  
Like you we wish daily to offer our lives to the Lord  
through the hands of the Immaculata,  
and to pray for one another  
that together we may “cast the nets” of confidence and hope.  
We believe that your ideal of life and mission  
can win the hearts of many people for Christ through Mary.  
Help us to discover the joy of self-giving.  
Amen.

## Final Blessing

- C. May God, the glory and joy of his faithful servants,  
who gave us a sign of heroic charity in the martyr Maximilian Maria Kolbe,  
grant that his face shine upon you.  
– *Amen.*
- C. May the intercession of the Martyr of Charity  
sustain our faith in Christ  
and his example of love for the Immaculata  
impel us to proclaim the Gospel by word and action.  
– *Amen.*
- C. May we come to share with Mary Immaculate, Queen of all saints,  
the joy and peace of that homeland  
where the Church rejoices eternally  
in the glorious communion of all her children.  
– *Amen.*
- C. And may the blessing of Almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on you and remain with you forever.  
– *Amen.*

## Closing Hymn