

75th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. Maximilian Kolbe

Week 15. November 20-27

Martyrdom of the Mission in Japan



People often have a romantic image of missionaries going off to exotic lands and people welcoming them with open arms and asking to be baptized. Maybe in the movies, but not in real life. The truth is that every country in the world was mission land at one time or another and today some are returning to being mission land once again because of the decline of Christianity, and the rise of atheism and secularism.

Maximilian's mission work in Japan was real not romantic!

The premises were so cramped that the friars had to sleep in the attic. And when they walked, they had to be careful not to dislodge the nails from the rafters.

From Nagasaki Kolbe wrote,

"There are times our souls are homesick for the Polish Niepekalanow, but these are only moments. Because when we think that eventually we will meet in paradise, a joyful enthusiasm takes over our hearts, together with a deep longing to be consumed for God."

"My scribbling is spotted with the blood of Japanese gnats, the big ones but especially the small ones that buzz around everywhere and end up on the sheet of my paper. It is simply impossible to drive them all out."

"I am overloaded with work. Our task here is very simple: working hard all day; working ourselves to death. Being considered a little less than a fool by our own people and exhausted, dying for the Immaculata."

Kolbe's mission in Japan was marked by homesickness, poverty, gnats, and hard work.

Yet in the face of all of these difficulties Maximilian could write,

"Glory to the Immaculata for all. Among us things are going more than well, and as soon as any suffering presents itself, it vanishes immediately. In fact the Immaculata sweetens it tremendously. It almost seems like the calm that invites us to prepare before a new storm. Still for the moment the horizon is serene and the sun is shining marvelously. It almost seems a bit strange after so many and such heavy crosses; it is almost difficult to become accustomed to.

Prayer :

O Immaculata, you knew the Joy of Bethlehem and the Sorrow of Calvary, may we accept the sorrows and crosses of our lives as easily as we accept the joys, knowing that you are always with us as you were always with Jesus in His joys and sorrows. Amen.

Meditations and Questions:

1. How far are we willing to go to spread the Gospel :
  - emotionally, spiritually, economically and geographically?
2. Do our crosses ever overcome our joys?
3. What were Maximilian's difficulties in Japan?
4. How did he handle or carry his crosses in Japan?
5. What are our crosses and how do we carry them.