

DAY 30 - St. Maximilian Kolbe

Three words summarize what we learned from St. Maximilian Kolbe: (1) Mystery, (2) Militia, and (3) Love. Let's ponder each one in turn.

MYSTERY

Who are you, O Immaculate Conception? St. Maximilian gives us the key to this mystery: The Holy Spirit is the uncreated Immaculate Conception, and Mary is the created Immaculate Conception. She is perfectly united to the Holy Spirit, because she was conceived without sin, never sinned, and always does the will of God perfectly. She allows the Holy Spirit to overshadow her, take possession of her soul, and bear fruit through her. The Holy Spirit delights in always working in and through Mary to save all the other creatures made in God's image, first by bringing about the Incarnation in her womb and then by making use of her to form the image of her Son in all of the baptized. While Kolbe gives us the key to the mystery, he doesn't fully unlock it. Rather, he invites us to ponder ever more deeply the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, a relationship that goes even deeper than that of marriage.

MILITIA

The name "Maximilian" means "the greatest." Saint Maximilian Kolbe was given this name because his superiors recognized his immense natural and spiritual gifts. He accepted it because it corresponded to his heart of hearts: "I don't just want to give God great glory but the greatest glory."

Kolbe recognized that the greatest way to give glory to God is to unite oneself to the creature who glorifies God most perfectly, Mary Immaculate. He also realized that the way to give God the greatest glory is not to do so just as one person, but to have a whole army ("Militia") of people who give God the greatest glory. In fact, he wanted this army of the Immaculate ("Militia Immaculata") to eventually get the whole world to give God the greatest glory, through her, and as soon as possible.

While the goal of Kolbe's program is the conversion of the whole world, it begins with oneself. One must first give himself completely to the Immaculata as her possession and property and stay in union with her and totally dependent on her. Then, one is to inspire others to give themselves to her and to live in total dependence on her, so she can use them as consecrated instruments to bring the whole world to the Merciful Heart of Jesus.

"Through the Immaculata we will attain the ultimate purpose of the [Militia Immaculata], that is, the greatest possible glory to God."¹¹³

LOVE

Kolbe was united to Mary through a dependence of love. He tells us that we also ought to love the Immaculata. How? By relying on her powerful intercession, experiencing her tender care, speaking to her from our hearts, letting ourselves be led by her, having recourse to her in all things, and trusting her completely. Recall his words, "My dear, dear brothers, our dear little, little mother, the Immaculate Mary, can do anything for us. We are her children. Turn to her. She will overcome everything."¹¹⁴

When we experience Mary's tender care for us, we'll fall more in love with her. But we have to speak with her. We have to ask her. Yet what if, even after many signs of her love and care, we still don't feel love for the Immaculata or her love for us? Kolbe explains:

Never worry that you do not feel this love. If you have the will to love, you already give a proof that you love. What counts is the will to love. External feeling is also a fruit of grace, but it does not always follow the will. Sometimes, my dear ones, the thought, a sad longing, as if a plea or a complaint, may occur to you: "Does the Immaculata still love me?" Most beloved children! I tell you all and each one individually, in her name (mark that: in her name!), she loves every one of you. She loves you very much and at every moment with no exception. This ... I repeat for you in her name.115

Today's Prayer:

Spend the day pondering Kolbe's Marian teaching as it is summarized by these three words: Mystery, Militia, and Love.