



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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Dear Parish Family,

August 7, 2011

The month of August is dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of our Blessed Mother Mary. There is a custom where individuals consecrate themselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Below is a personal prayer that can be used for this purpose.

Oh Mary, Mother of God and my Mother, I consecrate myself to you and to your Immaculate Heart. Please accept me, dearest Mother, and use me as you wish to accomplish the mission of Jesus Christ in the world. I am all yours - my Mother, my Queen - and all that I have is yours. Amen.

You can also consecrate your family, your business, any endeavor to Our Lady. The Rosary is also an excellent way to contemplate the mysteries of the life of Jesus, and can help to foster a deeper devotion to Jesus through His mother Mary.

Next Saturday, August 13, there is a diocesan youth event tied in with World Youth Day being held at St. Mary Parish, Port Sanilac. It's easy to find - just keep driving east on M-46 until you see Lake Huron; the parish is on the right! The program begins at 9:30 am and goes to 9:00 pm. Registration cost is \$20. For more information, call Maureen O'Mara at (810)622-8141 extension 104.

Pope Benedict's prayer intentions for this month are that World Youth Day in Madrid may encourage young people throughout the world to have their lives rooted and built up in Christ; and that Christians may be open to the action of the Holy Spirit and rediscover the freshness and enthusiasm of their faith.

We are less than a month to go in summer 2011. Don't take a vacation from God - include prayer and Mass in your time off! If you are traveling, you can go online to www.masstimes.org to find a weekend Mass. Please pray me and for one another!

Fr. David

Sacred Signs and Symbols

Sacramentals - Holy Water

Water is a mysterious thing. It is so clear and frictionless, so "modest," as St. Francis called it. It hardly pretends to any character of its own. It seems to have no other end or object than to be of service, to cleanse what is soiled and to refresh what is dry.

But at some time you must have gazed down into the still depths of a great body of water, and felt it tugging to draw you in, and have got a glimpse of the strange and secret thing water is, and of the marvels, terrors and enticements that lurk in its depths. Or, at another time when it was whipped to a boiling torrent by a storm, you have heard it rushing and roaring, rushing and roaring, or watched the sucking vortex of a whirlpool and felt a force so grim and dreary that you had to tear your thoughts away.

It is indeed a strange element. On the one hand smooth and transparent, as if it hardly existed in its own right, ready at hand to wash away dirt and satisfy thirst; and on the other a restless, foundation-less, an enigmatic force that entices us on to destruction. It is a proper image for the secret ground-source from which life issues and back into which death recalls it. It is an apt image for this life of ours that looks so clear and yet is so inexplicable.

It is plain why the Church uses water as the sign and the bearer of the divine life of grace. We emerge from the waters of baptism into a new life in Jesus Christ, born again of water and the Holy Spirit. In those same waters our old life was destroyed and put to death.

With this primordial element, that yields no answer to our questioning, with this transparent, frictionless, life-giving fluid, this symbol and means of the supernatural life of grace, we trace upon ourselves, from forehead to breast, from shoulder to shoulder, the Sign of the Cross.

When we sign ourselves in holy water, there is a satisfaction in making the Sign of the Cross over ourselves. Holy water is the symbol of nature set free from sin. May God protect us from every form of darkness! Holy water can remind us of our Baptism when we received the light of Christ. The soul redeemed and nature redeemed encounter one another in the Sign of the Cross.

-Romano Guardini

ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

Maximilian Kolbe was born on 7 January 1894 in Zdunska-Wola, near Lodz, in Poland. His name wasn't always Maximilian. He was born the second son of Juul Kolbe and Maria Dubrowska and was given the baptismal name of Raymond. After his First Holy Communion, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him. She offered him the graces of purity or martyrdom and asked him which he wanted. Filled with zeal, he begged for both, and was filled thereafter with the most ardent desire to love and serve Jesus through the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1907, he entered a junior Franciscan seminary in Lwow. He was received as a Franciscan novice in September 1910, taking the new name of Maximilian. From 1912 to 1915, he was in Rome studying philosophy, and from 1915 to 1919 he studied theology, also in Rome.

On April 28, 1918, Maximilian was ordained a priest. The next day, he celebrated his first Mass in Rome, in the beautiful Basilica of S. Andrea delle Fratte at the "Altar of the Miracle," where the Blessed Virgin Mary had appeared to the Alphonse Ratisbonne, who was instantly converted from atheism!

In January 1917, while at the Conventual Franciscan Friars' seminary in Rome, young Maximilian Kolbe heard the Miraculous Medal conversion story of Ratisbonne. This wonderful account inspired him to recognize the powerful role that God had given Mary in the work of leading people to conversion and growth in holiness. He understood that the Miraculous Medal symbolized her active presence in the Church as Mediatrix of all the graces that flow from the Heart of Christ. For the next nine months, Maximilian meditated upon the Miraculous Medal, the apparition of Our Lady to St Catherine Labouré and the marvel of Ratisbonne's conversion.

On the evening of October 16, 1917, the young seminarian was ready to put these Marian insights into a concrete plan of action. He gathered six Franciscan companions in a room at the seminary on Rome's Via San Teodoro to establish the Militia of the Immaculata. This movement, which now numbers millions of members worldwide, would unite people around one compelling and fruitful spiritual union with Mary Immaculate. The militia would embrace all ages and all vocations in the church – clergy, religious, lay men and women – stirring each to form a person-to-person relationship with Mary by means of the "Act of Total Consecration." St Maximilian made the Miraculous Medal the insignia of the MI movement. He recommended that people wear it as an external sign of their life-consecration to Jesus Christ through his mother. Mindful of Mary's promise to St Catherine that "all who wear it will receive great graces," St Maximilian saw the medal as a means of safeguarding the consecration. It reminds the militia members that by their consecration they belong to Mary, work for her and become one with her, so that she might act through them as her instruments of evangelization.

Father Maximilian returned to Poland in 1919 and began spreading his Militia of the Immaculata movement of Marian consecration, which he founded. The "Militia of the Immaculata" is a worldwide evangelization movement. In 1922, the Movement was recognized by the Church. In 1927, he established an evangelization center near Warsaw. Not

content with only working in Poland, Maximilian and four brothers left for Japan in 1930. Within a month of their arrival, penniless and knowing no Japanese, Maximilian was printing a Japanese magazine, which grew to a circulation of 65,000 by 1936. In 1931, he founded a monastery in Nagasaki, Japan comparable to the one in Poland. It survived the war, including the nuclear bombing, and serves today as a center of Franciscan work in Japan. In mid-1932, he left Japan for Malabar, India, where he founded a third monastery. However, due to a lack of members, it did not survive. Poor health forced him to curtail his missionary work and return to Poland in 1936. On December 8, 1938, the monastery started its own radio station. By 1939, the monastery housed a religious community of nearly 800, the largest in the world in its day, and was completely self-sufficient including medical facilities and a fire brigade staffed by the religious brothers.

When the Germans invaded Poland in 1939, Saint Maximilian was ordered to cease his publishing. Before long, the Gestapo arrested Father Kolbe and imprisoned him. He was released, but only to be arrested again. This time he was sent to Auschwitz, and there he became known as Prisoner Number 16670, just one more of the thousands of human statistics living in the terror of that vast horror chamber. Maximilian Kolbe would have been hated enough by his Nazi guards just for being Polish. But he was a Catholic priest as well, and his tormentors reserved their finest cruelty for priests. He was assigned the hardest and dirtiest tasks in the camp. Should he stumble or fall in his work, as he did many times, he would be beaten and kicked. It was late in July 1941 that a prisoner in his own block escaped. By three o'clock the prisoner was still not found the commandant selected ten victims for punishment. One of them, Francis Gajowniczek, cried out, "My poor wife, my poor children! What will happen to my family!"

At that moment Maximilian stepped forward. The guard bellowed, "What does this Polish pig want?" The reply came: "I am a Catholic priest from Poland. I would like to take his place, because he has a wife and children." A witness recalls: "From astonishment, the commandant appeared unable to speak. After a moment, he gave a sign with his hand. He spoke but one word: 'Away!' Francis Gajowniczek received the command to return to the row he had just left. In this manner, Father Maximilian took the place of the condemned man." He was then sent with other prisoners to starve to death. The sounds of screaming and crying were not heard from the starvation cells. Instead, the sounds of Father Kolbe leading the Rosary and singing hymns to Mary were heard. After two weeks, only four prisoners were left, and Father Kolbe was one of them. Father Kolbe was the last prisoner left to be killed. On August 14, 1941, the eve of the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven, Father Kolbe was martyred. The next day, his body was cremated.

On October 17, 1971, Maximilian Kolbe was beatified. In imitation of the life of Jesus Christ, the saint had loved his fellow-men to the point of sacrificing his life for them. "Greater love hath no man than this ..." and these were the opening words of the papal decree introducing the process of beatification. Fr Kolbe's canonization was not long delayed. It was the Pope from Poland, John Paul II, who had the joy of declaring his countryman a saint on October 10, 1982. Saint Maximilian Kolbe's feast day is August 14.

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