

The Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed into heaven, body and soul. In this world, which focuses so much on the here and now, it is helpful to step back and meditate on the realities that go beyond earthly life. “Contemplating Our Lady in heavenly glory, we understand better that our everyday commitments and efforts must not completely absorb us, because the horizons of life are not limited to the earth. In Her who shines with light today, we see the complete fulfilment of what the Heavenly Father promised to those who faithfully serve him, spurring their faithfulness, if necessary, even to the supreme gift of their lives.”ⁱ

On the Vigil of the Assumption in 1941, Maximilian Kolbe offered the supreme gift of his life as a martyr at Auschwitz. The Nazi’s helped to silence one voice. Little did they realize that the sacrifice of one priest’s life had already involved the Blessed Mother from the time Maximilian was only 12 years old. She appeared to him in a dream holding two crowns, one white, the other red. Mary asked the young boy if he was willing to accept the crown of purity or the crown of martyrdom. Maximilian, already thinking of heavenly glory, wanted to live a life of sacrifice and purity crowned by martyrdom. He asked the Blessed Mother for both crowns.ⁱⁱ

Mary was just a few years older than Maximilian, chronologically, when the Angel of the Lord asked her if she was willing to be the Mother of God. Obedient to the will of God, Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). Maximilian taught, “Christian perfection consists in the union of our will with the will of God.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The young boy with a devotion to Mary grew to adulthood becoming a Franciscan Friar and devoting much of his thought and prayer to contemplating the Virgin Mother. “To St. Maximilian, devotion to Mary was logical and necessary if one wanted to follow Christ. After all, our mission as Christians is to become ‘little Christs,’ formed into the image of Jesus in a greater and greater way throughout our lives. And there is no better way to be formed into the image of Christ than to entrust ourselves to the Woman who literally formed Christ in her womb, the Blessed Virgin Mary.”^{iv}

In the Magnificat, Mary teaches us to pray, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior” (Lk 1:46-47). This prayer from the lips of Mary, is one that we may pray as well. Yes, Mary was conceived without sin and through obedience to the will of God remained without sin. We on the other hand are not. As we honestly face our own weakness, we should not be discouraged but humbled by our failures. Failure is an antidote for self-conceit, and false pride when in humility, we recognize our utter dependence on God. Jesus suffered and died for our sins. Let us be thankful and rejoice in his mercy. Let us proclaim his greatness as we forgive those who trespass against us.

At the foot of the cross, Mary was entrusted with the mission of being Mother for the entire Church. All of humanity is protected by her mantle and inspired by her example. As her children we are called to love our neighbors, the neighbors we get along with and the ones who test our patience. St. Maximilian described the love we must have:

We need to love our neighbor not just because he is pleasant or helpful or rich and influential or even because he shows us gratitude. These motives are too self-serving... Genuine love rises above creatures and soars up to God. In him, by him, and through him [Love] loves all men, both good and wicked, friends and enemies. To all it stretches out a hand filled with love; it prays for all, suffers for all, wishes what is best for all, desires happiness for all—because that is what God wants.^v

In Auschwitz, Saint Maximilian stepped forward to take the place of a Jewish father who had been condemned to death. In so doing, he offered hope to all who witnessed his actions, the other

prisoners of the death camp and the German guards as well. Darkness can overwhelm us especially in the face of unrelenting evil. “St. Maximilian reminds us to never lose heart, to always be courageous, and to entrust everything to Mary, our good mother who is far more capable of helping us than we are of helping ourselves.”^{vi}

As we meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary, we suffer with Christ in the Sorrowful Mysteries; we rejoice with Christ in the Glorious Mysteries. “The contemplation of Christ’s face cannot stop at the image of the Crucified One. He is the Risen One! ... In the Ascension, Christ was raised in glory to the right hand of the Father, while Mary herself would be raised to that same glory in the Assumption, enjoying beforehand, by a unique privilege, the destiny reserved for all the just at the resurrection of the dead. Crowned in glory – as she appears in the last glorious mystery – Mary shines forth as Queen of the Angels and Saints...”^{vii}

St. Maximilian’s faith also shines forth in the midst of the tragic times he lived. He never lost sight of Christ, the reason for our hope. To help him radiate the light of Christ, he had a spiritual guide in Our Lady. “May we like him ... illumine the darkness of this world by the same fire of love.”^{viii}

ⁱ Angelus, John Paul II, August 15, 2001

ⁱⁱ saintmaximiliankolbe.com/biography

ⁱⁱⁱ catholicgentleman.com/2015/08/fire-of-love-lessons-from-st-maximilian-kolbe

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Rosarium Virginis Mariae #23

^{viii} Ibid, fire of love