Father Karl Stehlin

The Immaculata
Our Ideal

The Spirit of the Militia Immaculatæ
according to Father Maximilian Kolbe

The Immaculata
Our Ideal

Fr. Karl Stehlin

The Immaculata Our Ideal

The spirit of the Militia Immaculatæ
according to
Fr. Maximilian Kolbe

translated by
Michael J. Miller

Kolbe Publications
2016

Originally published in German as

Die Immaculata unser Ideal: der Geist
der Militia Immaculatæ
nach P. Maximilian Kolbe

by
Sarto Verlag
Vereinigung St. Pius X. e.V.
Dornbirner Str. 3
D-70469 Stuttgart
GERMANY

German edition copyright © 2004 by
Fr. Karl Stehlin FSSPX

English edition copyright © 2005 by
Fr. Karl Stehlin FSSPX

Polish edition copyright © 2005 by
Fr. Karl Stehlin FSSPX

French edition copyright © 2010 by
Fr. Karl Stehlin FSSPX

Russian edition copyright © 2012 by
Fr. Karl Stehlin FSSPX

Copies Available:
Kolbe Publications

286 Upper Thomson Road Singapore 574402
email: sales@kolbepublications.com

Printed I

Preface

THE IMMACULATA, OUR IDEAL, written by Fr. Karl Stehlin and containing many quotations from the lectures and writings of St. Maximilian Kolbe, is a priceless treasure for the clergy who are loyal to the Tradition of the Church and for all the faithful as well. Indeed, priests and lay people want not only to survive these extremely dangerous times unscathed, but also to sanctify themselves, to make progress in the spiritual life in these concrete circumstances and to bring it to perfection by means of these very circumstances.

The Apostle Paul assures us: "God is faithful and will not permit you to be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also give you a way out that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). But aren't we doomed to be defeated in our combat today against the deceits of the devil, against the powers and principalities, the rulers of this world of darkness and the wicked spirits in high places (cf. Eph. 6:11 ff.)? Won't this combat exceed our strength? Humanly speaking, defeat is inevitable. But precisely for that reason the Merciful God has given us in these days of confusion a bright beacon, a powerful general in this decisive battle, an infinitely loving mother in these dire straits, who gathers under her protective mantle all who entrust and consecrate themselves to her: the Immaculata. Her role in our personal, social, and ecclesiastical life has been elaborated theologically in the works of Father Maximilian Kolbe. Every confrere who

reads these lines will draw from them new courage, new strength to remain completely faithful to his vocation within the family of Catholic Tradition. Every Christian will decide to enlist in Mary's army, in order to fight for faith and morality, for the Church and Christendom.

Furthermore the fruitfulness of the apostolate, practically speaking, depends on whether or not we take up the means of salvation which God Himself has offered for a particular time, and apply them appropriately, in keeping with Divine Providence; in our own days these means are consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, First Saturday devotions, and the Rosary. The true prophetic charism — which does not consist of new and dubious revelations, but rather is found in God's call to conversion, repentance, prayer and penance — also has its proper place in the Church of the New Testament.

Let us not forget that on December 8, 1984, the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X, with all its priests, seminarians, Brothers, Sisters, Oblates and Tertiaries, its entire spiritual family, together with their apostolate and their establishments, was solemnly consecrated to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary in the former chapel of the seminary in Ecône. All the superiors signed the document of consecration upon the altar, as did representatives of the Brothers, the Oblates, the Third Order and the association of benefactors. In addition, ever since August 15, 1988, the priests of the Society have taken turns celebrating a daily Mass in honor of Our Lady, to whom the Fraternity belongs, in thanksgiving for the inclusion of four bishops in her fighting force. When we enlist in the Militia Immaculatæ, then, what else are we doing but putting this act of consecration from 1984 into practice?

On August 22, 1987, in Fatima, Archbishop Lefebvre consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, insofar as that was in his power; what else was he doing but complying with the fervent plea of our heavenly Mother on July 13, 1917? Since then districts, seminaries and priories everywhere have been consecrated to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary. Who else but she will send us families with many children and gather them around the sacrificial altars of her Divine Son? Who else but she can obtain for us from our Heavenly Father seminaries and good vocations, religious houses and Catholic schools, holy priests and parishes that engage in apostolic activity? Can there be any room in our ranks for lack of faith, faintheartedness, despondency or even less for cowardly flight? In contrast to such an impious attitude, the Knight of the Immaculata always has the supplication of the Church in his heart and on his lips: "*Dignare me laudare Te, Virgo sacrata. Da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos* — Grant that I may praise Thee, Blessed Virgin Mary. Give me strength against thine enemies."

Deus vult — God wills it — was the battle cry of the Crusaders. Let us therefore, full of courage and confidence in the graces intended for us by Divine Providence through Mary's hands, set out on the crusade of re-Christianizing and winning back the once Christian West, under the banner of the Immaculata.

Deus vult!

Zaitzkofen, May 24, 2004
on the Feast of Mary, Help of Christians
Father Franz Schmidberger

Introduction

"THROUGH MARY the salvation of the world began, and through Mary it must also be completed," wrote St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort almost three hundred years ago. In these troubled times of the great apostasy, she is "our refuge and the way that leads to God" (Apparition of June 13, 1917, in Fatima). In order to show us this way, she selected, among others, great saints whose work has become a shining light for those who are seeking the truth. One of these great Marian souls is Maximilian Kolbe, who founded a movement that he called the Knighthood of the Immaculata — *Militia Immaculatæ* — in Rome on October 16, 1917, three days after the miracle of the sun in Fatima. The nature, history, and purpose of this movement have already been presented briefly in a small booklet.[1] This book intends to help bring to light the great importance of this movement, particularly for our times. To accomplish this, the saintly founder himself will be allowed to have his say. With astonishing simplicity he awakens in every soul that experiences the attraction of his teaching a great ideal: the Immaculata and her significance in the life of the individual, of society, of the Church, and of the whole world. We discover that

[1] The author refers to his 32-page brochure, written in German, entitled *Militia Immaculatæ (traditionelle Observanz), die Ritterschaft der Unbefleckten Jungfrau* [Militia Immaculatæ (traditional observance), the Knighthood of the Immaculate Virgin], published in Warsaw in 2002.

he is a tireless defender of Catholic Tradition, a mortal enemy of the liberalism and modernism which plague the world and the Church today. His movement is a precursor of all those movements which, in an age that has witnessed the triumph of God's enemies, remain unswervingly loyal to Our Lord and to His Holy Mother and thus work effectively for the welfare of souls.

The M.I. is a movement within the Catholic Church and has a specific mission from her: in this way the movement performs in-valuable services to the Mystical Body of Christ (**Part One**).

Its spirituality is theocentric, *i.e.* focused entirely on God: the Knight of the Immaculata discovers first in the Militia what is most important, the "one thing necessary", namely, that he was created, not for this life nor for a paradise on earth, but rather for God, and that he lives in order to give Him honor. Thus he finds himself on the firm ground of the truth and now asks himself how he can correspond to it (**Part Two**).

The heart of the M.I. is the secret of the Immaculata: She is the guiding star, the quintessential element in the life of Fr. Kolbe; this is the secret of his incredible successes, but also the secret of his own sanctity. From the moment when she appeared to the ten-year-old boy and offered him two crowns to choose from, until his heroic death in Auschwitz, she was the overarching reality of his life. He acknowledged her as the "mold of God", which quickly and surely forms each one of her children and transforms them into Christ, even to the utmost degree of sanctity. He saw as his great mission the task of making her known and loved by souls (**Part Three**).

One who wants to attain a goal also wants the means to that end. The Knighthood requires spiritual weapons in order to fight the good fight and to win the battle. Yet it is not the quality of the weapons

alone that proves the caliber of the army, but also the way in which these Knights learn to use these weapons. In other words, Maximilian Kolbe does not remain at the level of theory; he gives a simple but effective and practical introduction to the spiritual life (**Part Four**). Besides good weapons and good soldiers, an army also needs order, a structure: some activities depend on the individual, others on the community, still others require an elite, which not only takes on the most difficult assignments, but also constitutes the powerhouse that keeps the entire movement from becoming weak and superficial (**Part Five**).

The importance of the Militia Immaculatæ in the recent periods of world history is demonstrated by its position among the great Marian events of the last two centuries (**Part Six**).

The M.I. offers the "banished children of Eve" a great consolation: what Traditional Catholics today are trying to maintain was lived out previously in the first half of the twentieth century by an almost countless host of Mary's Knights, with St. Maximilian Kolbe in the lead. May this assurance produce lasting fruits, so that zealous servants of Mary might arise through all the earth, "true apostles of the latter times… [who] will point out the narrow way to God in pure truth according to the Holy Gospel, and not according to the maxims of the world." [2]

The author wishes to express his special thanks to his confreres, the Reverend Fathers Schmidberger and Ettelt, as well as to W. Sroka, B. Spleiss and J. Herrmann, for their valuable assistance in producing this book.

---

[2] St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, paragraphs 58–59.

PART ONE

THE MILITIA IMMACULATÆ
AT THE SERVICE
OF THE CHURCH MILITANT

CHAPTER ONE

A Militia *versus* Pacifism

THE MILITIA IMMACULATÆ is a movement within the Church. The Church on earth is called the Church Militant, because she has to wage a perpetual war against Satan and sin, the deadly enemies of God and of the salvation of mankind. This fighting spirit is essential to the Church on earth. God established a single enmity, which lasts from the beginning of the human race unto all eternity: "I will place enmity between you and the Woman, between your seed and her seed. She will crush your head, but you will strike at her heel" (Genesis 3:15).

From that moment on the world was divided in two, into two camps, which continually fight against each other. The entire history of the Chosen People is a battle between God and the devil in his many guises. In the Gospel the Savior returns again and again to this fundamental law: "No one can serve two masters…. How broad is the way that leads to destruction; how narrow and rough the way to salvation!" About Him it was said: "He is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted." "He that is not with me is against me."

St. John, who writes most often and most profoundly about the love of Christ, and who is often cited by Modernists as the herald of love,

the harbinger of ecumenism ("that all may be one…"), is precisely the one who emphasizes most pointedly the contradiction between Christ and the world. "He was in the world… and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not…. If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own…. But I have chosen you out of the world." And in his first Epistle, he concisely states the fundamental principle: "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:15–16).

St. Paul and the Church Fathers know no other doctrine. St. Augustine in particular sums up salvation history as the unceasing battle between the City of God and the city of the devil. This fundamental idea of Christianity is found in all the Saints without exception. It is also significant that there is complete unanimity about the fact that in the end times this war will increase in intensity, that the devil will win more and more victories, "so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24).

It is not surprising, then, that the Mother of God in her major apparitions, especially in La Salette and Fatima, describes the final phase of this battle and calls on her faithful children to take up the powerful weapons that she gives us. After all, she appeared precisely in order to stand beside us in this battle and to show us the surest ways which lead to victory.

In this age of the "decisive battle" — this is the expression that the Mother of God used in speaking to Sr. Lucia — it has pleased Heaven to call together little armies, which under the banner of the

Immaculata raise the gauntlet and throw it down in front of the enemy, just as young David confronted mighty Goliath.

One of these little fighting forces is the Militia Immaculatæ. Precisely because the battle is growing more fierce, the Lord raises up servants who are not only aware of this war, like all the other movements in the Church, but who deliberately keep this ideal of the soldier in mind and position themselves in the vanguard on the battlefield, look the enemy straight in the eye, tear off his mask and fight against him.

> We are not just her children, though: we are also her knights. And the duty of a knight is to fight. Today, however, more than ever, this battle is our sacred duty. For the truth of Christ and the Church are being attacked by the godless, in no uncertain terms. Hordes of agitators for the cause of unbelief and immorality, revolutionaries, who often still bear the name of "Christians" (many of them are Jews), but are full of pagan customs and Bolshevist slogans, not only creep through the residential districts and the factory towns, but like disgusting and repulsive vermin they make their way even into the most remote villages, in order to spread among the rural masses their revolutionary slogans, and to uproot faith and trust in the Church from the hearts of simple folk.... What should we do, then — we, the Knights of the Immaculata? ... Today we must steadfastly and resolutely declare on which side we stand: under the banner of Christ, in His ranks, in the regiment of His Immaculate Mother — or under Satan's flag, the flag of insurrection and perversion, of hatred of God. Here there is no settlement or compromise,

> for our Lord Jesus Christ himself said: "He who is not with me is against me. He who does not gather with me, scatters." We, the Knights of the Immaculata, have made our decision.[1]

It probably does not need to be said, how contrary all of this is to the spirit of the modern age. Today pacifism reigns within the Church: we are all brothers and sisters; there is no longer an enemy, so they say. Peace first and foremost is the catchword. But thereby they cunningly confuse efforts for the "end of armed hostilities" with the "peace of God". They say that God does not want war, and so He wants peace. It follows that we must come to an understanding with those who believe differently, accept them, acknowledge their values, and work together with them. All men are men of good will, anyhow, and that is why we are building up a new world of peace and happiness. This is what the enemy says with forked tongue.

Apart from the fact that such slogans have been used for centuries by the mortal enemies of the Church, such a "proclamation" is the worst crime against souls that can be committed: There's a war going on, the enemy is attacking, and our generals not only lay down their arms, but even call the enemy a friend, embrace him, and do not notice that, in a very sophisticated way, someone is stabbing them in the back. This is the crisis in the Church, which delivers souls into the bondage of Satan with hardly any resistance whatsoever.

Opposing this is the little Militia Immaculatæ. By itself it would be ridiculous, but in reality it is *she*, the Woman who tramples the serpent, who is terrible as an army set in battle array, the new Judith, who cut off Holofernes' head, the Woman who alone has received the magnificent promise that she would crush the head of Satan.

---

[1] "Rycerz Niepokalanej" (henceforth: RN), 5 (1933), pp. 131–132.

The Immaculata is the one who fights and wins in us, through us, and with us:

> We all stand as one man under the banner of the woman who "alone has conquered all heresies", who is also able to help us against the hydra of contemporary godlessness.[2]

Catholics today must be filled with this fighting spirit, or else they will perish in the tasteless, artificially scented modern world. The enemy is so dangerous precisely because he has mobilized as an invisible, intangible influence: he envelops people like a whispering wind, like a wavelength that creeps through the strongest walls, full of fine and seemingly plausible phrases, "balanced", friendly, congenial, full of charm and pleasant, sympathetic sentiments. This is the poison that the enemy uses today. Declaring war on this omnipresent and deadly enemy is incomparably more difficult than having to deal with an overt attacker who is known to be dangerous.

Before thinking about what this battle consists of, what the enemy's tactics are and which weapons and what strategy one should use, one must be clearly convinced that it is a battle, indeed, an unremitting battle of life and death. "Brethren, be sober and watchful, because your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in faith" (1 Peter 5:8–9).

The very first sentence of the Statutes of the M.I. accentuates this battle: "She shall crush thy head!" (Genesis 3:15). This was, of course, heaven's first and only declaration of war against hell, and it should determine the life of the Knights of the Immaculata. Furthermore,

---

[2] Ibid.

St. Maximilian[3] calls this movement a "Militia", which can be translated as knighthood, or army, whereby it should be emphasized that a knight is not an ordinary foot-soldier, but rather belongs to the elite, so to speak. This fighting spirit is precisely what inspired those millions of people who over a very short period of time enlisted under the military banner of the Immaculata.

> Faced with such powerful deeds perpetrated by the enemies of God's Church, are we allowed to stand about idle? Is it permissible merely to complain and shed tears? No! Consider that at the last judgment we will not only give an account of what we have done, but God will also count up all those good deeds that we could have done but failed to do. Incumbent upon each one of us is the serious duty to stand on the front lines and physically fend off the enemy's attacks. Often one hears the remark, "But what can I do? The other side is so well organized, has so much power and wealth, etc." Such an individual has surely forgotten what St. Paul said: "I can do everything in Him, Who strengthens me."[4]

---

[3] The process for the beatification of Fr. Kolbe was initiated on March 16, 1960. On January 30, 1969 the Congregation for the Causes of Saints approved the Decree concerning his heroic virtues, and on June 14, 1971 the Decree concerning the miracles that have been attributed to his intercession. On October 17, 1971 he was declared Blessed, and on October 10, 1982 he was canonized. Concerning the controversy over present-day canonizations, see: Fr. Henri Forestier, *Heiligkeit, wie sie das II. Vatikanum definiert*, in "Mitteilungsblatt der Priesterbrud-erschaft St. Pius X", No. 290, pp. 22–29; Fr. Bernard Lorber and Fr. Jean-Michel Gleize, *On the canonizations of Pope John Paul II*, in "The Angelus", January 2003, pp. 5–16; Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, *L'infaillibilité des canonisations faites par le pape Jean-Paul II*, in "Le Sel de la Terre", No. 42, Autumn 2002, pp. 244–245.

[4] RN 2 (1923), p. 4.

And so the expressions: knighthood, battle, offensive, winning souls, destroying the enemy, ammunition, deploying the right weapons, etc., recur continually in the founder's writings, as though he had foreseen the danger of our time, in which Christianity has fallen asleep and peace with the devil has been declared.

> Knight, knighthood, battle: that all sounds very warlike, because it is indeed a war! Not a war conducted with rifles, bombs, tanks and poison gas, but still a real war. What is our strategy? Above all, it is prayer.[5]
>
> We must overcome our rigidity and get out of this defensive posture. Freemasonry and free-thinking fight against God and faith, want to make men into base animals and barbarians who destroy what is sacred; so let us, too, fight — with the means that are permitted, of course — not only to defend ourselves and our neighbors from becoming paganized, but also so that Mary might reign over the hearts of all men, for then the Kingdom of Christ comes to them.[6]

This fight, however, must not be understood as an adventurous phase in our lives. This fight is a total war, demanding all of our strength; it affects every aspect of our sojourn on earth, knows no bounds and has no end, as long as the enemy has not been vanquished. In other words, there are no half-measures in this fight; the knight must perpetually be inspired by the highest ideal:

---

[5] RN 3 (1924), pp. 217–218.

[6] RN 5 (1933), p. 132.

(...) so that she, the Immaculata, might become as quickly as possible the Queen of the whole world and of every individual soul, in all the countries of the world; so that every heart without exception might be filled with love for her — that is our great ideal.[7]

Mediocrity, laziness and indifference are foreign to the knight:

He is therefore not indifferent with regard to the evil which is spreading, but hates it with all his heart, and at every opportunity, in every place and at every time, he hunts down any sort of evil that poisons souls.[8]

In a word: the Knight of the Immaculata is someone who fights to win all hearts for her![9]

He extends a helping hand to all, he prays for everyone, he suffers for everyone, he wishes everyone well, he wishes everyone happiness, for God wills it so! Someone who does whatever he can with a prayer to the Immaculata on his lips or with a purified heart that is inflamed with a burning love for God, in order to win as many souls as possible for him through the Immaculata, to liberate them from the bonds of the Evil One, and to make them happy — he and he alone will one day celebrate victories.[10]

---

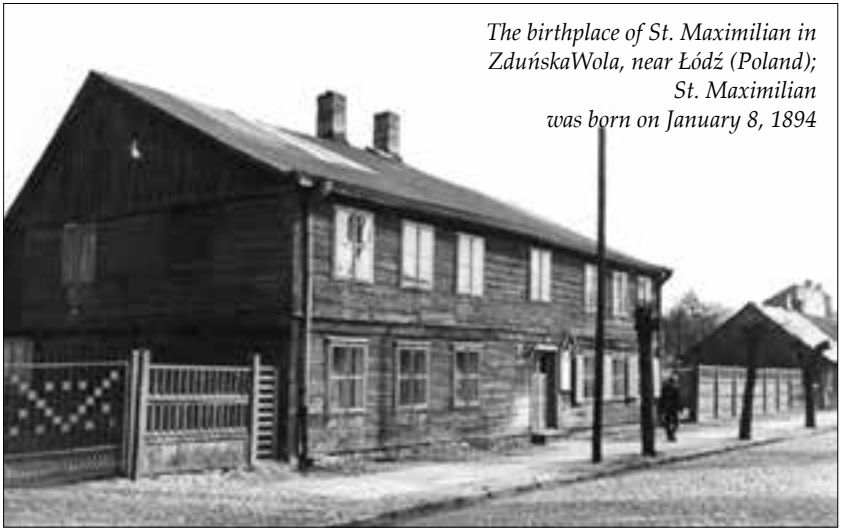
[7] RN 4 (1925), pp. 101–102.

[8] RN 4 (1925), pp. 25–27.

[9] Manuscript dated 1939.

[10] RN 3 (1924), p. 218.

Maria Kolbe, née Dąbrowska, the mother of St. Maximilian



The birthplace of St. Maximilian in ZduńskaWola, near Łódź (Poland); St. Maximilian was born on January 8, 1894

The parish choir; Raymond Kolbe (subsequently St. Maximilian) is on the front row, first from the left

In the Church of St. Matthew in Pabianice, Raymond Kolbe had a vision: Our Lady offered to him two crowns: the red crown of martyr and the white crown of the purity

CHAPTER TWO

Against the Devil, Sin and Hell

WHAT DOES THE BATTLE of the Militia Immaculatæ chiefly consist of? Who is the archenemy with whom we must contend? For St. Maximilian there is neither doubt nor hesitancy about this question. Together with all the Saints he proclaims loud and clear that this battle is, above all else, about conquering Satan, snatching souls from him and fighting boldly against sin. This battle is not a game, since everything is at stake: eternal happiness or eternal damnation. The devil is a powerful opponent, and it is extremely important to keep an eye on him.

> Scripture has it: "She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." Therefore, wherever the Immaculata appears, whenever a soul draws close to her, Satan is lurking at her heels. But we should not become anxious or fearful. We must be attentive and careful, and in particular we must pray much and pray well, but we have no reason to be frightened of anything. We should look down on him with contempt and have nothing to do with him — he isn't worth it. He was unfaithful to God, and so he does not deserve that we should

> have any dealings with him. And he can do nothing to us. He, who is so proud, is afraid of this contempt most of all. A proud person cannot bear contempt. Let us treat him like a dog. When he barks, then let him bark, but we just go on our way.[1]
>
> The devil, being a pure spirit, is cunning, and his intellect is much, much keener than ours, but with the help of God's grace and of the Immaculata, we are still much more powerful than he.[2]

The only chance that the devil has to ruin us is by tempting us to sin. If we fall into serious sin, God must retreat from the soul and Satan comes to replace Him. Now, as a rule, one does not fall immediately into serious sin. Usually it begins with negligence in little things.

> This negligence decreases the influx of grace, the soul becomes weak, and the joy in serving God is diminished. The devil is intent on leading the soul away from God and drawing her to earthly goods. But not content with that, he does not leave the deceived soul in peace, but instead suggests the gloomiest thoughts to her, and drives her to despair. As priests well know, such souls throw up their hands and say: It is no longer possible for us to be saved. That is devilish cunning: Satan first seduces the soul to sin, and then says that there is no more forgiveness.[3]

---

[1] Conference, June 23, 1936.

[2] Conference, November 20, 1938.

[3] Conference, June 12, 1937.

The worst of all sins, however, is pride:

> Through original sin Man has become selfish, full of pride and self-love. Self-love blinds a man. It then requires supernatural light in order for him to recognize his weaknesses and to lay the ax to the root.[4]
>
> "Love for God even unto contempt for oneself; love for oneself even unto contempt for God" (St. Augustine). Self-love insinuates itself into the most exalted regions, even into contempt for the world, and is a great hindrance to obtaining the grace of divine Love.[5]

Consideration of the consequence of sin — hell — causes us to shudder and to realize how serious it all is, what great danger continually menaces us, and the fact that we must therefore stand at our post day and night. In this regard the founder of the M.I. is not content to threaten us with the pains of hell or to describe their dreadfulness, but also explains with irrefutable logic the necessity and consistency of eternal damnation:

> The offense is measured by the dignity of the one offended. A slap that one gives to a street-sweeper is an offense; it would be a greater offense, if one were to slap the mayor, and an ever greater one, if it were the President of the country. But the offense becomes infinitely great, when the one offended is the highest of all beings, namely God. Through the Sacrament of

---

[4] Conference, July 31, 1937.

[5] Meditation, January 28, 1918.

> Penance the infinite merits of Jesus' suffering atone for this offense. Someone who is unwilling to avail himself of the Precious Blood of the God-man, however, will not be capable, being a finite creature, of making infinite reparation in this life. Therefore he will have to do it after his death, that is, eternally. This is demanded by sound reasoning.[6]

Nowadays this subject has become taboo. One commonly hears the opinion that all men will be eternally happy. Many theologians write thick volumes in order to prove that there is no hell, that it is empty, or at least that it will be empty at the end of the world. In that case it makes no sense any more to speak of a battle against opponents that exist only in the imagination of medieval reactionaries or are merely an expression of deep-psychological human needs. Consequently, the large majority of Catholics, with their shepherds in the lead, have given up the fight and made the enemy their friend. Thereby living in sin has become something normal, something psychologically balanced, something that is permissible nowadays and even desirable. If there should happen to be any warning voices left which try to arouse your conscience, then they are marginalized and branded as fundamentalists or radicals.

What happens, though, when one discovers with horror that sin, hell, and the devil really do exist, and that the enemy has not changed his strategy? What a sad awakening after a life spent in the grandest of all illusions — and most often if comes too late.

Accordingly, therein lies a special task for the M.I. in these times: first, not to be influenced, even for a moment, by the lie of universal

---

[6] RN 5 (1926), p. 291.

salvation, and then to wake up others, too, and alert them to the terrible consequences of their illusion. In this task the Mother of God herself comes to our aid, in that she showed the children at Fatima the sea of hellfire and called upon all people to fight against Satan and sin through devotion to her Immaculate Heart.

It follows from this that a Knight of the Immaculata finds the battlefield first in his own heart, that he must "fight against the flesh", concupiscence and temptations, which will never be lacking. In doing so he is aware of his weakness and will never lose heart or fall prey to discouragement:

> If you fall, do not give in to gloomy sadness, for that is foul pride. On the contrary, with great love and peace of heart stand up right away and keep going! Make amends for the fall through an act of perfect charity [*i.e.* an act of perfect contrition].[7]

If you should have the misfortune to succumb to temptation,

> then immediately commend yourself and the entire incident of falling to the Immaculata and ask for forgiveness: "O most loving Mother, forgive me, and beg Jesus for forgiveness." Strive to perform the next activity in such a way as to bring the greatest possible joy to her and to Jesus. Then be assured that such an act of love completely removes the guilt. At your next confession acknowledge this fall, and everything is all right again.[8]

---

[7] Conference, April 17, 1934.

[8] Sketches for the book, You belong to Her!, in: P. J. Domański, *Co dzień ze św. Maksymilianem*, Niepokalanów 1994, p. 138.

> Do not remain a single minute in the state of sin, but ask God immediately for forgiveness![9]

Furthermore, as the Saint teaches us again and again, we must remember that when God forgives us, we must also forgive others. Let us strive also to return to our "first love" [*cf.* Apocalypse 2:4] and to genuine zeal, and let us cast off indifference. And above all, let us trust in the Immaculata.

It is also important not to mistake temptation for sin.

> No temptation is a sin. Even if a temptation should last a very long time, it is by no means a sin; on the contrary, if the soul resists it, she gains merit. As for the way to fight against temptation, one should not lose one's composure by doubting or becoming nervous, but should rather quite peacefully commend oneself to the Immaculata and not be concerned about it, but instead simply have no time for it and busy oneself with something else.[10]
>
> Do not be surprised if you feel good and evil within yourself. All that is evil comes from you; all that is good pours out of the hands of the Immaculata, the Mediatrix of all Graces. The evil that we see in ourselves is not everything; the Immaculata allows us to recognize only a little of it, so that we do not forget who we are, in and of ourselves. We must fight against our weaknesses, but we must do so in peace, without becoming angry at ourselves. Place all your trust in the Immaculata alone,

---

[9] Spiritual exercises, 1912.

[10] Conference, August 16, 1936.

and she will guide you. Therefore submit yourself unconditionally to her will and fight in peace, with boundless confidence in her, and all the weaknesses will be transformed into a still greater good.[11]

Finally, we must avoid the occasions of sin. St. Peter sinned, because he had not prayed in the Garden of Olives and because he warmed himself at the fire together with Jesus' enemies. Our salvation, therefore, is found in prayer, in avoiding bad company as well as the occasions of sin, and in the bold profession of faith in Jesus Christ.[12]

If you have neglected the grace of avoiding the occasion of sin, then you will not receive the grace of victory over it.[13]

And so the Rule of Life of the first Knight of the Immaculata reads:

> [I resolve] at the very outset, to reject mortal sin or deliberate venial sin. As for the future, to remain at peace, and by my zeal to make atonement for lost time. I will not fail (a) to make atonement for every wicked deed (to destroy it), or (b) to increase or in some way to contribute to every good that I am capable of doing. Your rule is obedience: God's will, through the Immaculata.[14]

---

[11] Letter to Brother X, in: P. J. Domański, Co dzień…, p. 135.

[12] Meditation, March 16, 1918.

[13] Meditation, October 15, 1919.

[14] Rule of Life, 1920.

CHAPTER THREE

The Fight against Error and False Religions: Declaring War on Ecumenism

MAXIMILIAN KOLBE WAS CANONIZED[1] by a Pope who had chosen ecumenism as the primary goal of his pontificate: "unity in diversity", *i.e.* the common pilgrimage of the various religions toward a transcendental goal, whereby each religion represents a particular value and offers one of many possible ways to reach this goal. Thus the suspicion might arise that the saint, too, was a forerunner of ecumenism, and in fact he is not infrequently portrayed as such. He is said to have been a martyr of that love which overcomes all division, and as such to be a model for us: love ought to overcome all religious differences. Religious life, to this way of thinking, depends solely upon love, which takes the other person as he is and accepts his conscience and his world-view.

The real Maximilian Kolbe, in contrast, is quite a different one, as demonstrated by the second motto at the beginning of the Statutes of

[1] See footnote 3 of Chapter 1.

the M.I.: "Thou alone hast conquered all heresies throughout the world." The primary goal of the M.I. thus consists in overcoming heresies and errors, and that is one of the finest victories of the Immaculata. The Saint had no doubt whatsoever that erroneous doctrines are the mortal enemy of souls, because they darken human reason and destroy logical thinking. Since human activity is aimed at that which is perceived as true and good, false teachings are the worst possible calamity and the greatest danger for the salvation of souls. If the understanding adopts these pernicious ideas, then it chooses the wrong goal and directs its life toward an illusory happiness, which in reality leads to eternal destruction.

Thus, only a short time after founding the M.I., he wrote in his notebook: "Liberalism is opposed to the supernatural; modernism (*non serviam* — I will not serve!) wishes to adapt to the times in a merely human way."[2] "Naturalism is the plague, the wound of this [twentieth] century."[3]

"The nature of false apostles: they are (1) wolves (2) in sheep's clothing. But they can be recognized by their fruits."[4]

As editor of the "Rycerz Niepokalanej" ("Knight of the Immaculata"), he repeatedly returns to the theme of the danger of disbelief. He never tires of unmasking false religions and the errors of the age, but in doing so he also makes an urgent appeal to his readers to turn to the only effective solution, the only way of overcoming the danger: the Immaculata, who has vanquished all heresies throughout the world.

---

[2] Notebook, October 23, 1917.

[3] Notebook, February 11, 1918.

[4] Notebook, July 7, 1918.

The basic principle which the Knight of the Immaculata must make his own is this: all non-Catholic religions and world-views are enemies of the Church!

The Situation Today

All over the globe a battle is being waged against the Church and the good of souls. The enemy manifests himself in various guises and under different names. It is no secret that socialism exploits the misery of the workers, so as to inject them with the poison of unbelief. We see how the Bolsheviks trample on religion. We hear the teachings of materialists, who narrow down the universe to what is immediately perceptible to the senses, and so they persuade each other that neither God nor the immortal soul exists. Theosophy spreads religious indifference, and the Jehovah's Witnesses and other Protestants use fat wads of dollar bills to recruit more and more adherents. All these camps join to form a front line against the Church.[5]

But only behind these front lines do we find the enemy's main army: the foremost, strongest and worst of all the Church's enemies is Freemasonry. The fact that the flood of Protestant sects is actually the vanguard of Freemasonry is explicitly acknowledged by the Masonic organ [= publication] "Wolna Myśl" ["Free Thought"]: "While maintaining complete independence in our attitude toward the intrinsic values of the [Polish] Old Catholic Church, we can never-

[5] RN 2 (1923), p. 2.

theless support its fight, as well as that of the other Protestant sects, against the supremacy of the Roman Church."[6]

Christ's Church confronts her Enemies

It frightens us, fills us with anxiety, gives rise to gloomy thoughts — this dark wave of hatred that arises over the Catholic Church today….

The first enemies of the Church were the unbelieving Jews. They crucified Christ and thought that they could easily nip His work in the bud. And so they attacked the first Christians relentlessly, as only they are capable of doing: calumnies, prison, exile, stoning … that is how St. Stephen died. Yet the Church did not perish.

Then the pagans endeavored to uproot the tender vine of Christ. What terrible things happened in Rome during the first three centuries! How cruelly those who professed the name of Christ were treated by the Roman emperors, Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Diocletian and Julian the Apostate! It can scarcely be put into words. And on their side they had the people who believed that the Christians were the cause of all catastrophes. So they shouted, "Throw the Christians to the lions!" Pagan priests stirred the people up, the philosophers fanned the flames, and blood flowed in rivers — yet from that blood sprang, not the destruction of the Church, as the pagans vainly supposed, but rather an increasingly powerful development and flourishing. "The

[6] Manuscript: *Enemies of the Church Today*.

blood of the martyrs became the seed of new Christians", a contemporary named Tertullian declared.

No sooner had the persecutions ended than there was a new and even more dangerous catastrophe: Arianism. This heresy so thoroughly inundated the world, which had just been reborn to Christianity, that entire peoples accepted it, as well as the Byzantine Emperor. They not only accepted it but also spread it with all their might, drove out the Catholic bishops and filled the vacant episcopal sees with Arian heretics. A contemporary writer said that the entire world awoke and found that it was no longer Catholic but had become Arian overnight. There is almost no trace left of this sect today, whereas the Church continues to exist. Other sects appeared, Macedonians, Monophysites, Nestorians, Monothelites, but of those, too, hardly a trace is left today.

More dangerous than the heresies were the efforts of the Byzantine emperors to exercise as much influence as possible over the Church. How many persecutions, how many sufferings sprang from this "Cæsaropapism", as historians call it. Later the German emperors adopted the same way of thinking: the Otto's, Henry IV, Frederick Barbarossa, Henry VI, and especially Frederick II: they all wanted to rule the Church absolutely. And yet they fell, sooner or later, struck by the power of the indestructible Church. A similar fate awaited their later imitators: Joseph II of Austria, Napoleon, etc. Even over the latter the Church was victorious!

The Church received the most painful blows from internal scandals and divisions, which oppressed her as early as the ninth and tenth centuries. Bishops often were courtiers

and warriors instead of servants of God; even a few of the popes were unworthy to be vicars of Christ…. Then came the painful years when there were two or even three popes, who fought against each other … although, of course, only one was the real Pope. Those were terrible times for the Church! Every other institution would have fallen into ruins, but the Church withstood everything and did not collapse. The whole world vowed to destroy her, yet Christ's promise did not fail.

The sixteenth century brought the appearance of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Henry VIII of England and others. Heresies cut the body of the Church into pieces. Entire countries and nations fell away. To this day in several countries there are almost no adherents of the Church. The Church herself, however, did not decline and fall; she did not cease to exist, but after such great losses even flourished anew, mightier than before. She turned to the conversion of the heathen. She adopted millions of people.

Protestantism introduced a slackening of morality. Directly opposed to nature was the sectarian movement called Jansenism: the latter tried to control everything: laughter, joy, and gladness, in its opinion, were a betrayal of Christ's Spirit…. It, too, passed away!

The eighteenth century dealt the Church what may have been the most serious wounds: the Rationalism that flourished at that time no longer disputed one or another article of faith, but religion as such. Unbelief! Man created only for earthly happiness! Not even created, but … originating somehow by chance. So as to release him from any sense of responsibility, it was frivolously agreed that he was

descended from the apes. An ape has no need of religion, an ape will not be judged…. Pleasant principles, but how debasing!

Today the rationalists still noisily proclaim their opinions. But now they replace religion with spiritualism, hypnosis, etc. … and fight against the Church! But she, indestructible, unchangeable, continues to stand. Everything around her fell — not only the most ingenious institutions, but even countries and peoples — and she still exists. That is astonishing!

And so she will withstand the present attacks. Individual believers may fall away, if they do not decide in time to seek closer ties to the Church — but the Church herself will not fall. Entire peoples might separate themselves from the one sheepfold of Christ that can bring salvation … but they will not destroy the sheepfold itself, the Church.

May the Most-Holy Mother, the Queen of Poland, protect us from this worst possible misfortune![7]

Father Kolbe grapples with them all; not one of the Christian religions that are praised so much today does he omit. First he answers the question, why are there so many denominations:

The reason is sin and vice.

Bardas, the uncle of the drunken Emperor Michael III, who ruled the state for him, lived incestuously with the widow of his own son. The saintly Bishop Ignatius admonished him on that account, but in vain; and so on the occasion of a Divine

[7] RN 7 (1929), pp. 195–197.

Liturgy in the year 857 he declared him to be a public scandal. The result was rage, the banishment of St. Ignatius, a new Patriarch — Photius — and the beginning of Orthodoxy.

Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, broke his vows, pulled a nun out of the cloister, took her as his wife and founded Protestantism.

Henry VIII, King of England, was weary of married life with Catharine of Aragon, and wanted Anne Boleyn as his wife; after that he changed his wives as though they were gloves, and so the depraved monarch founded the Anglican Church in 1537, because the Pope would not and could not allow him to transgress God's law in that way.

Those are the origins of defection from Christ's Church!

Therefore everyone whose intellectual development, occupation and circumstances allow it has not only the right but also the solemn duty to investigate the truth, and thereby come to know the true religion of Christ and to live in accordance with it.[8]

With regard to Orthodoxy, which today not only is referred to as a "Sister Church" but is officially called a "particular Church", St. Maximilian published a whole series of articles in 1939. First the historical facts of the great schism are presented, and the underlying factors are described which led to the break with Rome. "Hatred of the papacy out of envy for its pre-eminence … hunger for greater spiritual and especially secular power, … pride, which regarded the barbarian West with disdain". As root causes of Orthodoxy the author mentions

[8] RN 5 (1925), pp. 264–265.

above all "Byzantinism, *i.e.* the interference of the Byzantine emperor in the internal affairs of the Church", as well as "the Byzantine patriarchs: the search for earthly happiness and the pursuit of temporal honors necessarily drove them into the hands of the secular authority, into complete dependence upon the emperors." He ends his analysis with the following words:

> They loved the darkness and to this day they seek other ways of salvation in vain, although Christ unceasingly stretches out His hands to them and calls them in a sweet voice so that they might yet return to his sheepfold.[9]

On another occasion the Knight of the Immaculata writes:

> **Why do schismatics so rarely convert?**
>
> Not long ago a cleric, Rev. O. Gapanowicz, turned away from his schismatic beliefs and was received into the Catholic Church. Now since Russian emigrants were persuading him to return again to the schism that is incorrectly called "Orthodoxy", which means right believing, Fr. Gapanowicz had to disappoint them with the following highly significant words: "For half a century I was an Orthodox believer, because I did not know the truth that is contained in the dogmas of the true Christian faith and was not trying to find it. I am sure that, if Orthodox bishops and priests had so much as a crumb of good will and zeal, they would acquaint themselves with the truths of the faith of the Catholic Church, and not one of them would remain Orthodox, but would

[9] See RN 5 (1939), pp. 149–151 and RN 6 (1939), pp. 166–167.

rather profess that *orthodoxia* (right faith) of which St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil and St. Nicholas were champions, and which I, too, profess today." In conclusion, Fr. Gapanowicz challenged all Orthodox to come over to the Catholic Church, as he had done.[10]

Anglicanism is judged in a similar way:

Why did Prof. Windle convert?

In England, Sir Bertram Windle, a Catholic convert from Anglicanism, has just died. Twenty-five years ago he had read the book by Dr. Littledale, which gives the reasons why Anglicans allegedly cannot return to unity with the Roman Church. Now shortly afterward one Father Byder wrote a response to this book, which Windle likewise read. As he studied the two treatises, point by point, he was struck by the numerous citations from the Church Fathers that both works used. And so he became convinced that one of the two authors took extensive liberties in his translation and that he did so quite deliberately. But which one? In order to find the answer to this question, Windle went to the parsonage of the (Anglican) Cathedral of Birmingham and borrowed a whole series of books containing the writings of the Church Fathers. Upon checking the very first translations that showed discrepancies, he exclaimed, "The Catholic is right!" On the following points, he arrived at the same result: "The Catholic is right again!" In this way he subjected all of the quotations to a rigorous analysis and discovered that his confidence in

[10] RN 2 (1929), p. 52.

the honesty of the Anglican cleric had been badly shaken. Windle continued to study Catholic works and very soon found his way to Holy Mother Church.[11]

St. Maximilian sees Protestantism as being particularly dangerous, because it blocks people's way to their Mother and denies them the necessary means for attaining eternal happiness.

The Truth: true happiness.

No heart can be content with half-measures! Doing something half-heartedly can give only a short, deceptive feeling of happiness. Ample proof of this is the fact that all stripes of Protestantism, which in fact do not possess the truth in its fullness, are losing their members. Brilliant minds are not satisfied with the dry and diluted teaching of Luther or Calvin, which is why Bergson, Newman, Browne, Chesterton and others have abandoned it. A new public figure has joined these countless hosts, namely a well-known American writer and educator, the Protestant Prof. Cuthbert Wright.

He was a believer before, but Protestantism did not give complete peace to his brilliant mind, nor did it satisfy his heart. Recently this great American scholar joined the Catholic Church. Let us look briefly at the story of his conversion, so as to understand the wonderful ways by which God draws souls to Himself.

Prof. Wright was born in a Protestant family. His father was a minister, the head of the Protestant sect, "Grace

[11] RN 5 (1929), p. 236.

Episcopal Church". Young Wright learned about Catholicism when he was in school. One day he went with a friend into a Catholic church. The Catholic services, especially Holy Mass, made a deep impression on Wright. "It seemed to me as though I were participating in a great mystery, the depths of which I was unable to grasp, yet I sensed its power. I understood that the stiff, cold ceremonies in my father's denomination were devoid of this life-giving power which I sensed in the Catholic Church. And so I began to study Catholicism. In one of the churches in New York that I occasionally visited there was a very beautiful stained glass window of the Mother of God, who was protecting the poor and the suffering under her mantle. I realized that devotion to Mary, of which Protestants have been deprived, is in fact something essential, which gives man great inner strength in his earthly warfare. Later on, during the Great War [World War I], when I was in great danger during a battle, I suddenly saw quite clearly before my eyes, as though she were alive, the image of Mary from the stained glass window in that New York church. That moment was the turning point of my life. Step by step I assimilated the fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine, until I received the grace of conversion."

The second fact that proves the claim stated above, is the conversion of the British author Levis May. He was known far and wide in the literary world as a famous author. He wrote a whole series of valuable books, which enjoyed great popularity throughout England. Despite his erudition, Levis May was a believer. Unfortunately, however, he was Protestant. Being an excellent scholar, nevertheless, he soon arrived at

the conviction that true happiness in life is to be found only in the Catholic faith. He followed the voice of divine grace and converted to Catholicism.

Catholicism conquers souls. It will always conquer souls, because it alone has the Truth. And "the Truth shall make you free," says the Lord Jesus. It gives them happiness, insofar as it can be experienced at all in this valley of tears; it satisfies the understanding, which seeks answers to the various questions of the present day.

Only Catholicism can provide this — and it does provide it![12]

St. Maximilian also notes the reason why there can be only one true religion and why all others are false. Our faith is upheld by a clear inner logic and an objective approach to reality, which is independent of human opinion, even if all men were to be against it. It is incidentally very interesting that he published this article in the one and only issue of "Rycerz Niepokalanej" that appeared during the German occupation in 1940–1941, that is to say, in the midst of the Nazi propaganda in Poland, which was aimed in particular against the Church and the Catholic faith.

Truth

Although not everyone loves the truth, nevertheless only it can be the foundation of lasting happiness.

The truth is one. This fact is well known to us, and yet we behave in practice as though "yes" and "no" were both true in the same matter. It is not difficult, for example, to experience for oneself that we sometimes act in accordance with our

[12] RN 10 (1936), p. 310.

belief in Divine Providence; but then at other times we are so dejected that we act as though this Divine Providence did not exist. Nevertheless, either Providence exists or it does not. Similarly, for instance, it is true that I am presently writing these words and You, Dear Reader, are reading them. In opposition to this there is no contrary truth, to the effect that I did not write this or that You did not read this. For "yes" and "no" cannot be the truth at the same time in the same matter. Truth is either "yes" or "no", for the Truth is just one.

The Truth is powerful. If someone tried to deny that I had written this and that You had read it, that would not change the truth; the one denying it would just be deceiving himself. And even if there were many people denying it, the Truth suffers no harm from it. And even if everyone throughout the world claimed, declared in print, filmed and swore for a hundred years that I had not written these lines and You had not read them, that cannot chip away the least bit from the granite rock of the truth that I have written this and You have read it. What power

Truth has! A boundless, indeed a god-like power!

This is true in matters of religion also. We encounter many, many religious denominations in the world, and it is a wide-spread opinion that every religion is good. We cannot agree with this statement. Whereas it is true that many of those either profess no religion or belong to this or that one are free of any guilt whatsoever in God's sight, because they are completely and utterly convinced that they are following the right path — nevertheless, in religious questions, too, there can only be one Truth per se, and those who are

convinced that it is otherwise than it is in reality are wrong. Only the one who judges in accordance with the Truth has the true faith.

If it is the truth, then, that God exists, then all the godless people who claim that there is no God are in error. If God did not exist, then all those who belong to a religion would be mistaken. Furthermore: if it is true that Christ is risen, then what He taught is also true, along with the fact that He is the incarnate God; but if He is not risen, then all Christian religions have no reason for being.

Finally, if Jesus did in fact say to Peter, "Thou art the Rock, and on this Rock I will build My Church," and He thereby gave the sign by which anyone can easily distinguish His Church from the hundred other Christian churches, then only those who are in the Catholic Church are on the right path. Only they have the guarantee that they will attain peace and contentment here on earth, and will one day have eternal life, if they seek God according to the teaching of the Church.

Similarly, this is true for all other religious cases. For example, if it is true that the Immaculata appeared to Bernadette in Lourdes, then it is certain that she is alive and loves all mankind like a true mother.

Acknowledge the Truth. No one, therefore, can change the truth; one can only seek the truth, find it and profess it, conform one's life to it, walk along the path of Truth in all things, especially in what concerns the ultimate goal of life, namely one's relationship with God, *i.e.* true religion.

All men seek happiness. There is no such thing, however, as a happiness which is not built upon the Truth. Only the

> Truth can be the indestructible foundation of happiness, and so it is, both for the individual human being and also for all of humanity.[13]

Again and again Fr. Kolbe calls upon the Knights of the Immaculata to fight for the Truth, which is possible only if they also fight against error:

> They [the Knights] will spread the fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine, and will especially counteract godlessness, free-thinking, religious indifference, sectarianism, and anti-clericalism.[14]

The one who conquers all heresies is the Immaculata. Through our total consecration to her we are permitted to cooperate with her in overcoming the mortal enemies of the Church and of souls, in building up Christ's Kingdom, and in snatching our fellow-men away from everlasting death.

She destroys heresies, then, not heretics, for she loves the latter and desires their conversion. Precisely because she loves them, she frees them from heresy and destroys their false opinions and convictions.

She destroys them, that is to say, she does not only lessen or weaken them, but completely and utterly destroys them, so that no trace of them remains.

---

[13] RN December/January 1940/1941, pp. 6–8.

[14] RN 10 (1938), p. 101.

All! All of them without exception. Where? Through all the earth. Not just in this country or that, therefore, but in all the countries in the world. She alone! Nothing more is needed, therefore, since she is capable of accomplishing this alone.[15]

She conquers the enemy of souls! She has enlisted us under the banner of the M.I., so that we might fight together with her. The goal of the M.I. is therefore: to strive for the conversion of sinners, heretics, schismatics, Jews … and especially Freemasons, and to do so under the protection of the Immaculata and through her intercession![16]

But how much longer will this battle last?

Only until all schismatics and Protestants profess the Catholic Creed with conviction, when all Jews voluntarily ask for Holy Baptism — only then will the Militia Immaculatæ have reached its goal.[17]

In other words: there is no greater enemy of the Immaculata and her Knighthood than today's ecumenism [which in 1933 was an exclusively Protestant movement], which every Knight must not only fight against, body and soul, but also neutralize through diametrically opposed action and ultimately destroy. We must realize the goal of the M.I., as quickly as possible: that is, to conquer the whole world, and

---

15 RN 12 (1933), pp. 293–294.

16 RN 10 (1938), p. 291.

17 RN 4 (1922), p. 78.

every individual soul which exists today or will exist until the end of the world, for the Immaculata, and through her for the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.[18]

[18] Diary entry dated April 23, 1933.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Fight against the World: Declaring War on the "Spirit of the Council"

THE "WORLD" can be understood in three ways:

1. The world in the sense of the cosmos, God's creation, is "the work of His hands", His footprint. St. Augustine calls it the book in which everything speaks of God.

2. The world is also the place in which we live, through which we travel as pilgrims toward our eternal destination: the world as a task in which we have to fulfill God's will; the world as a means of reaching our eternal goal, as an assignment to regard means as means and not to mistake them for the end. The fight already begins here, since the enemy's tactic consists precisely of perverting the means, making absolutes out of them, exaggerating their importance and thus making men into the slaves of things.

3. Finally, there is the world of which St. John speaks: the world knew Him not. "The world hates Me… but you are not of the world." In this sense the world is the kingdom of those who have turned

away from God, who want to hear nothing about the truth, who consciously or unconsciously are opposed to God. This sort of world is a temptation, and Christ not only has nothing to do with this world, but His battle against it is a matter of life and death.

And this is what the battle of the M.I. chiefly consists of: not opening oneself to this world (*aggiornamento*), not treating it with endless sympathy (Paul VI), not paying homage to the idols and "values" of this world as though it shared in the common task of building up the Kingdom of God. On the contrary, the representatives of the "world" and of its ideas, by which the Church has been influenced so much since the last Council, are the target of all the attacks of the M.I., particularly the Freemasons and Communism. Is it not a sign of Divine Providence that the M.I. was founded on the eve of the Bolshevik October Revolution? Was not the 200th anniversary of Freemasonry the specific occasion for the founding of the M.I.? Maximilian Kolbe did not learn about the mortal foe of the Church from books. He was an eyewitness to the blasphemous processions to the Vatican, in which the demonstrators sang songs in honor of Satan and carried banners with the inscription, "Satan will rule in the Vatican and the Pope will be his slave". He writes:

As Freemasonry in Rome appeared more and more in public and unfurled in plain view of the Vatican windows their banners, depicting St. Michael the Archangel trampled and defeated by Lucifer, and distributed leaflets reviling the Holy Father, the idea occurred to me to found an association to fight against Freemasonry and the other servants of Lucifer.[1]

---

[1] Memoirs of the Founding of the M.I., 1935.

What is the distinctive fundamental principle of Freemasonry (and of all other incarnations of atheistic materialism as well)?

> This mortal hatred of the Church, of Christ and of His Vicar on earth is not just an outburst of individuals who have gone astray, but rather a systematic action that proceeds from the principle of Freemasonry: the destruction of all religion, but especially the Catholic religion. All over the world the scattered cells of this Mafia strive in the most varied ways, more or less visibly, to reach the same goal. In doing so, it makes use of a whole horde of associations with various names and purposes, which under its influence still spread religious indifference and weaken morality.[2]

Especially today, the Saint's clear insight tears the mask off the "friendly face of free-thinkers". One should keep these texts in mind when observing these people going in and out of the Vatican. By what means do they achieve their purpose? Maximilian Kolbe quotes the high-ranking British Freemason, Rabbi Moses Montefiore, who as early as 1848 said, "As long as the newspapers of the world are not in our hands, we will accomplish nothing," and goes on to explain the method of the Freemasons:

> Look at today's world and how it has changed in recent decades. Who is sowing unbelief among the people? Who is stealing their hope of heaven and causing them to seek their happiness in earthly pleasures? Who has stifled the voice of

[2] Pisma o. Maksymiliana Kolbe [Writings of Fr. M.K.], vol. VII, p. 1194.

> conscience? Who broke the international laws, destroyed public order? All of that is the work of the daily anti-clerical press![3]

To this there is only one response: active resistance.

> It is high time for a change in this situation. The first step in this change is a drastic boycott of the bad press; the second — support for the good press. The godless press would not have developed to such an extent, had not millions of Catholics bought these anti-clerical periodicals and newspapers. What should we say about a people that pays for its own debasement? The responsibility for this scandal lies heavily on Catholics: this rubbish is printed for us Catholics, we subscribe to it and pay for it. Bishop Zwerger was right when he said (1884): "Anyone who pays money for the [anti-clerical] press is waging war against the Church and cannot be called a true Catholic.[4]

May these words be engraved today on the heart of the Knight as well, since unsuitable publications are commonplace even among loyal Catholics, or, worse yet, television, with its even more numerous bad films, and finally the plague of uncontrolled Internet use, which unfortunately often leads to wallowing in the worst sort of trash!

Today one scarcely hears any more a single voice from the Church's hierarchy trying to stem the "diabolical wave that is flooding the world" (Sr. Lucia of Fatima to Fr. Fuentes, 1957). On the contrary,

---

[3] "Akcja Katolicka a masoneria" [Catholic Action and Freemasonry], in Maksymilian Kolbe o masonerii, Krzeszowice, 2003, pp. 23–25.

[4] Ibid., p. 24.

bishops congratulate the Freemasons on their great accomplishments for the cause of peace and welfare in the world. How different the words of our Saint sound, when he turns his attention to the great ones of the world:

> In the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, *i.e.* of the true leadership of Freemasonry, they write about themselves: "Who or what is capable of subverting an invisible power? Such is our power.
>
> External Freemasonry serves to conceal its actual goals, whereas the plan of action of this power and the place where it is found will never be known to men." Gentlemen, fortunately for you, we are capable of overthrowing even an invisible power! I say, "fortunately for you", because you haven't the faintest idea how wonderful it is to have the privilege of loyally serving God and the Immaculata. I maintain that we are capable of overthrowing you, and we will bring you down. Perhaps you are curious to know who we are, that we rely so proudly on our might. Well, we are an army, whose leader each one of you knows, who sees every one of your deeds, who hears every word that you speak, and even more… not a single one of your thoughts escapes his attention. Tell us yourselves whether, under these circumstances, there can still be any talk of concealment and invisibility?
>
> Worse yet (or actually, better yet, for you): You are kept in check to such an extent that you can only make those movements that our leader allows you to make for the attainment of his wise purposes. And you would have been trampled in the dust long ago, if our leader had only given

the sign; to him alone do you owe the fact that the earth still tolerates your presence on its surface. So merciful he is toward you.

And do you know why? Because our leader loves you. Could you have ever imagined such a thing? He loves you very much and does not want you to perish, but delays and waits for you to reflect on your position and… to join his army instead as quickly as possible. But the time will come for each one of you, perhaps very soon, and then it will be too late!

Do you know what our leader's name is? Immaculata, Refuge of Sinners, Destroyer of the hellish serpent. Tell us, then, where can you turn to escape her glance? What deed, what word, what plan are you capable of concealing from her?

All of you are dust of the earth! Do you not receive your own life together with all your treasures at every moment from the hand of God? Can He, the Righteous One, not trample you into dust? But look, our leader, the Immaculata, is praying on your behalf for mercy, for the lengthening of your life, so that you can still come to your senses. But soon the day will break, and you will close your eyes for ever and then…. If you do not make things right with God now, while you still live, then that day will be terrible! Then all remorse, tears and repentance will no longer be of any use![5]

[5] RN 5 (1926), pp. 289–291.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Campaign of the Knight of the Immaculata: the Struggle for the Salvation of Souls

THE CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN is a mission: the conversion of sinners, the struggle for the salvation of souls.

Let us ask once more: What does this battle actually consist of? How is this enemy destroyed?

By making every effort to convert him. This is the missionary plan of Holy Mother Church, the motive that has sent thousands of missionaries to the furthest corners of the world: *Da animas — cetera tolle!* Lord, give me souls, and take everything else away! This motto hung over the writing desk of St. John Bosco. And from St. Maximilian Kolbe we hear the following thought-provoking statement:

> I live only for souls; that is my task.[1]

[1] RN 12 (1939), p. 359.

God made every human being to know Him, to love Him, to serve Him, and thus to save his soul, and therein consists his real happiness. Once a person has recognized that God has created him with infinite love, that Christ has saved *me* from everlasting ruin by His bitter death on the cross, then that person wants to share this happiness with others, and would like to show everyone the only way that leads to salvation:

> Do you know why so many people on earth do not yet know God, do not know the Immaculata, and therefore often ask, why they are living in this world in the first place? They do not know that man's destination is the Lord God, that everything on earth is only a means of attaining God in eternity, in heaven. They do not know that the Mediatrix of all Graces, the spiritual Mother of mankind, Mary, is the Immaculata, and that they will draw near to God in the fastest and easiest possible way if they fly to her and love her.[2]

This is the task, the vocation of every Christian, and yet for the Knight of the Immaculata it is the great goal of his life, the deep longing of his heart, the mainspring of his prayers and sacrifices.

> O Immaculata, when will you finally rule in the hearts of each and every person? When will all the inhabitants of the earth finally recognize you as their Mother and the Heavenly Father as their Father?[3]

---

[2] Letter to Japanese students, dated November 4, 1937.

[3] Fragment of an unfinished book about the Immaculata, January 1940. *Błogosławiony Maksymilian Kolbe*, Wybór Pism, Warszawa 1973 (henceforth: BMK), p. 590.

The Knight of the Immaculata, therefore, must distinguish clearly between the error and the one who errs, as St. Augustine says: "Hate the sin, love the sinner." Accordingly, he is not indifferent about any soul, but rather looks with great compassion on the poor souls that have been misled. St. Maximilian was not afraid to speak even to the mortal enemies of the Church — Freemasons, Jews, heretics — in a very friendly and cordial way. Hadn't the miraculous conversion of Alphonse Ratisbonne, a Jew, inspired him with the idea for the M.I.? Every single soul has infinite value, and therefore all the effort is worth it to win even one soul for the Immaculata. And so in the year 1930 he founded a City of the Immaculata in Japan, a project that originated in great suffering, through the cross, with many disappointments and difficulties, so that on several occasions the friars were tempted to discouragement. Once he heard a young Japanese man, who had converted there, say: "If you had not come, then I would still be a pagan now!" Thereupon he wrote to his Knights:

> These words were so full of sincerity and gratitude to the Immaculata and to us, her instruments, that immediately such thoughts as these sprang to mind: Even if no one else converted besides this one man, our efforts to date would have been worthwhile and we could have sacrificed yet much more, even if it were only for one soul![4]

The Knight does not love of neighbor superficially, however,

> because he [the neighbor] is sympathetic, useful, rich, influential, or just grateful. These motives are too base and

[4] Letter to Niepokalanów, February 11, 1933.

> are unworthy of a Knight of the Immaculata. True love rises above the creature and is taken up into God. In Him, for Him and through Him he loves everyone, the good as well as the bad, his friends but also his enemies. To all he extends a helping hand, for all of them he prays, for everyone he suffers, he wishes everyone well, longs for the happiness of all, because God wills it so![5]

The yearning for the salvation of souls is truly without limit:

> Let us meditate today upon the image of the authentic Knight of the Immaculata: he does not narrowly confine his heart to himself, nor to his family, to his close relations, friends, and countrymen, but he takes the whole world into it, each and every person, because all without exception have been redeemed with the Blood of Jesus Christ, all of them are our brethren. He wishes all true happiness, enlightenment through the light of faith, cleansing from sins, and a heart burning with love for God, an unbounded love. The happiness of all mankind in God through the Immaculata — that is his dream.[6]

When the movement of the Immaculata was in full bloom and the Knights already numbered in the millions, people often recommended that the Saint should not expand any more, that he shouldn't increase the circulation of his periodicals. To this suggestion he replied that

---

[5] RN 3 (1924), p. 218.

[6] RN 4 (1925), pp. 25–26.

one should never be content with the progress made thus far, but rather that they had to keep building every day, "in order to save as many souls as possible".

The salvation of souls is also an extremely urgent matter. We must act as quickly as possible, since the enemy never sleeps. What a fiery zeal for souls the Saint communicates to his Knights!

> To accomplish the goal of the M.I., and to do it as quickly as possible, namely, to conquer the entire world, and every single soul that is living now or will exist until the end of the world, for the Immaculata and through her for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To beware that no one snatches the banner of the Immaculata from any soul, but instead ceaselessly to deepen the love for the Immaculata in souls, to fasten ever more tightly the bond of love between souls and her, so that they become one with her, indeed, become the Immaculata herself. So that she alone might live and love and work in them and through them. Just as she belongs entirely to Jesus and to God, so too will each soul through her and in her become Christ's, God's. … Then those souls will love the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, as they have never loved Him before. The love of God will set fire to the world through Mary and will consume it in flames, and souls will be taken up to heaven, out of love.[7]

It is clear that there is no other way of attaining this lofty goal than through the Immaculata:

---

[7] Memoirs, April 23, 1933.

> The goal of the M.I. is so difficult to attain, that one would rightly have to doubt that it could ever be accomplished, if one were to rely only on natural powers, efforts, and instruments. Daily experience teaches us, in fact, that the enemies of the Church have more natural expedients and, in keeping the Jesus' words, are wiser than the children of light. Furthermore, conversion and healing require graces, whereas our fallen nature in and of itself is inclined to sin. Therefore one can rely only upon help from above. Yet God has willed that the easiest and surest help that can be obtained is that of the Blessed Virgin Mary… Accordingly there is no other way of attaining the goal of the M.I. than to commend oneself entirely and forever to the Immaculate Virgin Mary as an instrument in her immaculate hands, so that she alone might work in us and through us. There you have the essence of the M.I.[8]

But how are we to save souls? By burning and inflaming others, answers the founder of the M.I.

> To shine upon one's surroundings, to win souls for Mary, so that the neighbor's heart might be opened to her, so that she may reign in all hearts… — that is our ideal![9]
>
> To kindle love for the Immaculata, first in one's own soul, then to spread this fire around, and with it to inflame all souls that exist and ever shall be, and to fan this flame of love in

[8] RN 1 (1922), p. 102.

[9] RN 15 (1936), pp. 226–227.

> oneself and in the whole world, to stir up this fire more and more, without limits — that is our goal. Everything else is only a means to this end.[10]
>
> Anyone who has come to know the Immaculata, has loved her and devoted himself to her… anyone whose concern for her reign over souls makes him long for the day when others will give themselves to her, and who for his part does all that he can toward that end, and strives not to neglect any means, however costly it may be, even if it required sealing this ideal with his own blood; nay, more: anyone who views it as his greatest happiness, his loftiest dream, to offer his life as a holocaust, in order to win all souls for her, and I mean all, wherever they are, to whatever nation or race they might belong, and whenever they live, today or in the future — that person is the perfect Knight of the Immaculata.[11]

The man who wrote these words lived this devotion in his own flesh, even unto death for the sake of love of neighbor in the starvation bunker in Auschwitz.

Love makes a person resourceful. Love for souls constantly alerts the heart to new possibilities, in order to do good for them. The recently beatified children of Fatima always found new sacrifices to make so as to save souls from eternal ruin. The Knight of the Immaculata likewise will gauge the opportunities that are within his reach, in order to attain this great goal. It is precisely the trials, humiliations,

---

[10] Fragment of an unfinished book about the Immaculata, January 1940, BMK p. 602.

[11] Ibid., p. 605.

sufferings and crosses of life that will be his greatest assist, and even more than that:

> The person who — with a prayer to the Immaculata on his lips or in the depths of a heart that has been purified by suffering and is inflamed with the fire of love for God — does what he can to win as many souls as possible for Him through the Immaculata, to liberate them from the power of the Evil One, to make them happy — only that person will win the victory.[12]

[12] RN 4 (1924), p. 218.

CHAPTER SIX

Being a Knight

WE HAVE SPOKEN about a battle and about the necessity for it, who the enemies are and what this battle looks like. Let us take another look at the combatants themselves, who should not be hirelings, mercenaries, and not ordinary soldiers, either, but Knights of the Immaculata. With this expression the founder suggests both the external activity and also the interior attitude that he demands from those who want to consecrate themselves entirely to the Immaculata.

The Knight is inspired by a high ideal. He is not content with half measures, with penultimate things; he wants everything! The world is too small for him.

> The socialist's field of vision does not extend further than his coffin; it does not go beyond the purely material world. Immured in matter, he sees his only happiness in a bestial enjoyment of the world. But all that is too small for the man whose thoughts struggle through the atmosphere, the stars and the universe, whose understanding, which constantly looks for causes, strains to reach the first cause and the final end of all things. His heart, however, longing for happiness

> and glory, senses and understands that the more it has attained, the greater its longing becomes, and that nothing limited, not even the greatest of all finite things, can satisfy it. It longs for the good, for the infinite good.[1]
>
> "Our heart is restless until it rests in Thee, O God!" St. Augustine acknowledged after long years of seeking happiness in vain apart from God. We sense all of this through our own experience, that nothing finite is capable of satisfying us. Only God can be our goal. We want to know, love and possess him, to unite ourselves with Him, to become divinized in Him.[2]

The Knight knows about the mission which he has received from his Lord.

> God has bestowed a particular mission on earth upon every human being, and already as He was creating the universe, He arranged the initial causes in such a way that an uninterrupted chain of causes and effects created the conditions and circumstances needed to fulfill the mission of each person in an appropriate way. Every human being is born with talents that are suited to the mission assigned to him, and during his whole life situations and circumstances combine in such a way as to make it possible and easy for him to attain his goal. Now the perfection of the individual human being consists precisely in reaching this goal. The

---

[1] RN 4 (1923), p. 18.

[2] Manuscript, The Immaculate Mother of God.

> more faithfully he fulfills his mission, the more he accomplishes his task, the higher he is in God's eyes, the holier he is.[3]

Yet the Lord has ordained that we should come to know and love the Immaculata and accept the mission of being her Knights. The awareness of this task should not fade for an instant from the Knight's mind. This means that he will not lead a double life, but rather strive always and everywhere to put into practice the ideal to which he has consecrated himself and to fulfill the pledge that he has made to his Lady and Queen.

The Knight is furthermore loyal; he imposes no conditions on his Lady. He resolves to sacrifice even his last "yes, but…".

> This total and unconditional devotion, with no "ifs, ands or buts", is the prerequisite for the complete unfolding of the life of grace. If even a small hindrance is present, the soul will not soar, because she does not yet have the free wings of a dove… God, however, wants to lift the soul higher and higher. Therefore it is necessary for us to give the Lord everything, so that the slightest objection does not remain in us. Every reservation and every disordered inclination is a barrier and is unworthy of a Knight.[4]

"*Deus vult* — God wills it!" This was the song and the battle-cry of the medieval crusaders: "Have courage, crusaders, defend Christendom! Though hell may assail us, fear not and attack. The Lord will be with

---

[3] RN 1 (1922), p. 114.

[4] Conference, February 2, 1941.

you, rely on Him, He Himself wills it so!" The Knight knows that he is able to do nothing of himself.

> There are two ways: one's own strength or God's strength. Everything depends on which way we go. When the cause is nothing (namely, relying on our own strength), then the effect will be nothing, too. Will we rely on ourselves or on God? Only when we do not depend on ourselves, are we able and bound to attain the goal. This is the most basic principle, which applies to the effectiveness of all our actions: Everything with God, nothing without Him![5]

Often one hears the objection: I am too weak, too unreliable.

> "I would like to, but I cannot!" — Believe me, nothing more is needed than willingness. That is the first step. "I will," means that I use all the means that are at my disposal! "I would like to," means that I am reluctant to use all the means, because some of them are too costly for self-love. Such a soul still has too much selfishness in it, self-love. In order to become holy, one must will it. St. Augustine was a very bad man, but he said to himself: "Those men and others were able to become Saints, and therefore so can you, Augustine!" And he became a saint, because he willed it. If someone tells himself that he must become holy, then he will indeed. One day St. Benedict's sister, Scholastica, asked him what one must do in order to become holy. He answered in a word: "Will it."[6]

---

[5] Conference, July 5, 1937.

[6] Conference, May 2, 1937.

The Knight of the Immaculata is the one who also wants to become holy!

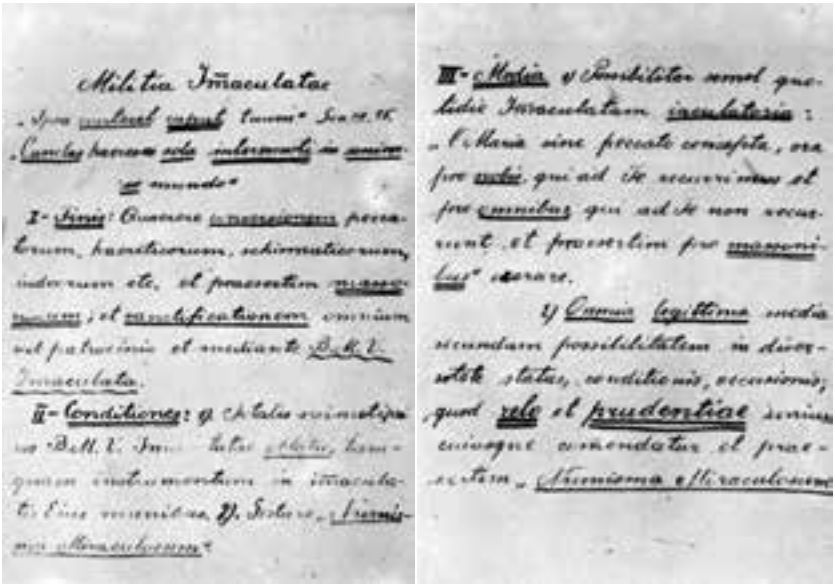
Finally, the Knight distinguishes himself through perseverance, which does not allow itself to be put off by the consequences of the battle — and he will not be spared, either. Defeats, wounds, lying prostrate in the dirt, all these things strengthen his conviction, that he can do nothing without grace.

> Dear children, we now have beautiful spring days; the sun with its warm rays awakens everything to new life, the grass sprouts from the earth, the flowers bloom in beautiful colors, and all of this inspires a person. It should be just like this in our life; it has to be springtime in our soul. The sun, which represents God, must cause its warmth to penetrate our souls through its rays, and this beam of rays is Mary. And so our soul grows and the flowers of the virtues bloom. It would be a terrible thing if the life of divine grace were to die away within us, that life which fills a person and inflames him with love for his Creator and his Mother.[7]

[7] S. Jurkowski, *Notizen aus dem Leben des hl. Maximilian Kolbe*.

Maximilian Kolbe with brothers in Rome; he is in the second row, the first from the left

Original manuscript of the Statues of the M.I. in Latin, handwritten by St. Maximilian Kolbe



Militia Immaculatae

I- Finis: Quaerere conversionem peccatorum, haereticorum, schismaticorum, indeorum etc. et praesertim massonum; et sanctificationem omnium sub patrocinio et mediante B.M.V. Immaculata.

II- Conditiones: 1) Totalis [illegible] B.M.V. Immaculatae [illegible] instrumentum in immaculatis Eius manibus. 2) Sistere „Numisma Miraculosum"

III- Media 1) Possibiliter semel quotidie Immaculatam inculcatoria: „O Maria sine peccato concepta, ora pro nobis, qui ad Te recurrimus et pro omnibus qui ad Te non recurrunt et praesertim pro massonibus" [illegible].

2) Omnia legitima media secundam possibilitatem in diversitate status, conditionis, occasionis; quod zelo et prudentiae [illegible] cuiusque commendatur et praesertim „Numisma Miraculosum"

St. Maximilian Kolbe, as a student in Rome in the year when the M.I. was founded (1917)

International College and the theological faculty of "St. Bonaventure"; in the chapel of this College St. Maximilian conceived the idea of founding the Militia Immaculatæ

CHAPTER SEVEN

Dust Rags for the Immaculata

AFTER ALL THAT HAS BEEN SAID, one could get the impression that the Knight of the Immaculata is a very important person, someone essential, perhaps even indispensable. In order to understand the true nature of the Knight even more precisely, therefore, it is important to know whom the Immaculata has actually selected for this great movement.

"When you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants," says the Savior. "I am who am; you are the one who is not," said God the Father to St. Catherine of Sienna. "God is everything; we are nothing," explained St. John of the Cross. "Without Me you can do nothing." When God works in His creation, He usually makes use of secondary causes, uses instruments, yet in these instances all wisdom and creative power as well as the resulting work are ultimately traced back to Him. The instrument can boast only that it was deemed worthy of existing and of being enlisted in God's service.

These principles are the foundation of the Christian life. Anyone who does not build on this foundation is building on sand, and sooner or later his spiritual house will collapse (see Matthew 7:24).

Am I called to be a Knight of the Immaculata? O Mary, then you have picked a really useless instrument!

But this does not say enough: often enough we are among those to whom the Savior must say, "You wicked servants!" Chosen by God, singled out and preferred to so many others, permitted to know the truth and to be children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, heirs of heaven, children of Mary, we have often been unfaithful to this lofty calling. How often? As often as we have sinned! Many thousands of times!

> These souls are chosen from among thousands to be brides of the Sacred Heart. But when they neglect themselves, when they seek their happiness somewhere out in the world, instead of in front of the tabernacle, oh how much they wound the Heart of Jesus! Yes, they wound Jesus more than all other men.
>
> On the cross, our Savior prayed for those who had crucified Him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But He will not be able to say that about these consecrated souls, because they had the opportunity to come to know Him through meditations, conferences… Accordingly, they willingly and knowingly turn away from Him and thus despise His love, which is the highest possible love, because it is divine. When in earthly life someone loves another person with all his heart and in response receives indifference, that hurts! If worldly men, despised by those whom they love so much, can be carried away even to the point of committing suicide, because they cannot endure the pain, how much

greater pain must then the most Sacred Heart of Jesus feel, when His infinite love is despised![1]

This is what the instrument looks like, then, which the Immaculata wishes to make use of.

Instead of using a suitable brush to paint her works of art on earth, she makes use of a simple broom.

The one who said this was a great Saint. How much more should we humble ourselves and with astonishment praise the incomparable love of Mary, who even… makes use of dirty dust rags in order to complete her work on earth!

Let us imagine that we are a paintbrush in the hand of an infinitely accomplished painter. What does the brush have to do in order for the most beautiful picture to appear? It must allow itself completely to be guided. It would be ridiculous if the paintbrush were to lecture an earthly artist and try to correct him. But when the Eternal Wisdom, God Himself, uses us as His instrument, then we will work well and produce a perfect result only if we allow ourselves to be absolutely and completely guided by Him in everything.[2]

Because we are nothing but instruments in the hands of the Immaculata, we are allowed to do only what she wants from us.[3]

Whatever we do, even if it were a more than heroic act that shook all the evil in the world to its very foundations, it will

---

[1] Conference, November 4, 1938.

[2] RN 11 (1932), p. 133.

[3] Letter to his brother Alphonsus, dated December 8, 1920.

> be worth something only insofar as our will is in agreement with her will and, through her, with God's will.[4]

There is a test by which someone can easily find out whether he really is an instrument or whether he is only making a pious pretense: contradictions and humiliations. The instrument, indeed, does not ask about the success, about the result, because that is the master's business. The instrument just has to carry out the artist's will; then, and only then, is success and victory assured as well.

> Someone who looks only at the outward appearances of the entire work is sorely mistaken. What is important is the interior progress. But we cannot see what is happening in the depths of the soul. And it is a good thing that God conceals from us the fruits of our labors; otherwise our self-love would ruin everything. Besides, we don't have to know about all that. At the last judgment we will see it, and that is enough…
>
> The Knight of the Immaculata is her property, and so it is our duty to let ourselves be guided by her exclusively. Whether it be through activities such as, for example, the printing of newspapers, or through prayer, good example, whether one's efforts are made in common with others or scattered to the four winds, whether here or somewhere else, whether here on earth or in heaven, all of that is secondary. The essential thing is to let ourselves be guided by the Immaculata, so as to become a better, an ever more perfect instrument in her hands. What kind of a chisel would it be that was constantly

[4] RN 4 (1925), p. 26.

turning askew in the hands of the sculptor? He could never complete his intended project. Or what sort of a pen would it be that similarly resisted the hand of the writer? He would put it down, because it would be unsuitable for his work. Therefore let us at last stop kicking and struggling in the hands of the Immaculata. Let us stop wanting to understand and anticipate everything according to our own way of thinking…

It is not our business to worry about the future, what it will be like, how and where we will be working, for in these matters Divine Providence guides everything, down to the slightest details. The Immaculata knows about all this with absolute certainty. This thought, that nothing happens without God's permission, ought to reassure every one of us. The Immaculata will accomplish what she wants, and nothing, absolutely nothing will be capable of hindering the fulfillment of her purposes. The whole world and all the devils can do nothing against God's will. Let us allow ourselves therefore to be guided by the Immaculata! And when she sends us contradictions and humiliations, then it is, after all, what is best for us…

On the other hand, it is an unhappy soul that does not allow herself to be guided completely by the Immaculata, that constantly wriggles out of her hands. The Immaculata cannot use such a soul in order to accomplish a more important task. Such a soul will not only be unhappy herself, discontent

and overly critical, but will also make everyone around her unhappy.[5]

Of ourselves we can do nothing, absolutely nothing, but with her help, in her, we will convert the whole world. We will cast the whole world at her feet, if only we belong entirely to her, if only we are unconditionally hers.[6]

---

[5] Conference, March 8, 1940.

[6] Conference, December 31, 1938.

The first issue of "RycerzNiepokalanej" ("Knight of the Immaculata"), dated January 1922; printed in Cracow

Printing house in Grodno (1927); in 1922, St. Maximilian moved to the friary in Grodno and acquired a small printing establishment; and from then on the review began to grow; by 1927, 70,000 copies were being printed

"The number of readers is growing by great strides. The Immaculate Virgin leads her review onward with a strong hand" — St. Maximilian wrote to his brother, Father Alphonsus

PART TWO

TO RENEW ALL THINGS IN CHRIST THROUGH MARY

CHAPTER ONE

For the Greatest Glory of God

THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS, the fight against the devil, consecration to the Mother of God: all these are in their turn only means of attaining an ultimate goal, namely, the one for which man and all other things were created in the first place: the glorification of God.

God stands in the center. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, to whom all honor and glory belongs. For St. Maximilian, man has only one meaning, inasmuch as he is ordered to God. Working for the salvation of mankind is in his view nothing other than the best way of giving God the greatest glory that a human being is capable of on earth:

> St. Ignatius did everything for the greater glory of God; we must do everything for the greatest possible glory of God, for God deserves this.
>
> The final purpose of every creature is the extrinsic glory of God. Rational living beings give Him this glory in the most perfect way, for they are images of the divine perfections, they recognize and acknowledge Him, hence the worship,

> thanksgiving, praise and love of the creature for the Creator. However, because God has loved us infinitely and has proved this love by His coming to earth to raise up fallen man, to enlighten and strengthen him and to redeem him through a most shameful death amid the most horrible sufferings; and because He now remains forever with us over all the earth, although ungrateful men still abandon and despise Him; finally, because He gives Himself to us as food, so as to divinize us with His divinity — for these reasons we must love Him without limit. On the other hand, as finite creatures we are not capable of giving God infinite glory. So let us give Him at least as much as we can.[1]

It follows that, for the M.I., "human autonomy" is a myth; man has no meaning in himself, and nothing is done merely for man and his dignity.

Opposed to this is today's idolization of man and his rights, which in all issues becomes the most important consideration. The fruit of this is religious indifference, the most virulent poison of our time. One might think that the Saint had experienced our period of history with us, when he wrote to his Brother Alphonsus in the year 1919:

> I am very glad that you are filled with zeal for the increase of God's glory; in our time the greatest plague is indifference, to which not only lay people but also [consecrated] religious fall victim. And yet God is worthy of honor, indeed, of the greatest possible glory. We poor, limited creatures, who are incapable of giving Him the great honor that He deserves,

[1] Conference for the M.I. in Krakow on September 18, 1919, BMK, pp. 477–478.

> must at least try to contribute as much as possible to God's glory.[2]

The contemporary cult of humanity, which sees in man the meaning of all things, is utterly foreign and contrary to the founder of the M.I. He sees in it a lack of faith in God, a complete reversal of values, which ultimately leads to atheism and sin. For this reason the Knight must defend God's rights, must be able to prove to men that God exists:

> When I look at a flower, a plain, ordinary wildflower, I cannot comprehend how someone can thoughtlessly doubt the existence of the One Who created it, Who designed it and purposefully ordered all its parts, so that it might blossom and bring forth fruit.[3]

Maximilian Kolbe devoted a significant portion of his periodical, *Knight of the Immaculata* to apologetic subjects that prove the existence of God, His truth and His rights; the reason for this surely was because he loved God with his whole heart and wanted everyone to know and love Him.

Anyone who is filled with the sense of God's greatness and majesty, however, also knows about his own emptiness. The recognition of one's own nothingness is the most important requirement for drawing near to God's majesty.

---

[2] Letter to Br. Alphonsus Kolbe, April 21, 1919, BMK, p. 41.

[3] Article, "The Life of God", in: P. J. Domański, op. cit., p. 20.

> When man is able to draw near to God in all, he must necessarily discover that all that we are, all that we have and can do, we have from God and receive from Him at every moment of our lives, for continuing in being is nothing other than an ongoing reception of this being. Of ourselves alone we can do nothing, or at most evil, which consists precisely in the lack of good, orderliness and strength. When we acknowledge this truth and look up to God, from Whom we receive at every moment all that we have, then we see immediately that He, the Lord, is capable of giving still more and, being a most loving Father, would like to give us all that we need.[4]

Again and again Father Kolbe pointed out that the greatest evil in the life of a human being was to rely on his own powers, to see himself as the center of things, to be focused entirely on himself, in keeping with the original temptation of the serpent: You will become like God. This spiritual pride, which glorifies one's own ego at the expense of God's majesty, is the real sickness of our time, which can be healed only through true humility. Humility gives God all the glory, it teaches the human person to regard himself only as an instrument in the service of God.

> Mary's Knight is a broom in her immaculate hands. The Mother of God, instead of using a suitable brush to paint the pictures which are her works, used a simple broom.[5]

---

[4] RN 4 (1925), p. 226.

[5] Letter to Fr. Justin Nazima, Nagasaki, February 21, 1935.

If we try to defend God's honor by our own power, then we will only do harm to God's cause.

> All of us, without any exception, only squander God's graces and are in fact worthless servants.[6]

Furthermore he was always very worried that he might besmirch the honor of the Immaculata by his own unworthiness, and therefore he asked again and again for prayers for his own conversion.

Knowledge about one's own inability, however, does not in any way paralyze the Knight in his zeal; rather, he will try to forget himself entirely and to rely only on God's grace and the help of the Immaculata.

Then she will do good through him, despite his wretchedness, weakness, stupidity and unworthiness.[7]

Anyone who in this way completely and utterly keeps the glory of God and of the Immaculata in view will be beset by no fear of men. The world's opinion no longer matters. People called St. Maximilian a madman, an incompetent, stupid and naïve, and often he was ridiculed by his confreres on account of his crazy ideas. Especially in the early days of the mission in Japan he was burdened by calumnies and suspicions on the part of the hierarchy. Although he took it all very much to heart, his sights were always set on the higher regions: after all, he was not there for his own sake, but for the glory of God and for the honor of the Immaculata.

---

[6] Letter to his brother, Alphonsus Kolbe, Nagasaki, November 30, 1930.

[7] Letter to his confreres in Japan, Shanghai, April 9, 1933.

CHAPTER TWO

Divine Providence

IF SUPERNATURAL FAITH is the foundation of human life, if God really holds a central place, then man must no longer think of the future in merely human terms, or plan and carry out his work in a merely natural way. Human calculations necessarily fall short. From a human perspective everything is doomed in advance to fail, because everything is lacking, because "the children of this world are wiser in their own generation than the children of light", because the Enemy has many more resources at his disposal.

Christian work, however, does not rely on this "merely human" element, but rather on the all-powerful working of Divine Providence, in which we trust unconditionally. Indeed, unshakeable faith in Providence is precisely the test of whether someone really takes God seriously, of whether he understands that he is an instrument in the hands of the Divine Master.

> Often it seems to us that God does not govern this world energetically enough. Our limited, narrow mind thinks this way, whereas eternal wisdom deems otherwise. God's ways are unfathomable but in every case all-wise…. Let us not try

> to correct God's wisdom or to guide the Holy Ghost. On the contrary, let us allow Him to lead us. Let us imagine that we are a paintbrush in the hand of an infinitely accomplished painter. What does the brush have to do in order for the most beautiful picture to appear? It must allow itself to be guided absolutely. The paintbrush might be able to make some claim with regard to a limited, worldly painter, but when the Eternal Wisdom, God Himself, uses us as His instrument, then we will work best and produce a perfect result if we allow ourselves to be absolutely and completely guided by Him in everything.[1]

This, however, demands a highly supernatural outlook, a completely different way of thinking from that of the world, one that is "a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks". It is the secret of the strength and the victory of the Knight of the Immaculata over the superior strength of his enemies. For most of his life Maximilian Kolbe was seriously ill; judged by human standards, his work was doomed in advance to fail. So at least thought many of his confreres at the beginning. Even though several times the doctors gave him only a few weeks more to live on this earth, he nevertheless did not worry about his work. On his sickbed in the sanatorium he wrote the remarkable words:

> We are only instruments in the hand of the Immaculata, and so we may do only as much as she wishes![2]

---

[1] RN 11 (1932), p. 133.

[2] Letter to his brother, written in Zakopane, December 8, 1920.

> The Immaculata should work as it pleases her. For I myself, my sickness, everything is her property, completely at her disposal.[3]

From the first moment of his extraordinary apostolate in the year 1922 until his death, the Saint relied solely and exclusively upon Divine Providence. His trust in God and in the Immaculata knew no bounds. Without a cent he began construction on the City of the Immaculata. As soon as the first buildings of Niepokalanów were ready he asked to go to the missions, so that the Immaculata could be preached to the pagans in the Far East as well. The Bishop in Japan thought that he was a madman, since he arrived with empty hands and without knowing a single word in the difficult language. But the Saint commented on the matter as follows:

> The Immaculata herself arranges everything for the best. If she wants her Niepokalanów to exist and to grow in Japan, then neither malice of any kind nor our helplessness can frustrate this plan. But if she does not want it, then we must not want it either.[4]

The mission was founded and became one of the largest in all of East Asia. And once when difficulties threatened to overwhelm him, and his heart was beleaguered by doubt, discouragement and bitterness, he often told himself:

---

[3] Letter to his brother, Zakopane, February 1, 1927.

[4] Letter to Fr. Samuel Rosenbeiger, December 8, 1936.

> You blockhead, why are you worrying? After all, is it your printing press, your work? But if everything belongs to the Immaculata, then she herself will take care of everything in the best possible way. Just allow yourself to be guided by her. And immediately I regained peace of mind and my heart was calmed.[5]

Of course that does not mean that you should fold your hands in your lap; on the contrary, someone who trusts God entirely throws himself into the battle and tries to follow precisely the way that God wills for him. And he knows that this way involves the utmost effort, the highest degree of activity: burning oneself up for this great cause like a candle!

This trust in Divine Providence, an essential characteristic of the Knight of the Immaculata, is closely connected with the spirit of poverty. One could say that Fr. Maximilian trusted God so much because he never owned anything.

> In general, worldly men are averse to poverty. Everyone wants to possess, wants to own things. And even if he had half of the world, it would be too little for him, he would want to have the whole world. While busying themselves accumulating riches, men forget their real purpose. Jesus came into the world to teach mankind that greatness, divinization are attained, not through wealth, but through poverty. The Divine Savior could have come as the son of a wealthy emperor, in a golden palace, but He didn't. He came into the

[5] Letter to his brother, Zakopane, November 19, 1926.

> world in a subjugated land, in a poor working-class family, although they were descended from royalty. He lived by the work of His hands, a truly poor life, the life of a laborer. During His whole life He owned nothing. To His apostles He said: "The foxes have their lairs, the birds — their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." He died naked, bereft of His clothing. He did not even possess a grave of His own. So He pointed out a way quite different from the one that men follow. And the One Who shows us this way is the God-man, and His way is infallible…. Here in Niepokalanów we are fortunate, too, for we really have nothing. We accept donations in order to spread devotion to the Immaculata; for ourselves we want nothing. We have no capital, debts we always have…. And yet, we have never been hungry; the Immaculata cares for us…. The world says: Blessed are the rich! Jesus says: Blessed are the poor![6]

This poverty acts like a magnet. The loving God cannot help giving His blessing to someone who trusts so boundless in Him. After all, He Himself said: "Consider the lilies of the field…. The Father in heaven cares for them. Only one thing is needed: Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these other things shall be added to you." The Knight of the Immaculata wants to be deliberately poor; for himself he wants only what is necessary for survival, but for the great purpose he wants everything. He imitates the inhabitant of the City of the Immaculata, of whom the founder sketched the following picture:

---

[6] Conference given on August 9, 1937.

> A mended habit, shoes with holes in them, a bundle of newspapers under his arm. He boards the latest airplane so as to hurry to that place where there are said to be souls to save…. We can live in barracks and wear mended clothing; our food should be simple, but our printing presses, which serve to spread abroad the honor and glory of God, must be the best and the very latest models.[7]

In a word: to promote devotion to the Immaculata "at one's own expense", as it says in the prayer of consecration. We have to allow this great goal to cost us something, *i.e.* to give up as much as possible, so as win all souls for the Immaculata as quickly as possible.

All of the means that are available to the Knight must remain means and must never take the place of the end — after all, they are supposed to help him to reach that end. Therefore man must not delight in the means, but must apply them unswervingly, in order to accomplish his purpose just as unswervingly. The goal is God and the souls that one intends to convert through manifold works: and if the means are lacking, God knows about it and will provide them. This simple logic necessarily causes trust in God to increase all the more, the fewer merely human opportunities are available. The Saint himself observed:

> The enemies have overflowing treasuries; they are the greatest financial powers on earth. Who can compete with them? God alone! Who can pay for the gigantic costs of the

[7] Investigation for the cause of beatification, Warsaw, folio 92.

> battle to win the whole world for the Immaculata? Only the bottomless cash-box of Divine Providence![8]

In today's world, however, when the Knight is deprived of almost all human opportunities, this fundamental law carries even greater weight: the mass media, public opinion, politics and business, literature and culture, even the official institutions of the Church are in the hands of the enemy. The loyal Knight of the Immaculata no longer has anything upon which he could lay down his head. He lives in a hostile atmosphere, bereft of any and all human support. And so only two possibilities remain for him: either to despair, or to develop the utmost trust in God.

This trust is nourished by yet another source. God leads everything by His Providence to its goal. But the goal is eternal happiness. The Knight knows about this promise that God has made and that God is true to His word. Life here on earth accordingly consists of allowing oneself to be led by God's sure hand, so as to get to heaven as soon as possible. Many Knights passed away before the Saint: the founding members of the M.I., his own brother, the first brothers in the City of the Immaculata, who had literally worked themselves to death in the service of the Immaculata. With a holy jealousy he remarked upon the sudden departure of his Brother Alphonsus, "The lucky man, he has already won!"

This hope in the eternal reward for all these pains makes us see death, too, in a new light:

---

[8] Letter to the Provincial, Nagasaki, December 9, 1930.

> What can possibly happen to us? At the very most they can take our lives. And then they do us the greatest possible service, for only then will we be able to work fully to win the whole world for the Immaculata. Then we will no longer have to think about building, books, machines or learning.[9]

He often used to say, "heaven is coming closer"; again and again he meditated on the mystery of eternal happiness.

> What will it be like in heaven? There we will find only goodness, boundless beauty, God and happiness without end. Let us take the most beautiful and the best things around us in order to imagine that heavenly beauty. But all this is only a distant, distant likeness, that is infinitely different from the original…. Soon enough we will experience it for ourselves, soon enough. In a hundred years surely not one of us will still be walking on this earth.[10]

He wanted his Knights to long for heaven with all their hearts, and to reflect often on the fact that it will come about "soon enough, very soon". Therefore it is worthwhile making that sacrifice, enduring the toils and struggles, renouncing the world and its wealth and wholeheartedly enlisting in the service of the Immaculata.

---

[9] Letter to Niepokalanów, written in Mugenzai no Sono, November 3, 1931.

[10] RN 3 (1924), p. 146.

CHAPTER THREE

The Source of Life for the M.I. — the Holy Eucharist

ONE SHOULD NOT SUPPOSE that St. Maximilian was lacking in supernatural, theological balance, even though he is often accused of going too far in his devotion to the Immaculata and of seeing nothing besides her.

The opposite is the case: the Knight's love for Mary is precisely what brings him closest to the Eucharistic Savior.

I HAVE GIVEN YOU AN EXAMPLE…

Maximilian Kolbe was ordained a priest on April 28, 1918.[1] Deeply impressed by the dignity of his priestly state, he took refuge in the Immaculata. She initiated him into the hidden mystery of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which he now celebrated devoutly day after day, and of the Most Holy Eucharist. During his years as a student in Rome his Eucharistic devotion was remarkable:

[1] On April 28 the Church celebrates the feast of St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, another great Marian Saint, whose work was an important influence on the founder of the M.I.

> His love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist touched the innermost depths of his heart. He had signed up for Perpetual Adoration at the convent of the Franciscan nuns outside the *Porta Pia*. He visited the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar hourly, that is, before and after each hour of instruction and recreation. In the evening he usually was the last to leave the chapel. His face often shone and outwardly manifested something of his inner zeal.[2]

A religious sister, who later was one of the most magnanimous "Knights of the Immaculata", became acquainted with him during his stay in the sanatorium in Zakopane in the following way:

> I came into the chapel of the sisters who were caring for Fr. Maximilian. Mass had already begun and I was rather distracted. But soon I was impressed by the way in which the priest, whom I did not know, was celebrating Holy Mass: it compelled me, so to speak, to pray. I said to myself: That must be a holy priest…. After Mass Fr. Maximilian made a long thanksgiving with great recollection. While he said Mass, he was thoroughly immersed in the holiness of the action that he was carrying out, and this had a great influence on me.[3]

---

[2] Testimony of Fr. Josef Pal, O.F.M. Conv., in the Padua investigation process, cited in: A. Ricciardi, Maximilien Kolbe, prętre et martyr, Mediaspaul, Paris, 1987, p. 51.

[3] Testimony of Sr. Felicitas Sulatycka in the Warsaw investigation process, cited in: A. Ricciardi, op. cit., pp. 106–107.

During his numerous and often long journeys by boat or by train, it pained him very much, not to be able to visit the Most Blessed Sacrament. The most difficult sacrifice for him during his illnesses was not being able to celebrate Holy Mass. During a voyage, whenever the boat put in at a harbor and was lying at anchor for just a few hours, Fr. Maximilian looked for a Catholic church, so as to adore the Savior there in the tabernacle. Often these visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament lasted several hours.

> The world has no idea how fortunate the souls in the cloister are. People do not know how much happiness one Holy Communion signifies. If the angels could envy us, then they would surely envy us on account of Holy Communion.[4]

During a stay in Nieszawa for medical treatment, he often walked by a Protestant church. He wrote to his brother[5] about how earnestly he was praying for the minister's conversion and fervently longed to see the church become a house of Catholic worship, in which the Eucharistic Savior would be adored day and night:

> When people observed him as he was adoring the Blessed Sacrament, they could not take their eyes off him, his face was so fascinating. At adoration he usually knelt before the steps to the altar. I observed Fr. Maximilian on many occasions, while he was celebrating Mass: he seemed to shine

---

[4] "Echo Niepokalanej", issue dated April 16, 1939, p. 3.

[5] Letter to Alphonsus Kolbe, dated June 17, 1921.

> with a light that is not of this earth. He was full of gentleness, devotion and recollection.[6]

The only dignity that he boasted of and never concealed was the fact that he was a Catholic priest. The last days of his life in the concentration camp were the high point of his priesthood. Even though he was no longer allowed to celebrate Mass, he was a "shepherd of souls" in everything that he did. The eyewitnesses cannot help praising again and again his apostolic zeal, his spirit of faith, his sacrifices and the joy with which he made those sacrifices. The source of this joy and dedication, as he himself said, was

> "the Immaculata and the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament", and he shared this joy of his with everyone around him. He lived completely in God, every day. He drew us all closer to God, he wanted to make our life in the camp easier. He was like a magnet that drew us to God and to the Mother of God. He often spoke to us of the Divine Mercy. He wanted to convert the whole camp…. He prayed unceasingly for sinners, for his enemies. When he could, he gave his ration of food away to other men who were hungry and took on the most difficult tasks in place of others.[7]

The high point of his life is well known.

---

[6] Testimony of Fr. Lukasz Kuszba, O.F.M. Conv. in the Warsaw investigation, quoted in A. Ricciardi, op. cit., p. 243.

[7] Eyewitness statements in Auschwitz, quoted in A. Ricciardi, op. cit., pp. 333–337.

After a prisoner escaped, ten men were sentenced to death in the starvation bunker in his stead. One of them began to la-ment, "*Ach*, my wife and my seven children, whom I am leaving behind as orphans!" Then something unheard-of happened: a prisoner stepped out of formation and went up to the camp commandant. The latter shouted, "Halt! What does this Polish swine want?" Fr. Kolbe pointed toward the prisoner and said, "I would like to go to my death for that man who has been sentenced." The camp commandant was speechless with astonish-ment. Then he asked, "Who are you?" The reply came back: "I am a Catholic priest!"[8]

THE KNIGHT … OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

How often I dream of how the Savior is adored day and night in the monstrance in the City of the Immaculata. How many blessings the worshippers would obtain by their prayers upon every newly-printed copy of our magazine, upon every soul that joins the Militia somewhere in the world…[9]

During the monthly day of recollection in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on First Friday, everyone who lived in the house [of the religious community] adored the Savior for the entire day, with the special intention of "asking forgiveness for our sins and for the sins of the whole world". Fr. Maximilian attached great importance to adoration on New Year's Eve and on carnival days [before Lent], to make reparation for the horrible offenses against God that are

[8] See Fr. Władyslaw Kluz, O.C.D., Człowiek XX wieku, św. Maksymilian Kolbe, Niepokalanów 1992, p. 212.

[9] Letter from Mugenzai to Fr. Kornel Czupryk, dated September 8, 1932.

committed on those days. All the centers of the M.I. throughout the world zealously adhered to this custom.[10]

Reparation, atonement, penance in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament … all this demonstrates how well Maximilian Kolbe's work harmonized with the Fatima apparitions: the Communion of reparation, the angel's prayer, in which the Savior is adored "in all the tabernacles of the world", and the ejaculatory prayers of the young seers during the apparitions, when the Mother of God showed them the divine light ("Oh my God, I adore You in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar"). This correspondence be-comes still more evident if we consider the role of the Immaculata with relation to the Most Blessed Sacrament. In Fatima it is the Immaculate Heart of Mary that makes atonement in us and through us, that asks for forgiveness for the horrible insults by which the Savior is offended, that leads souls back to God, to His grace, to His eucharistic love.

> Anyone who belongs entirely to the Immaculata will explicitly entrust his adoration to her when he visits the Savior in the Most Blessed Sacrament, be it only through the invocation, "Mary", for he knows that in that way he will be most pleasing to the Lord Jesus. For then she will take a more active part in this visit than he, and he in her and through her. It is the same with being better prepared to receive Holy Communion: we should entrust our reception of the Sacred Host entirely to her, so that she may prepare our hearts; then we can be sure that we show Him the greatest possible love.[11]

---

[10] See Fr. Albert Wojtczak, O.F.M. Conv., Ojciec Maksymilian Maria Kolbe, Niepokalanów 1981, vol. 2, pp. 60–61.

[11] Pisma o. Maksymiliana Kolbe [Writings of Fr. M.K.], vol. III, p. 272.

Similarly Fr. Kolbe makes clear his desire

> to see a statue of the Immaculata on the high altar in church, with the monstrance over it, before which the friars are to take turns in adoration. When someone comes into the church, the atmosphere should compel him, as it were, to fall to his knees and adore the Savior, and contemplate the face of the Immaculata. After all, that is the reason for having a church: to save as many souls as possible, to sanctify them and to lead them to the Savior through the Immaculata.[12]

St. Maximilian exhorts every Knight:

> Love the Immaculata with your whole heart, turn to her often with ejaculatory prayers, and she will teach you to respond to the Savior's love, which He demonstrates to you on the cross and in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, with boundless love.[13]

He wants to see every Knight filled with a great love for our Eucharistic Savior:

> In order to show me close up how ardently Thou lovest me, Thou comest from the purest delights of heaven down to this dirty, miserable earth, spend Thy life in poverty, adversities and sufferings — finally to hang, despised, ridiculed

---

[12] Letter from Mugenzai to Fr. Koziura dated May 17, 1934.

[13] Pisma o. Maksymiliana Kolbe, vol. IV, p. 63.

and overwhelmed with pain, between two thieves on the shameful gibbet. By sacrificing Thyself in this horrible way, Thou hast redeemed me, O God of love! Who could have imagined it? …

But that was not enough. Thou saw that, from the time when Thou pourest out these proofs of Thy immense love, nineteen centuries would pass before I appeared on this earth. Thy heart could not tolerate the thought that I should have to nourish myself solely on memories of Thy great love. Thou remained here on this small earth in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar and Thou come and unite Thyself with me — truly, under the form of food … and Thy Blood flows in my veins, Thy soul, O incarnate God, permeates my soul, strengthens and nourishes it. What a miracle! Who could ever have imagined such a thing? What more could Thou hast given me, O God, than Thyself to be my own possession?[14]

[14] RN 8 (1929), p. 327.

CHAPTER FOUR

Per Mariam ad Jesum: To Jesus through Mary

THE SUPERIORITY of the powers of darkness on the one hand, the weakness and lethargy of Catholics, on the other, and the subsequent dangers to the continued existence of the Church and the salvation of souls — this is St. Maximilian's disturbing analysis of the present state of affairs in the world. Today the strength of the former has become a dictatorship ruling over all departments of human life, while the latter have shrunk to a small number which itself is extremely susceptible and unreliable in battle. It won't take much more for "the gates of hell to prevail against the Church". To whom, then, should we turn, in order to prevent the worst possible outcome, so as not to be completely overrun by the enemy? Words like Knighthood, mission, battle, conversion, "To renew all things in Christ," etc., are very edifying. There are times when all efforts seem to be in vain. Not only are there no victories to record, but the Knights themselves are often so weak that they occasionally or even quite frequently find themselves in the Enemy's camp and must accuse themselves of being deserters, because instead of following Christ's plan, they adopt the

Enemy's tactics and sink down into "the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jn 2:16). Are not times like these cause for despair?

God promised only one person that she would crush the head of Satan; to only one woman has been granted the power to vanquish all heresies throughout the world; only one person leads, accordingly, to a certain victory: the Blessed Virgin Mary. To appreciate her, to love her, to belong entirely to her and to do her will exclusively is the essence of the M.I., the secret of its success and hence also its outstanding importance in our apocalyptic age. To Jesus through Mary! This is one of the most important axioms of the Christian life. It makes us understand how very necessary Mary is for our salvation. While still just a student in Rome, Maximilian Kolbe was convinced of her power. In January 1918 he noted in his meditations: "I can do all things in Him, Who strengthens me — through the hands of the Immaculata!" He deletes nothing from the great program of St. Pius X; he only adds the necessary condition which alone is capable of putting this program into action: *"Omnia instaurare in Christo per Immaculatam"* ["To renew all things in Christ, through the Immaculata"].[1]

In order to save us, God has given us everything: divine Truth, divine life, His own Son, even unto death on the cross, the Sacraments that flow from that, as well as countless graces.

> What else could you give me, O God, after giving me Thyself to be my own possession? Thy Heart, burning with love for me, suggested to Thee another gift: yes, one more! Now, Thou hast demanded that we become children, if we

[1] Notes on a meditation, dated November 17, 1919, BMK, p. 409.

> wish to enter into the kingdom of heaven. But Thou knowest that a child needs a mother: Thou Thyself established this law of love. Thy goodness and mercy have established a mother for us — the embodiment of Thy goodness and your infinite mercy: on the cross on Golgotha Thou commended us to her and her to us… and ordained, O loving God, that she should be the all-powerful intercessor and Mediatrix of all Thy graces. Thou refusest her nothing, just as she could never refuse anyone anything.[2]

How does it happen, though, that such an important role in our spiritual life should be assigned to her? Because God did not will it otherwise for Himself:

> When the time was fulfilled for Christ to come, the Triune God created for Himself alone the Immaculate Virgin, filled her with grace and dwelt in her ("The Lord is with Thee"). And this most holy Virgin thrilled His heart so much by her humility, that God the Father gave her His only-begotten Son as her son, God the Son came down into her virginal womb, and God the Holy Ghost formed in her the Most Sacred Body of the God-man. And the Word was made flesh as the fruit of God's love and the love of the Immaculata. So her firstborn became the God-man, and the only way that souls are reborn in Christ is through God's love for the Immaculata and in the Immaculata. And no word, no perfection or virtue becomes

[2] RN 8 (1929), p. 328.

flesh, becomes a reality in anyone, except through God's love for the Immaculata.[3]

"I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." But what example does the Savior give us?

> Then the Redeemer came to earth, the God-man, Jesus, and began His mission, His teaching about the way to heaven. And how did he begin? He made Himself dependent upon the Immaculata as a child is dependent on his mother, and for thirty years of His life on earth He honored His mother and served her directly in everything, and thus fulfilled God's will. From that moment on, no one who is unwilling to honor the Immaculata, according to His example, comes to resemble Jesus.[4]
>
> Jesus Christ, the God-man, true God, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, is her true child. She is His true mother. He keeps the Fourth Commandment, He honors His Mother. Just as a son never stops being his mother's son, so too Jesus will always be her Son, and she will be His mother for ever. He will honor her in eternity. And just as He honored her from all eternity and will honor her for all eternity, no one can approach Him, become like Him, save and sanctify his soul, unless he likewise honors her: be it an angel or a human being.[5]

---

[3] Fragment of an unfinished book about the Immaculata, January 1940, BMK, p. 600.

[4] "Informator Rycerstwa Niepokalanej" 4 (1938), p. 34.

[5] Fragment of an unfinished book…, op. cit., p. 601.

The deeper reason for this divine decree lies in the fact that, as a result of the Fall, the "banished children of Eve" are no longer capable of responding to God's love on their own. Only when they again have a mother who is so pure, powerful and holy to give birth to divine life in them, is there again any possibility of returning to God:

> Nothing finite can satisfy us. Only God can be our goal: to know, love and possess God, to be united with Him, trans--formed into Him, divinized, to become like the God-man. But since only God is infinite, will the limited creature therefore ever attain this eternal goal? Consider, too, that even "the just man sins seven times a day."
>
> So the Immaculata comes into the world, without the stain of the slightest sin, the masterpiece of God's handiwork, full of grace. The Triune God looks upon the lowliness, the humility of His handmaiden "and the Almighty does great things for her." God the Father gives her His Son to be her son… the Immaculata becomes the Mother of God. From now on the children of God are to be formed after the pattern of the Son of God, the infinite God-man, by duplicating the traits of the God-man, and souls will strive for holiness by following Christ. The more exactly someone reflects in himself the image of Christ, the closer he draws to the Godhead, the more he is divinized. Someone who does not want the Immaculate Mother as his mother, however, will not have Christ as his brother, either, nor will God the Father send His Son to him, nor will the Son come into his soul, nor will the Holy Ghost incorporate him by His graces into the Mystical Body of Christ, for all this happens in Mary

> Immaculate, in Her who is Full of Grace, and only in her. For no [other] creature is immaculate, nor full of grace and thus suited to have "the Lord with him". And just as the firstborn God-man was conceived in no other manner but through the explicit permission of the heavenly Virgin, so too it cannot be otherwise with other human beings, who must imitate her fundamental example in everything. In her womb the soul must be reborn according to the model of Jesus Christ. With the milk of her grace she must feed souls, embrace and raise them, just as she fed, caressed and raised Jesus. At her feet the soul must learn to know Jesus and to love Him. From her heart the soul must draw love for Him, with her heart the soul must love Him, and with her love it must be conformed to Him.[6]

In Fatima the Mother of God said on June 13, 1917: "My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that leads you to God." She is the quickest, surest and most exalted way to holiness.

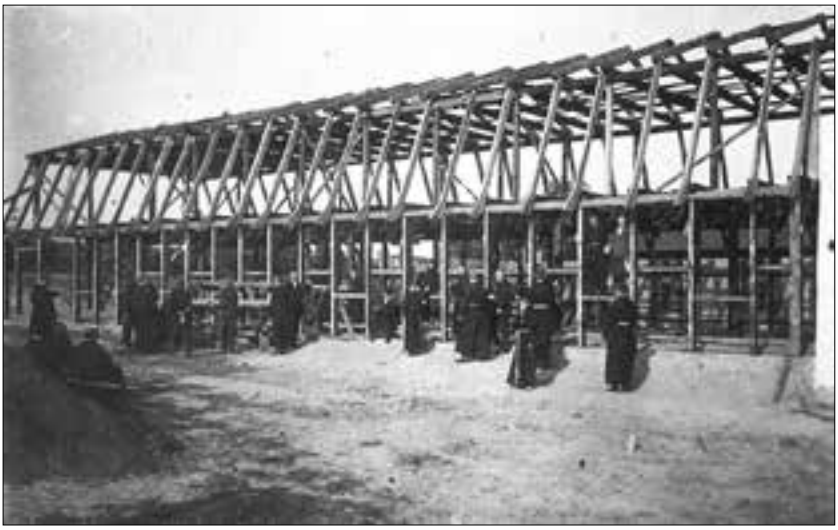
> For if only she comes into a soul, no matter how miserable and soiled with sins and vices it may be, then she does not permit that soul to be lost, but rather begs for it the grace of light for the understanding and the grace of strength for the will, so that the soul might return to its senses and arise from its sins. Through Mary Immaculate to Jesus — that is our motto, which Archbishop Sapieha expressed in his blessing upon the M.I.: "With all our heart we bless the members of

[6] Ibid., pp. 613–614.

> the Militia Immaculatæ; fighting under the banner of the Mother of God, may it help the Church bring the entire world to the feet of Jesus.[7]

To come to know her, to devote oneself to her, to live in her, to work through her: that is the secret of sure victory: "At the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph!"

[7] RN 4 (1925), pp. 130–132.



On 21 November 1927, the Franciscans moved from Grodno to Teresin and on 8 December, the friary was consecrated and was given the name of Niepokalanów, the City of the Immaculate

Above: the construction of the first chapel

Below: the first chapel after construction and blessing

Consecration of the statue of Immaculata (July 6, 1927) on the parcel of land donated by Count Drucki-Lubecki, upon which Niepokalanów, the City of the Immaculata, was to be built

General view of the City of the Immaculata

PART THREE

THE IMMACULATA:
THE MOULD
AND MODEL OF THE M.I.

IN HIS BOOK about total consecration to Mary, St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort teaches:

> Saints are moulded in Mary. There is a vast difference between carving a statue by blows of hammer and chisel and making a statue by using a mould. Sculptors and statue--makers work hard and need plenty of time to make statues by the first method. But the second method does not involve much work and takes very little time. St. Augustine speaking boldly of our Blessed Lady says, "You are worthy to be called the mould of God." … Anyone who is cast into this divine mould is quickly shaped and moulded into Jesus and Jesus into him.[1]

This truth provides the essential foundation upon which the Militia Immaculatæ is built.

> We hear in philosophy that the essence of a thing is composed of matter and form and consists of the union of the two. In the M.I., as in any society, the members are the material. … The form, on the other hand, which joins the members together in order to accomplish the purpose, and which constitutes the essence of that society, is in the case of

1 St. Louis de Montfort, True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, paragraph 219.

> the M.I. total consecration to the Immaculate Mother of God, so that she may sanctify us and through us may unite others with God in the most ardent love.[2]
>
> We should be formed according to the prototype, Jesus Christ. When someone fashions a sculpture out of stone, he must be careful, because the slightest wrong blow of the chisel can spoil the entire work. It is otherwise with a mould. Here there is no fear, provided that the mould be a good one. As the Saints say, the Mother of God is just such a perfect mould of divine perfection. Therefore we should allow ourselves to be guided by her, so that she may form Jesus in us. This is the sure and most perfect way.[3]

This means that our entire religious life, our prayers and sacrifices, our thoughts, words and deeds, all departments of human life (as individuals, in the family, in society) can reach their perfection only when they are cast into the mould of Mary, *i.e.* when they are accomplished in her, with her and through her.

What does this mean, concretely?

Mary thoroughly forms us; that is to say, she permeates and transforms the foundation of our life, the essential basis and underpinnings that support the whole spiritual building. Here the mystery of the Immaculate Conception shines forth in all its brilliance, the foundation not only of Mary's own greatness and sanctity, but also of our Christianity, our Knighthood (**Chapter 1**).

---

2 Conference, September 18, 1919.

3 Conference, March 28, 1937.

Building upon this essential foundation, the whole man is gradually formed, and the vital center, the focus, wellspring and seat of all his faculties of body and soul is the heart. Here the mystery of the Immaculate Heart of Mary appears, with its great mission: to be the mould and model of our hearts — in other words, the Mediatrix of all Graces (**Chapter 2**).

The head is the symbol of government, of striving to reach a goal, and of the great decisions which must be made in order to attain that goal. The Immaculata rises to this, the high point of our being, and takes over as Queen, the one sure way to the goal, to eternal victory (**Chapter 3**).

Yet our response is needed. Only at our request and in keeping with the decision of our will does the Immaculata come into our lives and begin the work of reshaping them. Only with this decision does someone begin to be a Knight of the Immaculata. That is the meaning of total consecration to Mary (**Chapter 4**).

CHAPTER ONE

The Mystery of the Immaculata

BEFORE ANYONE ENTERS into the wondrous world of the Mother of God, he must realize that at this juncture he is leaving behind the usual ways of human thinking and speaking, and above all that he is venturing into a new spiritual world, which is inexpressibly holy, pure, translucent and delicate. And since we are all too often burdened with filth and our thoughts are too closely bound up with the crude forms of the flesh and the earthly senses, we must "approach the throne of grace" with the greatest reverence (Introit of the Mass in Honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary). We must awaken to the subtleties of the spirit, marvel at this undeserved miracle of being allowed to have a glimpse of the divine world:

> When you get ready to read about the Immaculata, do not forget that you are then entering into contact with a pure living being who is without any stain whatsoever. Consider, too, that the words that you read are incapable of expressing who she is, for they are human words, drawn from human concepts, which present everything only in an earthly way, whereas the Immaculata is a being belonging entirely to God

> and therefore is to an infinite degree higher than everything around you. She herself will reveal herself to you through the sentences that you read and suggest thoughts, convictions and feelings to you, which you could not even have imagined on your own. Finally, be careful: The clearer your conscience is and the more often you cleanse it through the Sacrament of Penance, the more your concepts and notions of her will correspond to the reality.
>
> Recognize honestly, too, that alone, without her help, you are incapable of knowing anything about her, and consequently you cannot truly love her, and that she herself must enlighten you more and more, in order to draw your heart to herself in love. And so consider that if your spiritual reading is to bear any fruit at all, it will depend upon prayer to her.[1]

One might be surprised that Maximilian Kolbe almost always employs the same expression in speaking about the Mother of God, an expression that formerly was not even in general use. He calls her by the short and simple name: the Immaculata! The Immaculate Conception is in fact the center of his whole spiritual life. Again and again he speaks and writes about her; his whole mission is summed up in his longing for as many souls as possible to know her, to love her, to devote themselves to her and thus to be saved. In the final hours before his arrest, which ended in his heroic death in Auschwitz, he summarized his insights into the Immaculate Conception, as though divinely inspired. Perhaps no other spoken or written words of the saints approach the profundity of these reflections:

---

[1] Fragment of an unfinished book about the Immaculata, January 1940, BMK, p. 592.

Immaculate Conception! These words fell from the lips of the Immaculata herself. Hence, they must tell us in the most precise and essential manner who she really is.

Since human words in general are incapable of expressing divine realities, it follows that the meaning of these words ["Immaculate" and "Conception"] must be much deeper, incomparably more profound, more beautiful and sublime than usual: a meaning beyond that which human reason at its most penetrating could give them.

The words of St. Paul [quoting Isaiah 64:4] can be applied here fully: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man what things God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Nonetheless, we can and should reflect on the mystery of the Immaculata; we should read and speak and write about it to the extent that our understanding and our words are capable of doing so.

Who then art Thou, O Immaculate Conception?

Not God, because He has no conception [beginning]. Not an angel, who was created directly out of nothing. Not Adam, formed out of the dust of the earth, nor the Incarnate Word, who existed before all ages, and of whom we should use the word "conceived" rather than "conception". The children of Eve, however, did not exist before their conception, and so we might call them [created] "conceptions". But you, O Mary, are different from all other children of Eve, too. For they are conceptions stained by original sin, whereas you alone are the Immaculate Conception.

Everything which exists, outside of God Himself, bears upon and within itself some resemblance to its Creator, since

it is utterly and entirely from God and depends on Him in every way; there is nothing in any creature which does not have this resemblance, because everything is an effect of that First Cause. It is true that the words we use to speak of created things can express the divine perfections, but only imperfectly, by analogy and in a limited way. Nevertheless they are a more or less distant echo of the divine attributes, as well as definitions of various created realities. Since there are no exceptions to this rule, what we have just said is true also for the word "conception".

The Father begets the Son; the Ghost proceeds from Father and Son. These few words sum up the mystery of the life of the Most Holy Trinity and of all the perfections in creatures, since the latter are nothing but a manifold echo, a hymn of praise, a many hued depiction, of that primordial and most wondrous of all mysteries. And so let us use the words taken from the dictionary of creation, for we have no others. But we must never forget that they are very imperfect words.

Who is the Father? What is His essence? It consists in begetting, eternally: He begets the Son from the beginning, and forever.

Who is the Son? The Begotten One, forever, from all eternity He is begotten by the Father.

Who is the Holy Ghost? The flowering of the love of Father and Son. The fruit of created love is a created conception (of a new being). The fruit of Love itself, however, that prototype of created love, is pure Conception. The Holy Ghost is, therefore, the "uncreated, eternal Conception", the prototype of all conception of new life throughout the universe.

And so the Father begets; the Son is begotten; the Ghost is the "conception" [that springs from Their love]; that distinguishes these Persons from one another, whereas the same nature unites Them, namely their divine essence.

The Ghost is, then, the most-holy, infinitely holy, undefiled and Immaculate Conception.

Everywhere in the universe we find action and reaction. The reaction is equal to the action but opposite: departure and return; going away and coming back; division and reunion. This is nothing but an image of the Most Holy Trinity in the activity of creatures. Union means love, creative love. Divine activity, outside the Trinity itself, follows the same pattern. First, God creates the universe; that is something like a "separation". Creatures, by following the God-given natural law, reach their perfection and become like Him. Intelligent creatures love God consciously and in this love they unite themselves more and more closely with Him, and "return to Him". Now the creature that is completely filled with this love for God is the Immaculata, the one who is without the slightest stain of sin, who never deviated in the least from God's will. In an ineffable manner she is united to the Holy Ghost as His spouse, but "spouse" in an incomparably more perfect way than can be predicated of any other creature.

Now what does this union consist of? It is first of all an interior union of her essence with the essence of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost dwells in her, lives in her, from the first moment of her existence, always and for all eternity.

In what does this life of the Ghost in Mary consist? He Himself is uncreated Love in her: the Love of the Father and of

the Son, the Love by which God loves Himself, the very love of the Most Holy Trinity. He is fruitful Love, "Conception". Among the creatures made in God's image, the union brought about by [married] love is the most intimate union of all. Sacred Scripture says that [a man and a woman] become two in one flesh, and the Lord Jesus emphasizes: "Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh" (Mt 19:6). In an incomparably more intimate, more interior, more essential manner, the Holy Ghost lives in the soul of the Immaculata, in the depths of her very being, and makes her fruitful, from the very first moment of her conception, all during her life, and for all eternity.

This is the Eternal "Immaculate Conception" (which is the Holy Ghost) in the womb [or depths] of her soul — and her Immaculate Conception conceives the divine life in an immaculate manner. And the virginal womb of Mary's body is reserved for Him [the Holy Ghost] alone, and by Him she conceives in time (just as all material things occur in time) the divine-human life of the God-man.

The return to God, that is to say, the equal and opposite reaction [or response], follows the path found in the act of creation, but in the other direction. The path of creation goes from the Father through the Son and the Holy Ghost; but here [in the Incarnation] through the Ghost the Son becomes flesh in her womb, and through Him love returns to the Father.

And she (the Immaculata), enmeshed in the Love of the Most Blessed Trinity, becomes from the first moment of her existence and forever thereafter the "complement of the Most Holy Trinity".

In the Holy Ghost's union with Mary it is not only love of the two beings that unites them; we could say that the one love [of the Ghost] is all the love of the Blessed Trinity, while the other love [of Mary] is all the love of creation. In this union, therefore, heaven and earth are joined; all of heaven with all the earth, the totality of eternal love with the totality of created love, and that is the summit of love.

At Lourdes, the Immaculata no longer called herself "the Woman who is conceived immaculately", but rather, as St. Bernadette tells it: "The Lady was standing then on a wild rosebush, in the same attitude in which she is shown on the Miraculous Medal. When I asked the third time, her face took on a very serious expression full of deep humility. She folded her hands as though to pray, lifted them to her bosom, looked up to heaven, and slowly opened her hands, bent down towards me and said with a slightly trembling voice: *'Que soy er' Immaculada Councepciou'*: 'I am the Immaculate Conception.'"

If among [human] creatures the wife takes the name of her husband because she belongs to him, unites herself with him, becomes his equal and becomes, in union with him, the instrument through which new life is created, how much more true this is in the case of the Holy Ghost's name. Immaculate Conception is the name of the Woman in whom He lives in that Love which is fruitful for the whole supernatural order.[2]

---

[2] On the morning of February 17, 1941, Fr. Maximilian dictated this article to Brother Arnold. That same morning at 11:50 a.m. he was arrested by the Gestapo and taken to Pawiak Prison in Warsaw. From there he was transported to the concentration camp in Auschwitz on May 28, where he died on August 14 in the starvation bunker from an injection of poison.

The Immaculata, who is so intimately taken up into the life of the Most Holy Trinity and the redemptive work of Christ, becomes the beginning of the return of all creation to God. And precisely this is the real foundation of the spiritual life. Anyone who does not have this foundation is building his house upon sand, which cannot withstand the rainstorm and the winds (*cf.* Mt 7:24). St. Ignatius speaks in his *Spiritual Exercises* about this principle and foundation: it consists in the fundamental attitude of dependence upon God. Man has been created by God, exists only in God, and finds the purpose, the meaning of his life in his return to God. This is precisely the theme of the *Immaculata Conceptio*: She is entirely of God; of all creatures she lives in the most intimate union with the Most Holy Trinity in an immaculate way from the first moment of her existence. She is also the first and most perfect creature, who returns to God completely with the greatest possible degree of love. Furthermore, she is the model and the channel for all creatures in their return to God. In her all of creation goes back home to Him.

Let us venture to shed some light on this great mystery. The Church Fathers often compare Mary to a high mountain, Mount Zion, upon which God comes down. God created the universe, the invisible world of the angels and the visible cosmos; let us compare all creatures with a heap of pebbles. God also created Mary in her purity and chose her above all women to be the Mother of God; she is the mountain, at the foot of which the pebbles lie. God created this mountain to be completely pure, immaculate, and He came down upon the peak of this mountain, and in the womb of this mountain God becomes man. At the foot of the mountain, however, is the lost world of countless sinners, soiled grains of sand. The God-man wants to save us, but our faces are turned away from him. He wants to join us in our dereliction

and cleanse us in His Blood, but our doors are barred. Given this situation, how is the creature supposed to return to God and build his life on the true foundation? But look, the holy mountain bends down to us, poor miserable souls, and lifts us up as a mother picks up her child who has fallen. Tenderly she turns our faces, which we had so stubbornly turned away, so that our eyes look upon him and his eyes upon us. Quietly and gently she moves aside the rubbish with which we had barred the doors to our souls and opens them. She is permitted to do this, because God wills it so, because God has created her that way. The Immaculate Conception is the atmosphere in which man can breathe again after being suffocated by the polluted air of the world. And now the God-man can go to work, whereas we are allowed — always and exclusively in her — to rebuild our lives on the foundation of truth. In truth we are now united with her like the child with its mother, like the pebble with the great mountain — creatures of God, in God and for God.

And this miracle occurs not only at the beginning of our Christian life. Her Immaculate Conception is always the beginning of our "spotlessness".

> In Lourdes the Immaculate Virgin replied to St. Bernadette: "I am the Immaculate Conception." With these words she clearly stated the fact that she is not only immaculately conceived, but is the Immaculate Conception. Similarly a white thing is something different from being-white itself; a perfect thing is something different from perfection itself. When God spoke about himself, He said to Moses, "I am who I am," that is: it belongs to my essence that I always have my being in and of myself, without beginning. In contrast, the

> Immaculate Virgin has her beginning in God; she is a creature, is a conception. And yet she is the Immaculate Conception.[3]

In other words, the Mother of God is not only immaculate herself, but she also imparts her "spotlessness" to us. To the extent that she permeates our existence and we belong to her, she transforms us, so that we come to resemble her more and more. In this regard St. Louis--Marie de Montfort uses the image of an apple:

> It is as if a poor peasant, wishing to win the friendship and favour of the king, were to go to the queen and give her an apple — his only possession — for her to offer it to the king. The queen, accepting the peasant's humble gift, puts it on a beautiful golden dish and presents it to the king on behalf of the peasant. The apple in itself would not be a gift worthy of a king, but presented by the queen in person on a dish of gold, it becomes fit for any king.[4]

One might take this comparison still further and imagine that the peasant brought a rotten apple as his gift. The Immaculata now places this apple on the golden dish along with her own splendid fruits. And since she has the grace of being the Immaculate Conception, she imparts her spotlessness to the rotten fruit, and behold, through coming into contact with her, transformed by her, the apple becomes fresh, pure and sound.

---

[3] "Miles Immaculatæ" 1 (1938), pp. 8–9.

[4] St. Louis de Montfort, True Devotion…, paragraph 147.

All of our pitiful acts of love ultimately are directed to the Eternal Father as their final goal, but in the Immaculata they receive an immaculate purity, and in the Son an infinite value, worthy of the Most-Holy Majesty of the Father! When the soul ponders this, how much more readily will it be kindled with love for Jesus and Mary. The soul, then, commends its acts of love to the Immaculata, but not in the way that one hands over an object to an ordinary middleman, but rather as her property, as her unconditional possession. Thus the Immaculata gives these acts to Jesus as her own, immaculate, without stain, and He gives them to the Father. And so the soul becomes more and more united with the Immaculata, just as the Immaculata is completely united with Jesus, and Jesus is one with the Father.[5]

[5] Fragment of an unfinished book about the Immaculata, January 1940, BMK, p. 592.

St. Maximilian Kolbe and his brother, Father Alfons Kolbe

Solemn profession in the City of the Immaculata

The chapel in Niepokalanów. In 1939, it housed 762 inhabitants: 13 priests, 18 novices, 527 brothers, 122 boys in the junior seminary and 82 candidates for the priesthood

CHAPTER TWO

Mediatrix of all Graces

THE TRUTH about Mary's universal mediation of grace follows from the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. If creation's return to God comes about only through the Immaculata, if Christ comes to us in no other way than through Mary and we can return to him by no other way than in her, then this means that we receive all graces only through her immaculate hands.

> Just as Jesus, as a proof of His immense love for us, became the God-man, so too the Third Person [of the Holy Trinity], the "God-love" wanted to indicate by an outward sign His mediation between the Father and the Son. This sign is the Heart of the Immaculate Virgin, which follows clearly from the statements made by the Saints, especially those who regard Mary as the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. Thus St. Louis-Marie de Montfort reasons, in conformity with the Church Fathers: "God the Holy Ghost, who does not produce any divine person, became fruitful through Mary whom He espoused. It was with her, in her and of her that He produced His masterpiece, God-made-man, and that He produces

every day until the end of the world the members of the body of this adorable Head. … This does not mean that the Blessed Virgin confers on the Holy Ghost a fruitfulness which He does not already possess. Being God, He has the ability to produce just like the Father and the Son, although He does not use this power and so does not produce another divine person. But it does mean that the Holy Ghost chose to make use of our Blessed Lady, although He had no absolute need of her, in order to become actively fruitful in producing Jesus Christ and His members in her and by her."[1]

After Christ's death, too, the Holy Ghost accomplishes everything in us through Mary…. Accordingly, as the incarnate Second Person of the Trinity reveals Himself under the title of "Seed of the Woman", so the Holy Ghost also reveals His participation in the external work of redemption through the Immaculate Virgin, more intimately united with her than we could ever comprehend…. Mary, as the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, and thus exalted above all created perfection, fulfills completely and utterly the will of the Holy Ghost who dwells within her from the first moment of her conception.

We can conclude from all this that Mary, as the Mother of Jesus the Redeemer, became the Co-Redemptrix of the human race, and that as the Spouse of the Holy Ghost she participates in the distribution of all graces. Thus we can say with the theologians: "As the first Eve through her free action contributed to our ruin and also truly brought it about, so

---

[1] The first internal quotation is from St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, The first internal quotation is from St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, *True Devotion…,* paragraphs 20–21.

does Mary cooperate truly by her free action in the work of redemption."[2]

Especially in recent times we comprehend the fact that the Immaculata, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, is our Mediatrix. Thus the Immaculate Virgin appeared to Sister Catherine Labouré in 1830. From statements made by the seer we recognize that the purpose of Mary's apparitions was to demonstrate her Immaculate Conception and her marvelous power of intercession with God: "The Most Blessed Virgin turned her glance toward me and at the same time I heard a voice say: 'This globe represents all of humanity and each individual person. This is the symbol of the graces that I pour out on all those who call upon me.' Afterward an oval frame formed around the Blessed Virgin, on which was written in golden letters: 'O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee.' At that moment I heard a voice say: 'Have a medal stamped according to this image. All who wear it will receive great graces.'"

In Lourdes the Immaculate Virgin appeared as Mediatrix: she calls the sick, the lame and the infirm, in order to sanctify them and to show our dependence upon her in our natural life as well. She gently draws to herself those whose souls are sick, namely, unbelievers and hardened sinners, pours supernatural life into their hearts in order to convince them of her power to impart supernatural life to us. … St. Bernard summarizes as follows what the Immaculata has proved by

---

[2] The second internal quotation is from J. Bittremieux, *De meditatione universali Beatæ Virginis Mariæ*.

her deeds: "Thus it is the will of Him, who intended that we should have everything through Mary."[3]

This consoling truth is the heart of the M.I. and the central focus of the life of a Knight of the Immaculata.

> The movement of the Militia Immaculatæ is founded upon this truth, namely that Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces. If she were not, then our work and our striving would be in vain.[4]
>
> Every single grace for souls comes from the hands of the Mediatrix of all graces, and there is no moment in which she is not sending fresh graces to every individual soul: graces that illuminate the mind, strengthen the will, encourage good deeds; ordinary and extraordinary graces; graces that pertain to earthly life and graces that sanctify the soul. Only at the last judgment and in heaven will we learn how much our loving heavenly Mother cares for each soul, for each of her children, in order to transform them according to Jesus, the model.[5]
>
> As Christ became for her the source of graces, so she wishes to be for us the distributor of graces. Every grace is produced by the life of the Holy Trinity: the Father eternally begets the Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from them. From this flows every perfection in all created order. Every

[3] The passage as a whole is from "Miles Immaculatæ" 1 (1938), pp. 25–28.

[4] Conference in Niepokalanów dated June 6, 1933.

[5] Fragment of an unfinished book about the Immaculata, January 1940, BMK, p. 596.

grace comes from the Father, who eternally begets the Son and brings forth the grace with regard to the Son. The Holy Ghost, who eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, forms this grace in the Immaculata and through her forms souls according to the likeness of the firstborn God-man.[6]

From then on [*i.e.* after the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in Mary's womb], the Holy Ghost does not confer any grace, the Father does not give supernatural life to any soul by the Son and the Holy Ghost, unless these gifts are bestowed through the Mediatrix of all graces, the Immaculata, who cooperates in the giving, and distributes them as she wills. She obtains from God all the treasures of grace, as belonging to her, and she distributes them to whomsoever she wills, as she wills. The fruit of the love of God and of the Immaculata is Jesus, the Son of God and Son of man, the Mediator between God and man. Just as the Son from all eternity is, so to speak, the mediator between the Father and the Holy Ghost, so too Jesus, the incarnate Son, became the direct Mediator between the Father and the Holy Ghost who dwells in the Immaculata and is, so to speak, incarnate in her, and thus the Mediator between the Father and the Immaculata, who is completely filled with the Holy Ghost, the Representative and spiritual Mother of all humanity. And it is by her and not otherwise that the love of creatures can rise to Jesus, and by Him go back to the Father.[7]

---

[6] *Ibid.,* p. 615.

[7] *Ibid.,* p. 591.

The Heart of the Immaculata becomes the mould of our hearts: from her Heart flows an uninterrupted stream of graces, which permeates our thoughts, words and deeds, the innermost recesses of our soul, the most profound insights, the most important decisions, as well as the usual everyday pulse of our life. To her we owe our existence, our baptism, our conversion, our vocation, and all, absolutely all graces, whether known to us or unknown. Her Heart, the treasury of these graces, is really at the center of our manifold life.

> Every conversion, every degree of sanctification is a product of grace. Even cooperation is grace. Without God's grace we can do nothing. The Mediatrix of all graces is the Immaculata. The closer a person draws to her, the more graces he receives from her.[8]

We see her before us, with us, in us, as she invisibly leads us through the confusion of our time, as she so often keeps us from falling and even more often helps us up again after a fall, as she nourishes us with the Blood of her Son and enlightens, warms, strengthens and encourages us. And if we examine them carefully, then all our good deeds, all our virtues, all perfections in us are more the fruit of her graces and the presence of her Immaculate Heart than the result of our own willing and doing.

Isn't this the essential message of Fatima, where God gives the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the world as its last great hope of salvation, the sure and swift way to sanctity?[9]

---

[8] Conference dated August 28, 1933.

[9] See Part Six, Chapter 2.

Hence the truth of Mary's mediation of graces is the theological basis for the statement that the Knight can become an instrument of the Immaculata to such a degree that she prays in him (even more than he prays in her), and that in him she makes sacrifices, speaks, vanquishes all heresies, converts and sanctifies souls and finally crushes the head of the serpent.

What, then, does our path of life on earth consist of? What are we to do in this valley of tears? What is the truly meaningful, deep-seated purpose of our existence? The Heart of the Immaculata gives a clear answer to this question as well: "Pray and make sacrifices, for so many souls are lost because there is no one who prays and makes sacrifices for them," she said on August 19, 1917 in Fatima. All of our pursuits, our actions, the various circumstances, where, when and how something happens, is still only the surface of our life, the external, visible side. The inner reality, though, the meaning of it all, consists in pleasing God, serving the Truth, following the pathway to heaven and leading others there. In other words: The Mediatrix of all graces wants us to continue, as it were, this mediation in souls, so that we might be channels, instruments, in order to pour out the graces of conversion and sanctification upon as many souls as possible.

> If Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces, then we can become channels of grace to the extent that we draw close to her. Then, however, we become mediators of the graces that pour into us from the Father through the Son (who won them) and the Immaculata (who is their custodian), and through us into the souls of others.[10]

[10] Letter to seminarians dated February 8, 1934.

CHAPTER THREE

The Queenship of the Immaculata

THE WORKING OF THE IMMACULATA in us attains its fullness and perfection only through her queenly dominion.

> Mary has received from God a far-reaching dominion over the souls of the elect. Otherwise she could not make her dwelling place in them as God the Father has ordered her to do, and she could not conceive them, nourish them, and bring them forth to eternal life as their mother.... None of these things could she do unless she had received from the Almighty rights and authority over their souls.... Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth by grace as Jesus is king by nature and by conquest.[1]

Fr. Kolbe explicitly points out that the Queenship of Mary is not in "competition" with the Kingship of Christ:

[1] St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, *True Devotion...*, paragraphs 37–38.

> God is our Most-High Lawgiver, and our salvation depends upon fulfilling His will. The Immaculata is the Mother of God, but in comparison with God's perfection, she is infinitesimal, merely the work of His will.[2]

That is true. But at the same time she is His most perfect and most holy work, as St. Bonaventure says: "God can create a greater and more perfect world, but He cannot raise any creature to a higher dignity than Mary." The Immaculata is the uppermost limit between creatures and God. She is a true image of God's perfection and sanctity.

> The degree of perfection is dependent upon the union of our will with the will of God. The more perfection, the more union. However, since the Blessed Mother has surpassed all angels and saints in her perfection, her will is most closely united and conformed to God's will. She lives and works only in God and through God. Therefore, when we do the will of the Immaculata, we always fulfill thereby the will of God.
>
> By saying that we want to do only the will of the Immaculata, not only are we not detracting from God's honor, but we are even increasing it, for we are thereby acknowledging God's omnipotence and adoring it, since He has created such an exalted and perfect being. So it is when we enthusiastically praise a beautiful carving, for then we are honoring and admiring the genius of the artist.
>
> Thus we can fearlessly say that our highest and sole intention is to fulfill the will of the Immaculata as faithfully

[2] "Informator Rycerstwa Niepokalanej" 4 (1938), in: BMK p. 586–587.

> as possible, to belong more fully to her each day, and to allow the Immaculata to rule over all of our actions. For then we will be her loyal Knights.[3]

In this way the Immaculata transforms even the highest faculties of the soul, namely the understanding and the will. The understanding ought to perceive everything as she perceives it, and therefore ought to grasp and judge everything in light of the Immaculata. On the other hand, it should see and know nothing that would be offensive to her.

The will, however, which makes decisions in life — which makes man like God in his spontaneous ability to say *yes* freely to a given end and freely to select the means to that end — subjects itself voluntarily to the will of the Immaculata through close contact with her and through perfect obedience to her (see Part Four, Chapters 1 and 2).

> We imitate good, virtuous, holy men and women, but none of them is without imperfections. Only she, immaculate from the first moment of her existence, has experienced not even the slightest fall. Therefore to imitate her, to draw near to her, to belong to her, to be transformed into her — all this is the height of perfection. All who have loved the Immaculata have wanted to belong to her and have expressed this in various ways. To be a servant, a child, a slave of Mary: these ideals sanctified their lives. All of them, however, wanted to belong to her in a perfect manner, and no doubt they all would have used all other titles that could be imagined or that a loving heart might still devise in the future. In a word, to be entirely

---

[3] *Ibid.*

> hers: that is the sunshine in the life of many, many hearts. Once the fire is kindled, it cannot be contained within the confines of the heart, but breaks out externally, stirs up, consumes and engulfs other hearts. It wins more and more souls for its ideal, for the Immaculata.[4]

May St. Maximilian Kolbe's Rule of Life become that of every Knight of the Immaculata also:

> Consider that you are the concern and the unreserved, unconditional, unlimited and irrevocable property of the Immaculata. Whoever you are, whatever you have or can do, all of your *actions* (thoughts, words and deeds) and *passions* (pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral feelings) are entirely her property. She may do with all of this whatever pleases her (and not you). In the same way all your intentions belong to her: She may change them, add to them or take away from them as she pleases (indeed, since she can never violate justice). You are an instrument in her hand, and so do only what she wants: accept everything from her hand. Have recourse to her in everything like a child to its mother. Entrust everything to her. Be concerned about her, about her honor, about her affairs, and leave the care of you and yours to her. Take no credit, but rather acknowledge that you receive all from her. The entire fruit of your labors depends upon your union with her, just as she, too, is the instrument of the Divine Mercy.

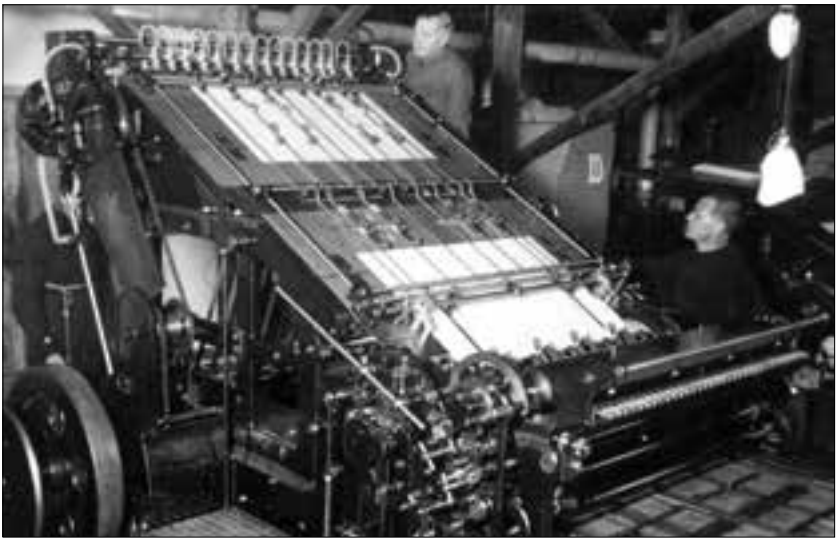
---

[4] *On the Militia Immaculatæ*, manuscript, 1939, BMK pp. 601–602.

My life (every moment), my death (where, when and how), and my eternity, everything is yours, O Immaculata. Do with me whatever Thou willst. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me through the Immaculata.[5]

[5] Rule of Life, written during a retreat in February 1920, BMK pp. 369–370.

The printing house had been expanding. More modern machinery had been installed, including three machines which could produce 16,000 copies of the review in an hour; new techniques of type, photogravure and binding were adopted



CHAPTER FOUR

Total Consecration

WHENEVER SOMEONE begins a new stage of his life, it does not happen automatically, but rather by means of a decision and an intentional act. For example, a man decides on a career and signs a contract with his employer. Or he chooses his state in life and seals this decision with a wedding ceremony, ordination or religious profession. Now everyone knows that married life and family are made up of more than just a wedding, yet the wedding is a solemn act which seals this intention to marry and to have a family and indicates the firm resolve to keep this promise until death. Throughout the life of the spouse this solemn act is renewed each and every day and is unceasingly put into practice. If this were not the case, then the promise would at first retreat further and further into the background, only to fade entirely and eventually to be broken and shattered.

In a similar way, the Knight of the Immaculata enters the Militia Immaculatæ through Total Consecration to Mary, a solemn answer to the Immaculata's call to fight under her banner. The individual has recognized the greatness and importance of the Mother of God as a lifeline in these difficult times and wishes to respond.

Total Consecration can be understood in two ways. There are many sort of "consecration to Mary" that consist of a request rather than an act of submission. Catholics consecrate a child to the Mother of God, or consecrate themselves to Our Lady on the occasion of their First Holy Communion, etc. This is to make a request of her, that she might take me completely under her protection and make me entirely her own. This sort of devotion is legitimate, but it is not a *donatio*, a giving of self in the strict sense. True *consecratio*, complete submission, consists in giving oneself to Mary in such a way that the Knight of the Immaculata regards himself in every respect as no longer being the owner and master of what he has, what he is, and what he does, but rather considers that all of this belongs completely and irrevocably to Mary. Hence from now on he will dispose of his material goods only according to Mary's intentions; he will make use of his body only according to Mary's wishes. He will, of course, accept no thoughts, ideas, attachments or deliberate decisions except those that Mary would agree to.

St. Maximilian himself wrote a commentary on his Act of Consecration to the Immaculata. By meditating on it often, the Knight will better understand and better live out his devotion to Mary.

"O Immaculata"

We address her with this title, for she was the one who gave herself this name in Lourdes: "I am the Immaculate Conception." God is eternally "Immaculate", but He is not "Conception". The angels are "immaculate", but they, too, were not "conceived". The Lord Jesus is "Immaculate" and also "conceived", but He is not "Conception", for He already existed previously as God and therefore the Name of God applied

to Him from all eternity — the Name that was revealed to Moses: "I am who am" (Ex 3:14). But He who always is cannot begin to be. Other men are "conceived" but stained [with sin]. She, however, is not only "conceived" but also "Conception", and furthermore "Immaculate". This name contains many mysteries, which are revealed over time, yet it indicates that her being "Immaculate Conception" belongs to the Immaculata essentially, as it were. How dear this name must be to her, since it signifies the first grace which she received in the first moment of her existence — and the first gift is the dearest. This name also holds good throughout her life, for she was immaculate. And therefore, too, she was full of grace and the Lord was always with her, so much with her that she even became the Mother of the Son of God.

"Queen of heaven and earth"

In the family, loving parents carry out the wishes of their children, whenever they can, insofar as it is not harmful to them. How much more God, the Creator and prototype of earthly parents, would like to carry out the will of His creatures, insofar as it is not harmful to them, *i.e.* to the extent that it is in keeping with His will. The Immaculata never strayed from the will of God in anything. In everything she loved God's will, God Himself. Therefore she is rightly called an all-powerful intercessor, for she has influence upon God Himself, upon the whole world. She is the Queen of heaven and earth. All in heaven acknowledge the dominion of her love. On the contrary, that group of angels that was unwilling to acknowledge her queenship lost its place in heaven.

As the Mother of God, also, she is queen of the earth. Yet she would like to be recognized as such — and that is her right — by every heart freely, to be loved as the Queen of each heart, so that through her that heart might be cleansed more and more, and become more "immaculate", more similar to her heart and thus more and more worthy to be united with God, with the Divine Love, the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

"Refuge of sinners"

God is merciful, infinitely merciful, but He is also just, infinitely just — so much so that He cannot tolerate even the slightest sin and must demand full reparation for it. The one who dispenses the infinite merits of the Precious Blood of Jesus, which washes these sins away, is the personified Divine Mercy in the person of the Immaculata. Therefore we rightly call her the Refuge of sinners, all sinners, even if they have committed countless serious sins, and even if it might seem to them that there is no mercy left for them. Furthermore, every purification of a soul is once again a confirmation of her title, "Immaculate Conception", and the more the soul was entangled in sins, the more the power of her "spotlessness" shines forth, in that she restores snow-white purity to such a soul.

"Our most loving Mother"

The Immaculata is the mother of our entire supernatural life, for she is the Mediatrix of all Graces, the Mother of God's Grace, and therefore our mother in the supernatural

realm. The most loving mother, because there is no mother who loves so much, who devotes herself so entirely as the Mother of God, the Immaculata, the Woman who has been completely divinized.

"To whom God deigned to entrust the entire order of mercy"

Every father of a family is glad when the mother, by her intercession, holds back his hand as he is about to punish a child, for then justice has been paid its due and mercy appears as well. For the execution of justice has not been postponed without reason. In a similar way God, so as not to have to chastise us, gives us a spiritual Mother, whose intercession He never refuses. Therefore the saints say that Jesus has kept the order of justice for himself, while He has commended the order of mercy to the Immaculata.

"I, N.N., an unworthy sinner"

We acknowledge here that we are not immaculate, as she is, but sinners. All the more as none of us could say that he had lived to this day without sin; rather, he has been guilty of much infidelity. Another reason that we say "unworthy" is that in reality there is an infinite difference, so to speak, between her immaculate nature and ours, which has been contaminated by sin. Therefore we acknowledge in all truth that we are unworthy to turn to her, to pray to her, to fall prostrate at her feet. And so as not to resemble proud Lucifer, we say:

"I cast myself down at Thy feet and humbly ask Thee to deign to accept me completely and utterly as Thy property and possession."

With these words we ask and implore the Immaculata to accept us. We consecrate ourselves to her entirely and in every respect as her children and as slaves of her love, as her servants and instruments, in every possible way, under every title [legal claim] that anyone could ever devise and formulate. And we do this as her property and possession, which she can dispose of freely, to employ and use even unto complete destruction.

"And do with me as it pleases Thee: all the faculties of my soul and my body, my entire life, my death and my eternity."

Here we hand over our whole life: all the powers of our soul, *i.e.* our understanding, our will, and our memory, along with all the powers of our body, namely all the senses and energies, health and sickness of our whole life we commend to her with all its pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent incidents. We commend to her our death, whenever and wherever and in whatever manner it is hastening to meet us, and even our whole eternity — indeed, that is precisely when we expect to belong to her to an incomparably more perfect degree than now. Thus we express our longing and our supplication that she might allow us after all to belong to her ever more perfectly and in every respect.

"Dispose of me as Thou will, so that what has been said of Thou might be fulfilled: 'She will crush the head of the serpent,' and also, 'Thou alone hast vanquished all heresies throughout the world.'"

In statues and pictures of the Immaculata we always see the serpent at her feet, winding itself around the globe, while she crushes its head with her foot. Satan, soiled himself by sin, tries to befoul all souls on earth with his sin. He hates the woman who was always immaculate, and he strikes at her heel, *i.e.* at her children, and in this battle she always crushes his head in that soul which flies to her. We ask her to deign to use us too, if it pleases her, as instruments to trample the proud head of the serpent in unfortunate souls. Sacred Scripture adds to the verse cited above, "and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Gen 3:15). Indeed, the wicked Foe lies in wait in a special way for those who consecrate themselves to the Immaculata, in order to revile her in them, at least. But his endeavors in sincerely devoted souls always end with a yet more shameful defeat — and hence an even more violent and helpless rage.

"You alone have vanquished all heresies throughout the world."

These words are taken from the prayers of the priests in the Divine Office which the Church places on his lips concerning her. The Church says "heresies", not "heretics", because she loves the latter and this very love prompts her to seek their liberation from the error of heresy. The Church says "all", without any exception whatsoever. "Alone", because she

alone is sufficient; for God with all His treasures, including the graces of conversion and sanctification, belongs to her. "Throughout the world": no remote corner of the earth is excluded. At this point in the Act of Consecration we ask her to use us to destroy the whole body of the serpent which is coiled around the earth, namely the manifold heresies.

"Make of me an instrument in Thy immaculate and merciful hands, which serves Thee, in order to increase reverence for Thee as much as possible in so many fallen--away and lukewarm souls."

In the world we see so many unhappy, fallen-away souls, who do not even know the meaning of their lives, who love various empty goods instead of God, the one true good. Many are indifferent with regard to his surpassing love. We long to instill and increase devotion to the Immaculata in these souls, and we implore her that we might be useful instruments in her immaculate and merciful hands. That she might never allow us, therefore, to oppose her, that she might compel us if ever we do not want to obey her.

"Thus the benevolent reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus will spread more and more."

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the love of God for men. His kingdom is the reign of this love in the hearts of men. The Savior showed us this love in the crib, during His whole life, on the cross, in the Eucharist, and also by giving us His mother as our own. He yearns to kindle this love in the hearts of men. To instill and increase devotion to the Immaculata in

souls, to win souls for her is to conquer souls for the Mother of Jesus, who establishes the kingdom of her Divine Son in souls.

"For whatever place Thou enter, Thou shalt implore upon it the grace of conversion and sanctification, for all graces come to us from the Sacred Heart of Jesus only through Thy hands."

The Immaculata is an all-powerful intercessor. Every conversion and sanctification is a work of grace, but she is the Mediatrix of all Graces. Therefore she alone is capable of imploring and obtaining any grace whatsoever. During the apparition of the Miraculous Medal, St. Catherine Labouré saw rays streaming from the precious rings on the fingers of the Immaculata. They signified the graces that the Immaculata magnanimously grants to those who desire them. Ratisbonne speaks in a similar way in his vision about the rays of grace.

"Grant to me to praise Thee, O Blessed Virgin; give me strength against Thy foes."

Who is her enemy? Everything that is spotted, that does not lead to God, that is not love: everything that comes from the infernal serpent, all lies, all our vices and our guilt. Let us ask her to give us strength against him. That, after all, is the reason for all devotions, prayer, and the Blessed Sacrament: that we might receive the strength to overcome all obstacles on the way to God through an ever-stronger love for and conformity with God, indeed through union with God

himself. As we came forth from God, when He created us, so we return to God. All of nature speaks of this, and wherever we look we find after an action an equal and opposite reaction, an echo of God's work, as it were. On this return path (the reaction) to God, free will encounters difficulties and adversities, which God permits in order to increase still more our longing for him. For a creature to have sufficient strength to do this, however, it must pray, it must ask for this strength from him who is the source of all strength and who looks lovingly upon all the endeavors of His creature and wants it to desire sincerely to come to him. And when this creature, namely His beloved child, stumbles and falls along the way, hurts and injures itself, then the merciful Father cannot bear to see such a misfortune. He sends His only-begotten Son, who through His life and His teaching shows the child the clear and safe way. With His Precious Blood He cleans away the filth and heals its wounds. However, so that the soul might not lose hope out of fear of God's justice which has been offended, God sends the embodiment of his love, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, the Immaculata, His all-beautiful, all-spotless, all-human daughter, sister to the children of Adam. He puts her in charge of all His mercy upon souls. He designates her the Mediatrix of the graces which His Son has merited, the Mother of grace, Mother of the souls who have been reborn through grace.[1]

[1] Commentary on the Act of Consecration, in: Fr. Władysław Kluz, OCD, *Czlowiek XX wieku…, op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 183–189.

On 8 December 1938, a radio station was installed at Niepokalanów with the signature tune (played by the brothers' own orchestra) of the Lourdes hymn

The installation of telephone networks

The electricity control unit

A part of the library in Niepokalanów

St. Maximilian with the fire brigade of brothers

PART FOUR

THE KNIGHT'S POWERFUL WEAPONS

CHAPTER ONE

The Power of Prayer

PRAYER IS LIFTING UP the soul to God. One cannot live in dependence upon God, in God and unto God unless one converses with Him often. Therefore the most important bond between man and God is prayer. Father Kolbe speaks very often of the necessity of prayer. Almost daily he exhorts the Knights of the Immaculata to more fervent prayer, to spending time with God, to fidelity in their spiritual obligations. It is not possible to be the knight of a lord unless one is in regular contact with him, laying one's life and deeds again and again at his feet, receiving advice and direction from him, submitting everything to him for inspection. Prayer is the spiritual life-breath of the Knight. In prayer he gather strength for his work, here he draws

> from the very source of his being. We know from where we must draw the supernatural strength for our sanctification. Grace must come to help us in this endeavor, but we obtain grace through prayer. As prayer goes, so goes everything else.
>
> Everything depends on prayer. "The one who prays will be saved; the one who does not pray is damned," said St. Alphonsus Liguori. Satan knows that quite well. He knows

> that he always wins, when it is a question of natural means. He is a pure spirit, is keenly intelligent to a far higher degree than we are, and therefore he understands all this much better than we do. But when a person reaches higher, for supernatural help in prayer, then he trembles. Then begins his battle, no longer with human beings, but with God, and he knows that he will be defeated. Therefore he tries by all means to keep the soul from praying, through distractions, dryness, fatigue, discouragement, etc., which we personally experience again and again.[1]

The goal of the Knight of the Immaculata is the conversion of souls, the triumph of the Immaculata throughout the world. Yet all external activities and projects are not capable of converting even one soul, for this is the work of divine grace. The apostolate among free men consists of turning the will, which is perhaps wicked, to what is good, so that a person who may be far from God or even God's enemy might draw near to God and become God's friend. And God assigns this task to His Knights through the Immaculata: that they go to the rescue of souls and become missionaries of Christ's Kingdom. It depends on them whether people are snatched from the fires of hell and how many souls will be. This, however, is the greatest grace of all. How can the Knight draw this grace down from heaven? Principally through prayer.

> Through prayer and suffering we can obtain many graces. External activity only prepares the way for grace; of itself it

[1] Conference on the stages of the interior life, *Konferencje św. Maksymiliana Kolbego*, Niepokalanów 1990, p. 189.

cannot provide these graces. There is one prayer that surely corresponds to God's will, namely the request for one's own sanctification and that of one's neighbor. When we pray that the Immaculata might win all souls, then that is surely God's will. For this intention we can offer up all our efforts, troubles and sufferings to the Immaculata, so that she might conquer the world. Once Napoleon was asked what was needed to win a battle. He answered: "Three things are needed: Money, money, and still more money!" Just so, when it is a matter of sanctifying souls, one needs prayer, prayer and still more prayer. If prayer is lacking, the soul becomes weak. One will have precisely as much from the treasury of graces as one draws from it.[2]

Prayer is the most misunderstood and yet the most powerful means of restoring peace to souls, of making them happy, and of bringing them close to God's love. Prayer renews the world. Prayer is the prerequisite for the rebirth and the life of every soul. Through prayer St. Thérèse [of Lisieux] became the patroness of all the missions, although she never went out-side the walls of her cloister. That is how we, too, want to pray: to pray well, to pray much, with the lips, with the heart. Then we will personally experience how the Immaculata rules more and more over our souls, how we will belong more and more completely to her, how guilt vanishes and faults diminish, how gently and powerfully we draw closer and closer to God. External activity is good, but it goes without saying that it is secondary, and even less than secondary in comparison with the interior life, the life of

[2] Conference, February 20, 1938.

> recollection and prayer, the life of personal love for God. To the extent that we ourselves burn more and more with divine love, we will be able to kindle the hearts of others with this love.[3]

To win souls for God is a very difficult undertaking. Often human means fail: fruitless conversations and discussions, projects that trickle away into the sand, publications printed in vain, and so on. But prayer never disappoints!

> The most important means in the struggle for souls is prayer. We must remember this often. Satan knows how effective prayer is, and therefore he also endeavors to disrupt our prayers.[4]

But while praying we must never lose sight of the purpose of prayer: union with God.

> As for prayer, this is not a matter of kneeling for a long time saying prayers, but rather of frequently uttering heart--felt ejaculatory prayers, which in no way cause us to neglect our duties.[5]
>
> The best devotion to the Immaculata is not the recitation of many prayers, but rather the simple, intimate relationship of a child to its Mother, which is best expressed through short, but very fervent and frequent ejaculatory prayers. A child

---

[3] Letter to Mugenzai no Sono, September 10, 1940.

[4] Conference, February 26, 1939.

[5] RN 15 (1936), p. 360.

> that loves its mother does not say many words; often a glance, a single word is enough. When it is in danger, it calls almost unconsciously: Mother![6]

Precisely in today's hectic world the apostolate of ejaculatory prayers, to which the Saint encourages us, is the best way of remaining in union with God and raising one's activities to a supernatural plane, and also of doing much for the salvation of souls. Ejaculatory prayers are like bullets from a machine gun, with which we strafe the Enemy in order to beat him. Without knowing it, our neighbor is ceaselessly bombarded, the grace of the Lord and the compassion of the Immaculata are called down upon him, until one day he casts himself down, overwhelmed, before his Creator and Redeemer. The Mother of God herself taught this apostolate of ejaculatory prayers to the children at Fatima, and through those visionaries she teaches us, too.

> Short sighs from the heart while at work are the best prayer, for it unites us again and again, every more strongly with the Immaculata, unites the instrument with Our Lady's hand, and thereby we receive many graces.[7]

When something in life goes wrong, when the Knight is defeated by the Enemy or the victory is not won, one should first ask oneself: Have we prayed enough? Has each one of us really taken this matter to prayer? We must especially guard against activism, which sees in external activity the entire effectiveness of a project. The Knight who

---

[6] RN 9 (1930), p. 303.

[7] Letter to Niepokalanów, October 15, 1931.

spends himself completely in these externals is in great danger of becoming fruitless himself and of maneuvering himself into a great deception.

> The conversion and sanctification of a soul was, is, and always will be a work of divine grace. Neither the spoken nor the written word, nor any other external means can accomplish anything of the sort without the grace of God. But one receives grace for oneself and for others only through humble prayer, mortification and fidelity in performing one's usual daily duties.[8]

[8] Letter to Mugenzai no Sono, December 1, 1940.

On 26 February 1930, Fr. Maximilian left Poland with four brothers from Niepokalanów on a journey to the Far East
Above: a photo from Shanghai (China)

They travelled by way of Port Said, Saigon and Shanghai, and on 24 April they landed at Nagasaki in Japan

First issue of Japanese Knight "Seibo no Kishi"; on 24 April 1930, exactly a month after their arrival, a telegram was dispatched to Niepokalanów: "Today distributing Japanese Knight. Have printing press. Praise to Mary Immaculate." Seibo no Kishi, the Japanese Knight, had a circulation six times that of the nearest Japanese Catholic rival; this was because it was aimed at the whole community, not just Catholics; the first 10,000 copies had swollen to 65,000 by 1936

The construction of Japanese Niepokalanów — Mugenzai no Sono (the Garden of the Immaculate), built on the slopes of Mount Kikosan; below: the construction of a Lourdes grotto in Mugenzai no Sono

CHAPTER TWO

The Secret of Sure Victory: Being Subject to Our Lady

DOES THE KNIGHT OF THE IMMACULATA have any guarantee that he will actually attain his great goal? Is there some firm foundation upon which he can build without hesitation, without fear of making a mistake? After all, man is so unreliable, his understanding so darkened! How often we lull ourselves with illusions! How often we think that something has gone completely wrong in our Christian life, but years later it turns out that that time of apparent futility was in fact the most important and most fruitful. And conversely, how often we are happy and proud about a successful project, about a deed that has been accomplished, and we celebrate our success. But years later it becomes apparent that what we had reckoned as a success was a deception of the devil, in order to blind us, to make us careless and thus to muddy the waters. Where is certainty to be found?

There is only one real certainty, which the Knight finds in faith alone: Man's purpose is the honor and love of God, which consists in doing His will. When man knows the will of God and acts according to it, then he raises himself above the inconstancy and dubiousness of

all earthly things and is firmly anchored in the un-changeable, infinite and eternal Divine Wisdom.

> The one who can do the most for the cause of the Immaculata is the one who perfectly — indeed, most perfectly — does the will of God in everything. Nay, more: someone who perfectly does God's will can rightly say that he does so much that the almighty, infinite God could not do more. Therefore he who does God's will as perfectly as he possibly can does an infinite amount of good for souls. This is, after all, the way that Jesus himself, our Redeemer, showed us. If there were another, more perfect way, He would have chosen it. But for thirty years He was obedient to His most holy Mother and to St. Joseph, and in doing so He unceasingly fulfilled the will of the Father. No particular training and no sort of special preparation is needed for this. Everyone can make a maximum contribution to the cause of the Immaculata by conscientiously doing his part as one of the many "wheels" that together make up the big "machine": Niepokalanów — the City of the Immaculata![1]

In what way does God reveal to us what He wants of us? What is the plan that He devised for our lives from all eternity in our best interests? Here a principle that runs through all of creation applies: God, the First Cause, usually employs a whole series of secondary causes, which are "transparencies", so to speak, which reflect Him, or channels through which He communicates His grace, His light, His will.

---

[1] Conference, April 18, 1937.

The Lord God in His [external] activity always wants to make use of instruments, and these instruments in turn make use of other instruments, so that they all form a precise, beautiful, harmonious whole. We are these instruments of the Immaculata. God gave us a free will, but He wants these instruments to serve Him, to subject their will to His, just as the Mother of God had said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to Thy word." The words "be it done to me" must always be on our lips, for there must always be complete harmony between the will of the Immaculata and our will. What do we have to do, then? Let ourselves be guided by Mary and not be afraid. When I say "the will of the Immaculata", I give God greater honor, because in this way I acknowledge that the Most Blessed Virgin is God's most perfect creature. So let us be guided by her in our interior and exterior life, and let us will as she wills.[2]

You can safely use the following expression: "I want to do the will of the Immaculata," for she always wills only what Jesus wills, and His will is one with the Father's will. Accordingly her will is no different from the will of the Son and the Father. Furthermore, when you cite her will, then you acknowledge, besides your love of God's will, an additional truth: the fact that her will is so perfect that it is no different from God's will, and thus you give God honor — Father and Son — that He created such a perfect creature and made it fit to become His mother.[3]

---

[2] Conference, June 13, 1933.

[3] Fragment of a book about the Immaculata.

The Knight of the Immaculata, who does the will of his Lady and Queen, has chosen the best part. There is no greater perfection, no more magnificent deed than to forget one's own ego completely and to do the infinitely perfect will of God, which is reflected in the will of the Immaculata. But how is this will revealed concretely in our everyday life? First, through the Commandments, the revealed truths of our faith, and the holy rules of life given to us by the Church. Especially, though, through obedience to those who represent God for us.

> Often we come to know Mary's wishes through inner promptings, but we can almost never be sure whether these come from her or from our self-love or even from the devil. Satan in the form of an angel of light is sometimes able to deceive us with the holiest things, which could perhaps be good for someone else, but which God does not want of us. Even if we were to have a vision and thought that the Mother of God was appearing to us and assigning to us the most exalted task, how do we know for sure that it is really she and not a deception or a devilish snare? … The best test is obedience to one's superiors.[4]

There are various sorts of obedience: one can be subordinate to someone else out of compulsion, or for natural reasons, for example, so as to gain some advantage for oneself, in order to be secure or successful. One can also be obedient simply because one wants peace of mind. All of these variations have nothing to do with the longing to be devoted to the Immaculata. This obedience is a lofty act of love —

[4] Manuscript *Militia Immaculatæ.*

the love of a child for its mother, a servant for his Lord, a creature for its Creator. In other words, it is supernatural obedience.

> One carries out a command not because it is pleasant, reason-able, wise, or holy in itself (for example, a command to pray), but rather because the command is the will of the superior and accordingly the will of the Immaculata, and therefore ultimately God's will. Without this attitude one is not an instrument in the hand of the Immaculata, but rather — I declare it openly — an instrument in Satan's hand, however many spiritual books one may read, however many Rosaries one may pray, however many great deeds one accomplishes.[5]

In supernatural obedience one demonstrates whether one really loves God. Love consists, after all, in an act of will, which in obedience is conformed to God's will and subjects itself to it, as the Immaculata did. Indeed, the Mother of God pleased God so much because she was never unfaithful to God's will, even in the slightest thing.

> The living M.I., the Knighthood of the Immaculata in practice, consists of this holy obedience.[6]

This faithful, joyful and instantaneous hearkening to God's will through the voice of His instruments, through the voice of the human authority that He has set over us, is quite important to St. Maximilian, as we can see not only from the frequency with which he speaks

---

[5] Letter to Fr. Florian Koziura, May 30, 1931.

[6] Letter to Br. X, April 18, 1934.

about it, but also from his example. He often told the story of that memorable occasion when he, as a young novice, was selected to continue his studies in Rome. At first he declared to his superior that he was not suited for the assignment because of his poor health. Later on, however, after he had thought about the matter, he went back to his superior and asked him to make the decision according to his (the superior's) will, without taking into ac-count at all the reasons that he (the novice) had mentioned.

> And what would have happened, if the Father Superior had listened to my reasoning and acted accordingly? Would the M.I. have come into being? Would Niepokalanów exist today? Would we all be here today? Do you see what great importance obedience has in God's sight?[7]

One should not imagine, however, that obedience consists in some sort of spiritual laziness, in a listless and thoughtless fulfillment of duties.

> A saint is not an absent-minded old fogy who has to be egged on constantly if he is to accomplish anything. A saint must be enterprising, dynamic, full of initiative. That does not mean that he has to overwork himself until he pants like a dog. He just has to be like an automobile, for instance, with all its devices and features. An auto is steered by the driver, but it has to drive by itself; the driver only turns the steering wheel, changes gears, gives it gas, brakes, etc. The auto will

[7] Conference on obedience, "Zagroda Niepokalanej" 1 (1932), p. 64.

> be at its best if it runs as the driver wants it to: slow, when it should be slow, fast when it has to be fast, to the left when he steers to the left, etc. Every one of us should let himself be guided in this way, but each one has to proceed on his own, like the automobile. No one pushes the automobile from behind; it runs by itself. When the Immaculata calls upon us to work here, then we must put all of our energy, our zeal, our abilities into it; when she tells us to rest, then we rest. When she sends us to recreation, then we go to recreation. A soul like that, which does all that perfectly, does much for the cause of the Immaculata.[8]

Our initiative consists of using, according to the certificate of the M.I., all the means at our disposal in order to save souls, according to our talents and abilities, which the Lord has instilled within us.

> Therefore we can, indeed we must freely mention to our superiors the thoughts, wishes and ideas that we have in our hearts, as well as present our opinion without fear. Only we should do so in such a way that we are inwardly quite free and obediently accept the decision of authority with equanimity![9]

Finally the Saint warns us about a false understanding of obedience. Supernatural obedience is always subjection to God's will. Basically we are always obedient to God, directly or indirectly, when we obey

---

[8] Conference, June 16, 1937.

[9] Letter to his brother, January 14, 1927.

our superior, inasmuch as he takes God's place and shares in God's authority. But the superior, too, is limited.

> It can happen that the superior demands something that, no doubt whatsoever, would be a sin, albeit a very little one. In this case the superior would not be God's representative and we would not be his subjects.[10]

If the earthly authority orders something that is even to the slightest extent contrary to the faith or morality, then the subject must "obey God rather than men" and do what the inviolable and unchangeable teaching of the Church commands. In this case the subject is only apparently disobedient; in reality he turns against the serious disobedience of his superior and practices the virtue of obedience in a perfect way: even unjust persecution and attempts to ruin his reputation do not keep him from being obedient to God.

---

[10] Letter to his brother, April 21, 1919.

Mugenzai no Sono (The Garden of the Immaculata) Nagasaki

In the first row: St. Maximilian, Fr. Matsukawa, Fr. Konstanty; behind them: two seminarians, Br. Marian Sato Shigeo (a Japanese brother) and Polish brothers (Mugenzai no Sono, Nagasaki, May 1932)

St. Maximilian Kolbe, professors and junior seminarians (Mugenzai no Sono, Nagasaki, 1936); in 1931, St. Maximilian founded a novitiate, and in 1936 a junior seminary

CHAPTER THREE

The Mightiest Weapon: Sacrifice

LIKE GOLD IN THE FIRE, so must love be purified in sacrifice. The Sacrifice on the Cross redeemed the world; everything else in our Savior's life was just a preparation for His "hour". Similarly the high point in the life of the Knight is not activity, not even the most spectacular deed, nor is it prayer, nor even the obedient performance of his duties, but rather sacrifice, the act of self-giving that must permeate all his work, prayer and activity. This complete sacrifice of self is crowned in suffering:

> Man's life is made up of three phases: preparation for work, work, and suffering. Some here in Niepokalanów are just preparing, others are already working, and a gray-haired old man like the one seated in front of you is already entering upon the final phase, suffering. Through these three stages God draws us to Himself. The more fervently a soul is devoted to God, the earlier it prepares itself for this third stage, in order to cement its love for the Immaculata with

suffering borne out of love. For nothing unites us with the Immaculata and strengthens us so much in charity as this very love combined with suffering for love's sake. Precisely along this path of suffering we can find out whether we truly and unreservedly belong to her. In this third phrase of our life we must show the greatest love for her, the love of a Knight! And so we must chivalrously suffer, work, and die, but not an ordinary death: why not by a bullet in the brain, in order to seal our love for the Immaculata? Why not shed our last drop of blood as a Knight in order to hasten the conquest of the whole world for her?! I wish that for me and for you also![1]

We must understand, in the divine perspective, that the first moments of zeal and that eagle's flight of the soul to God, that sweet presence of Jesus, have very little worth in God's sight. For these were only God's sweet bonbons, extraordinary graces through which the heavenly Father moved our emotions and drew us to Himself. God granted us to taste something of His sweetness, so that we might joyfully and willingly enter upon the way of perfection. For eternal life, however, those days have little merit, for they were lacking sacrifice and effort on our part. Love, "the bond of perfection", is nourished and satisfied only through suffering, sacrifice and the cross. Naturally, we must be very grateful to God for these, His priceless graces, which were necessary during this first stage of the spiritual life because of our great misery and weakness. But as He removes these consolations from us and sends us painful crosses and sufferings instead, love is not

[1] Conference, August 28, 1939.

> diminished in the least. Love for God is perfected in suffering, as gold is purified in the fire.[2]

"Pray and offer sacrifices, for so many men go to their eternal ruin because there is no one who prays and makes sacrifices for them." These words of the Mother of God, pronounced on August 19, 1917 in Fatima, confirm and illustrate the mystery of the communion of saints — namely, the fact that the salvation of many souls depends upon our little prayers, sacrifices and sufferings. Thus we understand why Fr. Kolbe insisted so much on this point:

> In order to make our work for the good of souls easier, God allows us to have various crosses to bear, whether or not they be dependent upon the will of others, whether they result from good will or an unjust will. Here is an enormous field with countless sources of graces to be tapped. Especially useful among these are the pains that are caused us by others. With what holy hope do we actually pray in the Our Father: "and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"! After all, the Lord himself taught us this prayer. And so complete forgiveness of the wrong that has been done to us is enough to obtain the right to have our own sins against God forgiven. How difficult this would be, if we had nothing to forgive! On the contrary, how fortunate we are when we have the opportunity to forgive good-sized crumbs of offenses! Granted, human nature trembles at the prospect of suffering and humiliation, but in the light of faith

[2] Conference, January 17, 1937.

> they are so important for the purification of our soul, such excellent means, because they do contribute to a more fervent union with God and thereby to more effective prayer and to stronger missionary zeal.[3]

Maximilian Kolbe was so convinced of the effectiveness of sufferings offered up, that he once declared in the presence of all the guests that his sick friars in Niepokalanów were his most important co-workers:

> The infirmary and the sick who are lying there — that is the most important workforce in the publishing house of the M.I., the department with the largest revenue, the most productive of all, because it is full of merits and returns for God's cause. Here every sort of attachment and self-seeking, which gives a person a certain contentment and prospect of success, is ruled out, not to mention recognition and praise for the results of the work. All that is left here is suffering and the merit for it. The infirmary is the only department in the City of the Immaculata which brings the maximum net profit.[4]

One should beware, however, of idealizing this weapon. Sacrifice in most cases does not consist of a heroic, dramatic gesture that is visible to all, as one might dream of a glorious martyrdom, for in-stance, that people would talk about with admiration long afterwards.

---

[3] Letter to Mugenzai no Sono, December 1, 1940.

[4] J. Grzybowski, *Die Bedeutung des Leidens bei P. Maximilian* [The meaning of suffering according to Fr. Maximilian].

> A few days ago, as I was speaking with the friars about the missions, many of them demonstrated willingness to devote their lives to God's cause in far-off lands. It is not difficult to become a martyr for the faith in the missions. That is much easier than being sick and being consumed slowly over the course of many months and years by suffering, without any hope whatsoever of recuperating. Martyrdom in most cases lasts only a relatively short time, whereas sickness destroys the body slowly but surely, and so one must attain long-term heroism. When a sick person struggles to reach the voluntary heroism of the sacrifice that proceeds from a burning love for God, then he doubtless approaches God with giant steps and is united with Him from moment to moment with ever stronger bonds of love. Happy — I repeat — happy is such a soul….[5]
>
> The best mortifications are those which arise from one's daily duties and are thus independent of our will, for those which we impose upon ourselves flatter our self-love. If something happens that incites us to impatience, then we should endure this peacefully. That is the best mortification, because no one can observe it, and in the course of the day there are many, many such opportunities.[6]

Sanctity lies in the little, seemingly insignificant things, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus used to say, and she herself has given an example of this:

---

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Conference, November 8, 1936.

> Patroness of all the missions! Where did she get such "expertise" in missionary matters? Was she perhaps a missionary in many pagan lands? Did she shed her blood as a martyr? Not at all. She never crossed the threshold of her cloister in Lisieux. During her life here on earth she worked no striking miracles, but rather offered herself up utterly and entirely in her ordinary, everyday routine. Therefore it is not a question of what we do, but rather of how we do it, for what intention and with how much love. What was her intention? To give joy to the Savior, to carry her daily crosses out of love, to work and to live for love of him, to be a little child that encompasses the hearts of her father and mother with little proofs of love. Everyone can and must be such a missionary.[7]

Only in sacrifice is love demonstrated. And the more someone loves God and the more that person is a Knight of the Immaculata, the more sacrifices he will make, the more he will suffer and be crucified with the crucified Savior.

> Let us reflect on the fact that love lives upon and is nourished by sacrifices. Let us thank the Immaculata for interior peace, for the delights of love, but let us not forget that all that, though good and beautiful, is not the essential thing in love, and that love can exist without all these feelings, and only then is it perfect love. Its high point is the condition in which the Lord Jesus prayed on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Without sacrifice there

[7] Manuscript, The Patroness of all Missions.

is no love: sacrifices of the senses, especially of the eyes, of the senses of taste and hearing, but above all the sacrifice of the understanding and the will in holy obedience. Like the love of the Immaculata, like the love of God's goodness in her, of the Divine Heart in her, so this love should embrace and permeate us, too, and then sacrifices for souls become a necessity. Then the soul will offer ever new and ever more profound proofs of its love, and these proofs are nothing else than sacrifices. Therefore I wish others and myself as many sacrifices as possible.[8]

How short life is, how quickly time passes! Let us spend it, or rather, let us give it away, let us sacrifice it, as dearly as possible. The more suffering, the better, for after death one cannot suffer any more — the time in which to demonstrate love is short, and we only live once![9]

---

[8] Letter to Mugenzai no Sono, April 9, 1933.

[9] Letter to the Friars in Lviv, March 17, 1933.

CHAPTER FOUR

The "Ammunition" of the Immaculata

AS AN OUTWARD SIGN of membership in the M.I., the Knight of the Immaculata wears her Miraculous Medal. We human beings are not only spirit, but also body. Our interior life, our ideal and mentality must be perceptible from outside, must be expressed in our external life. Therefore outward signs are necessary in order to bring the interior disposition to light. The Savior willed to grant His graces to people precisely through such "sacred signs", namely the Sacraments. In a similar manner the Knight of the Immaculata must also make an outward profession.

> The Miraculous Medal is the outward sign of the interior Total Consecration to the Immaculata.[1]

Furthermore, as a weapon in the battle for souls he distributes these medals wherever he can.

[1] Leaflet about the M.I., 1938.

> The Miraculous Medal should be the weapon, the bullet, which the Knight of the Immaculata makes use of. Even if someone is as wicked as can be, if he agrees to wear the Miraculous Medal, give it to him and pray for him, and occasionally try with a kind word to bring him to the point where he begins to love the Mother of God and to fly to her in all his difficulties and temptations. But anyone who sincerely begins to pray to the Immaculata will soon be convinced to go to Confession as well. There is much evil in the world, yet let us consider that the Immaculata is even more powerful: "She will crush the head of the infernal serpent."[2]

Isn't such a practice somewhat exaggerated? How is it that the founder of the M.I. places so much trust in such an external thing? We should reply, first, that the very origin of the M.I. is closely related to a great miracle that was worked through the Miraculous Medal, namely the conversion of a Jewish man, Alphonse de Ratisbonne. In the year in which the M.I. was founded (1917), the seventy-fifth anniversary of this great miracle was being celebrated in Rome. Young Brother Maximilian had already asked himself the question long before that:

> Is it possible that our enemies should display such activity and gain superior strength, while we remain idle, without getting down to work? Do we not have even stronger weapons,

[2] Letter to a reader, September 12, 1924.

> namely the protection of heaven and of the Immaculate Virgin?[3]

He found out the answer on that memorable twentieth of January, when the superior of the house presented to them the story of the impenitent Jew's conversion as a theme for meditation. In that meditation, as Father Pal, his friend and co-founder of the M.I. attests, the Saint received the inspiration to found a knighthood in honor of the Immaculata, which chose the Miraculous Medal as its emblem and shield for the future Knights. From that day on, Brother Maximilian often visited the church of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte in order to pray before the altar where Alphonse de Ratisbonne had converted. He also chose that altar as the one upon which he would offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the first time after his priestly ordination.

Furthermore Fr. Maximilian often used to tell his friars about truly extraordinary incidents that he himself had experienced with the Miraculous Medal. For example, one time while he was recuperating in Zakopane he tried to convert a young Freethinker who proudly called himself "the Heretic".

> All arguments were in vain. Nevertheless, out of courtesy he accepted the Miraculous Medal. Immediately afterwards I suggested that he make a confession. "I am not prepared. By no means," was his reply. But… at that very moment he fell on his knees, as though impelled by a higher power. The confession began; the young man wept like a child. The Immaculata had won.[4]

---

[3] Testimony of Fr. Pal, Acts of the [Diocesan] Investigation, p. 312.

[4] RN 3 (1924), pp. 3–4.

Naturally, the cause of this miraculous change in a human heart was not the medal itself as a physical object, but rather the Immaculata, who attaches her special graces to the wearing of the Miraculous Medal. And there were many, many such incidents in the life of St. Maximilian. Therefore:

> Distribute her Medal, wherever there is an opportunity: to children, so that they will always wear it around their necks; to the elderly and the youth, so that they, under her protection, might have enough strength to resist the temptations and falls that particularly beset them in our times. And also to those who do not go to Church, or who are afraid to go to Confession, who make fun of religious practices, who laugh at the truths of the faith, who are mired in a moral swamp or are living outside the Church in heresy — to all of these people you absolutely must offer the Medal of the Immaculata and ask them to wear it, but then fervently beg the Immaculata also for their conversion. Many people make use of another expedient when someone is reluctant to accept the Miraculous Medal. They just sew it secretly into his or her clothing and pray for that person, and sooner or later the Immaculata will show what she is capable of. The Miraculous Medal is the ammunition of the M.I.[5]

[5] RN 5 (1926), pp. 130–131.

PART FIVE

NOT JUST WORDS,
BUT DEEDS!

The *Militia Immaculatæ* is above all an ideal to live by. On the one hand, it involves total consecration of oneself to the Immaculata, thus the conversion and sanctification of oneself through Mary. On the other hand, it entails the endeavor to persuade others to give themselves entirely to her as well, thus the apostolate, the love of neighbor that inspires the Knight to make use of all possible means for the conversion and sanctification of his neighbor through the Immaculata, who alone is the Mediatrix of these pre-eminent graces. This ideal is put into practice in various stages. Father Maximilian Kolbe distinguishes three degrees in the Militia:

> In the first degree of the M.I. each one consecrates himself to the Immaculata and endeavors to realize the purpose of the Militia individually, according to his own circumstances and the rules of prudence. In the second degree of the M.I., the Knights bind themselves by special statutes and programs. They unite their forces, in order to reach their declared goal more quickly and effectively. The third degree of the M.I. consists in an unlimited devotion to the Immaculata. Thus she can do with us what she wills and as she wills. We belong entirely to her and she belongs entirely to us. We do everything with her help, we live and work under her protection. In this way, the first degree is restricted to individual action, the second degree — to the public and social apostolate, whereas the third degree goes beyond all limits and aims at heroism.[1]

---

[1] Letter, May 25, 1920.

CHAPTER ONE

The Apostolate of the Pioneers: The First Degree of the M.I.

THE BASIS for the *Militia Immaculatæ* is the individual, the Knight himself, *who personally and individually consecrates himself entirely to the Immaculata, and uses all valid and legitimate means, … according to his state in life and in the circumstances and occasions that present themselves*[1] in order to win the victory. The saintly founder leaves to *the zeal and prudence of each one* the degree of his devotion and of his activity. In this way no limits are set for the Militia: everyone should be a Knight of the Immaculata, as long as there is, at the minimum, an intention to consecrate oneself to the Mother of God and also to do something for the salvation of souls. Father Maximilian knows what people are like; he is acquainted with their weaknesses, but he also knows about the transforming power of the Mother of God. Once a person places himself under her protection and sincerely consecrates himself to her, she guides him without fail to the heights of sanctity. The M.I. itself is a school of the spiritual life. A Knight who offers no resistance to the influence of the Immaculata is imbued with this great ideal, which

[1] Certificate of the M.I.

forms his soul, and slowly but surely he develops a way of life that bears the imprint of the nature, the goals, the means and the projects of the M.I.

One might suppose that this degree is the lowest, an introduction, so to speak, which does not yet demand very much and has a limited ideal. But that is not the case. Although Fr. Maximilian addresses every Christian of good will and demands practically nothing from him but a minimal knighthood (wearing the Medal and saying the ejaculatory prayer of the M.I., and that not even under pain of sin), he nevertheless wants the Knight to develop in his personal life all of his talents, to use all possible and permissible means, and to be consumed with "zeal for the Lord's house". Therefore it is said ingeniously that the apostolate of the M.I. first degree is left to "the zeal and prudence" of each one.

But what does true zeal consist of? Zeal urges one to work for the cause, but it is not just ordinary working, but rather working with energy, with enthusiasm, with fire in the soul. Zeal is an unbending will that does not allow itself to be dissuaded, that does not weaken at the first obstacle, that does not shy away from sacrifices and wounds.

What does supernatural prudence consist of? It consists of realistically and reasonably choosing the most excellent means, which lead to the goal most surely and quickly in the best way. Prudence demands an objective view of the situation; the prudent person takes a concrete look at everyday life, with all its circumstances, events and duties, and then chooses the best means of living out the total consecration and of leading others to the Immaculata.

Someone who understands the full meaning of the first degree of the M.I., therefore, sees his mission as that of a solitary soldier, a pioneer who infiltrates the ranks of the enemies all alone, without

any human aid. He is not only surrounded by enemies but lives right in their midst, "in the world but not of the world". Even if he does nothing extraordinary, it very soon becomes obvious to others that he is different from them, that he is not guided by their principles and leads a different sort of life than they do. This arouses their curiosity, and in this way not a few come to the faith. Other people, perhaps most of them, are upset and feel that their apparent peace of mind has been disturbed. Such a person is troublesome to them, for he stirs their conscience. Therefore he is marginalized, made fun of, reduced to silence or much worse. The Knight accepts all that. And since he is isolated, he should bear in mind that he is weak and so he must live in an especially close union with the Immaculata, nourish himself more than usual with the sources of grace and flee the world, or else he will perish in the ever-present danger. But this is precisely what supernatural prudence prompts him to do. What a pioneer like this is capable of doing is demonstrated by famous examples from the twentieth century. Was not our Saint himself just such a solitary soldier at first? Heroic figures like St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, or in more recent times Venerable Edel Quinn, testify to the heroism that the individual Knight of the Immaculata can attain. It is certainly not too daring to state that the founder of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X, the Apostle of Jesus and Mary, Archbishop Lefebvre, received the grace and the strength to resist almost single-handedly the combined forces of Modernism from Mary, to whom he had consecrated himself.

But how does the Pioneer in the first degree of the M.I. fight? Besides the general means mentioned above, his most important apostolate is good example.

Every Knight should view his surroundings, his relatives, friends, co-workers, place of residence, as his mission territory, so as to win all of them for the Immaculata.[2]

Do not be discouraged because indifference and wickedness prevail; the grace of God through the Immaculata is stronger.... You must win your home for the Immaculata; here is your workplace. You must fight through prayer, good example and kindness, indeed, through great sweetness and kindness as a reflection of the goodness of the Immaculata.[3]

A missionary told the story that an intelligent Hindu came to him one day and expressed a certain desire to convert to Catholicism. The astonished priest asked him what prompted him to do this, and the man replied that formerly he did not believe in the celibacy of the Catholic missionaries, but after long and careful observation he became convinced of it, and therefore the Catholic faith must be the true religion, if it imparts such strength. So it is always: people want to see Christian teaching in practice.[4]

The way that the M.I. spreads is through our lives. St. Paul addressed the faithful with these words: "Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ." Act as I act. Each one of us must do the same and exclaim with St. Paul: *Be perfect* [1 Corinthians 1:10, 14:20 etc.].... If not with words, then in spirit we should behave in such a way that everyone can imitate us, and so we

---

[2] RN 5 (1926), p. 194.

[3] Letter to a reader, September 12, 1924.

[4] Conference, February 13, 1938.

will sanctify ourselves. That is our greatest mission: to show through example what a Knight of the Immaculata looks like.[5]

[5] Conference, March 5, 1939.

Brothers at work in Mugenzai no Sono, Nagasaki; office and printing house

St. Maximilian in his office in Mugenzai no Sono, Nagasaki

Brothers at the Lourdes grotto in Mugenzai no Sono, Nagasaki

CHAPTER TWO

Concerted Action: The Second Degree of the M.I.

> There are two general types of work: work done individually and social work in common. In individual work the individual person can accomplish much according to the talents that God has given him, and his trusting and yearning love in prayer, but again and again there are cases in which someone does not reach the goal alone. Just as Jesus said about prayer, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them," so too work in common is often more fruitful than individual activity.[1]

In this form the M.I. makes its way into the realm of public life. It becomes an association, a union, or an institution with officers, statutes and precisely delineated goals and means. Father Maximilian wanted second-degree M.I. groups to be organized depending upon the locality, the persons who belong to it, and the means that

[1] Conference, November 15, 1919.

they employ to achieve the overall goal of the M.I. As far as the locality is concerned, he had in mind a worldwide movement, then a nationwide one, and finally groups connected with particular territories (*e.g.* diocese, parish, village). As for persons: special groups for children, for youth, for parents, and for the elderly were supposed to be founded with special statutes corresponding to their state in life. As for the different sorts of works: he was thinking of prayer groups, groups of the suffering, but also of various occupations: for instance, he hoped to see second-degree M.I. groups made up of writers, lawyers, physicians, artists, salespeople, etc.

These groups, consisting mainly of Catholic lay people, are supposed to carry the idea of the M.I. into all departments of public life, into all sectors of society, into all institutions. One concrete form of this apostolate is the distribution of Catholic literature.

> Sales of religious books today are still very weak. For there are only a few people who recognize their duty to disseminate good literature. Furthermore, there is a lack of genuinely Catholic public libraries, reading rooms, bookstores and lending libraries. It is heartrending to see trash in the display windows of the city libraries and a long line of young people inside…. May God grant that in the near future there will no longer be one single city or village without free libraries and reading rooms supplied with good books and periodicals! Only let groups spring up everywhere to promote the Catholic press, and I assure you, they would renew the face of the earth.[2]

---

[2] Manuscript *Catholic Action.*

The second-degree M.I. could also become nurseries for new publications, which would defend in particular the ideal of the Immaculata. For this, good editors are needed:

> How important the editor of a Catholic publication is! Such an editor forms public opinion, he has a great influence on society, and therefore he also has a great responsibility before God. In order that the press produce good fruits, however, every editor must also live a good Catholic life; before writing an article he must pray and ask God for light and strength. If someone wants to give something, he must first have it himself.[3]
>
> It should also be required that the co-workers and editors truly write in the spirit of the M.I., namely, about winning the world for the Immaculata, about saving and sanctifying souls through the Immaculata, while on the other hand avoiding unnecessary attacks against persons, parties, or other nationalities. Our primary purpose is always the conversion and sanctification of souls, that is, winning them for the Immaculata, loving all souls, even the Jews and Freemasons and heretics, etc. It follows that the co-workers on the editorial staff are able to write in the spirit of the M.I. only insofar as they themselves not only belong to the M.I. but also live for the Immaculata, so that they view current events, people and their actions through her eyes. … The politician, the scholar, and the economist, too, will write so as to please

[3] Br. Gabriel Siemiński, *Na falach wspomnień*, Niepokalanów 1992.

> the Immaculata, so as to be real instruments in the hand of the Immaculata. Let them write as *she* would write.[4]

Of course, Fr. Maximilian had more than the press apostolate in mind, since he recommends the employment of "all conceivable means", as long as they are not bad in themselves.

> We must conquer the whole world for the Immaculata, and therefore we must use the most effective methods of all to do so. All methods, all the latest inventions, whether machines or operating systems, should serve first and foremost the sanctification of souls through the Immaculata. Therefore we should restrict our personal needs as much as possible and live an utterly poor life, yet use the most modern means.[5]
>
> All inventions must serve the Immaculata first, and only then other purposes. These media are: art, literature, theater, film, journalism, radio, etc.[6]

Fr. Maximilian was infuriated by the fact that all of these media were being left to the enemy. The reason for this is the weakness and laziness of good people.

> Radio is one of the most important means for propagating the work of the M.I., in addition to film and television…. All of these inventions are in themselves good and should serve

---

4 Letter to Fr. Marian Wójcik, July 12, 1935.

5 RN 16 (1937), p. 354.

6 Conference, April 23, 1933.

> godly purposes first, and only later human purposes. Today that is reversed: these and other inventions are used for evil, and only then do we come along to apply them for a good cause. There is something wrong with that. We deserve censure if we allow others to leave us behind in this race to make use of inventions.[7]

It is understandable why he insisted so much on the mass media, because it is precisely modern technology that is capable of reaching the masses in the shortest time. And in this area one should not economize.

> We can live in barracks, but we must print the word that forms the human mind with the latest machines in the greatest possible quantity and make this literature readily available.[8]

People today live with the newspaper, radio, television, etc. The one who controls these media rules the world. The religious renewal through the Immaculata that affected millions of people between the two World Wars could only take place through the miracle of the distribution of the magazine, "Rycerz Niepokalanej", which was founded in 1922 and at first had a circulation of 5,000; by the year 1939 the number of subscribers had reached one million.

During the few years that he had left on earth, the Saint was not able to realize this form of the M.I. to its fullest extent. Associations

---

[7] Conference, December 8, 1938.

[8] Quoted by J. Stemmler in the almanac RN 1948, p. 23.

were formed here and there, especially in Poland and Japan. After the Modernist revolution this apostolate fell victim to the *aggiornamento* of the Council. The second-degree associations of the M.I. were closed or completely changed. Public operations for the conversion of souls through the Immaculata gave way to a new evangelization of unrestricted respect for the freedom of the other person, and for his religious views as well (see also Part Six, Chapter 3).

Many Catholics throughout the world who kept the faith reacted to this crisis in the Church. New associations sprang up, youth movements, study groups, prayer associations, and third orders were revived in the traditional observance. Among them the second-degree M.I. is at home. All of these public movements are called upon to place themselves under the special protection of the Immaculata in these terrible times, that is, to fructify the particular purposes and goals that make up the essence and the distinctive character of each of these movements with the great ideal of the M.I., namely the winning of souls through the Immaculata. An awareness of their own insignificance and weakness, their helplessness in the face of the mighty enemy who controls all the public media, must prompt these groups to consecrate themselves especially to the Mother of God.

One concrete example: it is enormously difficult for a Catholic youth movement to survive nowadays. What it has to offer is simply lost in the shuffle of "the unlimited possibilities of the modern world". The various projects that form the mainspring of the movement no longer attract many young people, and the participants often lack courage, perseverance and enthusiasm. The little band seems too miserable and ridiculous when it is contrasted with the Goliath of the modern world. And so the movement wastes away, until one day it dies a natural death: the young people get older, and no one from the

next generation follows them. But suddenly a group leader discovers the Militia Immaculatæ of St. Maximilian, is astonished by its miraculous successes and extraordinary effectiveness. He inquires as to the reason for this: it is the Mother of God, who "alone vanquishes all heresies throughout the world", who alone has received from God the promise that she would "crush the head of Satan". He recognizes that, precisely in these recent times, God has placed everything in the hands of the Immaculata, and where Mary reigns, there is light, strength, a battle, and finally victory. Having realized this, the youth movement adopts the ideal of the M.I., encourages its members to become Knights of the Immaculata, spreads the spirit of conquest, banishes creeping pacifism from their hearts, and raises the flag to lead them into a life-and-death battle for souls. The youth movement doesn't change; it alters neither its statutes nor its goals, nor its projects, but it adds an element, a spirit, an ideal: Knights of the Immaculata! The miracle occurs: the Queen herself now has room in which to work in their souls. She fills the weak with strength, the discouraged with new courage. The projects are no longer just some actions of some people, but rather they are, above all, projects of the Immaculata, who is using her Knights as her instruments. It is she who distributes the leaflets, discusses things with people, gives witness, etc. And therefore it is also she who moves the people's hearts, which are often so far removed from God.

In this area the Militia Immaculatæ today is demonstrating its immense potential in the contemporary scene. Is this knighthood the personal work of St. Maximilian? Yes and no! Yes, because he is the instrument! No, because the originator is the Immaculata herself. Why did she bring this movement into existence? In order to give our age a practical means, an ideal, an organization, an extremely

modern outlook, *i.e.* a spirituality that is suited to the child of our age. Furthermore, the M.I. gives an answer to the errors and aberrations of our time: not so much in theory (there are plenty of competent intellectuals for that), but rather in practice. How does a Catholic confront the modern, modernistic world? As a Knight of the Immaculata! Thus he understands his mission, which he believes, which he lives, by which he is nourished.

It would be extremely worthwhile for all the public movements of Traditional Catholicism to consider themselves as second-degree units of the Militia Immaculatæ, and thus give the Immaculate Heart of Mary the opportunity to carry out her extraordinary role in the end times. To the extent that we do everything in, through, with, and for Mary, we survive and win the victory. Without her, our personal and public deeds are in vain.

St. Maximilian Kolbe, Fr. Mieczysław Mirochna, Fr. AleksyTabaka and Fr. Korneli Czupryk (Nagasaki, September 9, 1935)

St. Maximilian with Fr. Mieczysław Mirochna and Japanese priests

The community in Mugenzai no Sono, Nagasaki

CHAPTER THREE

The City of the Immaculata: The Third Degree of the M.I.

THE MILITIA IMMACULATÆ should be all-encompassing; the whole world ought to belong to the Immaculata. And so there should also be Knights who put the great ideal into action to their utmost, "heroically", by an unlimited devotion to the Immaculata, namely in the form of consecrated life within a religious community in which everything serves this great purpose. Such a community is called a house, city, or garden of the Immaculata, *Niepokalanów*. In this community every member should strive to become ever more fully the property of the Immaculata and to perfect himself in an exclusive union with the will of the Immaculata, which takes place through perfect supernatural obedience to the superiors.

> Such a cloister is called Niepokalanów, City of the Immaculata, for it belongs entirely to the Immaculata, is consecrated to her unreservedly, with all the hearts that beat within its walls, with all its machines, motors, schools, implements,

cares, difficulties and debts. In a word: her goods and her property![1]

In these houses the idea of Total Consecration to the Immaculata should attain the heroic degree at which a person disappears entirely, together with his own wishes, opinions and inclinations; then all that remains is God as the one goal of life and the Immaculata as the perfect, best way to divine love. Here all possible means at one's disposal should be used in order to carry on the various forms of the Marian apostolate, in order to make the ideal of the M.I. a reality. Each house should be a school of sanctity, of training those latter-day Apostles for Jesus and Mary that St. Louis-Marie de Montfort speaks about — that saint who was the great example and spiritual father for Fr. Maximilian and his work. Furthermore the members must be profoundly knowledgeable about the importance and role of the Mother of God in souls, her greatness and pre-eminence in the end times of world history. Niepokalanów should be a place of study, where the truths about Mary are investigated more and more deeply, continuing the main theological lines of thought of the recent popes and communicating them to the people as spiritual food and guidance.

Consecrated religious Knights should also be formed who will kindle this spirit of zeal in the second-degree groups of the M.I. through conferences, pastoral visitation, retreats, etc., and who will also keep in contact with the solitary soldiers of the first-degree M.I., at least through regular correspondence. Only in this way will the flame of the M.I. continue to burn throughout the world and to kindle more and more souls for the Immaculata. Other Brothers, who have

[1] Article entitled "Cel Niepokalanowa" ["The purpose of N."], printed in the volume *Z życia Niepokalanowa* [From the life of N.], Ostern 1934, pp. 5–6.

special practical skills, should be trained in various occupations and technologies, so as to spread the apostolate to all departments of life. Thus in *Niepokalanów*, the Polish "City of the Immaculata", there were specialists who distinguished themselves by their intricate technological inventions, as well as craftsmen who attained a maximum of perfection in their handiwork and were even envied by their colleagues in the secular world.

What is especially striking about the history of Niepokalanów is the miraculous increase in vocations in a very short time. Father Maximilian was quite aware that the Church can be maintained and renewed only through zealous vocations, men and women who are striving for holiness. Niepokalanów was supposed to become a seedbed for priests and brothers, who would be formed there by the Immaculata herself, so as to go out into the world later to conquer it for her. And that is where the Knights would return again after their missionary journeys:

> drawn like iron by a magnet, in order to take refuge after their toils, to cleanse themselves from the dust of the earth, to heal the wounds that the thorns of the world inflicted upon them, and to renew their spirits and gather fresh energy for their future missions.[2]

Mediocrity would be the death of the third-degree M.I.: Fr. Kolbe emphasized often and clearly that a member of Niepokalanów is ready for any work that the Immaculata might require of him through the will of the superiors. There should be no limits to this readiness, which must extend even to leaving one's homeland and going to the

[2] Letter to Fr. Koziura from Nagasaki, November 21, 1931.

most distant missions.[3] The internal dynamic of these houses should consist of and be maintained by the desire to open new houses for the Immaculata elsewhere in the world, and to do mission work in new countries and among other peoples.

> It seems to me that in every nation there ought to be a City of the Immaculata, in which and through which the Immaculata might reign over all, including the most modern media, for these new inventions should be at her service first of all, and only then be used for commerce and entertainment….[4]

Religious vows or solemn promises (for those communities of apostolic life that do not take vows) constitute a suitable basis for the third-degree M.I.

> Niepokalanów should and must be a model of consecrated religious life, where the rule, the sacred constitutions and all the regulations of the order are quite strictly observed.[5]

Indeed, one can best and most easily devote oneself entirely to the Immaculata in a life secluded from the world, in a spiritual house that is sanctified by its orderliness and directed by superiors who are the voice of the Immaculata. Through observing the evangelical counsels, the Knight is freed from the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life. In the world he must

---

[3] Letter to Fr. Koziura, December 9, 1930.

[4] Letter from Mugenzai, August 8, 1935.

[5] Br. Gabriel Siemiński, op. cit., p. 335.

always worry about material things and keep something for himself, whereas religious poverty frees him entirely from these cares, so that he can dedicate himself utterly and entirely.[6] Poverty was a particular concern of the Saint. Attachment to worldly things is a hindrance to the spiritual life and causes aridity in the soul. One example of such attachment is smoking:

> My dear children, do me a favor: even when I am dead, do not smoke and don't drink hard liquor. Refuse, if someone offers them to you. I ask you to take it especially to heart and I most fervently desire that no one in any City of the Immaculata smoke, for this would be the start of backsliding and weakening and would affect the very foundation of religious life, which stands and falls with holy poverty.[7]

In the same way, married life requires a division [of one's efforts between spiritual and worldly concerns], according to the teaching of St. Paul [*cf.* 1 Corinthians 7:32 ff.].

> With our vow of chastity we give ourselves exclusively to God. We give up riding by car, so to speak, and choose the airplane.[8]

We thereby come to resemble the Immaculata most closely; she is, after all, perpetually a virgin. Finally, in holy obedience we find the

---

[6] See conference of August 29, 1937.

[7] *Copia Publica*, Investigative Process in Warsaw, folio 277.

[8] Conference, August 30, 1937.

will of the Immaculata expressed clearly and precisely in the details of our everyday routine.

> When we obey, then our entire religious life and its sources become her property and become the Immaculata herself. Supernatural obedience becomes her will; chastity becomes her virginity; poverty becomes her renunciation of earthly goods. Our soul belongs to her; she rules our thoughts; she controls our will, so that it loves only her will and, in her, the will of Jesus Christ, of the Sacred Heart. Our body belongs to her, so that it might be spent willingly for her in work, toils and sufferings. All that we are and all that we have is hers.[9]

St. Maximilian was a Franciscan, and because the third-degree M.I. is based on the consecrated state of life, he naturally viewed the houses of the Immaculata as convents and friaries of his Order, in which the ideal of St. Francis would be faithfully put into practice with the original fervor, observing all the regulations. And so, too, the Order valued the City of the Immaculata:

> Niepokalanów can be compared with the Rivotorto of our holy father Francis; a genuinely seraphic spirit reigns there.[10]

Again and again Father Maximilian comes to speak of the rules and regulations of his Order, so as to ensure that they are applied in all their severity. He also sees the cause of the Immaculata as a special

---

[9] Letter to French youth in the French secondary schools, February 28, 1933.

[10] Acts of the Provincial Chapter, 1930 and 1936.

heritage of the Franciscan Order, which has defended Mary's Immaculate Conception from the very beginning.

The question arises: Is the third-degree M.I. necessarily connected with the Franciscan Order? In its canonical existence thus far, yes! Likewise in its origins and its continuance down to the present day! In my opinion. however, it would be a serious error to restrict to the Franciscans this ingenious movement of the Militia Immaculatæ, which reaches its summit in the third-degree M.I., however great their service in this cause may be. The Saint's vision of the City of the Immaculata transcends the Franciscan charism. The basic form of Niepokalanów is possible in every order, in every congregation, in every religious association, provided that it calls for a *vita communis* [life in community] and dedicates itself in some way the Marian apostolate of saving souls. Besides, history demonstrates that the ideal of founding a City of the Immaculata in every place has not been realized in its original form. Furthermore, due to the crisis in the Church today, the Order of St. Francis to a great extent has grown unfaithful to this ideal.

Just as the entire Militia Immaculatæ has special significance in the battle during these difficult times (and according to the founder's words, this depends much more on the ideal and the spirit than on the external projects and accomplishments of any particular age), so too the third-degree M.I. in particular must play a special role, since without a fire burning in the hearth which "extends even to heroism", the zeal and the strength of the Knighthood are in danger of declining and gradually being snuffed out. But how can the third-degree M.I. be put into practice today?

In every movement in the Church the members are bound by vows or promises which are ordered to the evangelical counsels. Thereby

they already fulfill what St. Maximilian considered to be the most important requirement of "unconditional" total consecration to the Immaculata. And since there are no restrictions upon the Militia in its choice of means [of carrying on an apostolate], provided that they are pleasing to God and correspond to supernatural prudence, why shouldn't the statutes themselves, the holy rule and the constitutions of a particular Religious Order be, for those who belong to it, the suitable means of conquering souls for the Immaculata? Thus, for example, the Dominican Order could place its specific charism as a preaching and penitential order under the banner of the Immaculata, especially since one of the most important components of Marian devotion has been entrusted to the spiritual protection of this very Order: the Rosary. In other words, the Order with its distinctive spirituality and its particular apostolate intends to be guided entirely by the Immaculata, and intends to impress this Total Consecration so deeply upon the hearts of its consecrated religious that the entire atmosphere of the convent or religious house is determined and permeated by Marian devotion. This ideal contributes in a preeminent degree to the renewal of the religious community:

> To bring about a renewal of the Order, it is not enough to make wise regulations, which are supposed to be carried out by means of strict sanctions. The thing most needed for the sanctification of religious is supernatural grace. Now the Immaculata is the Mediatrix of all Graces, and the closer a soul draws to her, the stronger and more vital it becomes. The most perfect form of this approach is True Devotion. The breath of the Immaculata begins even today to enliven

> in a marvelous way those members of the order who have consecrated themselves to her entirely in a very special way.[11]

The priory, as defined by Archbishop Lefebvre in his statutes, could be the ideal House of the Immaculata today, the nucleus for a "City of the Immaculata". Those statutes describe priors (and accordingly their priories) as follows: "They should be first and foremost a roof of the providential founding of the priestly fraternity, through their supernatural example of peace and composure, of strength in joy, of boundless trust in Our Lord and in His Most Holy Mother…. They should have infinite reverence for the kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ.… They should propagate this reverence through the true Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and through Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, as well as through devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Everything that went into the "miracle of the City of the Immaculata" and contributed to its unprecedented spiritual success is provided for in the priory. In Niepokalanów the absolute center was the tabernacle, before which the friars knelt in adoration daily, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the high point of their daily schedule, as well as devotion to the Immaculata — on principle one could not be dispensed from these three fundamental pillars in order to pursue the apostolate.

The heart of the priory: the priestly apostolate, the duties of the brothers and sisters, the demand for an intensive interior life, the wonderful combination of prayer, sanctification and the apostolate with hours of contemplating the altar and the Sorrowful Mother at

---

[11] Letter from Mugenzai, August 8, 1935.

the foot of her Son's sacrificial cross — together with the ideal of the evangelical counsels… all this is strengthened and spiritualized and becomes more perfect and purer in light of the M.I.

Everyone knows how hard it is today to live according to the evangelical counsels, especially holy obedience! In what more exalted light could the members of a religious house view the supervision and the orders of the superiors than to see therein the will of the Immaculata, whom they serve, whom they thereby love more fervently, and thus become an ever more pliable instrument for conquering evil and saving souls! The priest who is a Knight of the Immaculata would then wish to become a chivalrous priest, would resolve to fulfill his priestly duties in particular dependence upon her, would hope to please his Queen with all of his thoughts, words and deed, to love her and to make her more widely loved. He will see, in the souls that are entrusted to him, the beloved children of the Immaculata, to whom he is called to lead them. Above all, he will fulfill his sacred duties more and more fully with and in Mary and thus be much more fervent in saying Mass, administering the Sacraments, praying the Breviary, making his meditations, etc., and promoting community life. For that is the singular nature of the Immaculata, that wherever she reigns, she "crushes the head of Satan", "conquers heresies and errors", banishes temptations, and obtains "all the graces of conversion, interior renewal and sanctification". Thus the often laborious apostolate acquires a splendid new dimension, because in even the smallest deed, prayer, suffering, sacrifice or work of every member of the religious house, Mary prays, sacrifices, and works, and thus the "success" is not only certain, but also perfectly pure and holy.

Finally, the extent to which the ideal of Niepokalanów as a seedbed for vocations is consonant with the purposes of the Priestly Fraternity

of St. Pius X is demonstrated by the vision which the former Apostolic Delegate and Archbishop of Dakar had in his cathedral concerning the renewal of the Church: a new host of priests thoroughly imbued with the love streaming from the wounded, burning Heart of the eternal High Priest! But who can better form in us the ideal of the eternal High Priest than His Most Holy Mother?

It is equally important to impart to the other members of the Fraternity a high ideal of their vocation. Do we not find here also the City of the Immaculata, which bestows upon the Franciscan friars such decisive influence and responsibility for the conversion of the world through the Immaculata?

Lastly, wouldn't every prior wish that one day someone would write about his priory what the physician of Niepokalanów testified concerning this unique city:

> In Niepokalanów everyone was impressed by the tremendous organization of Fr. Maximilian's project. At every turn it was evident: here they knew how to bring the best out of people in a suitable way. The precision with which the work was done and the great zeal of the brothers clearly sprang from the fact that the whole friary was permeated by one essential idea: serving God through the Immaculata. Visitors were surprised by the great contrast between the modern machinery and tools and the poverty of the friars in their personal necessities.[12]

[12] Dr. Stanisław Wąsowicz, *Copia Publica*, Investigative Process in Warsaw, folio 215.

PART SIX

THE IMMACULATA IN THE END TIMES

AGAIN AND AGAIN it has been made clear how well suited the M.I. is precisely for our times, as if St. Maximilian had founded his movement for us rather than for his own age. But we can say even more: Many saints have pointed out and given proofs for the extraordinary role of Mary precisely in the end times. It is as though the entire Marian movement is about to converge upon this climax, which the Apocalypse describes as the great battle of the dragon with the Woman.

Therefore it is worth examining the significance of the M.I. in the overall plan of God's saving work, since He has willed that the final, terrible ages of world history would be characterized by the "great sign in the heavens", the sign of the Immaculata (**Chapter 1**).

In this respect, the conformity of the M.I. with the message of Our Lady of Fatima, which it also complements, deserves our particular attention (**Chapter 2**).

Another feature of these end times is the sad fact that the "great apostasy" has advanced even into the ranks of the official Militia Immaculatae, and that those responsible for Fatima and places associated with other great apparitions or Marian movements have turned away from the truth and caricatured the message and greatness of Mary. It is therefore the duty of the loyal child toward the best of all mothers to make her true face shine forth again, so that her authentic message is known, propagated, and lived out. This means that it is also necessary to establish the Knighthood of the Immaculata according to the traditional observance (**Chapter 3**).

Lastly, all of these considerations make us understand what a special position the M.I. holds today: It is supposed to put the truth about Mary into action. Provided with all that it needs by its founder, it is capable of encouraging faithful Catholics to join the final battle as soldiers under the banner of the Immaculata (**Chapter 4**).

CHAPTER ONE

The Significance of the Immaculata in the End Times

THE SPECIAL ROLE that the Lord has assigned to Our Lady in the end times of world history is an indisputable fact. We should note, on the one hand, the unusual development of Catholic doctrine concerning her person and her mission (called Mariology); on the other hand, she herself intervenes more and more often in the various apparitions which have been carefully examined by the Church and declared authentic. At the same time the Church presents to us the so-called Marian saints, whose lives, writings and deeds can only be explained by a special intervention of the Mother of God, who serve her as instruments in bringing to fulfillment the most astonishing enterprises in the history of the Church. For these reasons the Marian devotion of the Catholic faithful grew more and more, and brought forth the abundant fruits of saintly lives and gave people strength for the decisive battle against every sort of evil, be it heresy, lack of morality or even godless regimes.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARIOLOGY

In the early centuries of the Church, devotion to Mary was very much alive, as countless passages from the works of the Church Fathers testify. Already in the second century St. Justin[1] and St. Irenæus[2] taught that she is the New Eve, who together with the New Adam, Christ, cooperates in the salvation of souls. The greatest among the Church Fathers, Saints Ephrem, Ambrose, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, Germanus of Constantinople and John Damascene, honor her as the immaculately conceived Virgin. Most often, though, Mary was praised by the Church Fathers as the *Theotokos*, the God-bearer. The Council of Ephesus (431) proclaimed the first Marian dogma: "If anyone does not confess that God is truly Emmanuel, and that on this account the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God, … let him be anathema."[3] The Marian spirituality of the Church Fathers has been preserved most profoundly in the Eastern Divine Liturgy: the Akathistos hymn is a long litany in honor of the *Theotokos*, which portrays every single aspect of Mary's sublimity and greatness.

Marian devotion received renewed impetus in the thirteenth century through the introduction of the Rosary, which Tradition holds was received by St. Dominic directly from the Mother of God. Furthermore in the year 1251 Blessed Simon Stock, the reformer of the Carmelite Order, received from the Mother of God the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This is an abbreviated habit, and many graces are attached to wearing it, among others the greatest grace of

---

[1] *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, around 155 A.D., in: J. P. Migne, *Patrologiæ cursus completus: Series græca*, Paris 1857 (henceforth: MG), 6, 713. See also M. J. Rouet de Journel, *Enchiridion Patristicum*, selection 142.

[2] *Adversus hæreses* 3, 22, 4 (around 170 A.D.), in: MG 7, 959.

[3] Denzinger-Schoenmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationum* (henceforth: DS), no. 252, Freiburg 1965.

all: "Whoever dies while clothed in this habit will be preserved from the fires of Hell." The theological tradition of the Franciscans in particular endeavored to investigate and propagate the mystery of Mary's Immaculate Conception.

Not until the nineteenth century did the development of Mariology attain its full significance through the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in the year 1854 by the Holy Father, Blessed Pius IX in the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*.[4] On the basis of this dogma, theologians enlarged upon the doctrine of the spiritual motherhood of Mary. Pope St. Pius X writes in his Encyclical *Ad diem illum*:

> No one knows Christ as well as His Mother, and therefore no one can be a better guide and teacher along the path to the knowledge of Christ. Nor can anyone establish a stronger bond between Christ and humanity.... And so therefore she is also our Mother. In one and the same womb of the all-pure Mother, Christ took on His physical body and also united Himself with His spiritual Body, made up of all those who would believe in Him.... Therefore all of us, who are joined together in Christ, as the Apostle says (Eph. 5:30), are members of His Body which came forth from Mary's womb, of the Body which forms a unity with the Head.[5]

A further consequence of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Pope Pius XII not only included this feast of Our Lady in the liturgical calendar as a high-ranking feast (second-class), but also consecrated the entire

---

[4] DS 2803.

[5] DS 3370.

human race to Mary's Immaculate Heart at the conclusion of his Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*.[6] Leo XIII (among other places, in his Encyclical *Octobri mense*[7]), St. Pius X (in the Encyclical *Ad diem illum*[8]), and Pius XII (in the Encyclical about the universal Queenship of Mary, *Ad cæli Reginam*[9]) speak of Mary as the Mediatrix of all Graces.

On November 1, 1950 Pope Pius XII declared in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* the dogma of the Assumption of Mary into heaven, body and soul.[10] During the time of preparation for the Second Vatican Council, the central commission received from the bishops more than 600 *vota* (proposals and recommendations to be dealt with by the Council), with the request that the next general Council should declare in a special way the doctrine concerning the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. Three hundred eleven *vota* demanded the proclamation of the dogma of Mary's universal mediation of graces, 127 — the definition of other dogmas, for instance, concerning Mary as Co-Redemptrix.[11]

The *nouvelle théologie* [French "new theology"] and the post-conciliar reforms were a death blow to the development of doctrine concerning the Mother of God. In inter-religious dialogue with non-Christian religions there is no place for Mary, and the Marian dogmas are a stumbling block for ecumenism with the Protestants.

---

[6] Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi,* AAS 35 (1943) 193–248.

[7] DS 3274–3275.

[8] DS 3370–3371.

[9] DS 3916–3917.

[10] DS 3900–3904.

[11] *Analyticus conspectus consiliorum et votorum quæ ab episcopis et prælatis data sunt*, vol. I, Rome 1960.

You might say to yourself that in contacts with the Orthodox Churches, at least, the Mother of God will pose no problem, but here, too, we run into many obstacles: the Orthodox, after all, recognize no dogma of the Catholic Church which has been proclaimed after the first seven ecumenical councils. As a result of these attacks against Mariology, the danger is that the Marian devotion of many Catholics will become more and more detached from its dogmatic foundation and drift into a subjective sentimentalism. In this way many are falling prey to false and even heretical "apparitions" (*e.g.* Ohlau or Medjugorje).

THE GREAT MARIAN APPARITIONS

As Catholic teaching about the Mother of God was being elaborated, in a parallel development Mary herself was appearing more often and more solemnly to her children. There have always been such apparitions in Church history, the main purpose of which had to do with the personal relation of the visionary with Mary or a message to a particular order, a country or a limited group of believers. In contrast, the great apparitions with worldwide significance do not begin until the modern period. It seems that the more fiercely the battle on earth is waged against the rights of God and of the Church and the more the Masonic spirit of materialism and liberalism spreads, the more often the Mother of God herself appears, in order to strengthen Catholics in their faith and to provide them with suitable help against impending dangers.

Guadalupe (1531): While approximately eight million Christians in Western Europe were being separated from the Catholic Church because of Protestant heresies, the Mother of God appeared in America to Saint Juan Diego on the ninth, tenth and twelfth of December, 1531, on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico. She requested that a shrine be built at that

place, where "I will demonstrate to men all my love, my mercy, my help and care." When the bishop demanded a sign from her, in order to confirm the authenticity of the apparition, a miraculous image of Mary was imprinted upon Juan Diego's cloak, in which he was gathering the roses that the Mother of God had given him during the apparition. The miraculous image is the centerpiece of Marian devotion in Guadalupe. In the archives of the Cathedral of Mexico there are descriptions and testimonials of thousands of miracles that have taken place through the invocation of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Before the apparitions there were very few conversions in Latin America, despite the intense efforts of the missionaries. As a result of the devotion to the miraculous image on the tilma, which the Indians recognized as a sign of Mary's victory over their idols, more than ten million people converted in a very short time,[12] and in the following years all of South America became Catholic.

The Miraculous Medal (1830): One consequence of the French Revolution was the ongoing decline of the Christian social order in all the countries of Europe. In the year 1830 a new revolution (*Commune de Paris*) flared up in the capital of France, which could be described as the herald of the socialism and communism that were to follow. At the same time, in the same place, namely in Paris, the Mother of God appeared in the convent chapel of the [Vincentian] Daughters of Charity on the *Rue de Bac* to a novice, Catherine Labouré. Mary requested prayer and penance in atonement for the sins of the people who were perishing in godlessness and immorality. During the second apparition Catherine saw an oval frame made completely of light form around the Blessed Virgin, and upon it a semicircular

[12] O. Anticolli, S.J., *La virgen del Tepeyac: Compendio Historico-Critico*, p. 45.

inscription in golden letters: *"O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you."* The Blessed Virgin commanded Sister Catherine: *"Have a medal struck according to this pattern. Those who wear this medal will receive many graces. Graces will be abundant for all who wear it with confidence!"* After many difficulties the first medals were struck in the year 1832. It is called *the Miraculous Medal* because of the countless miracles that took place soon afterward and continue to this day: conversions, cures, supernatural help.[13]

La Salette (1846): *"Lock religion up in the sacristy."* With this slogan all of public life was being systematically secularized, *i.e.* Christ was no longer to rule over public and governmental institutions. The new constitutional laws of the nations are no longer based on divine law, but rather on the human rights proclaimed during the French Revolution. For the simple folk, a visible sign of this secularization is the suppression of those precepts of the Church which have to do with the public life of Catholics: keeping Sunday holy, the prohibition against reading or selling godless and immoral books, etc. Within the Church (especially in France) liberal Catholicism sprang up, which influenced part of the clergy and attempted to reconcile the axioms of the revolution with the teaching of the Church. Despite the condemnation of liberal Catholic principles by Pope Gregory XVI in the Bull *Mirari vos*, this movement spread throughout Europe and North America. This was the beginning of Modernism. During this period the Mother of God again appeared in France, this time on September 19, 1846 in La Salette to two children, Melanie and Maximin. This message is called the "Apocalypse of the Mother of God", since it deals with the end times and the Antichrist. In a terrifying manner she

[13] See: Werner Durrer, *Der Siegeszug der Wunderbaren Medaille*, Jestetten 1993.

describes the decline and apostasy of the clergy as well as the apostasy of the nations, while calling for prayer and penance.

Lourdes (1858): In eighteen apparitions the Mother of God taught the visionary Bernadette Soubirous a whole program for the spiritual life, which can serve as a guide to every Catholic in his own life: *"I promise to make you happy, but not in this life, rather, in the next,"* said Mary on February 18 in Lourdes. *"Pray for sinners"* (February 21). *"Penance, penance, penance!"* (February 24). *"Go, drink and wash in the spring"* (February 25). *"I am the Immaculate Conception"* (March 25). This is, according to St. Maximilian Kolbe, the revelation of the most profound mystery of Mary's interior life. In Lourdes the Immaculata revealed the spiritual and theological basis for her mission at the end of the ages. *"The purpose of every human being is his divinization through Jesus Christ, our Mediator with the Father,"* said the Saint, *"but a person is united with Jesus through the Mediatrix of all Graces, the Immaculata!"*

Fatima (1917): This year may well have witnessed the apotheosis and the victory of godlessness: in the East the atheistic Communist movement was inaugurated, while in the West Freemasonry celebrated its 200th anniversary as a triumph over the old order represented by the Church. In that same year Our Lady appeared in Fatima, which was the culmination of the entire Marian movement of the last centuries. By propagating devotion to her Immaculate Heart, the Church should bring to light the full meaning of the Immaculata and publicly and authoritatively declare to the world that she is the Mediatrix of all Graces. On July 13, 1917 the children had a vision of hell and of countless souls that were on the way to eternal damnation. *"In order to save them, God wants to spread devotion to My Immaculate Heart throughout the world."*[14]

---

[14] *Sister Lucia speaks about Fatima*, Fatima 1989.

Faced with Satan's victory in the world through Communism and Freemasonry, the Mother of God offers herself again to mankind as a last lifeline. This final hope is her Immaculate Heart, to which the entire world, but especially Russia, must be consecrated. The Third Secret of Fatima[15] speaks about Satan's victory in the Church through apostasy and Modernism. Therefore in this most difficult time for the Church, this time of her mystical martyrdom, there is one safe refuge: the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In order to confirm the message of Fatima, God willed that 70,000 people should see the miracle of the sun on October 13, 1917. In the following decades Fatima and the resulting Marian devotion had a decisive influence on the life of the Church.

THE MARIAN SAINTS

There is no doubt whatsoever that all the saints were great devotees of Mary. Therefore when we speak of "Marian saints", it means that these saints consecrated themselves and their entire work to the Mother of God in an extraordinary way. Among them were St. Ephrem the Syrian (5th century), St. Bernard of Clairvaux (12th century), and in recent times St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, St. John Berchmans, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Catherine Labouré, St. Bernadette Soubirous and St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe. Besides them we can add to the list a great number of saintly individuals such as Melanie Calvat, the visionary of La Salette, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade,

[15] On the Third Secret of Fatima and the dubiousness of its publication, see: Bishop Bernhard Fellay, *Das dritte Geheimnis von Fatima,* in: "Mitteilungsblatt der Priesterbruderschaft St. Pius X" [Newsletter of the FSSPX], No. 260, pp. 9–14; M. Cesanek, *Are there Two Original Manuscripts of the Third Secret*, in: "Fatima Crusader", Summer 2000, pp. 3–15; Brother François de Marie des Anges, *Fatima — Joie intime, événement mondial* [F. — secret joy, world event], Saint-Parrès-les-Vaudes, 1991, p. 291; Mark Fellows, *Fatima in Twilight*, Niagara Falls, 2003, pp. 269–280.

founder of the Marianists, and the children of Fatima — Blessed Jacinta and Blessed Francisco Marto.

The common characteristic of these very different saints is their unconditional total consecration to Mary as *Servants of Mary* (Alphonsus Liguori and John Berchmans), *Slaves of Mary* (Louis-Marie de Montfort), *Property of the Immaculata* (Maximilian Kolbe), or *Mary's Cause* (Père Chaminade). To the extent that they realize this purpose, they increase their life of virtue to a heroic degree. Love for Mary leads them to offer up every possible sacrifice and suffering for the glory of God and in atonement for the countless sins of mankind which have severely offended God's majesty. At the same time their zeal for the salvation of souls increases. This yearning to save souls from the danger of eternal damnation is the root from which spring great missionary projects, apostolic associations, and also visible deeds such as the construction of churches, convents, places of pilgrimage, or the use of the mass media in the service of the Mother of God.

CATHOLIC DEVOTION TO MARY

The life of the Church has always been bound up with a special reverence paid to the Mother of God, which in theology is called hyperdulia. Nevertheless it is easy to ascertain that this devotion always became more intense when the people were threatened by spiritual or material danger. For example, when no human power was capable of overcoming the heresy of the Albigensians and the Cathari, St. Dominic taught the people to pray the Rosary, and within one hundred years both sects vanished. A similar thing happened when Europe was threatened by the Turks: at that time the small Catholic army at Lepanto (1571) won a victory over the much more powerful forces of the Sultan, because St. Pius V had proclaimed to all the faithful the first spiritual crusade:

the Rosary crusade. For that reason also he introduced the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary into the liturgical calendar in thanksgiving for this victory. The same thing was repeated in the year 1683 before the city gates of Vienna. At that time, in thanksgiving for the victory of King Jan Sobieski over the Turks, Pope Innocent XI inaugurated the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary. Subsequently the governments of many countries placed their people and their land under the protection of the Mother of God. She is honored as their Queen, their Lady, their Empress and commander-in-chief.

In the same way, many Marian shrines throughout the world, along with the masses of pilgrims who visit them, testify to the deep attachment of Catholics to their spiritual Mother and Queen and their trust in her.

There is no doubt that the Marian movement was never so strong as in the first sixty years of the twentieth century. Against the background of two World Wars, the dominion of Communism over half of the world's surface, of materialism and the proliferation of sects, the role of the Mother of God in the life of the Church shines like a sun in the midst of profound darkness. Here are a few examples:

Following the apparitions in Fatima, Portugal was soon liberated from the Masonic regime which had plunged the country into misery and bankruptcy. Professor Salazar and his Catholic government, together with the Portuguese episcopacy, lifted the country up again through a deeper Marian devotion inspired by Fatima and kept it safe, not only from the Spanish Civil War, but also from the Second World War.[16]

In 1942 began the travels of the Pilgrim Virgin Statue. Everywhere dioceses, parishes, and Catholic associations consecrated themselves

[16] C. Barthas, *Fatima, merveille inouie* [Fatima, an unheard-of miracle], Fatima editions 1942, pp. 325–327.

to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (approximately 16,000 parishes in France alone[17] during the years 1943–1948). Statistics from the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith note the greatest number of conversions to the Catholic faith in precisely those years — more than 100,000 annually in the United States of America, about 15,000 per year in England, while in mission lands millions of pagans were baptized.

Great Marian associations leavened the private and public life of entire countries: the Militia Immaculatæ (the Knights of the Immaculata), founded by Fr. Maximilian Kolbe, with approximately four million members, especially in Poland and Japan; the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, especially in America, with six million members;[18] and the Legion of Mary, founded in 1921, which presently has some twenty million members throughout the world.

Marian religious orders and congregations reached the height of their vocations and missionary fruitfulness.

On the occasion of celebrations for the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland in 1966, in the midst of Communist rule, Cardinal Wyszyński consecrated his country to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Thanks to his Marian devotion, his land is one of the last places on earth where the Catholic faith has not yet disappeared.

During and after the Second Vatican Council, Marian devotion suddenly disappeared in most Catholic countries. At the same time the crisis in the Church brought about a decline in almost all ecclesiastical institutions, and within thirty years the Church lost almost 80,000

---

[17] L. Devineau, O.M.I., *Une extraordinarie odyssée dans le sillage de la Vierge* [An extraordinary odyssey in the Virgin's wake], Apostolat de la Presse 1965, p. 27.

[18] See: O. M. Dias Coelho, *Exercito azul de Nossa Senhora de Fatima* [Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima], a brochure of Sede International Fatima 1956.

priestly vocations through laicization, 50,000 religious vocations were lost, and hundred of millions of lay people left the Catholic Church, whether to join the sects or to live a completely godless life. Among the remaining Catholics only about five to ten percent are really practicing the faith. It is no longer possible nowadays to count the sins against God and against nature (official figures declare that approximately fifty million abortions are performed in the world each year, not to mention sins such as euthanasia and homosexuality that cry out to heaven for vengeance). It is as though someone were taking the last light away from a world that is already dark — the "sun of the Immaculata" — and all that is left is sin, error and ruin. Sacred Scripture calls such times apocalyptic. But wherever her light shines forth again, the darkness is overcome.

WHY DID GOD INTEND SUCH AN UNUSUAL ROLE FOR MARY DURING THE END TIMES?

"Through Mary the redemption of the world began, and through Mary it must be completed." With these words St. Louis-Marie de Montfort explains why Mary will appear especially at the second coming of Christ — in the end times. He lists seven reasons why the Virgin Mary must be known in a special way at Jesus' return and why she must be revealed through the Holy Ghost:

> God wishes therefore to reveal Mary, His masterpiece, and make her more known in these latter times:
>
> — Because she kept herself hidden in this world and in her great humility considered herself lower than dust, having obtained from God, His apostles and evangelists the favour of not being made known.

— Because, as Mary is not only God's masterpiece of glory in heaven, but also His masterpiece of grace on earth, He wishes to be glorified and praised because of her by those living upon earth.

— Since she is the dawn which precedes and discloses the Sun of Justice, Jesus Christ, she must be known and acknowledged so that Jesus may be known and acknowledged.

— As she was the way by which Jesus first came to us, she will again be the way by which He will come to us the second time though not in the same manner.

— Since she is the sure means, the direct and immaculate way to Jesus and the perfect guide to Him, it is through her that souls who are to shine forth in sanctity, must find Him. He who finds Mary finds life [Proverbs 8:35], that is, Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. But no one can find Mary who does not look for her. No one can look for her who does not know her, for no one seeks or desires something unknown.

Mary then must be better known than ever for the deeper understanding and the greater glory of the Blessed Trinity.

— In these latter times Mary must shine forth more than ever in mercy, power and grace: *in mercy*, to bring back and welcome lovingly the poor sinners and wanderers who are to be converted and return to the Catholic Church; *in power*, to combat the enemies of God who will rise up menacingly to seduce and crush by promises and threats all those who oppose them; finally, she must shine forth *in grace* to inspire and support the valiant soldiers and loyal servants of Jesus Christ who are fighting for His cause.

> — Lastly, Mary must become as terrible as an army in battle array [Canticle of Canticles 6:3] to the devil and his followers, especially in these latter times. For Satan, knowing that he has little time — even less than ever — to destroy souls, intensifies his efforts and his onslaughts every day. He will not hesitate to stir up savage persecutions and set treacherous snares for Mary's faithful servants and children whom he finds more difficult to overcome than others.[19]

But why should Mary, of all people (and not Christ directly), conquer Satan? Because the devil

> fears her not only more than angels and men but in a certain sense more than God Himself. This does not mean that the anger, hatred and power of God are not infinitely greater than the Blessed Virgin's, since her attributes are limited. It simply means that Satan, being so proud, suffers infinitely more in being vanquished and punished by a lowly and humble servant of God, for her humility humiliates him more than the power of God. Moreover, God has given Mary such great power over the evil spirits that, as they have often been forced unwillingly to admit through the lips of possessed persons, they fear one of her pleadings for a soul more than the prayers of all the saints, and one of her threats more than all their other torments.[20]

---

[19] St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, paragraph 50.

[20] *Ibid.*, paragraph 52.

WHAT IS MARY'S ROLE IN THE END TIMES?

It consists of the decisive battle between her, the "great sign in heaven", and the dragon (Apocalypse 12). This is already indicated by the fact that, the more godlessness spreads throughout the world, the more she reveals herself and comes to the aid of believers. While on earth the ideals of Freemasonry and of all the other enemies of God are triumphing, devotion to the Mother of God is also spreading and becoming the cause of the greatest flowering of the Catholic missions in the history of the Church. The Apocalypse describes that battle in the following words:

> And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars (12:1). … And there was seen another sign in heaven. And behold a great red dragon (12:3)…. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered: that, when she should be delivered, he might devour her son (12:4). … And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man child. And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert, unto her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a. time, from the face of the serpent (12:13–14). … And the dragon was angry against the woman: and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (12:17).

As we have already mentioned, St. Louis de Montfort views this battle as the fulfillment of all world history from the very beginning of mankind:

> It is chiefly in reference to these last wicked persecutions of the devil, daily increasing until the advent of the reign of anti-Christ, that we should understand that first and well-known prophecy and curse of God uttered against the serpent in the garden of paradise…. "I will place enmities between you and the woman, between your race and her race; she will crush your head and you will lie in wait for her heel" (Gen 3:15).
>
> God has established only one enmity — but it is an irreconcilable one — which will last and even go on increasing to the end of time. That enmity is between Mary, His worthy Mother, and the devil, between the children and the servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and followers of Lucifer.

St. Louis de Montfort goes on to quote the famous passage from St. Irenæus:

> What Lucifer lost by pride Mary won by humility. What Eve ruined and lost by disobedience Mary saved by obedience. By obeying the serpent, Eve ruined her children as well as herself and delivered them up to him. Mary, by her perfect fidelity to God, saved her children with herself and consecrated them to His divine majesty.[21]

Sister Lucia of Fatima, in a conversation with Fr. Fuentes (1957), describes these end times in the following words:

---

[21] *Ibid.*, paragraphs 51–52; 53.

Father, the devil is arming himself for the decisive battle against the Virgin Mary. And because he knows what offends God the most and what it takes to win the greatest number of souls, he does everything that he can to win souls that are consecrated to God, for thus he gains access to a wide field of souls, so as to conquer them that much more easily.... Father, the Mother of God has not told me directly that we are in the end times, but still she has given me to understand that this is the case. There are three reasons for this:

First, because she told me that the devil is preparing for the decisive battle against the Mother of God: the decisive battle, however, is the final battle, in which it becomes clear which side will have the victory and which side will be defeated.

Second, because she told my cousins and me that God is now giving the world the two last means of salvation: the Rosary and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. But if these are the last means of salvation, that implies that there will be no others.

Third, because it is in keeping with the plans of Divine Providence that, if God is going to punish the world, all other usual methods of conversion must first be exhausted. When He saw, however, that the world is neglecting all these methods, He offered it the final means of salvation, namely His Most Holy Mother. But if we now despise and reject this final means of salvation, too, then there is no more forgiveness for us, because we have then committed the sin that the Gospel calls the sin against the Holy Ghost.[22]

---

[22] O. J. M. Alonso, C.M.F., *La Verdad sobre el Secreto do Fatima*, Centro Mariano, Madrid 1976, pp. 103–106.

Maximilian Kolbe recognizes no other means in these times:

> If the Immaculata wants something from us, then there is no doubt that we will safely accomplish it! With her help we are capable of anything, we can convert the whole world. Of ourselves we can do nothing at all, but with the help of the Immaculata we will convert the whole world, I repeat: we will place the whole world at her feet! Let us only be utterly and entirely her property.[23]

[23] Conference, December 31, 1938.

By 13 September 1939, Niepokalanów had been occupied by the invading Germans and on September 19, 1939 most of its inhabitants had been deported to Germany; among them was Fr Maximilian; but that exile did not last long and on 8 December (the feast of the Immaculate Conception) the prisoners were set free

Picture above: the first arrest of St. Maximilian and his brothers

Picture below: German soldiers in Niepokalanów during the II War World

St. Maximilian and seminarians on day of the religious vows (Niepokalanów, July 28, 1940)

The First Communion in Niepokalanów (1940); St. Maximilian began to organize a shelter for 3,000 Polish refugees, among whom were 2,000 Jews. "We must do everything in our power to help these unfortunate people who have been driven from their homes and deprived of even the most basic necessities."

CHAPTER TWO

The Militia Immaculatæ and the Great Secret of Fatima

IN THE SECOND HALF of the year 1917 four great events took place: the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the two-hundredth anniversary celebrations of the founding of Freemasonry (especially in Rome), the appearances of Mary in Fatima and, again in Rome, the founding of the M.I. The first two events are in striking contrast to the latter two. The connection between Bolshevism and Freemasonry is immediately evident, once you know their principles, methods and real goals. The two forces complement each other so well, that one can regard them as a totality: a logical system of thought and action that comes from one source, from the hand of one author. One can say the same thing about the latter two events. Here the author is the Mother of God, who appeared in Fatima in order to come to the aid of a world confronted with the great apostasy of our times. She it was, again, who inspired a faithful instrument in the person of Maximilian Kolbe, whose task it would be to fulfill her will in a simple, profound and effective way. Since the same person was revealed in Fatima and was also the chief cause of the founding of the M.I., the two events

therefore illuminate each other: one sheds its light on the other, so that the true devotee of Mary is able to discern ever more easily and clearly the profound intentions and the unfathomable riches of the Heart of the Immaculata.

From what we have said thus far it is clearly evident how similar Fatima and the Militia Immaculatæ are: the importance of prayer and sacrifice, of unconditional obedience to the Mother of God; the Immaculate Heart of Mary in its capacity as Mediatrix of all Graces (the very essence of the M.I.); the children who saw the visions — examples of true Knights of the Immaculata; the glory of God and the battle for the salvation of souls through Mary.

THE FIRST SECRET OF FATIMA AND THE FIRST-DEGREE M.I.

In the Apocalypse we find the description of the Immaculata's deadly foe:

> And there was seen another sign in heaven. And behold a great red dragon (12:3). … And the dragon was angry against the woman: and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (12:17).

The chief and really the only intention of the dragon is to cast as many souls as possible into eternal damnation. The first part of the great secret of Fatima consists of the vision of this most terrible misfortune:

> We saw something like an ocean of fire. Submerged in this fire were the devils and souls. The devils were distinguished

> from the human beings by their horrible and disgusting appearance, resembling unknown, terrifying monsters….[1]

In order to protect souls from this hellish fire, the Mother of God showed them a means of salvation:

> You have seen hell, where the souls of poor sinners go. In order to save them from it, God wishes to spread devotion to my Immaculate Heart throughout the world.[2]

This devotion is expressed in external works, but consists above all in an interior spiritual attitude: yearning for the salvation of souls, one's own and that of one's neighbor, through consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which is our refuge and the way that leads to God (Apparition of June 13, 1917).

This is precisely the ideal that St. Maximilian entrusts to his Knights, who are expected to attack the deadly foe of souls with all the means at their disposal. This battle is hand-to-hand combat. At stake is every individual soul, which must be preserved from the fires of hell. The solitary Knight in battle for every soul that is presented to him is the foundation of the first-degree M.I.

> In the first degree each one consecrates himself individually to the Immaculata and strives personally to achieve

---

[1] *Sister Lucia speaks about Fatima, op. cit.*, p. 153 [German edition].

[2] *Ibid.*

> the goal of the M.I., according to the talents and abilities given to him by God.[3]

The devil, who is intent on every single soul and forgets none of them, is confronted by the Knight, who still lives in the world, but is no longer of this world, because he is imbued with the presence of the Immaculata. In Fatima the Immaculate Heart of Mary pointed out the mortal danger and declared the general remedy. The first-degree M.I. is, so to speak, the concrete realization of this program. To Maximilian Kolbe was given the grace to illuminate the significance of this devotion of each individual person to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the smallest details of everyday life, like a general who explains to his officers not only the overall strategy but also trains them in the concrete application of this strategy, in minute detail.

THE SECOND SECRET OF FATIMA AND THE SECOND-DEGREE M.I.

The first great instrument of Satan in the battle against the "seed of the woman" is the first beast:

> And I saw a beast coming up out the sea, having seven heads and ten horns: and upon his horns, ten diadems: and upon his heads, names of blasphemy. … And the dragon gave him his own strength and great power. And all the earth was in admiration after the beast. And they adored the dragon which gave power to the beast. And they adored the beast, saying: Who is like to the beast? And who shall be able to

[3] Manuscript: *M.I.*, in: *Co dzień z Świętym Maksymilianem*, Niepokalanów 1954, p. 183.

> fight with him? And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies … against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And power was given him over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell upon the earth adored him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world. (Apocalypse 13:1–8).

Exegetes usually interpret this passage in such a way that "this beast can represent only a political power."[4] In the second secret the Mother of God warns:

> If my wishes are carried out, then Russia will be converted and there will be peace. If not, godless propaganda will spread their errors throughout the world and cause wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have to suffer much. Many nations will be annihilated.[5]

How can this beast rising up out of the infernal sea, *i.e.* anti-Christian regimes, be vanquished? Through the acknowledgment of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the recognition of her power in public, social and political life. The expression of this acknowledgment and this recognition is consecration to the Immaculate Heart, but especially

---

[4] O. Allo, *L'Apocalypse*, Gabalda 1921, p. 184.

[5] *Sister Lucia speaks about Fatima, op. cit.*, p. 153 [German edition].

the consecration of Russia, the country that became the beacon of the gigantic project of destruction carried out by the beast and carried off half of the world with it into the abyss of communistic atheism. This consecration to the Immaculata includes conversion to the sole truth, first on the individual level, but then also in the realm of society and its public institutions and structures: the conversion of the Church, of peoples, and especially of Russia, and finally of the whole world.

It goes without saying: this secret is directed above all to the "great ones of this world", to the pope together with all the bishops, but then also to politicians who, when they listen to the requests of the Immaculata, often receive good things in a miraculous way (*e.g.* the fact that Portugal was spared involvement in the Spanish Civil War and World War II thanks to its consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary). In Tuy the Mother of God expressly foretold to Sister Lucia the terrible punishments that would befall those who were unwilling to listen to her.

Should we conclude from what has just been said that this secret has no significance for the common people? On the contrary! It is, after all, a call to every individual to work through Mary for the social kingship of Christ, so as to place society under the gentle yoke of Christ, even in small and limited circles. It is a commission to go beyond the narrow confines of private life and to fight so that society, together with its structures, will once again be under the dominion of the King of kings, and this is possible only through Mary.

This is precisely the purpose of the second-degree M.I. Through the establishment of cells in all public arenas, society must find its way back to the Immaculata: groups, associations, joint projects, especially publicity work through the press and the mass media — in short, the most modern methods should be applied to the work of conquering

the enemy in those places where he appears to be invincible, since he holds money, other forms of power and all of public life in his hands. Yet it is recognized as a fact that during the Communist terror the Catholic spirit was maintained in many places behind the Iron Curtain through the cells of the second-degree M.I. In the missions (for instance in China) they became a method of

spreading the Catholic faith and Christian civilization. The secret of their success was not great numbers and certainly not large-scale material resources, but rather the intrinsic form:

> Everything through the Immaculata! Lead the whole world and each individual soul to the Immaculata![6]

Consecration — that is the key to understanding the second part of the Fatima secret. Especially the consecration of Russia, but in the wider sense also the consecration of every institution, beginning with the smallest cell of society, the family, and ending with the world as a whole. Fr. Kolbe's teaching was analogous: in order to free the world from the "errors of Russia", that is, from atheistic materialism, we must consecrate to the Immaculata not only people's private lives, but also the public arenas. And since we are only a tiny group, which is insignificant in comparison to the forces of the gigantic army of the enemy,

> we have to be the most perfect instruments possible in her immaculate hands and allow ourselves to be guided by her in everything.[7]

---

[6] Letter from Nagasaki, April 29, 1931 to Fr. Koziura, in: BMK, p. 236.

[7] *Ibid.*

What encouraging words in today's difficult times! One poor, weak human being can rescue many. A little group can set off an avalanche, preparing the way for the great return to God through Mary, the triumph of the Immaculate Heart.

THE THIRD SECRET OF FATIMA AND THE THIRD-DEGREE M.I.

We read again in the Book of Revelation:

> And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth: and he had two horns, like a lamb: and he spoke as a dragon. And he executed all the power of the former beast in his sight. And he caused the earth and them that dwell therein to adore the first beast…. And he did great signs… and he seduced them that dwell on the earth; … saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make the image of the beast (Apocalypse 13:11–14).

The second beast is a further emanation [or extension] of the dragon. Three times the Evangelist calls it the "false prophet" (Apocalypse 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10).

Thus it is a question here of a power that has the ability to prophesy, therefore a spiritual, religious power that is rooted in evil. This evil is nothing other than unbelief, which "comes up out of the earth", *i.e.* from within the Church itself; it mimics the teaching of Christ and of the Church (*he had two horns, like a lamb*). In reality, however, this heresy in the Church is inspired by the dragon and is completely in his service.

Whatever one might think about the publication of the Third Secret of Fatima, there is no longer any doubt today as to its essential

contents: the almost complete destruction of the Church and an unprecedented throng of ruined souls is the work of the second beast, which is, as it were, incarnated in a new world religion, which leads whole nations into the great apostasy in the name of a false ecumenism.

Heaven's answer, however, is always the same — the Immaculate Heart of Mary! In this secret the answer is especially important for the members of the endangered Church itself. Every offensive of the devil, in spite of his sinister intentions, only demonstrates even more clearly the greatness of the victorious Queen. That is why heresies develop at first with dizzying speed: only so that, in the moment of the most severe trial, when it seems that truth has been definitively crushed, the Immaculata will conquer them all without exception. In this victorious role of vanquisher of all heresies, the Immaculata appears especially as the Mediatrix of all graces of conversion. As Co-Redemptrix she puts an end to the "horror of the destruction of holy places" and sees to it that the Sacrifice of our redemption, the Mass of all times, will once more illumine the world with its eternal splendor. The Mediatrix of all graces of conversion ends the period of false ecumenism. The privileges of her universal Motherhood and Queenship annihilate the cult of man, unmask the utopia of a Masonic paradise on earth and once again demonstrate the value of the last things, especially the everlasting beauty of our heavenly fatherland.

All of this concerns pastors primarily. The second beast, even worse than the first, casts the world into the abyss of unbelief and causes countless souls to fall away from the faith by using the weakness and betrayal of many shepherds. The victory over this beast will come from other, zealous and faithful shepherds of souls. But it would be a mistake to think that the Third Secret concerns only a small group of clergy, namely the Church's hierarchy. In every message of Fatima

the Mother of God addresses everyone. By offering her Immaculate Heart as a "refuge", Our Lady of Fatima gives the world the means of conquering even the worst possible temptation, that is, falling away from the faith — a means without which mankind would be utterly helpless against "the diabolical wave that is sweeping over the world".

The question still remains: how does the Immaculate Heart of Mary overcome the lapse of so many shepherds of souls, the great apostasy and the new anti-Christian world religion? Mary already answered these questions long ago in various apparitions (*e.g.* La Salette), or through St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. Her answer: the little army of the faithful "apostles of Jesus and Mary". This answer, like all of Mary's other messages, remains extremely pertinent to the world situation today. The devil's attack is answered by a no less resolute counterattack. The dictatorship of liberalism is countered by the ideal of total dependence upon and subjection to her, who *alone vanquishes all heresies throughout the world.*

This is precisely the goal that St. Maximilian had in mind when he founded the third-degree M.I., with its boundless devotion to the Immaculata, even to the point of heroism. We might recall here once more all that the Saint has said about this highest form of the Militia Immaculatæ. We might also consider the "City of the Immaculata", a miracle of our time (see Part Five, Chapter 3). As we have already said, besides unconditional total consecration to the Immaculata, the third--degree M.I. rests upon two pillars, which are intrinsically opposed to the essence of liberalism and modernism: true obedience and the spirit of poverty. Is not the new world religion simply disobedience toward revealed Truth and the Commandments of God, especially the First Commandment? Does it not consist in the rebellion of unlimited human freedom against God? The Mother of God opposed this

catastrophe in Fatima: total consecration, reparation, the conversion of poor sinners — that is the quintessential message of Fatima.

SUMMARY

The great mystery of Fatima portrays the three-fold workings of Satan, who thereby apes the Most Holy Trinity. The dragon endeavors to bring about the ruin of souls. The two beasts are the means of attaining this goal. The first is modern liberalism, embodied in the sects of Freemasonry and in Communism. The second is the new world religion, constructed on the foundation of false ecumenism. Opposing this monster in its three embodiments is the "Woman clothed with the sun", the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Her "great mystery" consists of the fact that she is the one who will crush the head of Satan. By fulfilling her will, we can save our souls in a simple way (the promise connected with devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary), renew the Christian world order (which is bound up with the consecration of Russia) and ultimately rescue the Church (the Third Secret).

In Fatima the Immaculata placed an effective spiritual weapon in our hands, and at almost the same time she chose her loyal servant, Maximilian Kolbe, who was to organize this counterattack through the founding of the Militia Immaculatæ, a Knighthood in the classical and most noble sense of the word.

The first-degree M.I. demonstrates how important are the works of even the least significant individual believer. St. Maximilian calls to everyone: on you depends the salvation of a great number of souls; it depends on you whether this or that person will someday rejoice in the everlasting vision of God, or will curse God for all eternity in the fiery ocean of hell.

The second-degree M.I. demonstrates the importance of establishing structures, without which the zeal of the pioneers would soon flag. One

can approach souls more easily by means of a group, a structure, an institution. The devil knows that all too well, for he is a past master in this department, *i.e.* in the art of organizing the forces of destruction. That is why his rage knows no bounds, either, when here and there little cells arise in the service of the Immaculata. Opposing the "almighty" power of Freemasonry and Communism, the little army of the Immaculata cannot serve the masses, nor does it have great financial resources at its disposal; but it does not therefore lose courage! Gedeon needed no more than three hundred soldiers in order to conquer the enormous army of the enemy, because God was with him.

Finally, the third-degree M.I. answers the greatest need of our time. It is the call to holiness, to the heroism that the Mother of God demanded of the clergy when she appeared in Fatima. Through the City of the Immaculata in Poland and Japan Maximilian Kolbe won great spiritual victories and worked together in the vanguard of the renewal of spiritual life in the Church. The answer to the apostasy of the nations today can be nothing other than the greatest possible fidelity to the deposit of faith handed down by Tradition. The third-degree M.I. — this is no longer just words, lectures, ideas, gestures which point out the crisis of the Church and do not allow themselves to be swept away by the diabolical wave. The third-degree M.I. is the offensive of unconditional devotion to the Immaculata, who vanquishes all heresies throughout the world and who — through us, in us and with us — crushes the head of the devil forever. The great secret of Fatima has no other conclusion than this: In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph! Fatima and the Militia Immaculatæ were granted to us so as to prepare for the fulfillment of this great promise.

Photo of St. Maximilian Kolbe in 1940

ID card of St. Maximilian Kolbe in German language; in Poland during German occupation, all personal documents were in German

Gemeinde Schimanów
KRS. SOCHACZEW

Schimanów, den 8 I 1940

BESCHEINIGUNG

Bescheinige das der Herr Rajmund
KOLBE
Geboren am 29. 1. 1894
Geburtsort Zduńska Wola
Stand ledig
Wohnort [illegible]
ist in unsere Gemeinde gemeldet und persönlich in die Bücher eingetragen ist.

Der Amtsbürgermeister
in Schimanów
(F. KRETER)

Eigene hand diterschrift

The prison Pawiak; early in 1941, in the only edition of The Knight of the Immaculate which he was allowed to publish, Fr Maximilian set pen to paper and thus provoked his own arrest. "No one in the world can change Truth," he wrote; on 17 February 1941, he was arrested and sent to the infamous Pawiak prison in Warsaw; here he was singled out for special ill-treatment

CHAPTER THREE

The Militia Immaculatæ betrayed

AFTER THE HEROIC DEATH of Maximilian Kolbe, the Knighthood of the Immaculata spread in a miraculous way throughout the world. On the eve of the Second Vatican Council it numbered more than 4,000,000 members and exerted its beneficent spiritual influence on all the continents. "Cities of the Immaculata" were founded in various countries.

Then, with the Council, came the great revolution and with it *"aggiornamento"*, opening the Church up to the modern, godless world — a trend to which the Militia Immaculatæ, too, has fallen victim. After various modifications, the definitive new General Statutes, approved by the Apostolic See, were published in the year 1997. Are these Statutes compatible with the spirit and work of the founder, *i.e.* are they merely an organic development thereof, or do they contradict it?

A NEW PROGRAM

The beginning sounds very nice:

> "…a global vision of Catholic life under a new form, consisting in the bond with the Immaculate, our universal Mediatrix before Jesus" (Article 3).[1]

The scope or purpose (Article 4) is defined as follows:

> [C]ollaborating in the conversion of all, so that "through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, all peoples might be led as soon as possible to awareness of the truth" (*Ad gentes* 42), [through] observance of the law of God and union with the Church, "so that with the help of the Mother of God they may be one" (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum* 30; *cf. Marialis cultus* 33);
>
> [C]ollaborating in the sanctification of all persons and each person in particular, after the example of the Immaculate, in Whom the Church "joyfully contemplates, as in a faultless image, what she, as a whole, wishes and hopes to be" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 103), and in that way
>
> [O]btaining the greatest glory for the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity (*cf. Lumen gentium* 69).

Spirituality and formation are described in Articles 5–9.

---

[1] *Statuty Generalne Rycerstwa Niepokalanej*, Niepokalanów 1998, 22 pages.

5. The spirituality of the M.I. consists in living the baptismal consecration in the light of the Immaculate, gift of the Redeemer. On Calvary, He accomplishes the first act of entrusting, giving Mary to the disciple and the disciple to Mary (*cf.* John 19:25–27). The life of the disciple is characterized [from then on] by the presence of the Mother.

6. The M.I. affirms in Christians the pre-eminence of the interior life, according to a principle dear to St. Maximilian: "first of all, dedicate yourself completely to yourself and, in this way, you will be able to give yourself completely to others… through the overflow of your fullness". With regard to personal prayer, militia members will attend to, in particular, the daily recitation of the ejaculatory prayer: "O Mary, conceived without sin…" together with the "intentions" suggested monthly by the International Centre. Not to be neglected is the praiseworthy custom of wearing with devotion the *Miraculous Medal*, an exterior sign of one's own belonging to the M.I.

7. After the example of Mary, Virgin in listening, Virgin in prayer, Virgin Mother, Virgin offering, members of the Militia of the Immaculate recognize the fundamental value of listening to the Word of God, of the liturgical celebration, of prayer, of charity towards others, of offering one's own being, in order to collaborate with Christ in the salvation of the world.

8. Since the giving of oneself to the Immaculate is not a transitory act, but a responsible and dynamic acceptance of the state of conformation to Her, in order to grow in the spirit of faith and service, it is necessary that militia members be

adequately formed according to the ideals of the Association and in the apostolic style that characterizes it.

9. The members of the M.I. love the Church, Mother and Teacher, and offer themselves as a living and effective presence for contributing to the growth of the ecclesial community.

The Mission of the M.I. is set forth in Articles 10–14:

11. The members of the Militia of the Immaculate make their own the mission of the Church: "to bear the Gospel of Christ as a source of hope for all and a source of renewal for the society".

12. Recognizing in the Immaculate "the new creation", the M.I. sees in Her, perfect disciple of the Lord, the model of the believer.

13. The specific nature of the M.I. consists in promoting the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, namely: "to sow this truth in the hearts of all […] and to take care of its growth and the fruits of sanctification", contributing to the Christian formation of consciences and to the new evangelization. Mary, sign of the victory over evil and death, "through her intimate participation in the history of salvation, while being preached and honored, calls believers to Her Son, to His sacrifice and to the love of the Father" (*Lumen gentium* 65).

14. Therefore, militia members strive to communicate love for the Immaculate by their witness in the various spheres of social activity, permeating every human reality with evangelical spirit. Consequently, they are called to carry out every activity with particular dedication, to promote the protection

of life, in service of the integral dignity of the person, while proposing values of fraternity, justice and solidarity.

In the following articles the various methods of the apostolate are described (Article 15), as well as the social milieus to which the M.I. particularly directs its attention (Articles 16–17). One article is devoted to the use of modern media. The Statutes conclude with the administrative section, "Organization and government" (Articles 19–44).

At first glance the new program seems to be very pious and full of zeal for the cause of the Immaculate. A deeper analysis of both sets of Statutes, however, indicates fundamental differences:

1) There is talk about conversion, but this conversion is understood to mean that the peoples of the world find their way to the truth in unity with the Church, so that with the help of the Mother of God, *all may be one*. The new Statutes do not even use the expression "Catholic Church" or "Catholic truth"; on the contrary, the wish that all may be one is a clear reference to present-day ecumenism. Proof of this is the fact that the chief reason for the founding of the M.I. is not even mentioned: not a word about Freemasonry, about the conversion of heretics, schismatics, Jews, etc. Not even the archenemy, Satan, is mentioned. That is why you can no longer find the mottoes, either, which the founder emphasized so much: *She will crush your head* and *You alone have vanquished all heresies throughout the world*. Even the characteristic ejaculatory prayer of the M.I. was shortened: the founder's addition, "and for all those who do not have recourse to Thee, especially the Freemasons," was deleted.

2) There is not the slightest trace of the fighting spirit of the Church Militant. Therefore the very word "Militia" loses its meaning, and in

fact it has been translated by other terms in various countries, for instance, in France by "Mission of the Immaculate".

The new Statutes are pacifistic; the entire apostolate and mission consists of "giving witness" and "loving". Expressions like "sin, the battle against vice, hell, Satan, the enemies of the Church, fighting under the banner of the Immaculate, saving souls from eternal damnation," etc., are carefully avoided.

These new Statutes present a Christian life that is completely different from the one which Catholic spirituality until now has described as such. It seems as if from now on all men are friends, at least that they are all full of good will and that we, too, should all show our good will and love them from the heart. Such a vision of Christian life is a practical denial of original sin and its consequences and has nothing whatsoever to do with Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church Fathers. Indeed, the first pope explicitly warned us, "Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, strong in faith" (1 Peter 5:8–9).

3) The new Statutes say a lot about the Immaculate. We even find the statement: "Each one should wear the Miraculous Medal." But even here we find fundamental changes: Mary is presented mainly as a model and example, but never as the way, much less as the indispensable way to God, as Maximilian Kolbe taught. Similarly, there is not even the faintest echo of the truth about Mary's universal mediation of graces, which was so dear to St. Maximilian. If the M.I. is supposed to "promote and emphasize the mystery of the Immaculate Conception", why then are these prerogatives of Mary as Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix, which were so important and dear to the founder, not mentioned?

4) Has the theocentric character of the M.I. been preserved, at least? It seems so: "obtaining the greatest glory for the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity" (Article 4.3). In reality, however, the accent is on earthly and human things: human dignity, brotherhood, renewing society, peace in the world, etc. In contrast, we find only one allusion to eternal salvation and the attainment of heavenly glory. It seems that today's Knighthood is supposed to give glory to the Trinity only through active collaboration in building up a better world, a better standard of living, and in promoting human dignity and happiness on earth. The contradiction is aggravating: Maximilian Kolbe and his M.I. are focused completely on eternity and treat earthly life as a short battle in order to win grace and conversion through the Immaculate, as a preparation for true, eternal happiness. In contrast, the new Knighthood is occupied chiefly with earthly life. The use of the term "new evangelization" (Article 13) explicitly leads the members to the contemporary charismatic movement and the ecumenical goal of "uniting the world and all men" (see *Nostra ætate* 1).

A NEW SPIRIT

The official leadership of today's M.I. emphasizes that Maximilian Kolbe's thought and work absolutely must be aligned with the requirements of the Second Vatican Council, and that this is to be done in the name of the "new cultural sensitivity of contemporary humanity".[2] Concretely speaking, "the words and deeds of St. Maximilian must be reinterpreted in light of Chapter 8 of the conciliar Constitution, *Lumen gentium*. The entire religious vocabulary must also be revised, since

[2] This quotation and the others in this paragraph are from Fr. Giuseppe Simbula, O.F.M. Conv., *La Milizia dell'Immacolata: Natura, Teologia, Spiritualità*, Rome 1991 (translated from the Polish edition, Niepokalanów 1994).

it is incomprehensible to modern man." In other words, the entire M.I., along with the Mariology of St. Maximilian, must be modified on the basis of contemporary ecumenism — for that is precisely what Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium* says. The reason: the Saint's message can no longer be understood by modern man.

And so the M.I. was reformed in keeping with these principles. First it was a matter of taking Mary's glories down off the pedestal, because they were "incomprehensible today". Mary now becomes the sister of all mankind, the prototype of the People of God on their pilgrimage, an example in the difficulties of today's life, the model of love of neighbor, tolerance and mutual understanding. Such an image of Mary no longer upsets those who belong to other faiths, and indeed, that is one of the principal demands of the Council: to do and say nothing that could be a stumbling block to the separated brethren. Father Giuseppe Simbula, one of the most important proponents of the post-conciliar M.I., goes so far as to state explicitly that the M.I. must not portray devotion to Mary as something obligatory and necessary, since that would lead to slavery, which is unworthy of a mature Christian.

What about Mary's universal mediation, then, which is such an important truth for St. Maximilian Kolbe? "It is fraught with a one-sided triumphalism. Furthermore, Mariology had been isolated from the other areas of theology, and as a result some aspects of Marian devotion had become exaggerated. No doubt Father Kolbe was under the influence of this Marian zeal, with its positive and negative aspects." Thus Fr. Simbula does not hesitate to describe the Mariology of all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, especially that of Saints Bernard, Dominic, Bonaventure, Bernardine of Siena, Louis-Marie de Montfort, Alphonsus Liguori and many others, as "self-con-

tained, one-sided, exaggerated and precarious". Mary as Mediatrix is, at bottom, nothing more than the mediation of every Christian: if he gives good example and becomes involved for the sake of others, "he, too, will become a mediator of grace".

There is no interest whatsoever left in the contemporary M.I. for Mary's titles as "Co-Redemptrix" and "Queen of Heaven and Earth". They would only lead to confusion, because they are imprecise and no longer suitable for the present democratic age.

But it was necessary to remove yet another stumbling block, no doubt the most serious difficulty in the remodeling of the M.I. After all, the main purpose of the Knighthood was the "conversion of the enemies [of the Church]". Here the tone of the innovators becomes downright sarcastic and insolent. First off, Maximilian Kolbe, with his attitude toward Jews and Freemasonry was a victim of his times. Today this antagonism no longer makes sense, since "the aforementioned forces no longer display any anti-Christian or anti-social behavior." The members of the M.I. would do better "to take an interest in atheists and those who are indifferent to religion by means of an honest and cordial dialogue".

Is today's M.I. the faithful continuation of the M.I. as St. Maximilian founded it? In a material sense, yes, since today's M.I. has preserved the organizational structures of the earlier M.I. (the conditions for membership, the enrollment of the Knights and the administration have not been subject to any changes). On the other hand, the present spirit and purposes are in flagrant contradiction to those specified by the founder. All other ecclesiastical institutions, too, have fared similarly after the Council.

Thus the need arises "to preserve the heritage", which has nothing to do with nostalgia or backwardness, but rather with the salvation of

our souls. Since the M.I. has borne such extraordinary supernatural fruit in the past, since its spirit can be a guidepost to bewildered contemporary man for the salvation of his soul, it is important that this work not founder in the wake of the reforms, but live on in the hearts of faithful Catholics.

This necessity, combined with the present critical state of souls, led to an awakening of the M.I. to new life in absolute fidelity to its founder. Let us ask the Lord and His Most Blessed Mother that this little army of Knights of the Immaculata might faithfully contribute to the ideals and the program of St. Maximilian for the salvation of the Church and for the triumph of Christ the King, *ad maximam Dei gloriam* [to the greatest glory of God].

On 28 May, Fr Maximilian was deported from Pawiak to Auschwitz. There he received his striped convict's garments and was branded with the number 16670

Above: the main gate of concentration camp in Auschwitz

Below: Block 13, the death cell Block

The starvation bunker, in which St. Maximilian died, on August 14, 1941

CHAPTER FOUR

The Task of the Militia Immaculatæ in our Time

IN LA SALETTE the Mother of God proclaims to our times:

> The precursor of the Antichrist will proceed to battle with the armies of many peoples against the true Christ, the sole Redeemer of the world. He will shed much blood and attempt to destroy the true worship of God, in order to have himself worshipped as God.… Before this happens, though, a sort of false peace will prevail on earth; people will think of nothing but enjoying themselves. The wicked will indulge in every sort of sin. But the children of Holy Church, the children of the faith, my genuine followers, will grow in the love of God and in the virtues that are dearest to me.… Rome will lose the faith and become the seat of the Antichrist. The demons of the air will work great sign

> on earth and in heaven with the Antichrist, and men will become more and more perverted….[1]

We are experiencing the Good Friday of the Mystical Bride of Christ, the Holy Church. As then on Calvary, so too today: Christ is betrayed and misjudged by most people, only a small remnant is still loyal to him, a little band gathered around the Mother of Sorrows under the cross. What does it take to be numbered among her children? *What will they be like, these servants, these slaves, these children of Mary?* — asks St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. The description that he goes on to give is a great ideal, which we must first recognize, in order then to imitate it better and ultimately identify ourselves with it completely. He writes about how we must conduct ourselves in that decisive battle:

> [T]horoughly purified by the fire of great tribulations and closely joined to God, [t]hey will carry the gold of love in their heart, the frankincense of prayer in their mind and the myrrh of mortification in their body. They will bring to the poor and the lowly everywhere the sweet fragrance of Jesus, but they will bring the odour of death to the great, the rich and the proud of this world (*cf.* 2 Cor. 2:14–16). They will be like thunder-clouds flying through the air at the slightest breath of the Holy Ghost. [They will be] attached to nothing, surprised at nothing, troubled at nothing…. [T]hey will be true disciples of Jesus Christ, imitating His poverty, His humility, His contempt of the world and His love. They will

[1] A. de Lassus, *Le secret de Notre Dame à La Salette*, in: "Action Familiale et Scolaire", no. 125, Paris 1996.

> point out the narrow way to God in pure truth according to the holy Gospel, and not according to the maxims of the world… they will not spare or heed or fear any man, however powerful he may be. They will have the two-edged sword of the Word of God in their mouths (Hebr 4:12, Eph. 6:17) and the blood-stained standard of the Cross on their shoulders. They will carry the crucifix in their right hand and the rosary in their left, and the holy names of Jesus and Mary in their heart. The simplicity and self-sacrifice of Jesus will be reflected in their whole behaviour.[2]

The Mother of God ends her message in La Salette with the following exhortation:

> I address an urgent appeal to the earth; I am calling the true disciples of the living God who reigns in heaven, of the sole and genuine Redeemer of mankind; I call on the true followers of Christ, who became man; I call my children, my true devotees, who have entrusted themselves entirely to me, so that I might lead them to my divine Son — the children that I carry on my arm, so to speak, who live according to my spirit; finally I am calling on the apostles of the latter times, the true disciples of Christ, who live in contempt of the world and of themselves, in poverty and humility, in silence and in oblivion, in prayer and penance, in purity and unity with God, in suffering and misunderstood by the world. The time has come for them to appear and to bring light to the world.

[2] St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, paragraphs 56–57, 59.

> Go and show yourselves to be my beloved children. I am with you and in you, so that your faith may be a light that shall enlighten you in these unfortunate days. May the zeal in you awaken a hunger for the honor and glorification of Jesus Christ! Fight, O children of light, small in number, but aware that the age of ages, the end of the end is near.[3]

The Militia Immaculatæ was founded in this fighting spirit:

> The Knight of the Immaculata is not indifferent with regard to the evil that is spreading through the world, but rather hates it with all his heart and pursues at every opportunity, in every place and at every time any sort of evil that is poisoning souls.[4]
>
> Now, since the evil spirit is not biding his time but is working quickly and according to plan, we cannot slacken for any reason in our work in Niepokalanów (the City of the Immaculata); after all, it is a question of souls, of the conquest of the whole world and of each individual soul for the Immaculata, of the sanctification of all souls through the Immaculata, until the end of the ages. It would certainly be a shame to lose any individual soul.[5]

The few loyal ones will be especially persecuted by the devil. An individual in this situation would almost certainly be lost; he could

---

[3] A. de Lassus, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[4] *Do ideału MI*, Niepokalanów 1996, p. 70.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

scarcely withstand the manifold temptations and the cunning of the serpent. And so the Savior leads his beleaguered children to Mary. She was given to us for the end times as the victorious general in all of God's battles. She bands her loyal children together into a little army, a spiritual world which is imbued with her presence, her purity, beauty and power. It is not a question of being enrolled in yet another sodality, nor of belonging externally to the M.I.; rather everyone who wants to remain faithful to Christ must consecrate himself to Mary, in whatever manner, and he must live according to this consecration.

The M.I. places into his hands the means of fighting this battle faithfully: the example of St. Maximilian, the history of the M.I., but above all its intrinsic structure, which corresponds so well to the needs of our time and is also extremely well-suited to modern man.

Ultimately it is a question of the most important thing of all: the salvation of our souls and those of others. There is hardly any other movement that helps so much to make it possible to put Christ's words into practice: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of eternal life!"

"IN THE END MY IMMACULATE HEART WILL TRIUMPH."

It is revealed, infallible truth that at the end of the ages Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead, "and His kingdom will have no end". This is the final and definitive triumph of our Redeemer, as St. Paul writes:

> Afterwards the end: when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father: when He shall have brought to naught all principality and power and virtue. For He must reign, until He hath put all His enemies under His feet. …

> And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then the Son also Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:24–28).

But as the morning star precedes the sun, so the triumph of Mary prepares the way for Christ's triumph. That is why the first promise of redemption states: *She will crush your head.* And the Church in her liturgy says to Mary: *You alone have vanquished all heresies throughout the world!* In Fatima we hear from Mary's lips the comforting words: *In the end My Immaculate Heart will triumph,*[6] and St. Maximilian gives expression to this conviction:

> Surely it is God's will that the Immaculata conquer all souls.[7]
>
> But when will she reign in the world? When will the "City of the Immaculata" arise in every land? When will her Miraculous Medal rest upon every breast and will every heart throughout the world beat for her? I maintain that there is no better way of hastening that blessed moment than for each one of us to strive constantly to live more fully our Total Consecration to the Immaculata.[8]

---

[6] Apparition in Fatima on July 13, 1917.

[7] *Do ideału MI, op. cit.*, p. 77.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Table of Abbreviations

AAS Acta Apostolicæ Sedis

BMK *Błogosławiony Maksymilian Kolbe, wybór pism* [Blessed Maximillian Kolbe, Selected Writings], Warszawa 1973

CDM Fr. J. Domański, *Co dzień ze św. Maksymilianem,* Niepokalanów 1994

DS Denzinger-Schoenmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationum*

MG J.P. Migne, *Patrologiæ cursus completus. Series græca*, Paris 1857

RN „Rycerz Niepokalanej"

Table of Contents

Preface 5

Introduction 8

PART ONE: THE MILITIA IMMACULATÆ AT THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH MILITANT

Chapter 1
A Militia *versus* Pacifism 12

Chapter 2
Against the Devil, Sin and Hell 22

Chapter 3
The Fight against Error and False Religions:
Declaring War on Ecumenism 29

Chapter 4
The Fight against the World:
Declaring War on the "Spirit of the Council" 47

Chapter 5
The Campaign of the Knight of the Immaculata:
The Struggle for the Salvation of Souls 53

Chapter 6
Being a Knight 61

Chapter 7
Dust Rags for the Immaculata 68

PART TWO: TO RENEW ALL THINGS IN CHRIST THROUGH MARY

Chapter 1
For the Greatest Glory of God 78

Chapter 2
Divine Providence 83

Chapter 3
The Source of Life for the M.I. — the Holy Eucharist 91

Chapter 4
Per Mariam ad Jesum: To Jesus through Mary 99

PART THREE: THE IMMACULATA: THE MOULD AND MODEL OF THE M.I.

Chapter 1
The Mystery of the Immaculata 113

Chapter 2
Mediatrix of all Graces 126

Chapter 3
The Queenship of the Immaculata 133

Chapter 4
Total Consecration 140

PART FOUR: THE KNIGHT'S POWERFUL WEAPONS

Chapter 1
The Power of Prayer 154

Chapter 2
The Secret of Sure Victory: Being Subject to Our Lady 162

Chapter 3
The Mightiest Weapon: Sacrifice 172

Chapter 4
The "Ammunition" of the Immaculata 179

PART FIVE: NOT JUST WORDS, BUT DEEDS!

Chapter 1
The Apostolate of the Pioneers: The First Degree of the M.I. . . 185

Chapter 2
Concerted Action: The Second Degree of the M.I. 192

Chapter 3
The City of the Immaculata: The Third Degree of the M.I. . . . 202

PART SIX: THE IMMACULATA IN THE END TIMES

Chapter 1
The Significance of the Immaculata in the End Times 215

Chapter 2
The M.I. and the Great Secret of Fatima 236

Chapter 3
The M.I. betrayed 250

Chapter 4
The Task of the Militia Immaculatæ in our Time 262

Table of Abbreviations 268

Father Karl Stehlin

The Immaculata
Our Ideal

The Spirit of the Militia Immaculatæ
according to Father Maximilian Kolbe

The Immaculata
is Our Ideal

To draw near to her, to become like her,
to allow her to rule over your heart and soul forever,
so that she might live and work through men,
so that she might love God with our hearts.
To belong to her unreservedly — that is our ideal!

To shine forth into our surroundings,
to win souls for her,
so that our neighbors will open their hearts to her,
so that she might rule all hearts
beating everywhere in the world,
without distinction of race, nationality, or language,
and that she might be in all hearts
that would ever exist, until the end of the world —
that is our ideal!

And that her life might extend and grow
in every soul that exists now or shall be,
that is our precious ideal!

St. Maximilian Kolbe