

THE KNIGHT OF THE *Immaculata*

E-PUBLICATION OF THE MILITIA OF THE IMMACULATA, USA

NEW PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

PAGE 2

"Meet" Our New MI National Council

PAGE 4

The 2026 MI National Assembly in Pictures

PAGE 7



Cover Photo: Children's Marian Consecration at St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish, Pembroke Pines, FL. Published with the Parents' permission.



by D. Brian Scarnecchia, MI National President

Dear Knights of the Immaculata, It is with heartfelt gratitude that I write to you members of the MI-USA on the occasion of my election as the new MI-USA National President. First, to give thanks to those who have gone before, to the former President, Ronald Rodrigues, and Vice President, Michael Wick, and all the past members of the National Council for their selfless service to the MI and the Immaculata. If I and those newly elected members of the National Council accomplish a fraction of the good they who preceded us have done, building on their legacy, I am certain our task will not be wholly in vain. I hope that Br. Francis Mary Kalvelage, may he rest easy in heaven, will not be disappointed as I try to walk in his footsteps, he who first introduced me to the work of the MI back in 1977 when he invited me to join him and the other teens and young adults for a month-long Youth Mission of the Immaculata retreat at Marytown in Kenosha, WI. He was for me the embodiment of a tireless instrument in Her hands, a true Knight of the Immaculata. He and the other friars who mentored us allowed us the privilege of fixing fences, tending bee hives, distributing day-old donuts to the less fortunate children in the poorer districts of Kenosha, and assisting with the printing of Immaculata

President's Column

magazine. We learned the riches of the Catholic intellectual tradition from luminaries like the late Dr. Warren Carroll, who had just founded Christendom College. But of course, the highlight of our retreat were our nightly vigils we kept before the Blessed Sacrament leading up to our total consecration to Jesus through the Immaculata. I also wish to acknowledge the kindness of our past MI Youth and Young Adults Director, Shevawn Pearson, who allowed me to enroll three of my six children in the summer teen retreat at Marytown in Libertyville, IL, beginning in 2003. For years I had the honor of teaching and forming teens

and young adults with her and the good Franciscan friars at Marytown. In all the years that I have taught, whether at Franciscan University of Steubenville, or Ave Maria University, or now at Ave Maria School of Law, or leading hundreds of university students to the United Nations to lobby in conjunction with the Holy See for authentic human rights, never have I enjoyed mentoring young adults so much as during the MI retreats at Marytown. Today the Church and the world stand at a crossroad, an uncharted path lies before us. Pope Leo XIV in his encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas* (Magnificent Humanity) explains the potential for good and the possible dangers of the AI revolution. He has shown us a way forward directing us to rebuild the "walls of Jerusalem" and be transformed in grace and not attempt to erect again a "Tower of Babel," symbolizing a pseudo-technological divinization. As the prophet Nehemiah once did, he asks us to hold in one hand a spear, and brick and mortar in the other. God willing, the MI-USA will be at the tip of that spear defending human dignity, warding off what Pope Francis referred to as a "throw-away culture" while at the same time we make secure the walls of a "civilization of love" as described by Saint Pope John Paul II in his February 2, 1994, Letter to Families. (Continues on pg. 3)

Daily Holy Mass

will be offered throughout 2026 for the MI-USA and all MI Members, living and deceased, at the City of the Immaculata established by St. Maximilian Kolbe near Warsaw, in Poland.



Send your prayer intentions to be placed in the MI Book of Intentions at the feet of Our Lady and St. Maximilian Kolbe's first class relic: PrayerRequest@MissionImmaculata.com



President's Column

(Continued from page 2)

In our new MI headquarters at Ave Maria University, constantly nourished by the richness of its sacramental life and perpetual Eucharistic adoration, we have tremendous resources and the assistance of experts in AI and digital technology, in philosophy and theology, the humanities and science, and the disciplines of communications, economics, business, and law, to make a new Niepokalanow. I am sure St. Maximilian would have taken full advantage of this opportunity to bring all hearts to Christ through Mary as soon as possible. Can we do less? Please join me in prayer thanking Ave Maria University President, Mark Middendorf, a long-time devotee of St. Maximilian and champion of Marian consecration, for welcoming us to our new home

and providing Fr. Kolbe Missionary of the Immaculata, Antonella Di Piazza, our National Coordinator, a welcome center and an office on campus inside the university's world class Mother Teresa Museum. Let us join her in prayer and action as she together with so many volunteers, the unsung heroes of the MI-USA apostolate, provides resources to MI members and MI Villages, as well as inquirers and visitors from across the United States. As we join hands (time, talent, and treasure) with the MI International and the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, may St. Maximilian Kolbe's vision for the MI spread the mantle of the Immaculata around the world. May she "who has crushed all heresies" bring about an era of peace as she promised at Fatima and inaugurate the reign of Christ the King. And may it begin with us, with our ever-deeper transformation in grace. May the Holy Spirit, the uncreated Immaculate Conception, "Max-IM-eyes" our vision helping us to see all that needs to be done as instruments in the hands of His spouse, Mary, the created Immaculate Conception.

In Christ and the Immaculata,
Brian

"Meet" Our New MI National Council



MILITIA OF THE IMMACULATA
MI NATIONAL CENTER - USA

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

 BRIAN SCARNECCHIA PRESIDENT	 ROY SAMSON VICE PRESIDENT	 EMMA HEGARTY SECRETARY / COUNCIL MEMBER
 JOSHUA MAZRIN COUNCIL MEMBER	 BR. CHRIS GARCIA, OFM CONV. COUNCIL MEMBER	 NICK DIGIOVANNI COUNCIL MEMBER

I am Roy Samson, a devoted husband to Shelly and proud father of three. Since my consecration as a Knight of the Immaculata in June 1998, Mary's maternal guidance has shaped nearly three decades of my life. Right after consecration, I began serving as a small group leader during MI teen retreats, including the Jubilee 2000 MAX Evangelization Team sponsored by the MI and commissioned by Cardinal Francis George. I'll never forget the sacred moment he stepped onstage and prayed with us during one of our dramas. That experience fueled years of

service as director, small-group leader, and music/liturgy coordinator across the U.S., Canada, and Hawaii, plus summer programs, MI Juniors, and the young-adult venue at the Long Beach Family Conference. Pilgrimages to Poland in 2001 and 2005, walking in St. Maximilian's footsteps through Niepokalanów and Auschwitz, sealed the MI forever in my heart. I collaborated closely with the MI Youth and Young Adults National Director to develop the infrastructure to form future generations, which included training emerging young adult

"Meet" Our New MI National Council

(Continued from page 4)

leaders in the Kolbean spirituality, especially as it pertained to implementing the MI Code of Conduct. It was at an MI New Year leadership retreat in 2008 that I became engaged to Shelly. Today we serve together in family faith formation, parent sessions, monthly Communion retreats, and Theology of Dance workshops, and lead the teens at the 2026 Southern California Catholic Homeschool Educators Conference. Even during my decade at SpaceX, the mentorship I received through MI Youth helped shape Trajectory, a leadership program for a space-faring civilization. We continue our formation every two weeks at St. Michael's Abbey [Orange County, CA], through the Archangel Institute—and enrolled our son Trystan Maximilian there—so our children can grow up in that same spirit of total consecration. Daily prayer, the Sacraments, and these experiences keep me ready to give “all that I am without reserve” as an instrument of the Immaculata, helping form, unite, and mobilize Knights for the greatest glory of God.

Roy Samson

Dear MI Family, it is an honor to introduce myself to you as the newly elected MI National Secretary. Many of you may recognize me from the youth and young adult programs. When I was 13 years old, I attended my first Militia of the Immaculata summer youth camp at Marytown in Libertyville, IL, and I made my consecration. They always say that when you dedicate yourself to Our Lady, she will take you on a grand adventure, and the last 22 years of my life have been a personal testament to that! I wanted to bring others to Jesus through Mary in St. Maximilian Kolbe's spirituality, so I volunteered as a group leader and eventually directed the youth

programs that had deeply formed my own heart. In my academic career, I earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree in Theology, which I have used working in Pro-Life ministry, parish ministry, formal classroom teaching, and now as a homeschool mother of four young children. My formation in the MI continues to guide me, and my entire family. I have been immeasurably blessed by the MI and its ministry throughout my life, and I see the opportunity to serve on the National Council as a way to show my gratitude for the many gifts I have received, and as a way to continue to live out my consecration by furthering the mission that St. Maximilian envisioned when he established the MI. I humbly ask each of you to pray for me, and for the entire Council, as we seek to do Our Lord's will. Thank you for your support!

Emma Hegarty

What is most important to me is that I am a husband and father in a Catholic family. But I am also a Catholic speaker and writer whose specialties include the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Maximilian Kolbe, the Immaculata, and prayer. I directed an apostolate in the Diocese of Brooklyn, NY, and served as the director of evangelization for the Diocese of Venice, Florida before working in real estate development for half a decade. My devotion to the Immaculata and the spirituality of St. Maximilian Kolbe has been a central part of my spiritual life and apostolic work for many years. I have been a member of the Militia of the Immaculata since 2012 and have devoted much of my writing and speaking to making Kolbe's Marian spirituality better

known and lived. Currently I am the Executive Director for the Albertus Magnus Institute, a non-profit which offers tuition-free Catholic liberal arts education, and am the Founder of the Immaculata Institute, a nonprofit devoted to spreading the teachings of St. Maximilian Kolbe and promoting Marian consecration. I have written 3 books and have edited over 50 Catholic books and textbooks. I look forward to serving the Immaculata alongside all of you! **Joshua Mazrin**

My name is Br. Chris Garcia, OFM Conv., and I am humbled to be one of your newly elected council members. I am a solemnly professed religious brother not pursuing ordination of St Joseph of Cupertino Province with its headquarters in California. I made my solemn profession in August 2021 in Hermosa Beach, California. I made my initial consecration to the MI in October 2017 when I was in studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington DC. I graduated in May 2021 with a licentiate in canon law. I have been involved with the MI in different capacities, having worked with several villages across the US in various leadership capacities, organized multiple Marian consecrations, given talks on the Blessed Virgin Mary and Maximilian Kolbe to various groups, and have encouraged young adults to consider MI Youth over the years. I was recently reassigned and moved to San Antonio, Texas, in January 2026 and intend to develop the MI in the area. My goals for the next four years are the following. First, to have all MI members know that they are valued, that their voice is being heard and respected. If we desire to win the world for Christ through the Immaculata, it cannot be done alone. We each have our particular gifts and talents. Let us work together to enact change. Second, to provide consistent activities and formation for MI members at the regional and national level. We are all spread across the country and may not know other local villages and initiatives that are occurring. We desire for members to come together to develop healthy authentic relationships with one another. Third, as a Conventual Franciscan, to provide an opportunity for MI members to get to know the friars from across the US and especially those in initial formation who have made their MI consecrations. I humbly

ask you to pray for each of us on the National Council as we discern how to guide and walk alongside you over the next four years. Know of my prayers for each and every one of you.

Br. Chris Garcia, OFM Conv.

Hello, Fellow Knights of the immaculata! I am newly elected Council member Nick DiGiovanni, and I look forward to serving you, and especially receiving communication and feedback from you on what you are expecting of me and the rest of the Council. I am currently the St. Mary Mokena, IL MI Village Moderator. My conversion began in the summer of 1986 through the life of a mentor devoted to Our Blessed Mother. Hence, my devotion to Our Lord's Mother beckoned me to submit my requirements for candidacy and here I am now newly elected! I am active in many St. Mary Mokena Parish and outside ministries, including the Knights of Columbus, Prison Ministry, Homebound Ministry, the Divine Mercy Ministry, Men's Ministry and core team leader of The Search Ministry. I have been active in our St. Mary's MI Village since its founding in late 2019 and have been the moderator for our Village for the past four years. I am a 1985 graduate of MacCormac College where I received my associate's in applied science - emphasis in shorthand reporting. After graduation, I eventually founded my reporting business in 1990. Throughout my early career, I served on the state and national associations which promote and serve my profession. Later, as I began to give more back to my profession, MacCormac College appointed me as an adjunct professor. I also serve on the College's Board of Advisors for the court reporting curriculum. This past winter I was commissioned to promote the film, *Triumph of the Heart*, and in doing so developed a passionate love for St. Maximilian Kolbe and his teachings. Through his intercession and his devotion to Our Lady, mine only grew more intense. My love for both our Blessed Mother and St. Maximilian will serve as a foundation for my serving you and I will rely on them to intercede for us as a Council and to deepen our spiritual awareness of our call to serve you. All In! Your brother,

Nick DiGiovanni

The 2026 MI National Assembly in Pictures



The Assembly opened with Holy Mass at Ave Maria parish church.



Welcome to the National Assembly!



Jesse Ray, Director of the Mother Teresa Museum, welcomes the participants on behalf of Ave Maria University.



The MI International President, Miquel Bordas Proszynski, Fr. Gilson Nunes, Delegate of the International Spiritual Assistant, and a few participants visit the MI National Office.



The International President congratulates the newly elected MI-USA National President Brian Scarnecchia.



Brian's Election acceptance speech.

Welcome letter from the Ordinary of the Diocese of Venice, Most Rev. Bishop Emilio Biosca Aguero, OFM Cap.



DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

August 5, 2026

Militia of the Immaculata
5251 Clancy Avenue
Ave Maria, FL 34142

Minational@missionimmaculaa.com

Dear Militia of the Immaculata,

Peace and Goodness!

As you gather for the National Militia of the Immaculata Assembly, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Diocese of Venice.

I pray that your gathering will be beneficial and fruitful. May the intercession of the Blessed Mother and St. Maximilian Kolbe assist you in your deliberations during this time.

With prayerful best wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

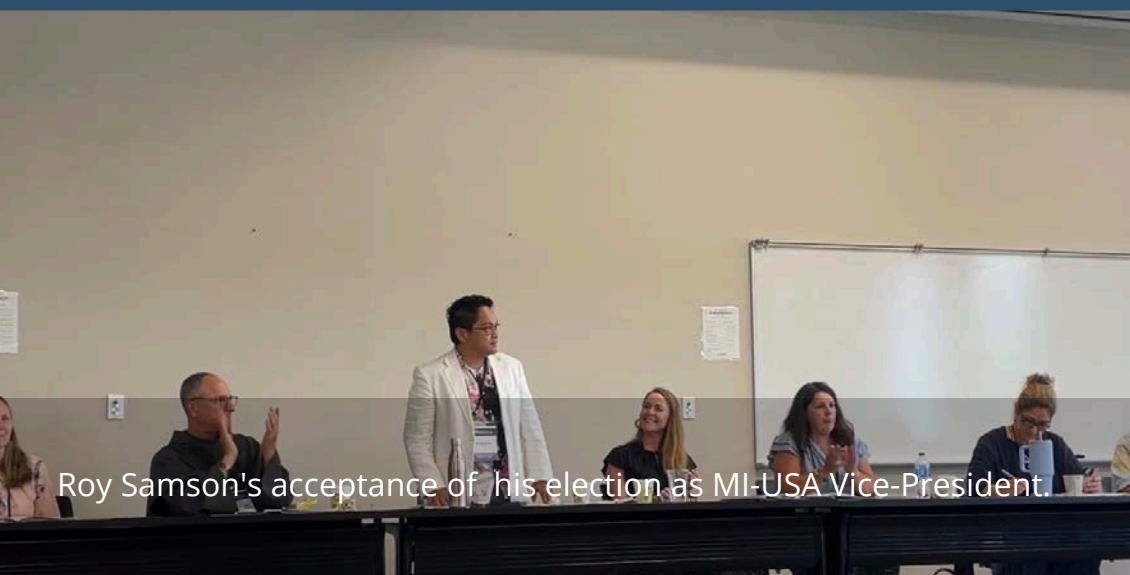
Emilio Biosca

+ Emilio Biosca, O.F.M. Cap.,
Bishop of the Diocese of
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EEB/mm

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Roy Samson's acceptance of his election as MI-USA Vice-President.



The Ave Maria University President, Mark Middendorf, visits and greets the MI Assembly participants in the Dining Hall.



The 2026 MI National Assembly participants.



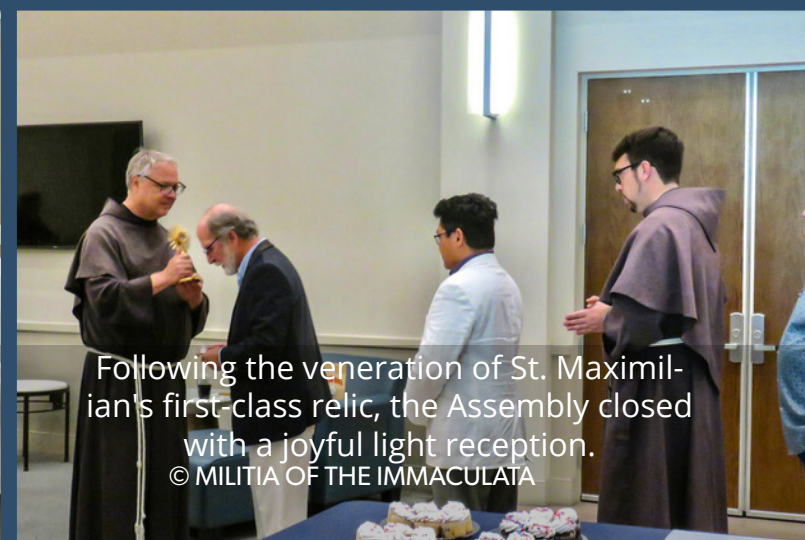
Solemn Blessing and Commissioning of the New Council, including Emma Hegarty and Joshua Mazrin (not in the picture.)

7 THE KNIGHT OF THE IMMACULATA - ISSUE 119



Blessing of all present through the intercession of the Immaculata and St. Maximilian Kolbe.

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Following the veneration of St. Maximilian's first-class relic, the Assembly closed with a joyful light reception.

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“
In Mary's Heart,
heaven and earth, time
and eternity, meet....
The beautiful face of
Our Lady is unique; it
transcends any possible
representation, and
yet, at the same time, is
familiar to us.”

Where True Beauty Lies

Pope Leo XIV's Homily on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady, August 15, 2026

Dear brothers and sisters, it is with great joy that I celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption with you once again this year. The Magisterium of the Church teaches us that Mary “having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory” (Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1 November 1950) and points out to us, in this Mystery, the fulfillment of the most perfect grace that God bestowed upon her at her Immaculate Conception (cf. *ibid.*). For this reason, many works of art depict her as a beautiful young woman physically rising from the earth toward the heavens at the end of her

earthly life. These works are inspired by the scene described in the passage from the Book of Revelation that we heard in the First Reading: “A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet” (Rev 12:1), signifying that in Mary’s heart, heaven and earth, time and eternity, meet. On the surface this image seems to contrast with our experience of what the passing of the years does to us. As we age, our bodies do not become more agile, but heavier; our skin does not become fresher, but shows the signs of old age; our hair does not gain color and luster, but turns gray and then white. So, what do we have in common with the beautiful young woman depicted on the altarpieces of our churches? To understand this, we must unite the two signs we have mentioned: the incorrupt body of the Mother of God and her immaculate heart. For it is the purity of the soul that, in Mary — as in us — by the grace of God, illuminates and transfigures the whole person, leading us to the glory of Heaven. The glorification of Mary, body and soul, teaches us that our true beauty does not lie in hiding the signs of aging, but in revealing the signs of love that never end, and are even impressed on our flesh (cf. 1Cor 13:8). With this in mind, we

are invited to reexamine many of the aesthetic standards, predominantly hedonistic and consumerist in nature, that the world imposes on us. These standards risk trapping us in burdensome expectations, causing us to waste precious energy on what does not really matter and does not last forever. In everyday life, we encounter people whose faces are marked by the years and by suffering, yet who are capable of radiating serenity, kindness and peace around them; just as we may observe others who are perhaps outwardly attractive but hard and cold at heart. It is easy to see where true beauty lies and where, on the other hand, there is still a need for conversion, forgiveness and healing. If we truly wish to discover and nurture the divine beauty that surrounds us and for which we were made, and to share it with those around us, we must learn to see it in the wrinkles of an elderly person as in the tender face of a child as well, in the maturity of an adult as in the liveliness of a young person as well, in work clothes and tools as well as in festive decorations. We must listen to the unique love stories that each of these realities tells us, recognizing in them small glimpses of heaven. Love is humanity’s most beautiful adornment. Love transfigures, transforms, ennobles and lifts us up, making us light, free and close to God, even amid life’s ups and downs. Reflecting on the mystery of the Assumption of the Virgin, Saint Paul VI said that to understand its meaning, “we must transform the terms we use in earthly and temporal language into superlative and absolute ones [...], to imagine the eternal on a small scale” (Homily, 15 August 1969). Regarding the encounter between the infinite and the finite in the Mother of God, Pope Francis wrote: “Mary was able to turn a stable into a home for Jesus, with poor swaddling clothes and an abundance of love” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 286). The miracle that Mary, the maiden of Nazareth, experienced in her innocent heart, which led her to the glory of Heaven, is a meeting of extremes, as she herself testifies in the inspired words of the *Magnificat*, which we heard in the Gospel (cf. Lk 1:46–55). In this canticle, through the humble expressions of her faith, the Mother of God speaks to us in simple terms of the magnificent mysteries she experienced, such as God becoming man in her to save humanity, and the Eternal One revealing himself within time to reopen the path to eternity for us. At the same time, in her position as a “humble servant,” Saint

Paul VI says that Mary shows us the “humble dimension” in which we too can encounter the Lord. We need not look far to find the sublimity of the Mystery we celebrate. We can encounter it wherever there is true charity. For example, in the eyes of a father and mother returning home after a long day, tired but happy to be with their children. In the faces of grandfathers and grandmothers who, despite the aches and pains of old age, are filled with unexpected energy as they care for their grandchildren. In the commitment of young people who strive to grow in morality and sincerity, ready even to go against the grain of “what everyone else does.” Finally, in the daily work of so many men and women who, with faith and dedication, help bring a little bit of Heaven to earth and the earth closer to Heaven.

Dear friends, the beautiful face of Our Lady of the Assumption is unique; it transcends any possible representation, and yet, at the same time, is familiar to us. Even at this very moment, we can see her face in the people who are close to us, such as the brothers and sisters with whom, in faith, we share the daily offering of our lives. For this reason, the community of believers sees itself in the woman of the Book of Revelation, and the Second Vatican Council describes Mary as “the image and beginning of the Church, [...] as a sign of sure hope and solace” (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 68). In her holy human nature, by the grace of God, we also see our nature; therefore, we too are called to live the same grace-filled life that she lived and to share in her glory. When speaking of Christ’s resurrection, Saint Augustine urged the Christians of his time to make it the compass and focal point of their lives. He said: “Christ rose from the dead so that He might never die again [...]. Change course, follow the light! Begin to rise from the very place from which he rose” (Enarratio in Psalmos, 126:7). Let us accept his invitation. Let us follow the light of the Risen Lord, changing course if necessary. Let us do so, especially today, by looking to Mary, whom God has crowned with glory in body and soul, and whom he has given to us as Mother, guide, companion on our journey, and protector on the path to Heaven.

Pope Leo XIV



On Some Aspects of Kolbe's Marian Spirituality

By Fr. Pio Maria - Part 1

What follows is an edited transcript of a short presentation given at the MI National Assembly, highlighting several distinctive aspects of Saint Maximilian's Marian spirituality. The presentation covered a range of ideas in rapid succession, and attendees followed along using an outline. In this article, relevant portions of that outline appear as headings at the beginning of each section. The transcript has been lightly edited for readability, and detailed references to the sources have been kept to a minimum. A rough recording of the original presentation will be made available on the Militia of the Immaculata website.

Introductory words

St. Maximilian was quick to point out that we get to know Our Lady better through prayer than through study. He said that

she's someone so elevated that, the more prideful we are in approaching her, the more stupid we could become, and that we get to know her best "on our knees." He also said that, when we do holy reading about Our Lady, if we're attentive to the fact that she's a real person next to us and who loves us, we can receive more knowledge about her than what the writer has written. So, when we come into a discussion like this, we always ask her help because, I can give you a long class, but you will know her better through docility to her own teaching of us.

Let's start with a little prayer. ... In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Hail Mary, ... Saint Maximilian, pray for us. Get ready, now we're going to move at a fast clip. There's so much to say, but it's so, so good.

Franciscan aspects

- evangelical/missionary
- emphasis on the Immaculate Conception
- Strong on affect
- Strong on will as faculty of charity
- theology as practical, and meant to be lived and applied
- *sine proprio* [words from our vow formula, referring to our vow of poverty] - we become her *proprietas*

St. Maximilian was a **Franciscan**, and this was deeply formative for his thought.

Evangelical and missionary

Francis was the first founder of a religious Order to go on mission and the Franciscan Rule was the first rule with a chapter on missions. He re-started - almost single-handedly - missionary work in the Church. During his life, he sent friars to as many countries as he could [they were already in eleven countries at the time of his death in 1226]. From his time on, Franciscans were usually the first missionaries in new countries. "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue," in 1493, he brought twelve Franciscans to the New World. So there's this missionary, evangelical thing, which is in our DNA, and which affects his Marian consecration.

The **Immaculate Conception**, the "golden thread," as Kolbe saw it. This is not because other Orders don't love Our Lady but, for some reason, Our Lady has given us this golden thread to pass on. It connects our history, from the time of Blessed John Duns Scotus and it continues even now. It was always, like our badge, and we fought for it, fought for it, fought for it, and defended it. This is something which is not in de Montfort's consecration. It wasn't a dogma during de Montfort's time and does not make up a major part of his thought, but it is an essential part of Kolbe's thought.

Strong on affect and strong on the will as the faculty of charity

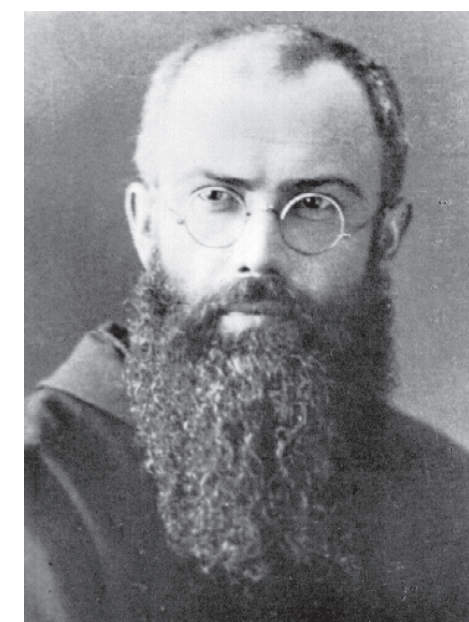
The Franciscans always had a strong focus on affection in prayer. There is a focus on the will as the faculty which allows us to love, and the will and love are higher than intellect. The intellect, in some sense, brings God down to us in a very

limited way in our minds, but love - through a simple act of the will - touches God immediately, without any mediation of perfect or less than perfect thought. So there's always a strong reliance on the will and affect in Franciscan thought. The importance of love is strong in all of Kolbe's writings. This will be touched on again later.

Theology as practical

St. Francis wasn't against study. He was just against study which only served prideful interest. There's a letter that he wrote to St. Anthony. It says, "To Brother Anthony, my bishop. It pleases me that you teach the brothers sacred theology, as long as, as it is stated in the Rule, it does not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion, to which all things must contribute." So, teach theology, but it's supposed to serve prayer and devotion.

(Continues on pg. 13)



fr. Maximiliano M. Kolbe

On Some Aspects of Kolbe's Marian Spirituality

(Continued from page 12)

And he also said, "It pleases me that brothers study, as long as they study not primarily to teach others, but first to apply it to themselves. And once they apply, then to teach to others." So it's for the sake of application.

For Franciscans, theology is always practical. God doesn't reveal Himself just so we can know stuff, it is for application and for relationship, so that we can know Him better and love better. Kolbe said, "It does not please our Holy Father Francis to beg for a part of his love. St. Francis wants his spirit to develop without reserve. It only pleases Francis when we want for a love greater than his. Then he will have perfect joy." So we are always supposed to be growing, always supposed to be moving.

And lastly, (under this part of the outline), *sine proprio*, that's from the vow formula, to "have nothing," to profess poverty.

Kolbe doesn't use the word "slave," like de Montfort (more on this later), he says "thing and property," "res and proprietas." Franciscans don't have property, but we have become her property through consecration. We have no things, but we are her things. She has taken us to herself.

Emphasis on the union of the Holy Spirit and Our Lady

- Immaculate Conception is more about the Holy Spirit than our Our Lady
- Similar to hypostatic union, but with this difference...
- Mediatrix because of the Immaculate Conception

There's a special *emphasis on the union of the Holy Spirit and Our Lady*, especially connected to the Immaculate Conception. This is part of the Kolbean heritage, and a lot could be said about it. ...

For him, the Immaculate Conception is more about the Holy Spirit than it is about Our Lady – a more secret, personal identity of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, which is revealed through

His relationship with Our Lady.

Similar to the Hypostatic Union, but with this difference...

He would say that the title "Spouse of the Holy Spirit", is a good title, because St. Francis used it. St. Francis wrote a prayer that the friars prayed fourteen times throughout each day in which he addresses Our Lady as "Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, and Spouse of the Holy Spirit." Kolbe said that it's a good title, but it's not strong enough. In the relationships in human life, the spousal relationship is the closest, in body and soul but, he said, it's too faint for the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Our Lady.

He says the best image that we have in which to express the union between the Holy Spirit and Our Lady is the **hypostatic union**, and this sounds heretical at first.... The hypostatic union is the union of two natures, divine and human, in the one person of Jesus. Kolbe says, we can borrow this terminology. The union of Our Lady and the Holy Spirit is like that. "Like" – he says "quasi," because he's a good theologian. (He got his doctorate in phi-

losophy when he was twenty-one years old, and his doctorate in theology when he was twenty-five years old.) Their union is like the hypostatic union, except for this important difference. In Our Lord, there's one person with two natures, but in the union of Our Lady and the Holy Spirit which began at her Immaculate Conception, there are two persons, but they are united so perfectly that Our Lady

has never experienced herself apart from the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit works completely through her without any hindrance. St. Maximilian says when we encounter Our Lady, we encounter the Holy Spirit in a real, profound way. He says we venerate the Holy Spirit in a special way when we venerate Our Lady. Our consecration plunges us into a special relationship with the Holy Spirit.

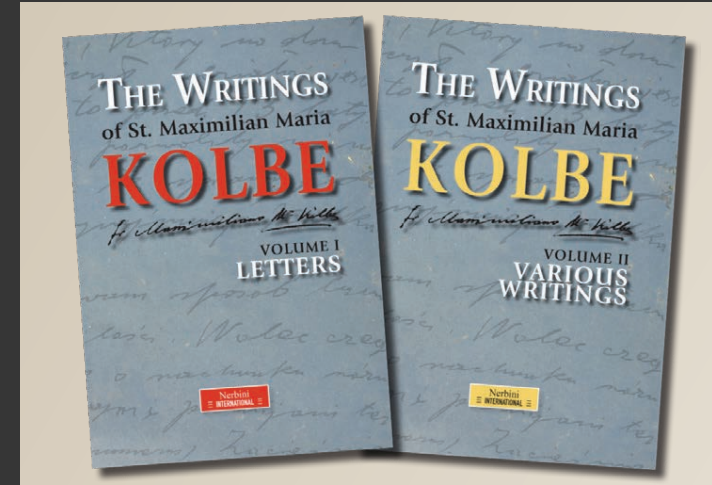
Traditional Catholic theology holds that Mary mediates grace because she helped acquire grace. She's Mediatrix because she's Co-redemptrix. Kolbe agrees, but he also locates this mediation in the union of these two at her Immaculate Conception. **She mediates grace because she's the Spouse of the Holy Spirit**, and He is the source of all the grace we receive..., it all comes through Him. Kolbe streamlines this thought: because she is one with the Holy Spirit, of course she distributes grace.¹

So that was something about the special relationship of the Immaculata to the Holy Spirit in St. Maximilian's thought. (*To be continued*)

[1] Here is a section from his writings which touches on the ideas just mentioned in the presentation:

"[The Holy Spirit] is in the Immaculata, as the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, the Son of God, is in Jesus, but with this difference: that in Jesus there are two natures, the divine and the human, and a single person, the divine. The nature and person of the Immaculata, instead, are set apart from the nature and person of the Holy Spirit. This union, however, is so ineffable and so perfect that the Holy Spirit only works through the Immaculata, His Bride. Accordingly, she is the Mediatrix of all graces of the Holy Spirit. Given that each grace is a gift from God the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit, there is no grace that does not belong to the Immaculata, given to her for her to dispose of freely.

"Therefore, by venerating the Immaculata, we venerate in a very special way the Holy Spirit, and just as grace comes to us from the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit, so rightly the fruits of this grace ascend to the Father in reverse order, that through the Holy Spirit and the Son, that is to say through the Immaculata and Jesus." (KW 634)



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The Martyr of Charity, St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe (1894-1941), before his death in the Auschwitz concentration camp, had spent the previous twenty-three years as a priest, evangelizer, media mogul, social commentator, missionary and religious reformer. His life's work cut short at age 47, St. Kolbe nonetheless left behind an impressive body of writings. In the 1950s the English-speaking world first began reading bits and pieces of those writings translated from the original Polish, Italian and Latin. The publication of the first English critical edition, *The Writings of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe*, constitutes a historic event for the English-speaking readership. The sublime inspiration of the Saint's Marian thought and spirituality transpires from every page of his writings, whether it be a treatise on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Immaculate Conception, an evangelization plan, a message of counsel to religious and laity, or a filial letter to his mother. His deep personal relationship with the Immaculate Virgin Mary colors and enflames nearly every page. His leitmotif is love for God, the Church, the world and all its peoples. His goal is the conversion and sanctification of that world.



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*That our ecclesial
communities,
thanks to the faith
journey they have traveled,
may become ever more
welcoming toward
non-practicing brethren.*

the religion that teaches love of God and neighbor can perfect men. The religion of Jesus Christ is really the religion of love, of perfect love, and is evident in the holy words of Jesus Christ. ... It can be said that if this religion is spread around the world, the world would become paradise." (KW 1205) Later, in his article "Patroness of Missions," he gives us the model which will mold us in this love. "What matters is not, in fact, what we do, but the way, the intention, and the love with which we do it.... St. Thérèse called herself 'little flower of the Immaculata' and acknowledged that she was raised by the Immaculata. We also are..., and she will teach us unlimited trust in the merciful love of God, of which she is the embodiment." (KW 1263)

An example of a life focused on love and molded by the Immaculata was Br. Martin Schmitz, OFM Conv., who was the last of the founding friars of Marytown in Crystal Lake IL in 1948. Br. Martin died peacefully on August 24, 2024 in the loving presence of the Little Sisters of the Poor. When Br. Martin was 17, he joined the

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Franciscans and was the first establishing class of Marytown, founded on September 15, 1948. Br. Martin, served the Immaculata for his whole religious life of 77 years. He joined us for our Provincial Chapter at the end of July and was blessed by our Minister General, Fr. Carlos Alberto Trovarelli OFM Conv., during this time.

We trust in Our Blessed Mother, for whom Br. Martin had a deep devotion, to intercede for him and lead him into his eternal reward in heaven. May St. Francis, St. Maximilian Kolbe, and all the saints and angels, be there to welcome him!

Prayer - The Act of Total Consecration to the Immaculata.

Prayer - The Act of Total Consecration to the Immaculata.

(Prayer composed by St. Maximilian Kolbe)

If it pleases you, use all that I am and have without reserve, wholly to accomplish what was said of you: "She will crush your head," and, "You alone have destroyed all heresies in the world."

Let me be a fit instrument in your immaculate and merciful hands for introducing and increasing your glory to the maximum in all the many strayed and indifferent souls, and thus help extend as far as possible the blessed Kingdom of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. For wherever you enter, you obtain the grace of conversion and growth in holiness, since it is through your hands that all graces come to us from the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

V. Allow me to praise you, O sacred Virgin.
R. Give me strength against your enemies.

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"Through Mary Immaculate to Jesus: that is our watchword. The more you spread veneration and love for the Immaculata the more souls you win over to her, and, through her, to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, who loved us unto death on the Cross."

– St. Maximilian Kolbe