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# NO GREATER LOVE

by Ronald L. Rodrigues, MI National President



**D**ear Knights of the Immaculata, Maria! As we leave the Christmas season behind and move rapidly into Lent, it seems there is little time between the celebration of the birth of Christ and His death. The time between seems so short it can sometimes be forgotten or overlooked. His life on this earth was short.

February reminds me of why all this happened. It was the greatest act of Love. God took on human flesh, He was born in a manger, and went to the cross and died for our sins. Love is the highest expression of God's nature. On our part, love is the greatest virtue. To love is to do the will of God.

The love of God is greater than anything we can imagine. He does more than love us. He is Love itself. It is only through His love that we are truly able to love others.

"If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge, if I have faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but re-

joices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.... So, faith, hope, and love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

Having faith, we believe God and what He says, in hope we expect to receive what He promises, but in love, we do what God does. St Maximilian knew what it meant to love: he gave his life for another out of love and sacrificed everything for someone else.

On the 14th of February, we celebrate Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, a season of penance, reflection, and fasting preparing to celebrate Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Ashes symbolize the dust from which God made us. Ashes also

symbolize grief, grief that we have sinned and caused separation from God. Ashes are a reminder of our mortality. But we also celebrate St. Valentine's Day, a day of love that may help us to remember who Jesus is and wants us to be, a day to cherish and love others. With both days coming together this year, maybe God is reminding us that He loves us.

Legend has it there was once a great Saint who represented what everyone needed, Love. The Catholic Church has recognized at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, and all were martyred. One was a Roman priest, another the Bishop of Interamna (modern-day Terni, Italy), both buried along the Via Flaminia outside of Rome. The third was said to be a saint who suffered on the same day with several companions in the Roman province of Africa.

Pope Gelasius I in 469 AD declared the 14th of February to be St. Valentine's Day; some believe that he did this to replace the pagan holiday, Lupercalia, which he outlawed in the late 5th Century. Lupercalia was celebrated on the 15th or mid-February, as a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus. Some people believe that St. Valentine's Day is celebrated on February 14 to commemorate the anniversary of St. Valentine's death or burial which is believed to have occurred around 270 AD.

(Continues on pg. 12)

## Daily Holy Mass

will be offered throughout 2024 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:

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# THE VIRGIN PRESENTING OFFERINGS

## THE FATHERS AND DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

**O**n this day the most Blessed Virgin obeyed both these precepts. Although Mary was not bound by the law of purification, since she was always a Virgin and always pure, yet her humility and obedience made her wish to go like other mothers to purify herself. She at the same time obeyed the second precept, to present and offer her Son to the Eternal Father. "And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord" (Luke 2:22). But the Blessed Virgin did not offer Him as other mothers offered their sons. Others offered them to God; but they knew that this oblation was simply a legal ceremony, and that by redeeming them they made them their own, without fear of having again to offer them to death. Mary really offered her Son to death, and knew for certain that the sacrifice of the life of Jesus which she then made was one day to be actually consummated on the altar of the Cross; so that Mary, by offering the life of her Son, came, in consequence of the love she bore this Son, really to sacrifice her own entire self to God. Leaving then aside all other considerations into which we might enter on the many mysteries of this festival, we will

only consider the greatness of the sacrifice which Mary made of herself to God in offering Him on this day the life of her Son. And this will be the whole subject of the following discourse. The Eternal Father had already determined to save man, who was lost by sin, and to deliver him from eternal death. But because He willed at the same time that His Divine justice should not be defrauded of a worthy and due satisfaction, He spared not the life of His Son already become man to redeem man, but willed that He should pay with the utmost rigor the penalty which men had deserved. "He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). He sent Him, therefore, on earth to become man. He destined Him a mother, and willed that this mother should be the Blessed Virgin Mary. But as He willed not that His Divine Word should become her Son before she by an express consent had accepted Him, so also He willed not that Jesus should sacrifice His life for the salvation of men without the concurrent assent of Mary; that, together with the sacrifice of the life of the Son, the Mother's heart might also be sacrificed. Saint Thomas teaches that the quality of mother gives her a special right over her children; hence, Jesus being in Himself innocent and undeserving of

punishment, it seemed fitting that He should not be condemned to the Cross as a victim for the sins of the world without the consent of His Mother, by which she should spontaneously offer Him to death. But although, from the moment she became the Mother of Jesus, Mary consented to His death, yet God willed that on this day she should make a solemn sacrifice of herself, by offering her Son to Him in the Temple, sacrificing His precious life to Divine justice. Hence Saint Epiphanius calls her 'a priest.' \* Excerpts from St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*

Offer your Son, holy Virgin, and present to the Lord the blessed fruit of your womb. Offer for the reconciliation of us all the holy Victim which is pleasing to God." \* Excerpt from St. Bernard, Homily on the Purification, III

Even if St. John Paul II has not yet been proclaimed a Doctor of the Church, let us consider what he wrote in his Marian Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (par. 16): "A little further along this way of the 'obedience of faith,' Mary hears other words: those uttered by Simeon in the Temple of Jerusalem. It was now forty days after the birth of Jesus when, in accordance with the precepts of the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph 'brought him up to Je-

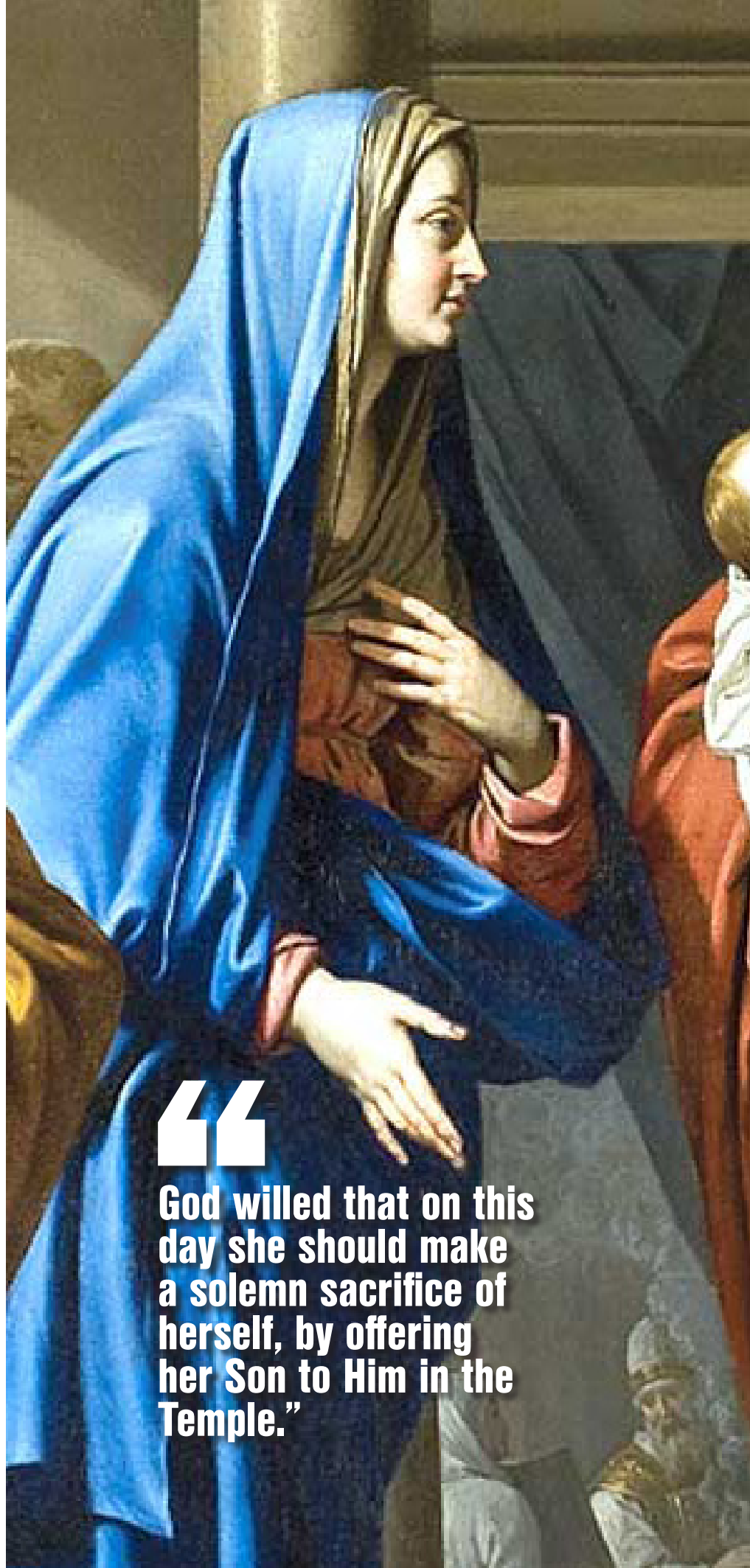


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The Eternal Father  
willed that...together  
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rusalem to present him to the Lord" (Lk 2:22). The birth had taken place in conditions of extreme poverty. We know from Luke that when, on the occasion of the census ordered by the Roman authorities, Mary went with Joseph to Bethlehem, having found 'no place in the inn,' she gave birth to her Son in a stable and 'laid him in a manger' (cf. Lk 2:7). A just and God-fearing man, called Simeon, appears at this beginning of Mary's 'journey' of faith. His words, suggested by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 2:25-27), confirm the truth of the Annunciation. For we read that he took up in his arms the child to whom-in accordance with the angel's command the name Jesus was given (cf. Lk 2:21). Simeon's words match the meaning of this name, which is Savior: 'God is salvation.' Turning to the Lord, he says: 'For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel' (Lk 2:30-32). At the same time, however, Simeon addresses Mary with the following words: 'Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed'; and he adds with direct reference to her: 'and a sword will pierce through your own soul also' (cf. Lk 2:34-35). Simeon's words cast new light on the announcement which Mary had heard from the angel: Jesus is the Savior, he is 'a light for revelation' to mankind. Is not this what was manifested in a way on Christmas night, when the shepherds come to the stable (cf. Lk 2:8-20)? Is not this what was to be manifested even more clearly in the coming of the Magi from the East (cf. Mt. 2:1-12)? But at the same time, at the very beginning of his life, the Son of Mary, and his Mother with him, will experience in themselves the truth of those other words of Simeon: 'a sign that is spoken against' (Lk 2:34). Simeon's words seem like a second Annunciation to Mary, for they tell her of the actual histor-



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**God willed that on this day she should make a solemn sacrifice of herself, by offering her Son to Him in the Temple.”**



ical situation in which the Son is to accomplish his mission, namely, in misunderstanding and sorrow. While this announcement on the one hand confirms her faith in the accomplishment of the divine promises of salvation, on the other hand it also reveals to her that she will have to live her obedience of faith in suffering, at the side of the suffering Savior, and that her motherhood will be mysterious and sorrowful. Thus, after the visit of the Magi who came from the East, after their homage ('they fell down and worshipped him') and after they had offered gifts (cf. Mt 2:11), Mary together with the child has to flee into Egypt in the protective care of Joseph, for 'Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him' (cf. Mt 2:13). And until the death of Herod they will have to remain in Egypt (cf. Mt 2:15)."

## LET US ALL HASTEN TO MEET CHRIST!

"The Mother of God, the most pure Virgin, carried the true light in her arms and brought Him to those who lay in darkness. We too should carry a light for all to see and reflect the radiance of the true light as we hasten to meet Him."

- St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, Candlemas Sermon (7th century)



# DEEPENING OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE THROUGH THE HOLY MASS

BY MSGR. PHILIP D. HALFACRE, VICAR GENERAL, DIOCESE OF PEORIA

**T**he Mass is one of the greatest gifts God has given to us. It is a holy exchange wherein we offer to God the most profound gift we have – the gift of ourselves – and we receive from God his divine gifts, which find their highest expression in the Blessed Eucharist. If we wish to allow ourselves to be drawn into this *magnum mysterium*, this great mystery, and experience

with awe and wonder this precious gift of God, then we must deepen our understanding of sacred worship. The task for us is to rediscover the Mass and continually make room for a renewal of our mind lest our participation at Mass devolve and fossilize into mere ritualism.... When Jesus began His public ministry, His message was clear: “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” (Mk 1:15) Quite a bit is packed into that com-

mand. In as much as Jesus came to overcome sin so that we might be reconciled with the Father, the first order of business from our end is that we in fact repent of our sins. Until that happens, we have not yet taken the very first step of discipleship. Besides repenting of past sins and striving to overcome present ones, evaluating the way we relate to one another is an important element of the spiritual life. The last



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**It is not by introducing novelties into the Mass that we are renewed, but by deepening our appreciation and by opening our hearts to God’s saving work here and now.”**

seven of the Ten Commandments are oriented toward this – we are not to kill, steal, lie, etc. In giving us the Commandments, God simply expressed in a concrete way what he had already “written in our hearts.” (Cf. Rm. 2:15) Note that it is not as though the Commandments required something that was unheard of outside of God’s covenant with Israel. In ancient Greece for example, the goddess Hestia oversaw (among other things) hospitality. So if one mistreated guests or turned away a stranger in need, they feared that they may have provoked Hestia’s wrath. The point is that treating others as we should affects our standing with the divine. But for the pagans of Antiquity, for the Jews of Ancient Israel, as well as for devout and observant Christians, our love for God entails more than treating our neighbor as we should. Our interaction toward God Himself – what we say and what we do – reflects the way we see our relationship with Him, and our covenant relationship with God has acts that are specific to it. Time and again, God reached out to “his daughter Israel” and He entered into covenants with her. A sacred bond united them – in a way that is parallel to a marriage bond – and the Scriptures record how God revealed specific things they were to do that expressed and celebrated their covenantal relationship. Famous (or notorious) among them is the Mosaic Law – the 613 specific precepts that observant Jews were to follow. Some of them were moral precepts while others were ceremonial. The keeping of the Mosaic Law was fundamental to the life of a devout Jew. We too, as devout Christians, have some things we do – such as the fasting or the almsgiving we do during Lent – that mark us out as members of the covenant. These are important elements of our spiritual life and are a form of worshipping God. What is sacred worship? One of the antiphons for vespers, which

is the evening prayer of the Divine Office, succinctly states: “Adoration and glory belong by right to the Lamb who was slain.” Worship is the adoration that we give to God because of who he is and because of who we are. As one of the Psalms puts it, “Know that the Lord is God; He made us, we belong to him. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.” (Ps 100) When people think of worship, often the first thing that comes to mind is prayer. Perhaps the simplest and best definition of prayer is that it is the raising of the heart and mind to God. In one way or another, our prayer acknowledges that God is the source of every good thing and the giver of every good gift. (Cf. Jas 1:17) Of particular importance for both Jews and Christians alike is prayer that takes the form of the pious recitation of the Psalms. Prayer, including the recitation of the Psalms, has a variety of forms: petition, adoration, contrition, and thanksgiving. Worship is also a form of gift-giving where the gift is given to God Himself out of reverence. The giving of gifts is part of the logic of love. We naturally desire to enrich the lives of the ones we love – or at the very least, make an adequate response to the one who has enriched us. Even little children desire to give gifts, which may simply be the giving of a picture they have drawn. The desire to worship God springs forth naturally from within us when we recognize God’s greatness, when we are moved to beg God to answer a prayer, or when we are grateful for what He has done for us. As I stated earlier, St. Thomas said that among the various forms of worship, sacrifice holds a special place. This should not surprise us since nearly every culture (especially religious culture) incorporated sacrifice into its worship. Not only was sacrifice fundamental to worship in the Jewish practice, it is fundamental to Christian worship as well.



## Eucharistic Revival Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who promised to stay with us always, until the end of the age.

Reawaken our wonder at His presence in the Most Holy Eucharist.

May our hearts burn within us as He opens the Scriptures and breaks the Bread.

Give us the eyes of faith to recognize His presence in our brothers and sisters, especially in the face of the poor and the suffering.

Nourished by the Eucharist, send us forth to walk faithfully as missionary disciples, proclaiming the Gospel to every heart and extending Your kingdom to every land.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

by Most Reverend José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles



Several New Testament references point to this – especially the Letter to the Hebrews. “Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him: ‘You are my son; this day I have begotten you’; just as he says in another place: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” (Heb. 5:1-6) Admittedly, the notion of sacrifice sounds particularly jarring to modern ears. While the offering of libations of wine or oil could perhaps be understood, the bloody offering of

animals seems beyond the pale. It calls to mind notions of the ancient Greeks offering roosters to Asclepios and geese to Isis. Saint John Chrysostom, writing in the fourth century, noted in his Eucharistic catechesis: “Moses, what are you saying? Does the blood of a lamb purify men and women? Does it save them from death? How can the blood of an animal purify people, save people or have power over death?” He went on to say that the immolation of animals was merely symbolic and was an “expression of expectation and hope in One who could accomplish what the sacrifice of an animal was incapable of accomplishing.” To this we must add that these sacrifices should be seen within the larger context – as a way of taking something that is ours and offering it to God as a gift. All gift-giving is in one way or another a token of the gift we make of ourselves. Indeed, this is anticipated in the Letter to Hebrews where it states: “For this reason, when he

came into the world, he said [in Psalm 40]: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. Then I said, As is written of me in the scroll, Behold, I come to do your will, O God.’” (Heb 10:5-7) The offering of what we have and of what we are is a fragrant sacrifice. In our ordinary, daily life, we do this all the time when we give to others the gift of our time, our attention, our money, etc. When we make this gift to God, it is a form of worship. And of course, the highest and greatest sacrifice that was ever offered was Our Lord’s offering of Himself for our redemption. We will come back to this. The Passover event is absolutely fundamental to our understanding of the way God brought about our redemption as well as our understanding of the Mass and the gift of the Eucharist. The Passover sacrifice prefigures what Jesus will later accomplish, and it is through this lens that we



must see Our Lord's salvific work. Of all the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant, none is more significant than the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. Just as every Christian knows the basic events surrounding Jesus' birth – Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem, there is no room in the inn, He is laid in a manger, shepherds and wise men come to visit, etc. – so too every Jew knew the significance of Passover and the role of the lamb as the symbol of Israel's redemption from slavery in Egypt. As we look briefly at these events, keep in mind that the very first way that John the Baptist (Jesus' forerunner or precursor who pointed him out when he came) was by the title "Lamb of God." Saint John, who was present at this first encounter with Jesus, records this in his Gospel. He and Andrew (the brother of Simon Peter and future Apostle) were with John the Baptist and accompanied him as his disciples. One day, Jesus walked by and the Baptist said: "Behold, the

## **“ The Passover event is absolutely fundamental to our understanding ... of the Mass and the gift of the Eucharist.”**

Lamb of God.” The significance of this will be seen shortly. The Israelites had been enslaved by Pharaoh in Egypt and they cried out to God that he rescue them from their slavery. Eventually – after hundreds of years – God called forth Moses who would be instrumental in freeing them. After numerous unsuccessful attempts by Moses to persuade Pharaoh simply to let the people go into the desert for several days to worship, God disclosed His plan to deliver them from Egypt once

and for all. On the night chosen by God for the beginning of their departure from Egypt, the Israelites were given specific instructions that they were to follow precisely. Each family was to procure a lamb. If they were too poor to afford one, they could join with another family in obtaining one. Not just any lamb would do; it was to be a male lamb without spot or blemish. The lamb was to be killed; they were to eat the lamb, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; and they were to take its blood and sprinkle it on the lintel and doorpost of their home. For on that very night, the Lord would descend upon the land of Egypt striking dead all the first-born in the land – but seeing the blood of the lamb on the door, He would pass over their home. And on that night, the Israelites began their journey out of slavery and into the promised land. This event is recalled every year by observant Jews as they celebrate Passover. (To be continued in March)





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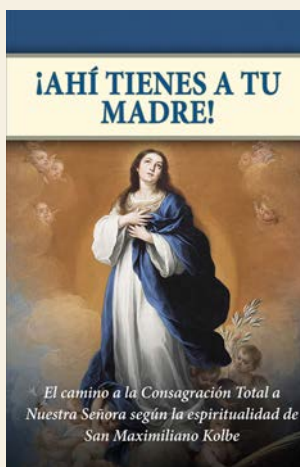
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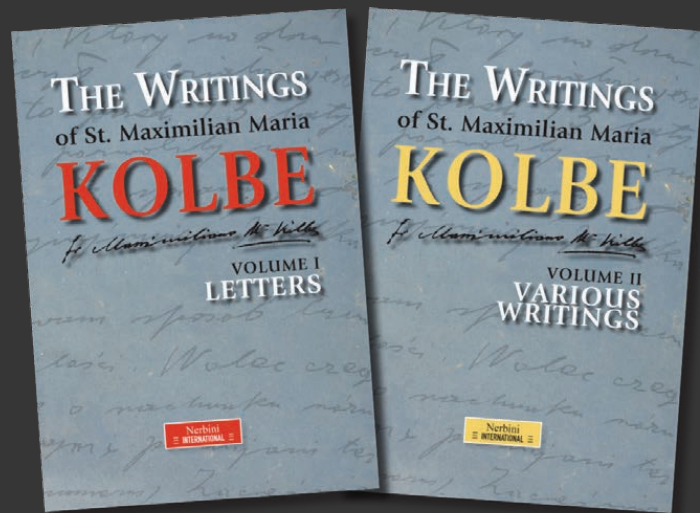
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— Fr. James McCurry, OFM Conv.

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# NO GREATER LOVE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)



St. Valentine's Day was later removed from the Roman Catholic Church calendar in 1969, because of doubts surrounding the historical details. The history of St. Valentine's Day and its patron saint are full of mystery. St. Valentine's Day, which most people celebrate today, contains both Christian and ancient Roman traditions. The legend that most people believe says that St. Valentine was a priest who served during the time of the Roman Empire in Rome. He ministered to persecuted Christians during the time of Emperor Claudius II Gothicus about 270 AD. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he banned marriage so young men would be more willing to go to war. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered his execution. Another story says that Valentine may also have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman prisons, where they were often beaten and tortured. According to one legend, while Valentine was in prison, he sent the first "Valentine" greeting to a young girl, possibly his jailor's daughter who visited him in prison. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter signed "From your Valentine," an expression that is still used today. While the truth behind the St. Valentine's legends is unknown, the stories all emphasize his love and care for others and display him as a loving figure. Years later, due to these stories, St. Valentine became one of the most popular saints representing Love.

May this February remind us that the greatest love of all is one that sacrifices all. Jesus Christ gave His life for us all. Remember St. Maximilian who gave his life for another. Let's remember our loved ones this February. "You come to love not by finding the perfect person, but by seeing an imperfect person perfectly." (Sam Keen) "Anyone can catch your eye, but it takes someone special to catch your heart." (Unknown Author)

Love is powerful, it can change lives. May all MI Knights learn to love as Jesus loves. May we love our Blessed Mother and let her out of love lead us to Jesus Christ, her Son.

Mary, Mother of Fairest Love, pray for us.

Ronald L. Rodrigues  
MI National President

"Our purpose is to fulfill God's will, the will of the Immaculata. Other goals are a waste of time."





# ST. MAXIMILIAN WRITES...

**DURING THIS 170TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, WE'LL REFLECT ON HIS INSIGHTS. THIS MONTH, ENJOY EXCERPTS FROM A FAMOUS LETTER TO THE SEMINARIANS OF THE FRANCISCAN CONVENTUAL ORDER WRITTEN IN 1933 (KW 486).**

**D**ear Dearest Young Confreres, It is now more than fifteen years since the current Most Rev. Minister General, giving his blessing in writing to the Militia of the Immaculata, decided that I should promulgate it among the youth of the Colleges of our Order. Which thing I have not done yet. So today, as we are still in the month of February, in which we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the first apparition of the Immaculata

in Lourdes, allow me to converse with you a little with these words of mine from the distant land of our Japanese mission. Every generation has to add its own hard work and the fruits of that effort to those of previous generations. The same very much happens in the life of a religious Order, and in ours as well. What will we be adding to it? It is said that the further a religious order is removed from its founder, the weaker it becomes. And that is what often happens. Yet it need not

necessarily be like that. For the spirit does not know the material laws of aging, but must evolve without limit. In addition, it is no sign of humility, for instance, to pray to Father St. Francis that he may obtain for us a "part" of his love toward God, or a love equal to his. Our holy Father will be perfectly happy only when, through his intercession, we ask for a greater love for God than his, indeed a love infinitely greater. And he wants his spirit to "evolve" in his children and not to set his own ho-

*fr. Maximiliano M. Kolbe*



**The truth of the Immaculate Conception has been declared a dogma of faith. And now?... There opens the second page of our history.... to sow that truth into the hearts of all...."**

liness as a stopping point, as the limit of our perfection. The germ he placed in the Order must evolve "without limitation." From the dawn of our Order, for seven centuries, the golden thread of the cause of the Immaculata has constantly evolved. We fought for recognition of the truth of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Our fight ended in victory. This truth is recognized worldwide and has been declared a dogma of faith. And now?... Has that cause possibly come to an end?... Could we

be content just with drawing the plan of a house without ever trying to carry it out?... Rather, is it not true that the plan is laid out only because it is the prerequisite for building the house itself?... There opens the second page of our history then; namely, to sow that truth into the hearts of all those who live and will live until the end of time, and to ensure that growth and the fruits of sanctification. To introduce the Immaculata into the hearts of men, so that she may erect in them the throne of her Son, lead them to the knowledge of Him, and inflame them with love toward His Most Sacred Heart. Our Order is called and is "the Order of Penance," which both practices and preaches penance. And here, we see that four years after the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, she herself in Lourdes asks for: "Penance, penance, penance." There is the One who wants to proclaim penance to our corrupt world: the Immaculata. So let her in us and through our Order proclaim repentance with the aim to renew souls. We would go too far if we lingered in such cheerful and sweet thoughts, but I cannot help adding something else. Let her

preach to us such penance. Let us open our hearts, let her come in, and let us generously give up our hearts, our souls, our bodies and all to her without any restriction or limitation. Let us devote ourselves to her completely without any limitation, to be her servants, her children, her unconditional possession and her property, so as to become, somehow, herself living, speaking, acting in this world. In her apparition in Lourdes the Immaculata did not say: "I have been immaculately conceived," but "I am the Immaculate Conception." With that, she determines not only the fact of the Immaculate Conception, but also the way in which that privilege belongs to her. Therefore, it is not some kind of casual feature, but a part of her very nature. She herself is the Immaculate Conception. As a result, she is such in us as well and transforms us into herself as immaculate beings... She is the Mother of God, and also the Mother of God within us... and makes us gods and mothers of God, who generate Jesus Christ in the souls of men... How sublime!... Completely yours, in the Immaculata and in our Father St. Francis. Br. Maximilian M.

## KOLBE DATES

### February 26, 1930



Fr. Maximilian and other four Franciscans, Br. Zeno Zebrowski, Br. Hilary Lysakowski, Br. Seweryn Dagis, and Br. Zygmunt Krol, leave Niepokalanow for the Far East. They reached Nagasaki on April 24 and a month later began distributing the MI magazine with a print run of 10,000 copies.



# HAROLD GOMES: AN AUTHENTIC KNIGHT AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

BY PAUL SOFRANKO, MI

**H**arold Gomes, MI Knight at the Foot of the Cross, said suffering changed for him when he took a pilgrimage to Lourdes with family in 2000:

"What I experienced in Lourdes changed my life forever... For me Lourdes was a foretaste of Heaven. Our pilgrimage to Lourdes reminded me of the pilgrimage of life. There are hardships but when you have arrived at your final destination you will see that the sufferings were all worth it. I saw Heaven as my goal and final destination. The Blessed Virgin guides us on our journey. I grew in my understanding of what is lasting and what is passing. I grew in a new desire to do God's will, especially in things that might cost me something because there would be more merit." In a final WhatsApp post, he was excited about gaining the plenary indulgences as an MI member on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in 2023:

"Happy feast day, fam! [I] was blessed to make it to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception for Mass at 10 AM followed by Confession and renewal of my Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary (December 8, 2001) at the chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes. What a great joy and privilege to belong completely and totally to the Immaculata!"

He entered a hospital a day later, on the Feast of St. Juan Diego, and died on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at age 46. Those feast days are a symbol. Like Juan Diego,



he was little in the world's eyes, suffering all his life from Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy. He beat by 6 years the usual life expectancy of Duchenne's sufferers. Like an "eagle who speaks," the Aztec version of St. Juan's name, his insights at MI and KFC Virtual Village meetings enriched all. This Mary's Knight prayed to die on one of her days and this happened on December 12th. Perhaps he heard Mary's words, previously spoken to Juan Diego in 1531:

"Let not your heart be disturbed. Do not fear that sickness, nor any other sickness or anguish. Am I not here, who is your Mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your health? Are you not happily within my fold? What else do you wish? Do not grieve nor be disturbed by anything."

Lourdes taught Harold about suffering:

"God permits suffering in order to bring a greater good out of it—the Crucifix is proof! I was moved when

I learned that my suffering has great value when it is united with the suffering of Jesus on the Cross. I can offer my suffering to save souls! It was for my good that He allowed me to suffer. He wants me to be a saint. I was in a wheelchair precisely because God loved me!"

Union with the Crucified is the MI's ideal. St. Maximilian drew fortitude from Jesus through Mary; Harold's life of heroic virtue in bravely facing his suffering can inspire all MI and KFC members in living our consecration. As his sister, Sr. Grace Dominic, S.V., said in her eulogy:

"He was brave, not brave on his own, but brave because of the prior witness of Jesus before him on the Cross. Harold was unafraid of the Cross and did not run from it."

## Do you want to know more about the Knights at the Foot of the Cross?

Visit our website and download the KFC brochure.



## THE WORLD DAY OF THE SICK



The World Day of the Sick is an annual Catholic observance established in 1992 by Saint John Paul II, who decreed that it be celebrated each February 11th, on the liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes. It is meant to encourage Catholic Christians to pray for those who are sick and suffering. Pope Francis's message for the 2024 World Day of the Sick is "It is not good that man should be alone" (cf. Gen 2:18) - Healing the Sick by Healing Relationships.

In his message, the Pope explores the fundamental importance and healing power of our relationships with others and with God. "The sick, the vulnerable, and the poor are at the heart of the Church," concludes Pope Francis. "They must also be at the heart of our human concern and pastoral attention." Read the whole message here: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/sick/documents/20240110-giornata-malato.html>





Want to connect and pray, deepening or preparing your consecration with others? we have several Online MI Groups.

For more information about our National Office: MINationalOffice.org





pray with other MI members? Looking for support in  
for your consecration? Join an MI Village and live out  
others. In addition to MI Villages that meet in person,  
MI Villages (see page 20).

about an MI group on the map, please contact the MI  
nal@MissionImmaculata.com





## Act of Total Consecration to the Immaculata

(Prayer composed by St. Maximilian Kolbe)

O Immaculata, Queen of Heaven and earth, refuge of sinners and our most loving Mother, God has willed to entrust the entire order of mercy to you. I, (name), a repentant sinner, cast myself at your feet humbly imploring you to take me with all that I am and have, wholly to yourself as your possession and property. Please make of me, of all my powers of soul and body, of my whole life, death and eternity, whatever most pleases you.

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.

# FEBRUARY MI INTENTION

This year, the monthly reflections are provided by Fr. Thomas Czeck, OFM Conv., the MI-USA National Spiritual Assistant.

## February

*O Immaculata,  
please intercede...*

*That we may let you guide us to  
your Son through  
prayer and penance.*

**Reflection** - This month, on February 14th, we begin Lent, our season of penance to prepare ourselves spiritually for the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of our Savior.

"Jesus pointed out unequivocally the need for penance, and the Immaculata, speaking to Bernadette, singled out penance as something she wished to be announced to others." (KW 1303) May we stand by the Immaculata like the Be-

loved Disciple, St. John the Apostle and Evangelist, offering our sufferings, penances, and crosses this Lenten season in union with Our Lady as we follow the Lord through His Passion.

"Jesus warns us not to be sad doing penance, so that penance may arise from love." (KW 1303) Penance is an attitude of sacrifice out of love. St. Theresa of Calcutta, a member of the MI, encourages us by her saying, "Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love." United with the Immaculata may we lead souls to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by our small acts of penance done with love.

**Prayer** - Act of Total Consecration to the Immaculata.

**\* Sign up for the  
MI Lenten Journey  
with Our Lady.**



## MI Villages

Want to connect and pray with other MI members? Looking for support in deepening or preparing for your consecration? Join an MI Village and live out your consecration with others. Check the map on pp. 17-18. For more information about an MI Village in your area, email the MI National Center. For *online MI Villages*, email the Moderators listed below.

**\*\*Moderator: Joseph Willis**

Email: [mi.la.adm@outlook.com](mailto:mi.la.adm@outlook.com)

Mtg Day: Friday (Last Friday of each month)

Mtg Time: 8:00pm CST

Weekly Consecration Renewal & Virtual

Village Rosary Tuesdays @ 8:30pm CST

**\*\*Moderator: Douglas Eschbach**

Email: [MI.village.marytown@gmail.com](mailto:MI.village.marytown@gmail.com)

Mtg Day: Sunday (3rd Sunday of each month)

Mtg Time: 5:00pm CST

**\*\*Moderator: Donna**

Knights at the Foot of the Cross (KFC)

Village of the Immaculata

E-mail: [miutah.stmary@gmail.com](mailto:miutah.stmary@gmail.com)

Mtg Day: Every Friday evening

Mtg Time: 8:00pm-9:00pm MST

**\*\*Moderator: Bill Bielawski**

Email: [william.bielawski@gmail.com](mailto:william.bielawski@gmail.com)

Mtg Day: Sunday (3rd Sunday of each month)

Mtg Time: 7:00pm CST

**\*\* Moderator: Lisa Fulgenzi**

Email: [drlisafmi@gmail.com](mailto:drlisafmi@gmail.com)

Write to request Google Meet join info

Mtg Day: Monday

Mtg Time: 12:00 – 1:00 pm EST



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TM

Check the MI website  
**[MilitiaoftheImmaculata.com](http://MilitiaoftheImmaculata.com)**  
often for updates and follow us on



Support Our Lady's Work  
by Helping the MI  
**DONATE HERE**

*"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

## MI Resources

### Available from the MI National Center



Disseminate the Miraculous Medal and introduce Our Lady and the MI to others!

Miraculous Medals and various MI resources can be requested from the MI National Office

via email: [MINational@MissionImmaculata.com](mailto:MINational@MissionImmaculata.com)