

# THE IMMACULATE: ICON OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE WRITINGS OF ST. MAXIMILIAN M. KOLBE

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(Outline)

Father Maximilian dedicated his entire young life – he died when only 47 years old – to the cause of the Immaculate, consecrating himself to Her with enthusiasm (an enthusiasm under the aegis of a great teleological and theological sense as well as the desire for martyrdom), *sicut res et proprietas* (SK, 508), becoming “as if Her very self” (*ivi*, 508).

This report is still *in fieri*, and will make use of the contributions of the other presentations of this gathering for the definitive text.

The mind, the heart, apostolic fervor, capacity for dialogue, the great love of Father Kolbe for the Immaculate Virgin even unto martyrdom, all surface from his writings. In a letter to the Provincial written in 1932 from Nagasaki, he confided: “At times I feel like writing something more (a small treatise) on Our Lady and dogmatic theology, but in a deeper and more simple and easy a way” (SK, 455).

## MARY IMMACULATE IN THE KOLBIAN WRITINGS

Here, *per summa capita*, we present the essential ideas of the “Marian doctrine” of Kolbe. With humility and a certain sense of unease caused by emotions, I too embark on the bright path created by so many illustrious colleagues, in the hope of doing something pleasing for Fr. Maximilian on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his “face to face” encounter with the Triune God, Who has done “great things” in Mary Immaculate for all generations. Generations of the third millennium who benefit from the merciful love of the Father, the sacrificial redemption of the Son, from the discrete and continuous sanctification of the Spirit, in view of a humanity transfigured by Love; in other words in view of men and women who, taught by the same Spirit of the truth of the Father and of the Son, understand and accept the historical-salvific fact, and therefore believe, that true beauty comes solely from God in Christ – *imago expressa* of the beauty of the Father -, and which leads to Him alone. This is the cogent and current meaning of that unedited and supreme “Trinitarian anthropology”, scarcely outlined, which we can recognize as fully realized in the event and person of the Immaculate Conception.

### **The Immaculate in Franciscan tradition: an undeniable fact**

The ‘cause of the Immaculate’ has always distinguished the religious Family of St. Francis of Assisi. This cause has marked its history, studies and devotion. Regarding it Father Kolbe used to say: “From the beginnings of our Order, for seven centuries the golden thread of the cause of the Immaculate Conception has developed unceasingly” (SK, 21).

- Someone wrote: “the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception emerges as an application of Franciscan voluntarism in the field of mariology”.

In fact, in the Franciscan perspective, the absolute predestination of Mary does not appear as an isolated intuition, but as a logical extension of the teaching of Duns Scotus on the absolute primacy of Christ; the mediation of Mary emerges not only as a participation subordinate to the salvific role of the “sole Mediator”, but also as an expression of the ontological perfection of the All Holy Mother of God, whose dignity and glory is precisely that of having been created with the sublime grace of redemption, “**The Immaculate Conception – The Full of Grace**” (Lc 1,28): Father Maximilian sees a close consonance and relationship between these two titles (cf. SK, 1331).

### **The sources of the Marian thought of Father Kolbe**

Father Kolbe has his own way of presenting faith and topics pertaining to faith, therefore also mariology, harmonizing theological facts with intuitions characteristic of the saints, and theological and Marian fervor unto martyrdom: he is the apostle, the one offered, the one consecrated to the “cause of the Immaculate”, which is “the cause of the Kingdom”. In Kolbe, as Father Piacentini observes, “you will not find a speculative Marian theology, namely the result of only theological reflection, and not even a purely mystical Marian theology, namely the fruit of mystical intuition, but you will have a Marian speculative-mystical theology, the result of both mystical intuition and theological reflection” (*Analisi degli scritti di P. Kolbe...*, cit., p. 363).

In 1994, the first centenary of the birth of St. Maximilian, the French academician and philosopher Jean Guittou, in a letter addressed to the International Director of the Militia of Mary Immaculate, expressing all his admiration for the saint and theologian, strongly and sincerely stated: ... it is in «the field of mystical theology that Kolbe will one day be compared with the eminent theologians of this 20<sup>th</sup> century. I place him with Balthasar, Lubac, Rahner, Congar (whom I have known). Undoubtedly with less erudition and information, but perhaps with more ‘intuition’... You know better than I, what he has contributed (and what he will contribute, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century) to the development of Catholic thought on Mary, on the Holy Spirit, on the Trinity...» (in MI 30 [1994] pp. 12-13).

We deduce from the Writings of Kolbe that much is due to his “remote” preparation – his Roman studies – and his “immediate” preparation (brought about by his conferences, articles, personal study): the sources for his Marian doctrine are **Sacred Scripture, Patristic tradition, the Magisterium of the Church**, (quoted quite frequently) the important **ascetical-devotional works** of St. Bernard of Clairvoux, St. Alphonsus, Montfort, the **mariological manuals** of recognized and important theologians and mariologists of his time: Neubert, Terrien, Campana, Mercier, Bittremieux, Lépiciér, Lacampre, Pawłowski, Kremer, Scheeben...(cf. SK, 906: letter of 25 September 1940, in which Kolbe indicates an essential Marian bibliography).

Father Maximilian was not a theologian by profession, because in such a case he would have remained in all probability tied to the conceptual and methodological mind set of a theology “*in scholastica forma*”, academic theology, of the manuals, and he

would have given little space to appreciating the historical salvific approach. By his own admission, he was a “spiritual theologian” who proceeds «by means of humble studies animated by prayer» (SK, 647), fully aware that the great mariological theme «is learned in-depth more on one's knees than with one's head» (SK, 906) and that «he who loves will know the Immaculate more than a philosopher and a theologian» (SK, 983): in his research, prayer and working for the propagation of the mystery of the Immaculate, he used and harmonized, with great intelligence and personal originality, the different ways of approaching this Mystery:

- “the intellect of love”; the “scholastic school of the heart” (R. Laurentin);
- the investigation of the wise person (the Marian model: cf. Serra and the corresponding word in NDM);
- the enthusiastic and almost frenetic workings of the lover for the Beloved (someone called him “the fool of the Immaculate”: on this point cf. the Trinitarian and mariological suggestions of B. Forte);
- the foresight of the prophet (the prophetic dimension: underscored by Card. Newman and considered in the Vatican document of 1989: “de interpretatione dogmatum”).

Father Maximilian in unison with Franciscan theology and the Oriental tradition attributes the axiological primacy and gnoseological priority to love. Therefore we note that he, albeit with great respect, gives less importance to disquisitions and syllogisms of the preferred method popular among scholastic theologians: **«It is very fine to study mariology, but we must remember – he writes – so long as we know the Immaculate more through humble prayer and loving experience of daily life than in learned definitions and arguments (although these ought not to be ignored)»** (SK, 634).

From the point of view of methodology, Father Maximilian in his intellectual, spiritual and pastoral itinerary, grows more and more convinced of the need to investigate the problem of the Immaculate by sounding in depth the relationships of Mary with the Persons of the Trinity and at the same time placing the Immaculate in the historical-salvific path (even though his references and his citations of Scripture are minimal) which starts from the Father and returns to Him in Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore in this itinerary of Kolbe De Fiores sees a triple phase: **a) the analogical phase** (1917-1932): from Christ to Mary; **b) the phase centered on Mary** (1932-1935): identification with the Immaculate; **c) the historical-salvific phase** (1935-1941): everything from the Trinity and with Mary back to the Trinity.

### **Mary Immaculate and her singular relationship with the Trinity**

Father Kolbe, heir and champion of the Marian tradition of the Franciscan family, personally engaged in making known “the glories” and “the soteriological and practical worth” of the Immaculate, sees confirmation of his thought in two well-known Marian apparitions of the 19th century: - the apparition to Catherine Labourè in 1830 in Paris – the Virgin, the miraculous medal and the prayer “O Mary conceived without sin pray for us” – (cf. SK, 1011;1042); - the message of the Virgin to Bernardette Soubirous at Lourdes in 1857 – “I am the Immaculate Conception” – (cf. SK, 1316-1317).

In order to explain the content of the message regarding the identity of the Virgin revealed at Massabielle, he places side by side the words of Jahwé on Mount Horeb and those of the Virgin to Bernardette: «In revealing His own name to Moses, God said: “I

am; that is Who I am” (Es 3,14) – since God exists from all eternity, He exists always. His essence is existence without any limit, both in duration and under any aspect whatever. Everything that exists outside of God is not existence but has existence, has received it. Therefore even the Immaculate began to exist in time» (SK, 1319).

Knowing well that the creature Mary, from the point of view of nature, was conceived like other human beings, Father Kolbe reveals the great difference from the point of view of grace and faith: «from the first moment of her existence She differs from other human beings by the fact that their conception is stained by original sin, inasmuch as we are dealing with a conception of children by parents who sinned, while Her conception, subtracted from this common law, is an immaculate conception» (SK, 1319).

Father Maximilian, analyzing the terms “conception” and “immaculate”, tries to give an answer and consistency to the fundamental question: **Who are you, O Immaculate Conception?**

*“Not God, because He has no beginning; not an angel, created directly from nothing; not Adam, formed from the mud of the earth, not Eve, taken from Adam; and not even the Word, Who exists already from eternity and is ‘conceived.’ Before being conceived, the children of Eve did not exist, therefore they can be called ‘conception, nevertheless You differ even from them, because they are conceptions contaminated by original sin, while You are the only Immaculate Conception” (SK, 1318).*

Father Maximilian’s answer is to be understood in the Trinitarian view of his mariological proposal, and, in particular, in profound consonance – not identity – and intimate union between the Mother of the Son of God and the Third Person of God.

It is interesting to note how St. Maximilian calls the Spirit of the Father and of the Son not only “Conception”, but also “Immaculate”. We therefore have on the one hand “the uncreated Immaculate”, or the Holy Spirit, and on the other, “the created Immaculate”, namely the Mother of Jesus. In this way, Father Maximilian resolves his research and in-depth study on the Immaculate Conception: to be Mary means to be the Immaculate Conception; “conception” and “immaculate” constitute the definition of Mary’s being, of her who in “the fullness of time” (Gal 4,4) virginally bore in her womb and, in a spirit of service, gave to the entire human race the Son of God, giver of holiness, so that the predestined Mother, who benefited in a singular way from the gift of redemption-salvation, could not be stained by sin in any way.

The Holy Spirit is the ineffable central character, in view of the coming of the Second Person, in the event and in the person of the Immaculate Virgin: through Him, the Father realizes his plans of love in regard to man, namely the Incarnation of the Son and the redemption of man from sin (cf. SK, 634; 1291; 1318). The Spirit himself lives in the Immaculate, His “spouse”, «with a love that is fertile in the entire supernatural economy» (SK, 1318), from the marvelous moment of the Incarnation of the redeeming

Word («fruit of the love of God and of the Immaculate» SK, 1296), up to her glorious assumption, where she intercedes the salvation of God for men.

One of the **original points of Father Kolbe regards the intimate relationship between the Spirit and the Immaculate**; a rapport described with uncommon language, daring but orthodox, which has lead some to misunderstand him (cf. L. Boff): «the Immaculate is in a certain sense the incarnation of the Holy Spirit» (Konf., 184): this strong and obsolete expression is, however, tempered by the expression “in a certain sense”. Furthermore the Holy Spirit «is in the Immaculate, 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 human, and one Person only, the divine. The nature and the person of the Immaculate, instead, are distinct from the nature and the Person of the Holy Spirit. This union, nevertheless, is so ineffable and perfect that the Holy Spirit acts solely through the Immaculate, His Spouse» (SK, 634). Father Kolbe can then conclude: «Therefore, by venerating the Immaculate, we, in an altogether special way, venerate the Holy Spirit » (SK, 1318).

Here we underscore two points: as in the fruitful rapport between the Spirit and Mary in view of the mystery of Christ and the salvation of souls, the mediating-sacramental role of the Church seems in fact to be ignored (we are still very far away from the ecclesiological turning-point of Vatican II, but since the end of the 19th century input along this line has not been lacking); how totally “foreign” all this appears to our present theological, pastoral and ecumenical sensitivity, the assertion according to which “the Holy Spirit acts solely through the Immaculate”: an affirmation which would seem to limit the sovereignty and liberty of the Spirit to entertain a direct, personal relationship with one redeemed by Christ (Trinitarian anthropology, created precisely by the Pneuma of the Father and of the Son, would be contradicted); an affirmation which, again, by misunderstanding the sacramental and ministerial work of the Church, taken literally would exaggerate the motherly diakonia which the Mother and Partner of the Redeemer exercises in favor of the believer.

Father Kolbe is well aware that Mary is a creature of Adam’s race; he is well aware that the dogma of 1854 affirms the need and the unedited “sublime redemption” offered to Her by God in virtue and in view of the merits of Her Son, Redeemer of the human race; he knows full well that the created Immaculate, Mary of Nazareth, mother of the Son of God, is not the incarnation of the Holy Spirit, but His “masterpiece” (cf. SK, 634), the human and the holy magnification of the transforming love of redemption and sanctification of the Trinity.

Mary Immaculate is the creature who is **Tota Pulchra and sine macula**: before the splendor, the beauty, the radiance of the holiness of the Mother of Christ, Father Maximilian, almost dismayed, enraptured, finds it difficult to express himself. Only in prayer does he seek inspiration, the correct words and theological clarity; indeed only prayer helps to re-read fittingly the transfigured beauty of the Immaculate (cf. SK, 1317, p. 2324): beauty which comes from God and leads to God: «a faithful image of the perfection of God, of his holiness» (SK, 1232). Wherefore he ecstatically adds: «How beautiful is this fullness of grace, whose excess flows copiously on us! Or rather this fullness is for us the source of grace» (SK, 991).

Furthermore, Father Maximilian’s reflection centered on the question “Who are you, O Immaculate”, extends from the Virgin to the entire Mystery of faith through the

intuition of Her relational being. In fact, in addition to *the historical-salvific way*, which goes from the Trinitarian mystery and includes the Immaculate as the work of the Triune God and the summit of humanity which returns to Him, Father Maximilian touches upon, *per summa capita*, the *relational path*:

«in addition it would be necessary to think about deepening our knowledge of the Immaculate. The knowledge of her relations with God the Father, with God the Son, with God the Holy Spirit, with the entire Most Holy Trinity, with Jesus Christ, with the angels and men, so that such knowledge become ever more manifest, by means of humble studies animated by prayer» (SK, 647).

«Let us deepen our belonging to the Immaculate more and more each day, and in Her and through Her, to Jesus and to God ...» (SK, 634).

### **Mary does not eclipse the person and work of her Son**

Some have insinuated that Father Kolbe, in his “dated” and unshareable Marian enthusiasm, had obscured, albeit unwillingly, the axiological primacy of Christ and the Spirit: a careful reading of the Writings is sufficient to banish every doubt in this regard.

Certainly, in order to illustrate the profound consonance, the intimate communion of intent among the Son, the Spirit and Mary, St. Maximilian recurs to combinations and expressions, which are the fruit of the “maximalism of the Saints”, therefore little understood in their correct sense, and therefore held by some so controversial that they cannot be shared.

In St. Maximilian the association of the Virgin with the Spirit is accurately distinct from the association with Christ: «Mary as mother of Jesus the Savior becomes the Co-redemptrix of the human race, while as the Spouse of the Holy Spirit she shares in the distribution of grace» (SK, 1229). Consequently, the Holy Spirit «does not exercise any influence on souls except through Her» (SK, 1225). Because of the inseparable union which the Spirit maintains with the Immaculate Mother of the Redeemer, She is rendered capable of “generating” the adopted sons of God (cf. SK, 1295; Vatican II will call this service “maternity in the order of grace” and John Paul II will describe this in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* as “maternal mediation”): «For this reason She has become the mediatrix of all graces, precisely for this reason She is truly the mother of divine Grace. For this reason again She is the Queen of the angels and saints, She is the Help of Christians, She is the Refuge of sinners» (SK, 1224).

Certainly St. Maximilian does not ignore and does not forget to underscore in his writings the fact of the creatureliness of the Virgin, Her dependence on and her respect of the transcendence of Christ, the distinction between “ascending”, absolute and direct mediation of Her Redeemer Son and subordinate and important mediation, coming – by gift and *maternal office* – from His holy Mother; reading and refocusing everything from the perspective of the Trinity: «As the Son from eternity is, so to speak, mediator between the Father and the Spirit, so Jesus, the Son incarnate, has become the direct mediator between the Father and the Spirit, considered in a certain way incarnate, (namely) the Immaculate, Representative, the spiritual Mother of all of humanity. And not otherwise than through Her, the love of creatures reaches Jesus and through Him the Father» (SK, 1310). The mediating role of the Immaculate Virgin does not substitute nor eclipses that of Christ, the sole and perfect mediator, but consists in making all of created love immaculate and in offering it to Her beloved Son, so that He offer it to the Eternal Father: «**Quodlibet signum amoris creaturarum non nisi per Immaculatam**

**expurgatur ab imperfectionibus elevaturque ad Jesum ad valorem infinitum ideoque maiestate Patris Coelestis dignum ante faciem Dei prodit».**

The exaltation of Mary as the summit of the perfection of creation, fervently and enthusiastically admired, invoked and indicated as “mediatrix of all graces”, could lead one to accuse him of excessive emphasis...

Some expressions and accentuations used by St. Maximilian, considered today antiquated or out of place for pastoral and ecumenical reasons, are, as we have already mentioned, the fruit of a heartfelt “Marian maximalism” not obsolete with theologians, pastors and saints of the past, and which only apparently seem not to take into account what the Roman Pontiffs used to indicate as the “road of the golden means” of sobriety and of adherence to the measure set by the dogma; a teaching which Vatican II will update and sanction with perfect expressions in *Lumen gentium* 67 (theologians and preachers must avoid, abstain from every false exaggeration and from every narrowmindedness in considering the singular dignity of the *Deipara /Mother of God/*). Regarding this, Paul VI acutely observed on 17 October 1971 in his sermon for the beatification of Kolbe: «Let no hesitation hold back our admiration, our adherence, to what the new Blessed hands on to us as an inheritance and example: even if we be hesitant of similar Marian exaltation, when other theological and spiritual currents, christological and ecclesiological, prevalent today in thought and religious life, are in competition with the mariological one... Our Blessed is not to be reproved, nor the Church with him, for the enthusiasm which he dedicates to the cult of the Virgin; it will never be equal to the merit or advantage of such a cult, precisely because of the mystery of the communion which unites Mary to Christ and which finds convincing documentation in the New Testament; there will never be a “mariolatry” just as the sun will never be obscured by the moon... **This Marian profile of our new Blessed qualifies him and classifies him among the great saints and prophetic spirits, who have understood, venerated and sung the mystery of Mary».**

### **The Immaculate “the new creature”: an aspect of Kolbian anthropology**

I would have liked to delve deeper into the anthropological thought of Father Maximilian, but time does not permit it...; for the moment, at least, I direct you to the rich and informed doctoral thesis defended here at the Seraphicum by the Conventual Paweł Warchoń: “The Anthropology of Fr. Maximilian Kolbe. The christological-Marian perspective in his Writings and Conferences” (Rome 2000, 411 pp.

In the mystery of the Immaculate Conception the love of God for man, the sinner, has become greatly evident. Thus, at the moment in which the Daughter of Eve predestined to be the Mother of the Son of God «is preserved from sin – preservation which for Fr. Kolbe is a culminating anthropological moment, - Mary consented to the divine idea to create “a new man” which She, the first fruit of redemption, by generating the Son of God, continues to generate for every man. The Immaculate is the image of the “new humanity”, the “recreated microcosm”, the “seed of the new creation”, “harmonic and total unity”, “beauty never sullied by evil”, “the dynamic crystalline model”. In her purity one can contemplate the greatness of man and find the way to “divinization” and holiness. Fr. Maximilian wants to gather from the life of Mary a practical model for every Christian. Mary is a model everyone needs to have before

one's self but not to be slavishly followed, to contemplate in it what can be and become a person, when accepted, as She, to enter into a plan created by God. The maternity of Mary, her Immaculate Conception, help us also to bring out in Her the mission of the Woman, Mother, the Immaculate, Handmaid, Queen, Virgin. Faith, obedience, love, poverty, humility, purity, these are the virtues which Father Kolbe gathers in Mary and proposes to men».

**Consecration to the Immaculate: becoming like Her to win over the world for Jesus (cf. SK, 1211, 1220, 1329, 1330, 1331...)**

St. Maximilian M. Kolbe in his intense life dedicated to the Mother of our Lord, the created Immaculate, a model to be taken by every Christian so as to be pleasing to the Holy Trinity, under the guidance of a well-known act tested by preceding Christian spirituality and given new impetus by St. Luigi Grignion de Montfort, proposes his own “**consecration to the Immaculate**”. Evaluations and studies on this pious devotion indicated by Father Maximilian, and proposals to put it into practice, are not lacking; but to understand its nature, its contents and its finality, we have to start from the global theological perspective of the economy of salvation, which Father Kolbe summarizes in this way: «Grace... from the Father through the Son (Christ, *I will send*), through the Holy Spirit (the Immaculate). The reaction proceeds inversely: from the creature, through the Immaculate (the Holy Spirit) and Christ (the Word), to the Father» (SK, 1291). The ultimate reason, the dynamics and the theological finality of total, faithful and obedient offering to the created Immaculate, appears Trinitarian. In effect, Father Maximilian specifies, «every offering of ours..., by the very nature of things, is purified in the Immaculate and is elevated to infinite perfection in Jesus, and becomes an object of gratification to the Trinity» (SK, 1301).

In his religious, spiritual and theological maturity – a privileged period to grasp the congruity of his thought and Marian proposal – Father Maximilian sees consecration to the Immaculate as an opening to Trinitarian experience, as true dedication to “the cause of the Immaculate” and as service and oblation on behalf of fellow men. As a result, consecration to Mary is not a ritualistic and bigoted aspect of Marian devotion and spirituality, but for Father Kolbe and for his knights it becomes, it must become, a school of mystical life within the context of apostolic strategy. **Mystical annihilation** – an ascetical practice perhaps not fully comprehensible nor close to so many men and women of our postmodern times – to which Father Kolbe subjects himself in his continual configuration to Mary, which ends in «becoming one with God, through the Immaculate» (SK, 1160), entails the realization of a long process of self-emptying which brings him to nullify himself and disappear, so as to «become Her» (SK, 580), «to be... Her very self» (SK, 556).

## CONCLUSION



At the end of this incomplete report, I would like to mention a conclusion which regards the realization, in today's postmodern Church and time, of the mariological and anthropological proposal of Father Maximilian.

We are certainly all aware that his thought, especially its modalities and expressions, smacks of the historical-social, ecclesiological, theological, mariological and anthropological past. To perpetuate an a-critical and dated reading of his "Writings" is not a good service rendered to him: every *res umana*, even the dogmas of the Church, contains transitory and perennial elements. Therefore it is necessary to pass Father Maximilian's thought through the wise and tried "historical-ecclesial rectifications"; a delicate but inevitable task which, even though it entails some "sacrifice", allows us to gather and appreciate the originality, congruity and actuality of the Kolbian proposition.

The insistence and persistence of the Marian element in the thought, life and works of Father Kolbe, could perhaps provoke today some perplexity, an impression which he countered in his Writings by inserting his Marian reflection/proposition in a Trinitarian context with a strong christological basis. As an example, I quote the case from a letter addressed to his confrere fr. Matthew Spolitakiewicz, who was experiencing some difficulty in harmonizing the love of Christ with that of His Mother: «Most certainly our purpose is God – he wrote in 1935 -, the Most Holy Trinity, surely the source of all good, in whatever order both natural and supernatural (namely of grace): God the Father who always works through the Son and the Holy Spirit, namely the most Holy Trinity» (SK, 643).

The axiological primacy of the Trinity, expressed so clearly, doesn't prevent him from inserting into the Trinitarian circuit the type and role of "correspondence" to Grace and to divine graces of the created Immaculate Mary: «Nevertheless correspondence to the graces, which creatures have obtained through the Son and the Holy Spirit – Fr. Maximilian observes – returns to the Father only along this same path, namely through the Holy Spirit and the Son, namely through the Immaculate, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus united hypostatically to the nature of the Son» (SK, 643).

The Immaculate is present in this inexpressible and holy Trinitarian current of love as «the summit of the love of creation which returns to God», precisely because it is in Mary Immaculate that «the miracle of the union of God with creation occurs» (SK, 1310). And since She «is united in an ineffable way with the Holy Spirit», the Virgin is the summit of the rational creature who "returns" to God through love (cf. note 147 Perrella in Miles 1999 on "consecration") because She is «the creature totally full of this love, of divinity..., She is the summit of love» (SK, 1318).

Father Kolbe is therefore interesting and original because of the way – not haughty and abstract – of tackling the question of the Immaculate Conception, both in its ineffable and singular relation with the divine Persons, and with the Holy Spirit, Her "discrete and industrious" traveling companion in the mystery of Christ, the Church and man redeemed. But according to my opinion, the soteriological dimension of his doctrine, profoundly connatural and coherent even though not directly and organically expressed in his Writings, is to be made use of: the *way of Love*; the *way of Beauty*; the *way of Mariae* and *Christi*, the *way of the Trinity* are paths to be traveled and further studied.

The very "consecration" should be read and proposed, even from the aspect of language, in the key of "reception /accoglienza/" (empathy with the teaching of John Paul II), of the person of Mary, the paschal "gift" of the Redeemer who "entrusted" us

to Her (cf. Gv 19, 25-27); with his christological Magisterium (“do whatever Jesus will tell you”); with Her perfect and humble example as disciple and servant of the Lord; with Her as model and icon of the Church; with her maternal mediation and intercession, in view of the building up of the Kingdom.

By its nature the *sermo de Maria* tends to be engulfed in the *sermo de Deo*; and the look given to the Immaculate Mother of Jesus Christ and our sister becomes attention given to the cause of man, a sharing of Her destiny. In its final stage Mariology is doxology, pure praise and love of the threefold Holy God, and compassionate and practical love for man, especially the last, service to his cause. The testimony of Father Maximilian Mary Kolbe is in this sense magisterium to take up and propose for its actuality, cogency and fruitfulness.