

**A STUDY GUIDE for the book *A Man for Others* by Patricia Treece.
An introduction to the Saint's life through the words of those who knew him.
By John W. Galten**

To prepare, read pages vii—51.

1. **Prologue**— How does St. Maximilian's life prepare him for his historic and heroic self-sacrifice?
2. **Chapter 1:** How did the remarkable event of the Immaculata's apparition to the boy affect his future life?
3. **Chapter 2:** As a student, St. Kolbe's personality became more defined. From the reading, how would you describe him?
4. **Chapter 3:** The Saint was confined to a tuberculosis hospital for some time. How did he occupy his time? How did he evangelize others under these conditions?
5. **Chapter 4:** How did the City of the Immaculata, Niepokalanów, come about?
6. **Chapter 4:** What is the significance of the name of the friary, City of the Immaculata?
7. **Chapter 4:** How may an MI member in the world "mirror" the work of the Friars at the City of the Immaculata?

To prepare, read pages 53-92.

1. **Chapter 5:** St. Maximilian leads a small band of Franciscans to Japan to begin the work of the MI. How does this mission and its struggles exemplify the virtue of faith? What does it tell us about our struggle in the apostolate of spreading total consecration? What virtue do you note in St. Kolbe and his friar companions? How does it inspire you?
2. **Chapter 6:** The Saint returns to Poland after planting the beginning of a worldwide movement. Note how the Immaculata blessed the City of the Immaculata with extraordinary numbers of Franciscans and the genius of its organization and inventiveness. How does St. Maximilian use technology to spread the Gospel? What does that tell us? How did he blend spirituality and practical apostolic work? What does this tell us about trust in the Immaculata? Kolbe says that to say someone is a religious (that is, a member of a religious order) should be a synonym for saint. Allow me to paraphrase his words: To say that someone is a Knight of the Immaculata should be a synonym for saint. What do you think of that?

To prepare, read pages 93-145.

1. **Chapter 7:** St. Maximilian and the friars now endure the martyrdom of Poland by war. This time is characterized by suffering and privation. Fr. Kolbe prepares his friars by outlining for them and us the three stages of life. What are they? What wisdom is contained here? Is it applicable to us? (Cf. pp. 93-94) How would you describe St. Maximilian's reaction to the war? To the Nazis?

2. **Chapter 8** How does St. Kolbe react to the disastrous situation? What does he do?
3. **Chapter 9:** Faced with catastrophic death and satanic hatred unleashed, how does he respond? What is his attitude and spiritual disposition?
4. **Chapter 10:** What do you think is the source of the Saint's joy and serenity? How did he recover from the setbacks? He returns to the theme of the Christian apostolate. What does he say about this? What do you think about what he says? (Cf. pp. 141ff.) How important does Kolbe think that the publication of *The Knight of the Immaculata* is? Why? How about our MI e-publication? What would he think about it? This chapter speaks of the "joy" of St. Maximilian. What do you suppose is the source of this joy? Does he suffer also? How can he be joyful while waiting for the Gestapo? His fellow friars speak of their recollections of Kolbe. What are your own favorite stories of him? What would you most like to imitate of his qualities? St. Maximilian desperately strove to publish *The Knight of the Immaculata* magazine. Why was this so important to him? What purposes did it serve?

To prepare, read pages 147-162.

1. **Chapter 11:** St. Kolbe gave a conference to the friars on Mary's relationship to the Holy Trinity. What prompted such a topic so close to his arrest? Why did he say that one must pray to understand this relationship? Must we do this also? On page 152, Brother Rufin Majdan recounts "my idea of the (spiritual) Militia—formerly superficial—became so clear, lofty and dear I would willingly die for it." What do you suppose this means? How does St. Max treat the Gestapo who come to arrest him? Kolbe leaves with a "recollected face." What does this mean in light of his Total Consecration?
2. **Chapter 12:** How did St. Kolbe witness to his faith among his companions in the Pawiak prison? See pp. 159-160: Edward Gniadek recalls his heroic profession of faith when attacked by one the Gestapo men. How does his example inspire you in giving witness to the Lord while facing ridicule and opposition?

To prepare, read pages 163-211.

St. Maximilian's life now moves rather quickly to its end and fulfillment in martyrdom as offered by the Immaculata and his choice. His character now blooms into the fullest dimensions of a saintly charity. In the cauldron of hatred known as Auschwitz he blazes with divine charity in his priestly heart.

1. **Chapter 13:** The chapter begins with a quote from Kolbe on the true potential of every human person, "No one's conversion is impossible." He asked prayers for the heartless guards. Can we dare ask for this gift of evangelistic charity? See pg. 173: A fellow prisoner drew courage from the presence of Fr. Kolbe, calling him a "real man, a fighter—a fighter for the truth." How are we today to console our brothers and sisters by being fighters for the truth?

2. **Chapter 14:** A prisoner remarked, “Each of us thought only of this: To live! Nobody interested himself in his neighbor.” Is there evidence for this in our culture? Where do you see it? What can we do about it? What did St. Maximilian do about it in Auschwitz? A prisoner confronted by a brutally tortured corpse froze and was threatened by a guard with a beating. A voice said to him calmly, “Let’s pick him up, my brother.” Guess who? Are we always ready to help?

St. Maximilian utters perhaps one of his most treasured quotes consoling a fellow prisoner: “Hate is not creative, only love is creative.” What do you think of this principle? Can we live it?

So many survivors of Auschwitz survived because Kolbe encouraged them. Why is encouragement important? 5. Prisoners remarked that St. Maximilian was a man of prayer—hence, he was also serene and at peace. What is the connection?

To prepare read pp. 213-239.

As we conclude the book study, we enter the last phase of his life—his martyrdom. Each year, we celebrate the Anniversary of this event on August 14. This luminous act of self-sacrificing heroism for another man’s life bisected the most horrific blood-letting century of recorded humanity. In the darkest place and darkest hour of humanity, through St. Maximilian’s martyrdom the light from Heaven pierced the hellish darkness of the death camp. His gift and sacrifice of self-vindicated the true dignity of man and revealed again the triumph of the Cross and the Love of Christ. Let us enter this mystery of love with our Guide, the Immaculata.

1. **Chapter 15:** Kolbe, although as a priest he was singled out for brutality, remained serene. What do you think was his secret for this reaction?
How did other prisoners react to the process of selection of those to die on August 14th? What was Kolbe’s reaction?
2. **Chapter 16:** How did Kolbe conduct himself in the starvation bunker? Why were the SS guards loath to have Kolbe look at them?
The end of this chapter records the reactions of the whole camp. What was the result? What is your reaction to our Saint’s martyrdom? What effect, if any, will it have on your life?
3. **Epilogue**
What effect did the story of St. Maximilian have on Karol Wojtyla, the future Pope St. John Paul II? How is the Saint’s victory a victory of “faith and love”?
What have you learned from the martyred Saint about becoming a Saint?