

Saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe (PART 2)

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At the end of the last installment in this series on Marian consecration in the life of the Church, I reproduced the text of the official Act of Consecration, which Saint Maximilian composed for the Militia Immaculatæ (M.I.). In early December of 1937, Saint Maximilian published his rationale for the deliberate choice of terminology in that Act of Consecration:

The end of every man is to belong to God through Jesus, our Mediator with his Father, and to belong to Jesus through the Immaculate, Mediatrix of all graces. Those who love the Immaculate have at various times, both in public and in private, used various formulas to express their consecration to Our Lady. All of them seek to stress the most perfect form of consecration, as far as this is possible, even though in the words used and in the direct meaning of these words there is considerable diversity. The expressions, "Servant of Mary," "Servant of the Immaculate," etc., may suggest the idea of a recompense in view of which the servant labors. Even the term, "Child of Mary," reminds some people of the juridical obligations a mother has with regard to her children. Nor does the designation, "Slave of Love," suit everybody,

Christ bequeathed humanity to His Mother as His ultimate and perpetual testament from the Cross, therefore placing the Church in the very best of hands! Numerous Marian saints along the way, including Maximilian Kolbe, have recognized that consecration to Mary is not only a beautiful devotion to the Mother of God, but an essential component to the plan of salvation, and is verily God's intent for the Church's stability and sanctification, in spite of all odds.



Coronation of the Virgin, Giorgio Vasari, Chiesa Santa Caterina, Livorno, Italy

because although it is specified that we are dealing with a slavery of love, it is still difficult to do away with the impression that a slave remains in bondage against his will. So others prefer the expression, "property and possession." Evidently all these ways of speaking and all the other possible ones indicate in the last analysis one and the same reality; and all those who make use of them desire to consecrate themselves to our Lady in a total manner.

It is also essential to the nature of the M.I. to belong to the Immaculate totally and under every aspect. Consequently, in the act of consecration the members of the M.I. beg her "to accept me entirely and completely as your property and possession, and to do whatever most pleases you with all the faculties of my soul and body, my life, my death and my eternity."

The person who belongs to the M.I. ceases to be exces-



sively concerned even for his eternity. He recognizes that whatever does not depend on his own will comes from God's hand through the Immaculate. Insofar as he can, he seeks to do everything possible to know the will of the Immaculate ever more perfectly and to accomplish it ever more faithfully, even if this were to cost him many sufferings and sacrifices.¹

We see here Saint Maximilian's gift for careful and meticulous analysis. He recognizes the value of all the various formulas of Marian consecration—indeed, we could well say that each of the terms that he analyzes provides a further perspective on what it means to consecrate oneself to Our Lady. What Saint Maximilian is aiming at, however, is an act that is totally altruistic, completely disinterested; he wants the person consecrated to become an instrument of Our Lady for the reign of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Of course such heroism will be duly rewarded by the Lord and His Mother, but that is not the prime motive for this act. Note that he insists that the consecration is a commitment to carry out the will of the Immaculate “even if this were to cost him many sufferings and sacrifices.” In Maximilian's case, this, in fact, meant a terribly painful death as a totally altruistic act of charity for a neighbor he did not know.

As a good Franciscan theologian, following in the line of Saint Bonaventure and Blessed John Duns Scotus along with many others, Maximilian was very clear about Mary's place in consecration. She is not the ultimate goal; God is. But Mary has a very precise role in the divine plan and, indeed, a necessary one. Thus Saint Maximilian wrote to Brother Matthew

“...our acts, though they might be the most holy, are not without blemish, and if we want to offer them to the Lord Jesus as pure and immaculate we must directly and immediately present them only through the Immaculate One and give them to her as her possession, so that as her own property she might present them to her Son.”

Spolitakiewicz;

My dear brother, true, the source of every good thing in every order, whether natural or supernatural (namely, of grace), is God the Father who through the Son and the Holy Spirit always acts; in other words, the Most Holy Trinity. It is true that the only Mediator with the Father is His Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, at once God and Man, through Whom our praises rendered to the Father are no longer simply human, but now divine, and from finite praises become praises of infinite value and as such truly worthy of the Father's majesty. True, we love the Father in the Son, in Jesus Christ, and to Him we must offer all our love, so that in Him and through Him the Father might receive and accept all our love.

But also, and no less true, our acts, though they might be the most holy, are not without blem-

ish, and if we want to offer them to the Lord Jesus as pure and immaculate we must directly and immediately present them only through the Immaculate One and give them to her as her possession, so that as her own property she might present them to her Son. Then they will be without blemish, and immaculate. Then, having received an infinite value through the divine life of Jesus, they will worthily praise God the Father.²

A primary point of reference in Saint Maximilian's Marian thought is the mystery of Mary as Immaculate.³ Precisely as the Immaculate, the only all-pure human creature by virtue of her Immaculate Conception, Mary, in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, communicates her purity to us. She purifies our good works as she presents them to Jesus who presents them to the Father. One sees here the divinely ordained hierarchy of mediation in God's perfect plan for our salvation and the specific role of Mary in our purification. Here again is how Saint Maximilian puts it:

The soul is regenerated in the sacred waters of baptism and thus becomes God's child.

Water, which purifies everything over which it runs, is a symbol of her who purifies every soul that draws near to her. It is a symbol of the Immaculate, of her who is without stain, upon whoever is washed in this water the grace of the Holy Spirit descends. The Holy Spirit, the divine Spouse of the Immaculate, acts only in her and

1 *Scritti di Massimiliano Kolbe* (Rome: ENMI Editrice Nazionale M.I., 1997) Cristoforo M. Zambelli, O.F.M. Conv., trans. [= SK] #1329 [Anselm W. Romb, O.F.M. Conv. (ed.), *The Kolbe Reader* (Libertyville, IL 60048: Franciscan Marytown Press, 1987) 158-159].

2 SK #643 [*Maria Was His Middle Name: Day-By-Day with Blessed Maximilian Maria Kolbe* trans. Regis N. Barwig (Altadena, CA: The Benziger Sisters Publishers, 1977) 100-101].

through her; he communicates supernatural life, the life of grace, the divine life, the sharing in divine love, in the divinity itself.⁴

Of course the great enemy of our purification is Satan. He has been at war with “the Woman” from the beginning, from the first mention of her recorded in the Book of Genesis (3:15) because of her complete identification with the Messiah. Here is how Maximilian describes the “enmity” between them:

Satan is very much set on leading souls away from union with our Immaculate Mother in heaven, for he knows that souls which exclude Her mediation offer to Christ gifts that are filled with imperfections, sometimes more worthy of punishment than of reward. And what is worst of all, these gifts are filled with pride, taking into account that the Mother of God is excluded. I should point out, too, that this does not pertain to those actions which we offer directly to Christ, although we make no reference to the Immaculate One, as long as we do not exclude her, for sometimes things which are “understood,” are not articulated, and only taken for granted. Hence a soul consecrated to the Immaculate One should serenely and joyfully go with the movement of the heart that leads to the Tabernacle and the Cross, and to the Trinity, for such a soul no longer makes that journey alone, but with the heavenly and immaculate Mother of God. It cannot pray otherwise than with a peaceful heart. Then aspirations of divine love will lift it up to God, and the Holy Spirit guides it, removing all barriers, surpassing all limits. Lucifer refused to worship the God-Man, but all the more did he rebel against giving any honor to a human being alone, although the



most pure and immaculate, the Virgin Mary.⁵

Because Saint Maximilian was so thoroughly convinced of Mary’s place in the hierarchy of mediation, he understood that those who willfully exclude her mediation, who brag that they don’t need her, are “filled with pride” and are “more worthy of punishment than of reward.” Sadly, such willful exclusion is a direct result of the Protestant Reformation and prevents the growth of grace in her children who need her maternal mediation. By the same token, those who are consecrated to the Immaculate have the habitual intention of seeking and benefiting from her mediation, which is willed by God, even if they do not immediately or consciously advert to it.

According to Saint Maximilian,

Mary, the all-pure, wants to purify the acts of her children:

In practice souls can always turn directly and in full liberty either to the Immaculate or to the Holy Spirit or to Jesus the eternal Word or to the heavenly Father. But the more fully a soul understands that all its acts of love are addressed to the Father because he is our ultimate end, and that in the Immaculate its acts acquire an immaculate purity, while in Jesus they take on an infinite value, worthy of the most holy majesty of the Father, the more will they burn with love for Jesus and Mary.⁶

These thoughts represent just some of Saint Maximilian’s insights on Marian consecration.

6 SK #1310 [Romb 192].

4 SK #1326 [Romb 199].

5 *Maria Was His Middle Name* 53-54.