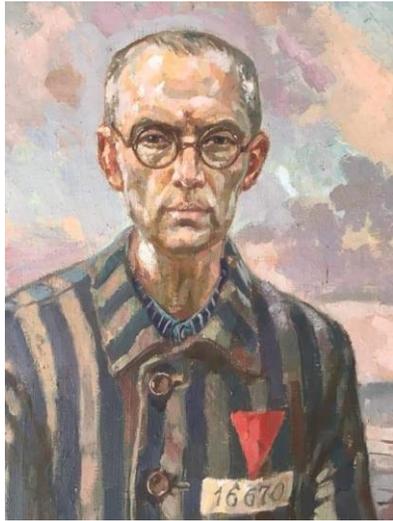


ON THE END, LOVE AND MERCY PREVAIL TESTIMONY OF MERCY OF SAINT MAXIMILIAN KOLBE IN AUSCHWITZ



An eloquent testimony of mercy is the martyrdom of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe. Going to starve to death in place of his fellow prisoner Franciszek Gajowniczek was the fruit of a whole consecrated life, dedicated to the service of God and people. "In all things, trust completely in the Divine Mercy, which leads you through the Immaculate. Leave the rest to the miracles of mercy of Divine Providence and the Immaculate. Let yourself be guided in peace and trust by the Divine Mercy through the Immaculate" (Writings of Maximilian Kolbe 849) – taught Maximilian Kolbe. His fellow inmates at Auschwitz testified that even in the horrific conditions of the German Nazi concentration camp, Father Kolbe radiated a peace that was nothing less than putting his hope in God "against hope."

Jerzy Bielecki, a prisoner of Auschwitz, emphasized that it would be a mistake to say that Father Maximilian died for one fellow prisoner and his family. Indeed, the friar's testimony of mercy was a source of strength for many prisoners. It turned out in the hell of the camp, Jerzy Bielecki stated, "that the real world exists, as it existed, that our torturers and murderers are not able to destroy it, that this world does not begin behind the barbed wire of our camp, that it is also here. Many began to look for the real world within themselves, found it and shared it with their camp mates, in order to strengthen themselves and fellow prisoners in the struggle with evil" (St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe, Fr. L. Dyczewski, ATK, 1984, p. 264). Father Kolbe testified that even in a world that seems to be without mercy, love and mercy ultimately prevail. This witness is the essence of the consecrated life.

"God wants to give you more than you want to receive" – said St. Maximilian Kolbe about the Divine Mercy. Divine Mercy appears in the writings and notes of St. Maximilian. At the same time, he often invokes the Immaculate Conception, to whom "the infinitely merciful, but also infinitely just" God gave "the kingdom of mercy alone".

"In all things, trust completely in the Divine Mercy, which leads you through the Immaculate. Leave the rest to the miracles of mercy of Divine Providence and the Immaculate. Let yourself be guided in peace and trust by the Divine Mercy through the Immaculate," Fr. Kolbe encouraged.

With all his actions, he strived to make as many people as possible to get to know Mary, and through her, God and his mercy. He lamented: "The poor don't know their Mother, they don't know how You love them, they don't even suspect it... And yet, in spite of this, You also love them and want them to know You and love You and praise the infinite mercy of the divine heart of your Son, of whom you are the personification."

Writing to brothers in Niepokalanów, he encouraged them to cooperate with Mary in being an instrument of Divine Mercy: "Dear friends, God is infinitely merciful, but also infinitely just. He created the Immaculate Conception in order to give her the kingdom of mercy

alone. We, on the other hand, have given ourselves to the Immaculate as instruments in her hands, not for the punishment of the just, but for the salvation of poor souls, so we are instruments of God's mercy."

The theme of Divine Mercy also recurs in St. Maximilian's short, daily meditation notes. Under different dates, i.e., is noted: "God's mercy toward the sinner is infinite." "Trust in God's mercy". "Trust yourself in nothing: trust completely in everything in the mercy of God, which leads you through the Immaculate." "Act as if everything depended on you and each other but expect the fruit of your work only from the mercy of God." "God desires to give you more than you receive. Trust in God's mercy."

"Mother is an instrument of Divine Mercy!" Kolbe identified Mary's mission with mercy. "Mother is an instrument of Divine Mercy, not justice," wrote Father Maximilian. "The good Lord gave us a Mother not to punish us. Be calm: place yourself entirely in the hands of the merciful Divine Providence, that is, the Immaculate..."

St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe often mentioned Mary in his "Writings". However, God's mercy was also particularly close to him. He saw in Mary the one who brought Mercy to the world. He often called her the Mother of Mercy. For him, Mary was a Mother who would always stand up for her children. "The good Lord gave us Mother so that we would not be punished," he emphasized.

Maximilian believed that a Christian should place himself whole, and with great trust, with boundless trust, into the hands of God's mercy. He saw in Mary the personification of God's mercy, by God's will. "In all things, trust completely in the Divine Mercy, which leads you through the Immaculate. Leave the rest to the miracles of mercy of Divine Providence and the Immaculate. Let yourself be guided in peace and trust by the Divine Mercy through the Immaculate," he noted in his "Writings".

Kolbe is the one who allowed himself to be led by mercy to the end. He was a witness of mercy for many prisoners who, like him, were sent to Auschwitz. "Father Kolbe testified that even in a world that seemed to be without mercy, love and mercy ultimately prevail," Jerzy Bielecki, a fellow prisoner from Auschwitz, later said.

St. Maximilian is a model of great trust. "What, then, shall we do? Trust in God. By this trust, without a direct understanding of things, we even give great glory to God, because we acknowledge His wisdom, goodness and power. So let us trust in God and let us trust without limits. Let us trust that if we only try to do His Will, nothing truly bad can happen to us, even if we live in a thousand times more difficult times," he wrote in 1933 when he was in Japan. What would he say to the people of the 21st century today? Perhaps the same thing he repeated and to which he himself adhered... "Be calm: place yourself entirely in the hands of the merciful Providence of God."

Lelis Cruzata