

PART 3

**Consecration to the Immaculata:
With Mary in the Church**
Readings from the Writings of St. Maximilian Kolbe

Let us continue our itinerary of preparation, or deepening, for our consecration to the Immaculata in the MI, turning to what we call the ecclesial dimension of the consecration to the Immaculata.

With Mary in the Cenacle

At the foot of the Cross, the scene described by John 19:25-27 presents Mary as she was entrusted to us as a mother by the dying Redeemer. At Cana the Mother says: "*Do whatever he tells you*" (Jn 2:5). We will focus our attention on the nascent Church gathered with Mary, waiting for the Holy Spirit, after the Resurrection (Acts 1:14).

Mary appears intimately united to the Church that lives in history, then as at all times: in prayer, in communion and mission. We cannot separate Mary from the Church.

The mystery of the one merges with that of the other. The Fathers of the Church had already emphasized in their reflections the intimate bond that joins Mary to the Church. St. Ambrose, in particular, stated that everything that in Scripture is said about Mary can be said about the Church and all that is said about the Church can also be said about Mary. Mary is the model, the image, the anticipation of the Church.

The Second Vatican Council will give a particular emphasis to the relationship between Mary and the Church, particularly in relation to her virginal motherhood.¹

As Mary is the Mother who virginally generates the Son of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so also the Church is the mother who generates the children of God by the Spirit through preaching and Baptism. And Mary is not only the model of the Church, but in fact, she cooperates in the rebirth of the faithful in the Church and continues to play a maternal role within the Church.

Mary, at the Annunciation, accepted the word of God and heard that: "*The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you...*" (Lk 1:35).

The Church shares the same experience at Pentecost. Mary and the disciples receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and from that moment the maternity of the Church begins. The Gospel will be announced to all nations. The motherhood of Mary continues in the maternity of the Church until the end of time through preaching and Baptism.

The mystery that joins Mary to the Church makes our consecration to Mary, ultimately, a consecration to Jesus in the Church. To belong to Mary means to belong to the Church. We cannot ignore this ecclesial dimension of the consecration to Mary.

If Mary was in the Cenacle of Jerusalem with the nascent Church, even today we meet Mary in the Church that proclaims the Gospel and celebrates the liturgy.

As we can deduce, then, to consecrate oneself to Mary is not simply a devotional act.

To consecrate oneself to Mary means to be committed to be an active member within the Church that recreates the Cenacle's atmosphere: prayer, communion and mission, in continuous docility to the Holy Spirit.

It means to be committed to live "with" the Church: "*Sentire cum ecclesia*," as the Fathers of the Church put it, by embracing the great ideals of the Church.

¹ See LG chap. VIII (the whole second part of the document: "*Mary in the mystery of the Church*").

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Each of us should foster the desire and commitment for the unity of the Church, first of all, for which Jesus prayed before His passion (cf. Jn 17). To stay with Mary in the Cenacle means to wish that all of God's children are gathered around the Eucharist. Today, those who believe in Christ are not yet fully united. We must feel the responsibility to pray for Christian unity and to participate in the work of the evangelization that is the extension of Mary's maternal mission. As missionary disciples, we are aware that the Word of the Lord is too far from being accomplished: "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation*" (Mk 16:15); "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*" (Acts 1:8).

The MI Movement

In the Kolbean spirituality, this ecclesial dimension is not simply a corollary, albeit important. It is a qualifying point.

In St. Maximilian's vision, authentic consecration to Mary does not exist if it is not referenced to the Church, especially in reference to the mission of the Church.

We could say that what is truly original in St. Maximilian, compared to other forms of consecration to Mary in the Church, is precisely its missionary and universal dimension.

He founded the MI Movement in 1917, when he was still a young man, with few resources, but with a great ideal in his heart. As time went on, that ideal would become ever more clear: "*To win the whole world for Christ through the Immaculata*"²; To embrace the entire globe "*...so that she may extend her dominion in the hearts of all those who live in any corner of the earth*" (KW 1210).

In the original charter of the MI, St. Maximilian delineated the characteristics of MI movement; he indicated the goal of his Movement with these words:

"To bring about *the conversion* of sinners, heretics, schismatics, etc., especially Freemasons, and *the sanctification of all, under the patronage and through the mediation of the B.V.M. Immaculate*" (KW 1368). To obtain this purpose St. Maximilian considered one's total consecration to the Immaculata the essential condition (ibid.).

St. Maximilian founded the MI with a clear objective: that everyone be converted and become a saint. Whoever is consecrated to the Immaculata in the MI Movement embraces the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel to every person, to the ends of the earth, collaborating in Mary's maternal care for the brethren of her Son, which continues until they are led into the happiness of their true home (LG 62). In this context we also find St. Maximilian. The charismatic gift he received is the spiritual insight about Mary's maternal role in the Church and in the life of every person, and the intuition regarding the fact that this Mother urges us to collaborate in her maternal mission.³

Jesus' gift from the Cross is the source of the charism of the MI movement: the gift of His Mother to John which took place at the climax of the mystery of redemption. This motherhood that we received calls us to ensure that Christ is born, through the Mother, in the hearts of all men.

Let us will refer again to a text that defines beautifully the MI identity and mission:

"*That is the MI: to let her into all hearts, to bring her into being within all hearts, that by entering those hearts and taking most perfect possession of them, she may there give birth to the sweet Jesus, God, and there raise Him to perfect age. What a beautiful mission! ... Is that not true? ... The elevation of man to God-Man, through the God-Man's mother*" (KW 508).

² Cf. KW 382. The abbreviation KW refers to the numeric order used in the English edition of *The Writings of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe*, Nerbini International, Lugano, 2016.

³ Cf. KW 1220.

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This collaboration in the maternal mission of Mary can be implemented in different ways. St. Maximilian indicated three levels of membership and participation in the MI: to the 1st level (MI-1) belong those who live their consecration individually. To MI-2 belong those who live the MI's spirituality communally, in order to implement its goals together, as well as individually, and thus fulfill the Marian mission that God has entrusted to the Movement. Finally, to the 3rd level (MI-3) belong those who live a total dedication to the MI ideal and apostolate, as happens for example in the Cities of the Immaculata, in the Institutes of Kolbean inspiration, and also individual MI members who strive to be totally dedicated to the MI ideals and mission. These different forms of participation in the Movement have been confirmed in the MI general Statutes, when the MI was recognized by the Holy See as a public association of the faithful, universal and international, that is, an association with which the Church identifies herself and which acts in the name and by mandate of the universal Church. Therefore, the MI truly is a great ecclesial family in which everyone can find his or her place. Welcoming the call to Marian consecration in the spirit of St. Maximilian means to accept the invitation to live a Church experience, in an ecclesial reality that is spread throughout the world with more than four million members worldwide.

Questions for discussion:

- Do you also want to welcome Mary into your life and participate in her maternal mission in the Church and the MI movement?

Commitment in our life:

To pray the Holy Rosary daily.