



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PRESIDENT
OF THE MILITIA OF THE IMMACULATA**

*To Fr Eugenio Galignano, O.F.M.Conv,
President of the Militia of the Immaculata*

1. With deep interest I have learned that the International Centre of the Militia of the Immaculata, supported by the "*St Bonaventure*" and "*Marianum*" Pontifical Theological Faculties and the Italian Interdisciplinary Mariological Association, has promoted the International Congress "*Maximilian Mary Kolbe in his time and today. Interdisciplinary approach to his identity and writings*".

In expressing my pleasure for this initiative, I cordially greet you, Reverend Father, Your Eminences, Brothers in the Episcopate, Academic Authorities, Father Minister General and Fathers and Brothers of the Conventual Franciscan Order, the Convention's presenters and participants in such a significant event.

The Symposium, 60 years after the heroic martyrdom of Fr Maximilian Mary, emphasizes how contemporary is his witness and how his thought does influence current Catholic theological reflection. The extraordinary gesture of the Martyr of Oswiecim offers the opportunity, through an interdisciplinary study, to understand his life and his work better, in order to understand his penetrating theological and spiritual intuitions more deeply in view of the new evangelization and of the renewed missionary impetus which define the Church of the third millennium.

2. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, a man who profoundly knew the anxieties and longings of his peers, knew how to recognize the life-giving presence of the "seeds of the Word" in every culture and, by a trusting and loving dialogue with Her who generated in time the Son of God, strove to use them for a courageous work of evangelization. The Immaculata was to him, in addition to a "sweet mother", an example and criteria of absolute fidelity to the saving plan God.

From his youth he had wanted to belong unreservedly to Mary, she whom God had thought of from all eternity, the Mother of the Son. The Blessed Virgin was the creature who knew better than anyone how to embrace the plan of redemption that the Most Blessed Trinity willed, in Christ, for all humanity. "How many mysteries about Jesus - wrote St Maximilian - the Divine Spirit, living and working in you, must have revealed only and exclusively to your immaculate soul" (SK, 1236).

He strongly believed that the person who is close to Mary is docile to the breath of the Paraclete, knows how to receive his inspiration and can adhere fully to Christ. He seems to suggest that whoever wants to know and preach the Gospel should draw close to the Immaculata with confidence, because She intimately knew the mysteries of the Son of God.

The Church, advancing confidently towards the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, continues to announce the Good News in a changing world, faithful to the heritage received, but aware that methods and words have to be adapted to the mentality of the men and women of today. St Maximilian knew how to speak to his contemporaries and make himself understood; he was faithful to God and faithful to man in truth and in holiness.

3. Fr Kolbe has left this heritage to his confreres, the Friars Minor Conventual, and, through their efforts and their witness, to the whole Christian community. The Militia of the Immaculata, founded by him and recently recognized as a public and international Association of the faithful, has made this consecration to Mary its own in a special way, so that the Gospel may continue to be preached generously to all and be a light for all humanity.

May the Congress, through various approaches to the personality and writings of the Saint, martyr of charity, contribute to enriching the doctrinal content and the apostolic methods at the service of the evangelizing work of the Church.

With these wishes, while I entrust you, Father, the participants of the Congress and all the members of the Militia of the Immaculata to the heavenly protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the intercession of St Maximilian Mary Kolbe, I cordially impart to all a special Apostolic Blessing.

From Castel Gandolfo, 18 September 2001.

JOHN PAUL II