

May Holy Hero
Saint Maximilian Kolbe

Feast day Aug. 14

Maximilian Kolbe was a Franciscan priest born in Poland in 1894. He was mischievous as a young boy, but developed a great love for the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The year before he became a priest, he founded what was called the Immaculate Movement. This helped people to understand many things about Mary and helped them to love her even more. This movement spread around the world, including Japan and India.

Maximilian was in Nazi Germany when World War II began. He was arrested in 1941 for speaking out against the war. He was sent to Auschwitz, a cruel and terrible prison camp of the Nazi's during World War II. While in the prison camp, he secretly said Mass and delivered Holy Communion, using bread and wine that had been smuggled in. Although he himself was suffering, Father Kolbe continued to preach about Jesus, knowing it was forbidden by the prison leaders.

One day, because a prisoner had escaped, the prison guards chose ten men to die. One was a man named Francis Gajowniczek, who cried out he would never see his wife and children again. Father Kolbe stepped forward and said, "I am a Catholic priest. I wish to die for that man. He has a wife and children." Like Jesus, Maximilian gave up his own life for someone else. He continued to pray with the other prisoners, as they died one by one. After two weeks with no food or water, Father Kolbe died, praying until his last breath.

The man he saved survived the prison camp and returned to his family, telling the story of Father Kolbe's heroic sacrifice until his own death in 1997. He was also present at the canonization of Maximilian Kolbe, saint and martyr on Oct 10, 1982.

Let us pray and ask St. Maximilian to help us to act bravely in our own life during difficult times as he did. Ask him also to show you how to use the power of love to overcome evil.

