

Saint Maximilian Kolbe



- Feastday: August 14
- Patron Saint of: of drug addicts, prisoners, families, and the pro-life movement
- Birth: January 8, 1894
- Death: August 14, 1941
- Canonized: By Pope John Paul II on October 10, 1982

"Courage, my sons. Don't you see that we are leaving on a mission? They pay our fare in the bargain. What a piece of good luck! The thing to do now is to pray well in order to win as many souls as possible."

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St. Maximilian Kolbe was born in Poland, and when he was 12, he had a vision of the Virgin Mary that would shape the rest of his life; "That night I asked the Mother of God what was to become of me. Then she came to me holding two crowns, one white, the other red. She asked me if I was willing to accept either of these crowns. The white one meant that I should persevere in purity and the red that I should become a martyr. I said that I would accept them both."

One year after his vision, Kolbe and his elder brother, Francis joined the Conventual Franciscans. In 1918, he was ordained a priest and continued his work of promoting Mary throughout Poland. In 1936, once the WWII invasion by Germany began, he became one of the only brothers to remain in the monastery. He opened up a temporary hospital to aid those in need. When his town was captured, Kolbe was sent to prison but released three months later.

Kolbe refused to sign a document that would recognize him as a German citizen with his German ancestry and continued to work in his monastery, providing shelter for refugees - including hiding 2,000 Jews from German persecution. In 1941, the monastery was shut down; Kolbe was arrested by the German Gestapo and taken to prison, and later transferred to Auschwitz.

Kolbe was the victim of severe violence and harassment. In his second month in Auschwitz, men were chosen to face death by starvation to warn against escapes. Kolbe was not chosen but volunteered to take the place of a man with a family. It is said during the last days of his life Kolbe led prayers to Our Lady with the prisoners and remained calm. He was the last of the group to remain alive, after two weeks of dehydration and starvation. The guards gave him a lethal injection of carbolic acid. The stories tell that he raised his left arm and calmly awaited death. St. Maximilian Kolbe died on August 14 and his remains were cremated on August 15, the same day as the feast of the Assumption of Mary.