



November 14, 2014 Meditation

Father Kolbe, like everyone, feared death but surrendered his life with faith and abandonment. He triumphed over death by giving his life in imitation of Christ. Listening to the cry of one condemned to die; **he became deeply troubled**, so much so that he requested the commander of the camp to take his place. Trading places with a dying man was not despising the world, nor the body. It was a self-giving that contradicted the Nazi madness. It became a counterweight to the evil in the world and destroyed it in the fire of love.

Saint John Paul II, in his first trip to Poland, said at Auschwitz³:

In this site of the terrible slaughter that brought death to four million people of different nations, Father Maximilian voluntarily offered himself for death in the starvation bunker for a brother, and so won a spiritual victory like that of Christ himself. (...)The victory through faith and love was won by him in this place, which was built for the negation of faith—faith in God and faith in man—and to trample radically not only on love but on all signs of human dignity, of humanity.

On Sunday, February 16th, the day before his arrest, Father Maximilian dictated a meditation to his friars. He speaks of the importance of love and forgiveness:

Thanks to the love for the Immaculata, I am able always entirely to forgive. When love for the Immaculata ceases, so does our mutual love. The Immaculata wants us to maintain love's harmony. Dear children, if on earth we live in love, we already have a foretaste of heaven. All will pass, but love remains forever. With love, we will enter eternal life, and in heaven, in the presence of the Immaculata, love will be purified and taken to its highest level.

The next day, Monday, February 17th, Saint Maximilian was deported. He had only one request for his friars when leaving Niepokalanów: "Wherever you go, don't forget to love." Love was the breath of his life. He understood the essential truth that love is stronger than death. **He was able to sing**, "What peace and happiness will fill us at death at the thought of how very much we have tired ourselves and suffered for the Immaculata."⁶

Father Maximilian confided to Rudolf Diem, doctor of Auschwitz, "I prayed to be able to love everyone without limit; I consecrated my life to do good for all men." What a grace it will be for these to be our words when death is imminent!

May each of our lives be a hymn to love! And death? An embrace with the Face always sought after. Always desired and finally met.

Angela Esposito
for the community

¹ Gv 11,11-52.

² *Morte tua vita mia si rovescia in morte mia vita tua.*

³ 7 giugno 1079.

⁴ 18 giugno 1983.

⁵ Cf. Ct 8,6.

⁶ SK 1159.