



We begin the second part of our reflection **Father Kolbe, a witness to joy**, with the question-answer of a writing that we left off with the past month:

“What is then, the happiness that man wishes for? A happiness without limit...intense, grand, in the long run and in everything.”¹

In happiness, Jesus says in the Acts of the Apostles, “is more blessedness”- that is, there is greater joy-“in giving than in receiving.”² Here is the secret of happiness! Happiness doesn’t consist in what others do

for us, give us: we will never be satisfied. Total happiness consists in what we do for others by giving of ourselves. Joy appears in the Writings of Saint Maximilian and in the Conferences as an example of how we do and live things. The presence of joy is the sign of a well lived reality and lived with the right attitude.

Father Maximilian, when speaking of joy, shows from what relationship joy is born. **The profound relationship with God, with the Immaculata, the relationships between the friars: these are the natural habitats where joy abounds.** Whoever believes that the story of the world is in God’s hands, will always remain joyous and serene. The joy of the missionary is solid in serving Jesus through the Immaculata: “You have no idea as to how sweet it is to faithfully serve God through the Immaculata...I wish you to love the Immaculata so much as to not be able to live without Her.”³

In Mary’s school he discovers to be loved by God and capable of loving his neighbors. He rejoices in the presence of each one. He rejoices that Niepokalanów is growing, that the Order is growing.

In writing to the Father Provincial regarding some issues, he underlines that “at Niepokalanów the spirit is very good: everyone loves the Immaculata and want to place themselves at her service with all their heart. There’s reason to be thankful. What strikes strangers is the serenity and the happiness reflected on each face.”

Speaking afterwards of his experience in Japan, he writes: “we are religious, so we must continually train ourselves to be gentle and delicate. Sometimes a religious is like an angel of gentleness to the laity but not to his confreres, meaning that his courtesy is very superficial. We can’t be whitened sepulchers but aspire to have a delicate heart, for love and respect towards

others, to be gentle.” With the Immaculata in the heart, father Maximilian speaks to his friars of the true joy that doesn’t consist in stupid jokes, in empty laughter. For him even a smile, a word spoken in jest, joyfulness, in themselves good, may become obstacles and impede the journey if they are excessive. True joy is born where there is some sacrifice, trial, and effort.⁴ It goes deeper than simple sentiment or emotion.

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Ladislao Dubaniowski, his companion in the Seminary, recalls that “even in the trials and difficulties he wasn’t put down and never fell into discomfort; on the contrary, he would joyously say: ‘Next time it will be better’.”⁵

Knowing that in the relationship with God, as in any relationship, there is a time for joy and also for trial and doubt, he affirms: “In joy, doesn’t mean that we don’t feel pain, but in the trial we offer ourselves to God’s will...and the greatest proof of love is, when it seems that God abandons us, we bear everything with joy experiencing the truth in Jesus’ words from the cross: ‘It is finished’ (Jn 19: 30).”⁷

For father Maximilian, therefore, **joy must live in man’s heart even in difficulties and in the trials of life.** He invites us to not lose peace, **joy even in the falls.** “In case of a fall, never be sad, because this is smelly pride; on the contrary, get up immediately with great love and joy of the spirit and go forth. Make amends for the fall with a perfect act of love.”⁸ Live, in a serene and joyous way, your mistakes: “Before falling, Satan tempts us with thoughts that undermine the sin: ‘but it’s not so serious...’, then after falling he magnifies the sin, shouting that this stain will remain forever. If after falling we meditate and think that the fall can be useful for the glory of the Immaculata, we would feel differently...I rejoice in my misery, strengthened in Jesus, according to Saint Paul (ref. 2 Cor 12: 9).”⁹

¹KW 1296

²Acts 29: 35

³KW 149; 1113

⁴ Cf. CMK (Maximilian Kolbe Conference) 63 (The numbers regard the number of the Conference in the edition and not the page number.

⁵Patrizia Treece, Maximilian Kolbe, the Saint of Auschwitz, pgs. 20-21.

⁶Cf. CMK 138.

⁷CMK 221.

⁸CMK 34.

⁹CMK 44.