

Of Seeds and Flowers

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HOW WE GET THERE, DETERMINES WHERE and HOW WE ARRIVE.

In February 1941 Maximilian Kolbe, a Franciscan priest, was incarcerated in the Auschwitz concentration camp. Lost in the sheer horror of the millions of Jews systematically killed at these camps is the reality that Christian clergy were sent to their deaths as well. Just within the invasion of Poland at the outset of World War II, the Soviets and Nazis executed almost 3000 Polish priests. The attack on the Christian church is seen throughout history as a precursor to coming tyrannical abuses and warning of the dangers of things to come. However, Kolbe maintained the gentleness and wisdom of Christ even in the harshness of this indescribable slaughterhouse. He shared his food, he gave up his bunk, he prayed for his captors – he was the **“Saint of Auschwitz”**.

In July of 1941 there was an escape from the camp. It was the custom at Auschwitz to punish such actions by killing ten prisoners for everyone who escaped. All the prisoners would be gathered in the courtyard, and the commandant would randomly select ten men from the ranks. These victims would be immediately taken to a cell where they would receive no food or water until they died. On this day the commandant began his selection. At each selection another prisoner stepped forward to fill the sinister quota. The tenth name he calls is Gajowniczek. As the SS officers check the number of the condemned, one of the condemned, begins to sob. *“My wife and children,”* he weeps.

The officers turn as they hear movement among the prisoners. The guards raise their rifles. The dogs tense, anticipating a command to attack. A prisoner has left his row and is pushing his way to the front. It is Kolbe. NO fear on his face; no hesitancy in his step. The commandant shouts at him to stop or be shot. *“I want to talk to the commandant,”* he says calmly. For some reason the officer doesn't club or kill him. Kolbe stops a few paces from the commandant, removes his hat, and looks the German officer in the eye.

“Herr commandant, I wish to make a request, please.” That no one shot him is a miracle.

“I want to die in the place of this prisoner.” He points at the sobbing Gajowniczek. The bold request is presented without stammer. *“I have no wife or children. Besides, I am old and not good for anything. He is in better condition.”* Kolbe knew well the Nazi mentality.

“Who are you?” the officer asks. *“A Catholic priest,”* replied Kolbe

The block is stunned. The commandant, uncharacteristically speechless. After a moment, he barks, *“Request granted.”* Prisoners were never allowed to speak. Gajowniczek says, *“I could only thank him with my eyes. I was stunned and could hardly grasp what was going on. The immensity of it: I, the condemned, am to live and someone else willingly and voluntarily offers his life for me –a stranger---. “Is this some dream?”*

The **“Saint of Auschwitz”** outlived the other nine. In fact, he didn't die of thirst or starvation. He died only after carbolic acid was injected into his veins. It was August 14, 1941.



What made St. Father Kolbe do this? He followed Jesus all the way. - to the Cross! He was committed to doing what was right, good, loving, THE TRUTH! *"If anyone wants to come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me."* The truth is always inconvenient! That is one way we recognize it. Christianity is a FULLY CONTEMPLATIVE WAY of being actively involved in our suffering world.

Gajowniczek survived the Holocaust. He made his way back to his hometown. Every year, however, he went back to Auschwitz to thank the man who died in his place. In his backyard, Gajowniczek carved a plaque with his own hands and placed it as a tribute to the man who died so he could live!

There are times it takes an angel to remind us about what we HAVE!! There aren't many similarities between Gajowniczek and YOU and ME. But we both have two things in common. We both had had a Jewish Rabbi die for us, in our place, and we both learned that what we already have is far better than anything we might want.

How did Maximilian Kolbe get that way? *"Set your minds on things that are above, not on earthly things."* (Col. 3:2)

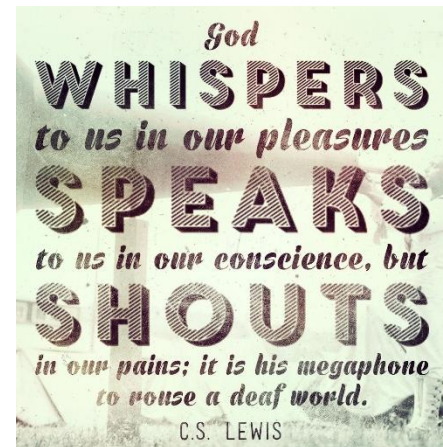
Maximilian was committed to doing what is loving, the TRUTH. He followed Jesus ALL THE Way. -to the cross. *"If anyone wishes to follow me let him take up his cross and follow me."* TRUTH changes people!!! The Nazi's killed about 3000 Catholic priests and about 4000 clergy in all. Socialism, Communism must kill God first. Democracy can't exist without God. Socialism can't exist with God. Happening here??!!!! i.e. killing God!! TRUTH changes people!!!!

THE MONASTERY OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: Holy matrimony, marriage, was never intended as a comfort station for lazy people. On the contrary, it is a systematic program of **deliberate and thoroughgoing self-sacrifice**. A man's home is not his castle so much as his monastery, and if he happens to be treated like a king there, then it is only so that he might be better enabled to become a servant. For marriage is intended to be an environment in which he will be lovingly yet persistently confronted with the plainest and ugliest evidence of his sinfulness and encouraged on a daily basis to repent and to change. Marriage is really a drastic course of action which, as much as any monastic commitment, dedicates a person to a vigorous self-denial, to a disciplined path of renunciation and of retreat from the world. It is a radical step and is not intended for anyone who is not prepared, indeed anxious, to surrender his or her own will and to be wholeheartedly submissive to the will of another.

People marry dreams and when the dream doesn't come true they blame the person who was supposed to be the DREAM PERSON. People also want DREAM CHURCHES and when the DREAM CHURCH DOESN'T DELIVER the dream, there is "hell to pay". Real spouses, real churches. NO DREAMS!

Marriage and Family are for DELIGHTFULLY INCOMPATIBLE people. Billy Graham was once asked how he would describe his marriage to his wife Ruth. His response was, ***"Ruth and I are delightfully incompatible."*** Marriage is like a man or a woman joining a monastery. People enter the monastery to give their lives completely to God, to their spiritual growth. The monastic and married life involves a process of having yourself transformed by the rubbing of your life, your qualities, against other people's (husband/wife) habits, quirks, background -like a piece of fine sandpaper. Little by little selfishness, the pride, the ego, the need for power and control, the lack of forgiveness is scrubbed from your soul like the cleansing from a fine piece of sandpaper.

"God sends us friends to be our firm support in the WHIRLPOOL OF STRUGGLE. In the company of friends, we will find strength, we will find strength to attain our sublime ideal." St. Maximilian Kolbe.



A great marriage is not when the "perfect couple" comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences. "As iron sharpens iron so one person sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17



Marriage would be so much easier if there wasn't another person involved, but then it would be meaningless too and the opportunity for personal growth would be gone. OH! the beloved **"Monastery of Marriage"**, that refines people's souls.

I recently heard of a man who said, *"For 30 years I've won nearly every argument in my marriage, but in the process, I've almost lost my marriage. I've always felt like success because I was ending conflicts through superior knowledge and logic. I now realize that I was defeating and humiliating my wife. That wasn't winning or succeeding at all; that it was a cruel and bitter kind of failure."* As the marriage counselor, Dr. Phil used to say, **"How is that working for you?"**



Still, most married people, along the way, learn this and what matters most is not who wins arguments, but rather how they are resolved. There is also a powerful message here for EVERYONE INVOLVED IN MINISTRY: **HOW WE GET THERE OFTEN DETERMINES WHERE WE ARRIVE!!!!**

One person can ruin a marriage, but it takes two to make it work. Pride fades as love grows, and there is happiness not only in giving, but also in **giving in**. *"The one watering others will themselves be freely watered."* (Proverbs 11:25) People change when they see it is in their best interest to change. Don't settle. Go for the dream.

Love does not wait for dramatic circumstances to reveal itself. In some respects, love is like clothing. What is it that holds clothing together? Not knots tied with rope but thousands of little stitches of thread. This is true whether we are speaking of clothing or the spiritual garment of marriage. "Little by little we grow!" The most important thing to DO is TO BE! BEING always comes before DOING. Who you BE'S really matters!

Since the blessings and happiness of married life need no elaboration, but the trials and crosses of life do, it is necessary to penetrate more deeply into the spirit of

Never let your career become more important than YOUR MARRIAGE!!



sacrifice and forgiveness. Here we assume not only the "worse" mentioned in the marriage vow "for better or worse" but even assume the worst.... The important question is, "How to interpret and accept these trials in a truly Christian spirit?" NO human being has a choice of whether he will go through life with or without suffering.... But each one has this choice: *Will the suffering open to the Cross and therefore will the person see the joy beyond, or will it be closed to the cross and therefore see no joy beyond; will it be closed to the Cross and therefore be the beginning of hell on earth?* The Cross that was given from the outside can now be offered from the inside by the Christian as part of his very self, as something so vital to his self-development in Christ that he would feel poorer, empty without it. To the onlooker, it seems like suffering; to the Christ lover, it is joy; just as to the unmarried an infant is the sum of economic expense, confinement, tears, measles, and worry; but to the father and mother it is a joy and a benediction.

At the Last Supper, in John's Gospel, Jesus uses the word LOVE 26 times and the word TRUTH 19 times. Marriage is about TRUTH and LOVE



An Irish Wedding Blessing

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields.

May the light of friendship guide
your paths together,
May the laughter of children
grace the halls of your home.

May the joy of living for one another
trip a smile from your lips,
a twinkle from your eye.

And when eternity beckons,
at the end of a life heaped high with love,
May the good Lord embrace you
with the arms that have nurtured you
the whole length of your joy-filled days.

May the gracious God hold you both
in the palm of His hands.
And today, may the Spirit of Love
find a dwelling place in your hearts.
Amen.

Joseph Dutton

Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure. Love never fails." 1 Corinthians, 13. Pray these words each night before closing your eyes in sleep, and your life will change. **Best to put YOUR FIRST NAME before each phrase. e.g. Bill is patient. Kind, etc.**

"Beloved, let us LOVE one another because LOVE is of God; EVERYONE who LOVES is begotten of God and has knowledge of God. The person without LOVE has known NOTHING of God, for GOD IS LOVE" 1 John 4: 7-8.

*"Come then, my love,
My lovely one come.
For see winter is past,
The rains are over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth.
The season of glad song has come."*

The Song of Songs



*We are in a committed relationship. Let's hope so, and more!
We are the best of friends. Let's hope so and more!!
We get along with each other. Let's hope so and more!
We are making a real go of it. Let's hope so and more!
We are staying together for the children. Let's hope so and more!
He/she is my best friend. Let's hope so and more!*



"My prayer is that your LOVE may more and more abound, both in understanding and wealth of experience, so that with a clear conscience and blameless conduct you may learn to value the things THAT REALLY MATTER." Phil 1: 9.

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