

Homily

6th Sunday of Easter, May 6, 2018

Raymund Kolbe was born in 1894 to a German father and Polish mother in the Kingdom of Poland, part of the Russian Empire.

Many of us remember him for his selfless act in the Nazi concentration camps.

Ten men were selected for execution. Kolbe offered to stand in the place of a man who had a wife and children.

What I didn't know about was his life of selfless dedication to the family of God and his devotion to the Immaculate Virgin Mary.

He was given the religious name Maximillian as a Franciscan initiate. He was ordained a priest in 1918.

He organized the 'Army of the Immaculate One,' whose goal it was to work for the conversion of sinners and enemies of the Church through the intercession of Mary.

He helped them publish pamphlets, books and a daily newspaper and even secured a radio license to broadcast his views on religion.

He founded missionaries in Japan and India.

He suffered physically from tuberculosis, but never complained, telling us his illness was an opportunity to suffer for Mary.

He reports of an early childhood vision of the Virgin Mary offering him two crowns, one white for purity and one red for a martyr's death.

At such a young age, he accepted both.

Even as he was suffering at the hands of the Nazi's just before his death, with those who suffered with him laying on the ground with no strength, he stood or knelt among them in prayer to support his fellow victims.

St. Maximillian Kolbe's life is a testament to the love Christ has for us and wants us to share.

We are not all called to a martyr's death, but we are called to die to self; just as we love ourselves, we are to love our neighbor and even our enemy.

Just as we are called to be with God in heaven for eternity, we are called to bring our neighbor and even our enemy to eternal life with God.

In the 1st reading just as Peter will not withhold the waters of baptism from the Gentiles, we are not to withhold the Good News from those we disagree with or dislike.

The man that St. Maximilian Kolbe saved in the concentration camp was a stranger to him.

He didn't ask what type of man he was. What he was was a husband and a father. And that was enough.

We are called to be Christ to one another, to look outside ourselves and to our neighbor, without regard to his or her political beliefs or personality or whatever.

As John tells us in the 2nd reading, God is love and to love is to be of God and to have life through Him.

It is so easy for me to stand here and preach about love.

I have the saints as powerful examples and scripture full of verses on love.

Yet, when I look at myself, really look hard at how I am an example of love, I fall miserably short.

But instead of beating myself up, I am inspired and encouraged by the Good News; we have the lives of the saints, who weren't always saints; we have the Word of God who loves us no matter what; we have the Sacraments, instituted by Christ and shared with each of us by His servants, the priests and bishops dedicated to a life of service.

I am very fortunate to have a spiritual director who hears my confession each month. I'm waiting for him to beat me over the head for what I do and what I don't do; yet he forgives me each time.

I'm blessed to live in a free country where I can attend Mass as often as I can to receive Christ, in the Word spoken and brought to life and in the Sacrament we are about to receive – truly present; body, blood, soul and divinity.

Although I am unworthy to approach this Sacred Sacrament, I am welcome as I am, a sinner and adopted child of God. And so are you.

Jesus said to His disciples: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love."

So how do we do that?!

First we need to remember that it was not us who chose God, but God who chose us. We do not merit God's love, but he does love us and that's that!

Next, we heed God's Word, to keep His commandments, specifically, to love one another as He loves us.

There it is: Love one another.

So, how do we do that?!

To love one another is to put the other person first, to serve one another. We serve one another when we set ourselves aside. It's the little things that we often and easily forget about.

Are we helping those in need; the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger. Or how about when someone needed to change lanes in traffic; did I let him in or did I speed up? Or when someone was talking and needed a friendly ear; did I listen, truly listen and try to understand, or was I think about the next thing I wanted to say? Or when someone asked for my help; did I really offer myself; my time, money, or gifts, all freely given to us from God? Or did I think about how it would set me back or take away from what I wanted. Or when someone was talking about another, gossiping or judging; did I ask them to stop or did I join in? Or when I felt wronged by someone: did I forgive them in my heart or did I plan my revenge?

What about all those times I've hurt another? Did I seek their forgiveness, try to right the wrong? Or did I refuse responsibility and pass them by without a thought other than, "What's in it for me?"

I heard a story about John the Apostle that he gave the same homily over and over. After reading the Gospel, he would simply look at the people and say, "Love," and sit down. As the story goes, some people came to him and said, "We get it, 'Love.' But what about something new and different?" John answered them, "Get that message and then I'll think of something else to say."

I don't think this is a true story, but that message is strong and clear. Even today, 2000 years after Christ walked the Earth, His message is the same. So I can't think of a better message for you and for me today, "**Love one another.**"