**June Chaplain’s Report – 2019**

***The Saints: Making the Ordinary, Extraordinary***

Over this past weekend at mass I shared the moving story of St. Maximilian Kolbe, a polish priest and martyr who was canonized by St. John Paul II in 1988 for his heroic self-sacrifice in the Nazi Concentration Camp of Auschwitz; laying down his life for another inmate. What is fascinating about Kolbe’s story is that his courageous self-sacrifice was not a flash in the pan but the culmination of a life thoroughly rooted in Christ; a life that is for us as a Knights of Columbus especially inspirational.

Kolbe, after entering the Franciscan Order, was sent to study in Rome. While there he grew in his devotion to Mary as he learned of the apparition at Guadalupe in Mexico, the Miraculous Medal, and the teaching on Marian Devotion promoted by St. Louis de Montfort. In the midst of this growing fervor, Kolbe witnessed an event that would have a profound effect upon the rest of his life. This event is recalled in “The Second Greatest Story Ever Told” a book that traces the growth of the story of the Divine Mercy devotion among others in the Church today. There we read:

***On February 17, 1917, while Kolbe was still in Rome for his studies, a troubling event took place in St. Peter’s Square that intensified the young seminarian’s already incredible intensity. He describes what happened as follows:***

***“[T] he Freemasons in Rome began to demonstrate openly and belligerently against the Church. They placed [a] black standard … under the windows of the Vatican. On this standard the archangel, St. Michael, was depicted lying under the feet of the triumphant Lucifer. At the same time countless pamphlets were distributed to the people in which the Holy Father was attacked shamefully.”***

***Suddenly, as Kolbe witnessed this disturbing scene, an idea came into his mind. Inspired by the Marian lessons he had learned in the seminary, he thought of founding an “active society” that would engage and conquer the kind of evil he saw in that square. He pondered this idea in his heart for many months, letting it mature and develop until the day of action arrived.[[1]](#footnote-1)***

The active society that Kolbe would found a few months later was named the ***Militia Immaculata.*** Kolbe would inspire religious and laity alike to seek the conversion of the whole world by way of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Knights in only a few years would evangelize much of Poland and part of the far east, notably Japan. Kolbe and his knights would combat the lies perpetrated by the oppressive dictatorships that threatened his beloved homeland from the east (the Nazis) and the west (the Soviets). It was the proclamation of the truths of the Christian ethos and worldview that would bring Kolbe to the Gestapo’s attention and set the stage for his ultimate moment of Christian Witness.

What might we take away from Kolbe’s example as particularly inspirational?

1. He responded to a concrete, local problem in his sphere of influence – in his case the vulgar demonstration of the Freemasons.
2. He did not combat the societal ills he faced by way of savvy political activism or attacking the persons who perpetrated them but rather by undoing the lies upon which their positions stood by bringing them face-to-face with truth in charity.
3. Kolbe was one man among many brothers. Without his fellow Franciscans and their life in common, it is uncertain whether Kolbe would have been able to persevere or not.

Evil in the world is many things, but one thing it is not is creative. The same old ideologies and lies that made possible the ills of the modern world do not necessarily go away quietly. Racism, totalitarianism, socialism, communism and other besides continue to plague our society with new adherents in every time and place. As Knights of Columbus, we are called to be on the front lines in defense of our families, faith and the truth.

With so many places to begin the task can appear overwhelming. Not ***every*** battle is the one in which we personally must contend. The trick is picking the right one. To quote a friend: ***“Pick one brick in the wall and have at it with all you got!”*** Wherever we begin – the important thing is that we ***do*** begin. Like Kolbe we will face contradictions and trials in that fight but Christ warned us of such troubles long ago and the reason for our confidently pushing on in Him. ***“In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.”[[2]](#footnote-2)***

**Practical Tips:**

***1) Read the Life of a Saint you are inspired by and consider what problems in society they dealt with and how.***

***2) Read Columbia Magazine or consider what the Knights have done over the past year and take note of any particular effort that inspires/motivates you and act on it.***

***3) Pray over the particular desires/gifts/motivations you may have and consider where the Holy Spirit may want to employ said movements of the heart.***

**Coming Up:**

***June/July***

* Father’s Day Weekend – 6/15-6/16/2019
  + Talk up new resources especially after/at masses for Fathers in Kiosks; talk up [*www.fathersforgood.org*](http://www.fathersforgood.org)too.
* Religious Freedom Week 2019 – 6/22-6/29/2019
  + Celebration and remembrance of one of the most fundamental gifts to human person – Religious Freedom.
  + Beginning with Feast of Ss. Thomas More and John Fischer and ending with Solemnity of Ss. Peter and Paul
  + About Religious Freedom Week: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/index.cfm>
* Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – 6/28/2019
  + Great day to practice devotion to the Sacred Heart; Solemn High Mass at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel 6/28/2019 @ 8:00PM?
* Novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel 7/8-7/16/2019
  + Special event happening at the Carmelite Monastery in Philadelphia – Ask Fr. McKale for more info

1. Gaitley, Michael E.. The Second Greatest Story Ever Told (Kindle Locations 2127-2136). Marian Press. Kindle Edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. John 16:33 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)