

The 75th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. Maximilian Kolbe

Week 29

Pawiak Prison



Auschwitz was not the only prison, nor was it the first prison Maximilian faced.

On February 17, 1941, the Gestapo came to arrest Maximilian and he greeted them by saying, "Praised be Jesus Christ!"

Like Pilate and the Sanhedrin, the Gestapo began to interrogate Maximilian about his teaching and he gave them a tour of Niepekalanow after which he was arrested in his office along with 5 other Franciscan priests and taken to Pawiak Prison, never to see his brothers or Niepekalanow again.

There were about 30 prisoners in the cell and the spirit of Maximilian was one of calm.

Kolbe had the ability to turn prisons into chapels.

By his questions and discussions he brought about calm.

By his prayer other prisoners could see his union with God.

By his refusal to take off his Franciscan habit he showed his willingness to accept persecution for being a priest.

By his taking the less comfortable place in the cell, he showed his willingness to suffer for others.

From his Franciscan habit hung a rosary with a crucifix.

For which he was beaten repeatedly.

His death in the starvation bunker was no accident.

Without realizing it, everything Maximilian did in his life was in preparation for his death in Auschwitz.

On March 13 Maximilian wrote a postcard from prison which said,

"All the Brothers must pray very much and well. Work with fervor and do not worry too much about us because nothing can happen to us without the permission of God and the Immaculata."

Prayer :

O holy St. John the Baptist who was imprisoned for preaching the Truth, give me strength and courage to preach the Truth to those who are imprisoned by hatred, selfishness and falsehood.

Mediations and Questions

1. Have I ever visited anyone in prison?
2. How do I treat those around me who are imprisoned by suffering, sorrow or falsehood?
3. What imprisons my heart and soul?
4. How does my Faith and Consecration set me free?