

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

Week 31

Kolbe in Auschwitz Pt. 1



On May 28, 1941 the prisoners from Pawiak prison were transported to Auschwitz. Stuffed into a windowless car, the crowding made the atmosphere almost impossible to breathe along with the knowledge they were going to a concentration camp filled everyone with despair and depression.

Until someone started singing.

It was Maximilian.

By his religious and patriotic songs their spirits were lifted.

After his arrival, Maximilian and the others were locked up for the night.

The next morning they were taken to the icy showers, given their prison uniforms and their heads were shaved and Maximilian was given the number 16670 and assigned to cell block 18. At the time there were no bunks. The prisoners slept on bagged straw on the floor.

One prisoner recalls how Maximilian knelt at night and prayed which risked beatings because prayer was strictly forbidden.

Priests were hated as much as the Jews and treated the same.

One day was especially dreadful for Kolbe. The capo selected him to be the day's special victim. Maximilian was loaded with the heaviest branches and then ordered to run. He fell and was repeatedly kicked in the face and stomach. He was then ordered to lie across a stump where he was given 50 lashes. Afterwards Maximilian could not even move, so the capo threw him into the mud and piled the sticks on top of him. Maximilian had to be carried back to the camp and taken to the camp's hospital.

To all of his suffering, Maximilian told the other prisoners,  
"Let us offer all of the suffering for the Mother of God. Let them see that we are her servants. "

Prayer : Lord Jesus, help me to carry the branches of the cross with Courage and Faith, united with the Immaculata who walked beside you as you carried your cross.

Meditations and questions :

1. What crosses have I carried this week?
2. How did I carry them?
3. Who around me carried crosses?
4. How did I help them to carry their cross?
5. How did others help me carry my cross?