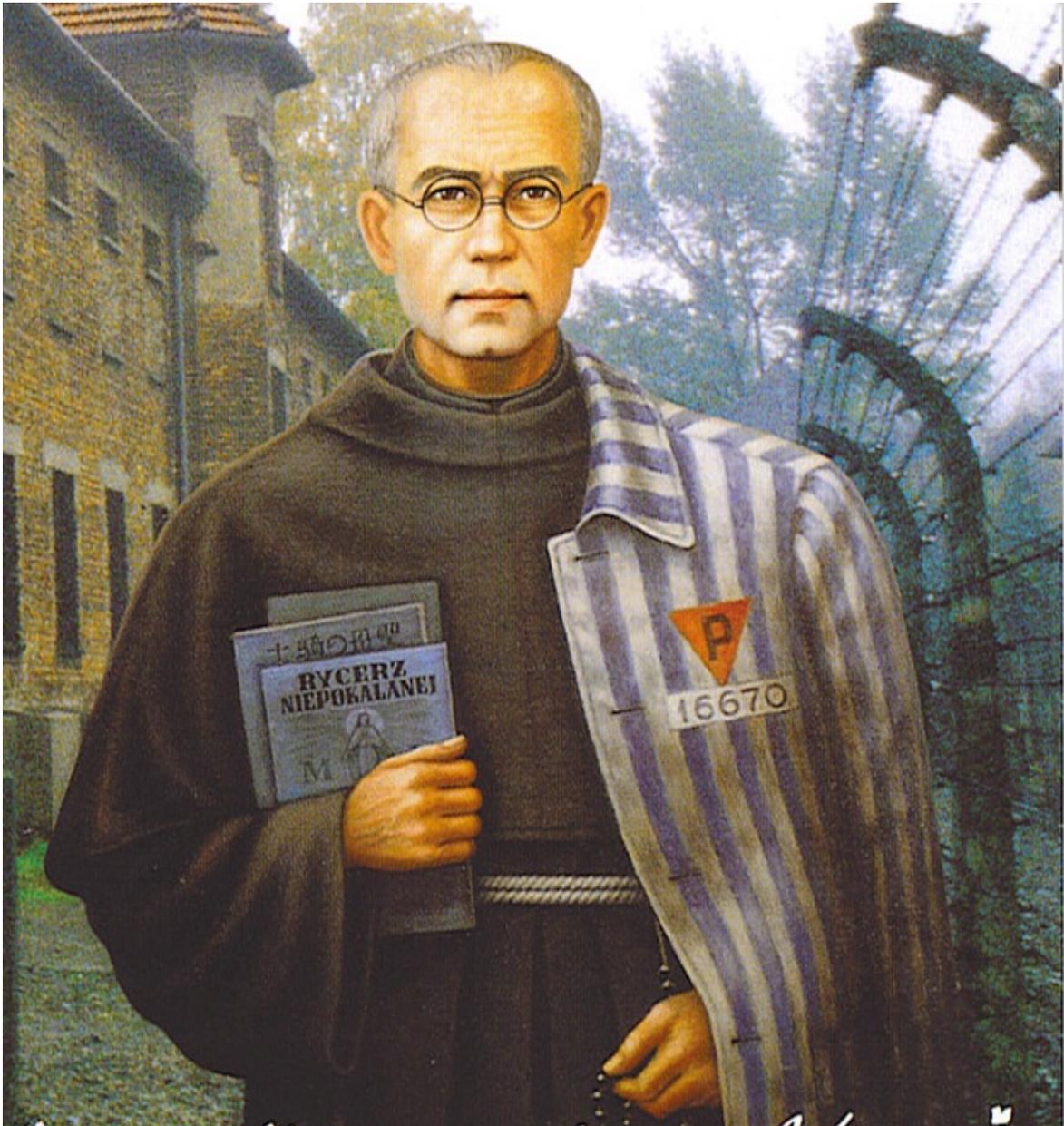


75th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Maximilian Kolbe

Week 36

Kolbe and Anti-Semitism



Even though Maximilian Kolbe was put to death by the Nazis in Auschwitz where millions of Jews were gassed and killed, he is accused by some of being an anti-Semite.

Why would the Nazis kill him, if like them, Maximilian was an anti-Semite?

Is there any factual evidence or merely innuendo and accusations of false association?

One cannot help but accept and acknowledge that Jews are sensitive to any and all forms of anti-Semitism considering 5-6 million Jews were killed out of a population of 9 million in Europe. The Jewish population in many countries was either wiped out or decimated in such a way that all that is left are empty synagogues and cemeteries reminding one of a rich and historic past. One can only shudder at the thought of what would have happened to the remaining 3 million Jews if Hitler had militarily won the war.

Anti-Semitism takes many different forms from

- * religious (Jew as Christ-killer),
- * economic (Jew as banker, usurer, money-obsessed),
- * social (Jew as social inferior, "pushy," vulgar, therefore excluded from personal contact),
- * racist (Jews as an inferior "race"),
- * ideological (Jews regarded as subversive or revolutionary),
- * cultural (Jews regarded as undermining the moral and structural fiber of civilization).

In none of these examples can Maximilian Kolbe be found.

Kolbe clearly wanted to bring the world to Christ and this included "some" Jews and Masons, who were politically active against the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Kolbe had read the Russian propaganda mythic slandering document of the Protocols of Zion and was thought to have believed them to be true at the time as did Thomas Edison and others. There is no evidence however that he took it seriously or acted upon it.

In those rare writings where he refers to the Protocols of Zion, Kolbe's criticism was directed towards a "few Jews" whom he hoped to convert, just as he hoped to convert the world.

There is also no evidence that Kolbe personally believed in the racial anti-Semitism based on the social Darwinism which the Nazis later adopted.

Kolbe was however, critical of Marxist atheism which the Papacy condemned in 1848, "Some" of whom were Jewish and participated in these Marxists political parties such as the Bolsheviks.

Lenin's grandmother was Jewish as well as Trotsky who was the founding leader of the Red Army and alongside Lenin, Stalin, and four others founded the first Politburo, in 1917 in order to manage the Bolshevik Revolution.

On a personal level, Kolbe showed the same kindness and acceptance to Jews as he showed to all people from Poland to Japan, Catholic and non Catholic.

After the Nazi invasion of Poland, a woman who was clearly anti-Semitic, came to the friary in Niepekalanow and asked him if it was "all right" to give handouts to war impoverished Jews, begging at her door.

Maximilian replied, "We must do it because every man is our brother."

After the war began, thousands of Jews were housed at his friary in Niepekalanow.

In truth, however, Maximilian has done more for the Jews and the holocaust by his death than any other Catholic.

Kolbe has introduced the genocide of the Jews in particular to millions who might only have had a passing thought or interest in Auschwitz and the Holocaust at best.

Kolbe is a doorway for Catholics to understand and enter into the suffering of the Holocaust and the Jews, and by remembering Kolbe's death every Jew is remembered by every Catholic. Kolbe thus can be a bond for Jews and Catholics.

As Eddie Gastfriend, a Jewish survivor from Auschwitz said, "Those of us Jews who came into contact with priests, such as Father Kolbe (I didn't know him personally, but I heard stories about him), felt it was a moving time-a time when a covenant in blood was written between Christians and Jews. . . ." (A Man for Others by Patricia Treece, p. 177. Marytown Press)

Prayer : O Lord, open my eyes to see, my ears to hear, my heart to love and my hands to reach out to my neighbor, in times of need regardless of race, or color or creed.

Meditations and Questions :

1. What is it like to be discriminated against because of race, color or creed?
2. How have Jews in particular been targets of discrimination?
3. How have Christians discriminated and persecuted Jews historically?
4. How can Jews and Christians become better sons and daughters of Abraham, our common Father in Faith?