

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

Week 41



The Garden of Auschwitz

When one hears about the Garden Of Auschwitz one may wonder of what kind of garden is it referring to. The Garden of Eden? Certainly not!
Rather It refers to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Before Maximilian could step out of line to be judged and condemned by the commandant as Jesus was by Pilate, and then proceed on his way of the cross to his Calvary in the Starvation bunker, he first, like Jesus had to enter into his Garden of Gethsemane.

When it was discovered that a Prisoner had escaped, all of the prisoners were lined up in the street. When the prisoner was not found, their dinner was poured out into the street in front of them and they were sent back to the barrack with no food for the night.

Maximilian's Garden of Gethsemane was Cell Block 14 in Auschwitz.

It was there that Maximilian entered into his Garden of Gethsemane. Throughout the night he prayed, knowing that if the prisoner was not found, 10 prisoners would be selected for the starvation bunker. Maximilian knew that the Cup might be offered to him in the morning. Just as Jesus prayed that His Father might take His Cup away from Him, so he prayed that the cup might pass from him for no servant is greater than his Master. But throughout his life Maximilian sought to do only the Will of God. Would he possibly pass up the Cup and his greatest chance to be obedient even unto death? Of course not! So through the night he prayed. Comforted by the Virgin Mary who had always stood by him and would stand by him in his Calvary of the Starvation Bunker.

The next day, when all of the other prisoners went off to work detail, Maximilian and the other prisoners from cell block 14 stood from morning until late afternoon in the hot August sun with only a break at noon for their soup ration.

At the end of the day, when the time came for the commandant to choose 10 prisoners to go to the starvation bunker, Maximilian was ready. So when Francis Gajowinczek was chosen and cried out that he had a wife and children, Maximilian was ready to step forward to take his place, just as Jesus was ready to take our place on the cross.

Like Jesus, Maximilian accepted the cup freely. He was not chosen by the commandant. Rather he stepped forward out of his own free will and offered to take the place of Francis Gajowinczek

Calvary was decided in the Garden of Gethsemane and Maximilian's stepping out of line was not a sudden fluke or fancy. He had endured his Garden of Gethsemane throughout the night in his bunker and was ready to accept the Cup when it was offered and to do the Father's Will.

Prayer : Heavenly Father, there are many Cups that are offered to me throughout my life, may I have the courage to accept them, knowing that you will always give me the grace necessary to do Your Will.

Meditations and Questions :

1. What Cups have I been offered to drink by God?
2. What Cups have I rejected?
3. How do I prepare to face my own personal Calvary?
4. How are Jesus and Mary present to me in my Garden of Gethsemane?