



Director's Letter No. 4

by Fr. Karl Stehlin, Director of the Militia Immaculatae

The Immaculate Conception, December 2016

Dear Knights of the Immaculata!

From his childhood Saint Maximilian Kolbe received a deep love and veneration for Our Lady. He grew up with the Polish devotions of the “Great Mother of God”, “Mother of Mercy”, “The most Holy and Blessed Virgin” and many other titles well known to each Catholic in that country. The Immaculate Conception was celebrated specially to emphasize the Catholic Truth against the Russian schismatic Orthodox who did not accept this privilege as a dogma of Faith. However, the title “Immaculata” as a proper name was forged only by him: he wanted to render popular the great mystery of the Immaculate Conception which was more for him than only the contents of the dogma proclaimed in 1854, that Our Lady was conceived through a unique privilege to be exempt from the stain of original sin. He often spoke about the practical dimension of this truth of faith, which became the fountain of all his spiritual life and immense apostolic action. The most beautiful fruit of his devotion was certainly the *Militia Immaculatae*, gathering around HER an always greater number of souls also impressed and enthusiastic about HER being immaculate.

The major idea behind the founding of the MI was to form an army around Our Lady, an elite squad full of ideal; that is why Saint Maximilian called them ‘knights’ and not simple soldiers. He had in mind the great divine rule: God in his action on earth always uses created instruments, and generally without them he would not act in the world. His Kingdom on earth is a priestly Church and each Christian has to collaborate with the grace of God to save souls to fulfil the greatest commandment — love of God, love of neighbor.

The MI became an important means to wake up the often sleeping faithful and make them aware about their vital role in the Church Militant: to fight on the side of the woman of the Apocalypse against the enemies of our salvation. What a grace for us to discover again our noble, immortal and eternal vocation! SHE calls us, in her boundless mercy, to work for the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart; she allows us to become “hunters of souls” and makes us bring forth “everlasting fruits” with an eternal reward, because “what we did for the sake of others, we do it twice, three times and more for our own sake”.

Saint Maximilian teaches us that all this is important; however, it is not the most important! In fact, the central concept in the MILITIA IMMACULATAE is not the “knight”, but the “Immaculata”. In the certificate for the Knights (mały dyplomik) the first words employed are the quotations we find also in the act of Consecration: “She shall crush Satan’s head” and “Thou alone hast vanquished all the heresies in the whole world”. If you are in the workshop of a great artist and you admire his wonderful masterpieces, you would be full of praise for the artist, admire his talents and amazing realizations; you would not think about his tools, his pens and pencils. If you enter a house so clean as to shine, you would be full of praise for the housewife and would have no interest in the brooms and rags she used to clean.

In the MI almost nothing is about us, but ALL is about HER! SHE is all in the MI, SHE is all in our life, SHE is “our life, our sweetness and our hope”. The MI is about the most astonishing and outstanding discovery; a discovery that brings so much light into our darkness, so much eternity into our nothingness, so much joy into our sad life, so much thrilling excitement into our boring and mean banality, so much LOVE into our cold and heartless soul.

And what is that discovery? That GOD who created us, who decided to give us everlasting happiness, who Himself came to save us, convokes us to a place where the Uncreated touched the created and united Himself with a human nature. This place He calls the “Holy of Holies”, the sanctuary which will forever be “His created Home”. What an awe-inspiring thought to be admitted in GOD’S HOME ON EARTH!

What or rather who is that place, this junction between eternity and time, between heaven and earth?

Imagine the majesty of the Most Holy Trinity before all times deciding the creation and salvation of the world. All possible creatures lay before him at a glance, as on a map. He sees all those who ever will be created, the almost infinite number of pure spirits and all men. But HIS eyes are fixed only on HER, and SHE will be the head of all creatures, the “blessed amongst them”.

SHE was to become a HOME for the SON, whose eternal HOME is the bosom of the Father. “In the beginning, before all creation I was conceived”. In God’s eternal mind, She was to be the eternally elected daughter of the Father, the mother of the Son and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost.

The eternal IDEA of God’s Providence was to create the world, so that his SON could become man, to become JESUS, through whom, in whom and for whom all things were created and all should return to God. In order to realize this greatest IDEA, God conceived another, similarly eternal idea (concept) of a human being from which the SON could take his human nature, his body and blood and most Sacred Heart: and thus conceived, in his eternal wisdom, MARY, the Mother of the eternal WORD, God’s home on earth!

When we speak and think about HER, we do it with the poor tool of our limited reason: we meditate her nativity from Saint Anne and Joachim, the Annunciation, Christmas, the flight to Egypt and the hidden years in Nazareth. We follow her discreetly during the public life of Our Lord and find her

again at the foot of the Cross. And after his resurrection we admire her glorious assumption and all the wonderful interventions of our heavenly Mother to assist her children in permanent danger.

But we should also try to lift up our minds as far as we can unto the limits where time and space ends, and eternity begins, where there is no more past and future, but an eternal NOW. And what are we allowed to see there?

THE INFINITE TRINITY who elects HER, the firstborn of all creatures in HIS eternal mind, more precious and great than the Cherubim and Seraphim, so much so that compared to her all the other creatures are what a little lake is to an immense ocean. The masterpiece of all his works, however, will be a human being, and all human beings after the fall of their first parents will need redemption.

So SHE also will be redeemed by that Precious Blood which was to be taken of her own. God in foreseeing Calvary pours the Precious Blood onto her soul at the moment of her conception: this Blood blocks in HER the 'entrance' to original sin: "When Mary's soul and body sprang from nothingness at the word of God, the Divine Persons encompassed their chosen creature in that selfsame instant, and the grace of the Immaculate Conception was their welcome and their touch" (Fr. Faber).

"Behold the tabernacle, the dwelling of the Most High amongst the sons of man": entirely pure, completely exempt from the slightest shade of imperfection, created holiness! Mary is exempt of whatever could limit God to act in his creature.

Being "immaculate" is just a negative description of being full of grace, of the fullness of God's life, of the absolute totality of God's infinite LOVE given to all creatures. Created out of nothing, in the very moment of her existence, Mary is lifted up to the spheres of God's nature as no other creature. With the freest will she gives herself to God, disappears in full agreement in the floods of light and grace which overwhelm her soul, so that God may be "all in all".

God's HOME on earth is ready: HE himself can come whenever he wills so! He will not find any obstacle, but infinite desire, entire poverty, open emptiness, and an immaculate heart beating with the very LOVE of the Holy Ghost who from all eternity chose HER as spouse.

IMMACULATA means: the all-holy presence of God on earth, the purest chalice full of the living waters of the totality of God's grace, God's life and God's love. This human being is so penetrated by the Holy Ghost, that all in her is only a transparent of His presence and action: her thoughts, her gestures, her words, her action are more the thoughts, desires, words and actions of the Holy Ghost than her own.

Immaculata means the spotless sanctuary where the Son will enter at the fullness of time and make HER his own Mother and Associate in his work of redemption. She will turn away the curse of the first Eve who lost her immaculate beauty for herself and all her children. The new Eve will not only be more immaculate than the first, but also the "mother of the living" to annihilate the stain and filth of the serpent wherever SHE is allowed to give supernatural life.

Immaculata means the Mother and Queen of all those redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, who invites them all to join him in his HOME on earth, in this sanctuary, which becomes for them a secure “refuge and the way which leads them to God”.

All these unfathomable mysteries (and many others) are contained in the simple term invented by Saint Maximilian Kolbe: IMMACULATA! Can we understand now, why he insists so often, that about Her mysteries we learn more on our knees in deep contemplation than in reading many wise books?

OUR LORD is inviting us: “My beloved child, come home!” And those, who with awe, fear and thrilling joy answer: “Yes I come!” are called CHILDREN OF THE IMMACULATA! It is greatest present a man can ever receive on earth, and we should say with immense gratitude: “I, an exiled restless wanderer and beggar, have found my home!”

But what does KNIGHT OF THE IMMACULATA now mean? Simply to have the desire to bring as many souls as possible ‘back home’! so that they may also find the purest and holiest sanctuary on earth! So that all souls may find the strength to fight against all that is maculated (Satan, sin and the wicked world), that during this lifelong war they will find a sure shelter and HOME, where they can recover from their wounds.

But above all: THE KNIGHT OF THE IMMACULATA is the living presence of the Immaculate Conception in the world: and wherever SHE appears, the darkness of error and the stains of sin must disappear. In him and through him SHE herself repeats what she said to Saint Bernadette in Lourdes: I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION! And in midst the endless trials and tribulations of these apocalyptic times the KNIGHT brings to many souls a ray of heavenly peace and eternal happiness: O IMMACULATA!

Fr. Karl Stehlin

In honor of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception 2016