



Director's Letter No. 10

by Fr. Karl Stehlin, Director of the Militia Immaculatae

St. Maximilian and St. Louis Grignion de Montfort

Dear Knights of the Immaculata!

In order to understand St. Maximilian Kolbe correctly, one must go back to the most important sources that have shaped and inspired his inner life: the history of his country, completely marked by the presence of Mary, in Poland specially venerated as the "commander in chief" of the Christian armies; the Miraculous Medal; the apparitions of Mary in Lourdes, and especially St. Louis Maria Grignion of Montfort.

Most likely, he met the great master of "perfect surrender to Mary" during his studies in Rome. It is certainly no coincidence that he was ordained a priest on the 28th of April, the feast of St. Louis (at that time yet Blessed Louis), exactly 100 years ago.

He made St. Louis known in Poland, and printed and published the first Polish translation of the "Secret of Mary". In the foreword he himself wrote a short biography and summary of the spirituality of St. Louis. Above all, he emphasizes the similarity of the situation in the different times in which both lived. At that time the enemies were the Jansenists, today it is the Freemasons and other sects: the distinctive mark of all of them — a hatred for true devotion to Jesus and Mary. Like the Knights of the Immaculata today, Grignion was then the great apostle of the Mediatrix of all graces: as a perfect instrument in her immaculate hands, he has saved countless souls from the chains of Satan during his popular missions. Just as today's M.I. faces the all-dominating armies of evil, so too Grignion was exposed to the mighty power of the enemies. Often alone, abandoned even by his friends, he became the target of the malice and envy of the heretics. Above all, however, Grignion and Maximilian draw together from the source of all strength and courage: they put all their trust in Our Lady and were absolutely obedient to her in everything; always and everywhere and completely only HER will counts!

There is, however, an even more important coincidence: Grignion of Montfort was certainly inspired "from above" when he pointed out the role of Mary in the latter times: if the supremacy of the dragon and its servants is so great that they almost succeed in destroying the Church and entice almost all men on the path of damnation, then the apocalyptic Woman appears (Apoc. 12, 1). Through her faithful servants, she crushes the head of Satan and overcomes all his attacks, but above all, through these few faithful "apostles of Jesus and Mary of the last times", she snatches countless souls from the adversary. St. Maximilian draws the attention of the Knights of the Immaculata to the description by Grignion of these faithful slaves of Mary,

who fear no power, who go wherever the Queen sends them, who hold the crucifix in their right hand, the rosary in their left hand and have written the names of Jesus and Mary in their hearts.

He wants that the Knights of the Immaculata identify themselves with the Apostles of Jesus and Mary of the last times: "Our goal and the means to achieve this ideal (apostles of Jesus and Mary) are in complete agreement with St. Louis Maria's views. His most earnest desire — the desire of his whole life — was to honour the Immaculata as the Queen of all humankind, to hand over to her love all beating hearts of men".

For this reason, according to St. Maximilian's wish, all inhabitants of the City of the Immaculata, both in Poland and Japan, have made the consecration according to St. Montfort. In order to truly become a Knight of the Immaculate Conception in the full sense of the word, one must be her obedient child and her submissive slave. One can be totally an instrument only if one belongs totally to the artist as his property.

It is certainly true that St. Maximilian makes it easy for everyone to become a knight, and basically demands practically nothing other than the consecration, a daily little prayer and wearing the Miraculous Medal. Nevertheless, he expresses his deepest wish that every knight should be filled by the great ideal of having received a magnificent, unspeakably significant mission: We should strive more and more to belong fully to the Immaculata, to be completely obedient to her and thus be her instrument that she can use as she wants to save as many souls as possible.

However, this is unspeakably difficult, especially in our times. And the closer the end, the harder and more dangerous the fight! In such moments we should never forget that the least we do for the Immaculata is generously rewarded by her. The first to be filled with the graces by the Immaculata, will be her faithful instrument itself. My efforts for the conversion of the poor sinners will first of all benefit me, the poorest of the poor sinners.

But what is the difference between the two consecrations? How do they relate to each other?

Our Lady gave St. Louis Maria the grace of true and perfect devotion to her. Through this devotion she becomes our mother and queen in the truest sense of the word, and we her children and slaves. As a mother, she takes our hands and helps us to return to God, to save our souls, to free ourselves from the devil's traps and cling to Jesus Christ. In this way we fulfill our **baptismal vows** and begin to fulfill God's greatest commandment: the love of God above all else! Visibly, the "perfect devotion" is given to us for our own conversion and sanctification, for our relationship with God himself: "Without my mother and queen I will never find HIS truth, HIS life and HIS way. Even if I found this truth and life once, I would surely lose it again without Mary. But now that she commands the ship of my life, she will take me safely to the harbour".

After the first and major commandment of love for God, Our Lord Jesus Christ requires us also to "love one another as I have loved you", and He calls this His new commandment. How did Christ love us? He gave himself to save us from eternal damnation and to lead us into eternal bliss.

And here too, we have to ask ourselves: How often do we think of the salvation of our fellow human beings? We don't care at all about most of them, others bother us, and if we happen to wish someone good, then it is mostly all about "health, well-being and success".

And here too, the Lord sends us a help so that we can practice the great commandment of charity better and better: It is the loving mother, the queen, who after Christ loves all people so much, each one more than all the best mothers of the world can love their beloved children together. Furthermore, Christ gave her all his graces so that these people could be converted and saved. But now God also wants us to participate in this work. That is why we have received another sacrament, the **Holy Confirmation**, which bestows on us the Holy Ghost not only for our own sanctification, but to become Christ's soldiers and to participate in the edification of the Mystical Body of Christ.

In order not to waste these great graces of holy confirmation, and to finally enter into the King's army and to follow his call, the Lord sends us the Immaculata so that we may become her knights, join her small army and help her to save the souls of her children — as many as possible. And behold, the queen of heaven and earth becomes a beggar, comes to me and humbly pleads: "My child, I need you! Do you want to help me save my children, the immortal souls? So many are lost forever because there is no one who prays and sacrifices for them" (Fatima 19th of August 1917).

Here, too, the Immaculata has sent us her servant, who is to teach us to save souls as her instruments and to unfold the graces of Holy Confirmation more and more: St. Maximilian Kolbe founded the Militia Immaculatae to lay the whole world at her feet, so that "She can crush the devil's head everywhere and overcome heresies all over the world".

Just as the love of the neighbour builds on the love of God and presupposes it, as confirmation builds on baptism, presupposes and supplements it, so all of Maximilian's work is based on the total consecration of Grignon, as its extension and complement. In other words, in order to complete the total Consecration to Mary according to St. Grignon, it needs the act of consecration of St. Maximilian. Only then will our entire existence be made dependent on Mary, permeated by her presence and her fullness of grace: not only our relationship with God, but also our relationship with our neighbour; not only our self-sanctification, but also the mission that we have received from God in this world, namely to be the champion of Christ for the expansion of His kingdom. Our way to Heaven, our struggles on earth for the salvation of souls — everything, without exception everything belongs to her, just as she belongs to God.

On the other hand, however, this also means that the Knight of the Immaculata must again and again be aware on his spiritual foundation: "O my Queen, victorious in all the battles of God, I can be your instrument and knight in your army only to the extent, in which I am wholly your child, and you my mother, I your slave, and you my mistress".

Strictly speaking, one cannot really be her knight without the total consecration through which we solemnly recognize Mary as our mother and queen, and thus our absolute dependence on her as her children and slaves.

If you have not yet made your Consecration according to St. Grignon, the Commander in chief would like to invite you to discover the secret of the sure victory in all battles and fights. If you reject this invitation you will never be an eager fighter of the Immaculata; on the contrary, you will often be too weak to resist the attacks of the terrible enemies. Besides, you won't be able to do anything special in battle, because the general can only count on you a little, your weapons are rusty or your ammunition is used up.

If you have already received the unspeakable grace that the Queen has accepted you as a slave and child and is now theoretically able to lead you safely to the heights of perfection, it is very important to renew again and again the total surrender to Mary, at least once a year.

The reason is simple: as long as we live, we will always lack the confidence to understand fully and seriously this devotion. With each renewal of our consecration we become a little less unworthy and a little bit more faithful!

There is another reason: the fight is terrible, we're always on the battlefield. The knight can easily get tired, especially when he is constantly occupied in helping the Immaculata to save souls. The never ending turmoil wears us out. That is why the Mother wants to draw us to herself, so that we can rest for a while, like a child at the heart of the Mother. She wants to remind us again how much she loves us, how much she is our mother and what she wants from us (2nd week of preparation). She wants us to reflect over and over again on who we ourselves are, as creatures totally dependent on God, but also as poor, fallen men (1st week of preparation). Above all, she desires to lead us to her Son, so that through her we may know and love Him fully and belong to Him who has loved us "boundlessly and who has given himself up for us to death on the cross "(3rd week of preparation)¹.

The preferred solemnity for St. Grignon is the 25th of March, the Feast of the Annunciation, on which all are invited to renew the act of consecration (or to do it for the first time). The great solemnity of the M.I. is the 8th of December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, on which we are to renew the act of consecration as her instruments. Thus, the preparation and the consecration as slaves usually falls into Lent, whereas the consecration as knights into the Advent season. Is this not a reminder of Providence, which in this way helps us to make a wonderful resolution in these times of penance and conversion?

Apart from this, all Feasts of Mary are also suitable for renewing our consecrations to the Immaculata – an important devotion so that we never forget our identity: Now and for all eternity we have the privilege of being children, slaves and knights of the Immaculata. MAY SHE BE PRAISED AND GLORIFIED for such an undeserved grace!

Jakarta, on the 26th of February 2018

Fr. Karl Stehlin

¹For the annual renewal of the act of consecration, St. Louis wishes that we prepare it during three weeks:"Every year, on the same day, you should renew the consecration for three weeks after the same exercises. You can also renew it every month or even every day by saying this short prayer: "I am all Thine and all that I have is Thine, my beloved Jesus through Mary, Thy holy Mother" (Treatise No. 233).