



33 Days
to
Morning
Glory

Retreat
Companion

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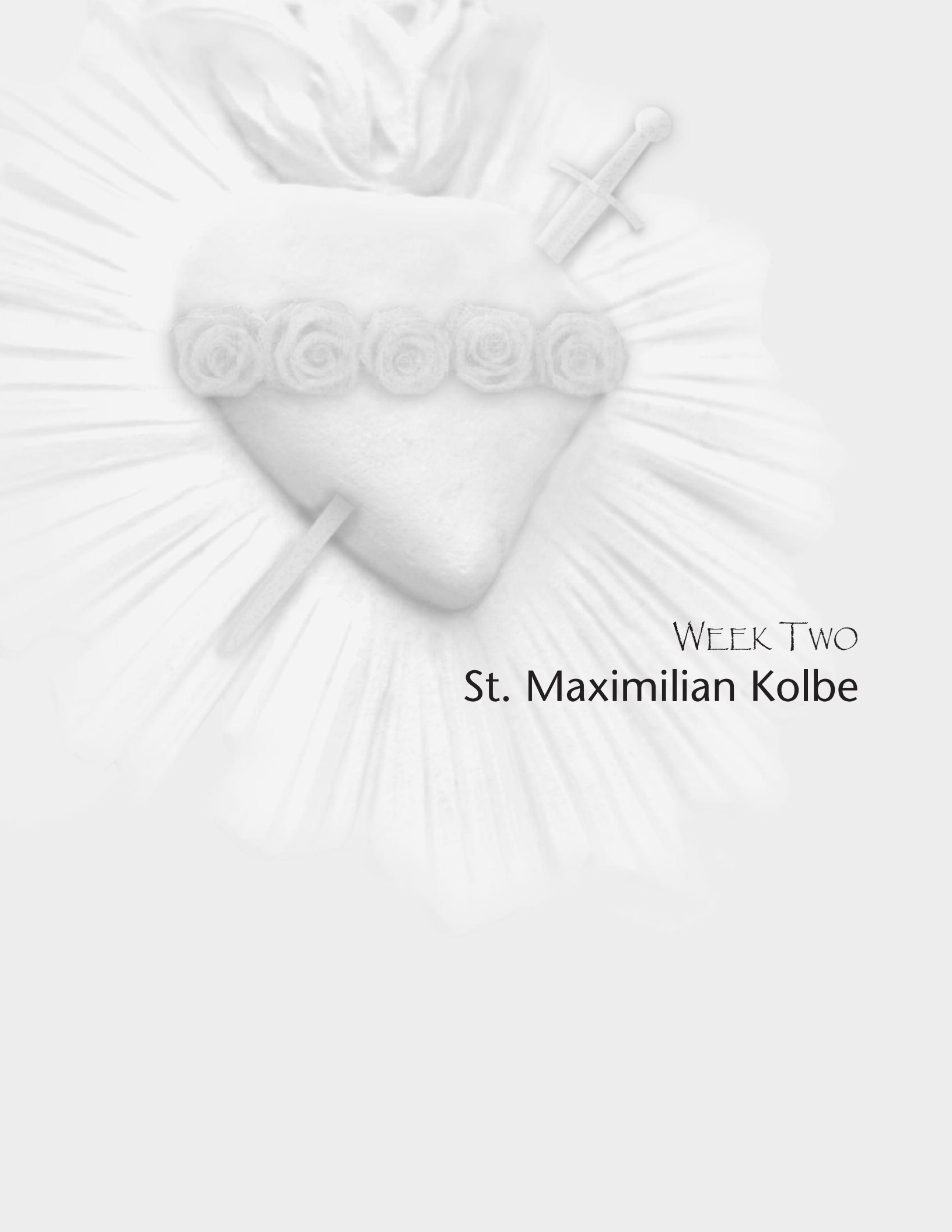
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WEEK TWO
St. Maximilian Kolbe

Prayer for Week Two — *Sub Tuum Praesidium*

Asking for Mary's motherly intercession is a key element to living out Marian consecration. As it says in *33 Days to Morning Glory*, being devoted to Mary means "relying on her intercession, experiencing her care, speaking to her from our hearts, letting ourselves be led by her, having recourse to her in all things, and trusting her completely."

This week, as you ponder the insights of St. Maximilian's devotion to our "little mother" and strive to grow in your love of her, start each day with the prayer *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, meaning "Under Your Patronage." This prayer, which was recorded around 250 A.D., is the oldest complete Marian prayer. It reveals that since the early days of the Church, Christians have called upon Mary as their Mother and Advocate. As you recite this prayer, your heart and mind unite with the saints of old in their devotion to Mary, and you can also recall modern saints, like St. Maximilian, who placed themselves under Mary's patronage. In a sense, St. Maximilian echoes the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* when he says, "... our little, little mother, the Immaculate Mary, can do anything for us. We are her children. Turn to her. She will overcome everything."

Sub Tuum Praesidium

We fly to your patronage,
O Holy Mother of God,
Despise not our petitions in our necessities,
But deliver us from all danger,
O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

Day 8

Who Are You, St. Maximilian Kolbe?

[Each day this week, you will (1) read the appropriate day from *33 Days to Morning Glory*, (2) pray the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, and (3) prayerfully answer the four corresponding questions in this *Retreat Companion*.]

- 1. Purity of Soul and Body: St. Maximilian wanted both the white crown and the red crown: purity and martyrdom. Purity of soul and body prepared him for martyrdom. To grow in holiness — to grow in purity of soul and body — we need Mary’s intercession. What ways can Mary’s powerful intercession help you grow in holiness? Are you ready to ask her for her intercession and guidance in seeking holiness?

- 2. Purity of Intention: “A person practices purity of intention when he directs his thoughts, words, and actions not to himself or another creature but to a divine purpose or mission, and ultimately to God.” Such an attitude of the heart avoids doing things for selfish reasons and instead tries to do all things out of love for God and for his glory. Can you give an example from your life of a situation in which you believe you acted with purity of intention? What do you need from God (through Mary) to make this a regular virtue in your life?

3. Significant Dates: St. Maximilian was martyred on the eve of the Marian feast of the Assumption. We all have significant dates in our lives. What are some of yours? Think about how you will make the date of your consecration significant throughout your lifetime. Any ideas?

4. Saint Maximilian strove to do everything “through obedience to God’s will, in union with Mary Immaculate.” This is dying to self and living for the glory of God. A second look at what aspects of your personal self must “die” might be good right here. What help from Mary and the Holy Spirit do you need?

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Make me pure in body and spirit and help me to die to myself.*

Day 9

Who Are You, O Immaculate Conception? (Part One)

- 1. Saint Maximilian’s most important reflection on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception comes in a sudden burst of insight just two hours before his arrest by the Nazis. Have you ever experienced a sudden or surprising understanding about a relationship with a person or a lifelong question? Was it after or during prayer? How did it change you or the situation?

- 2. Saint Maximilian says that Mary is the Immaculate Conception “in the most precise and essential manner... .” Stunning thoughts: “precise,” “essential.” Precisely and essentially, who are you? Who do you wish to become?

3. Was the idea of the Holy Spirit as the uncreated Immaculate Conception a surprise to you? As St. Maximilian understands it, this uncreated Immaculate (holy, sinless) Conception springs from the Father and the Son’s relationship with each other. How does this relationship among the Persons of the Trinity shed light on how they relate to humanity?

4. Ephesians 3:14-15 says, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit ... and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. ...” The goal of our union with Christ is to share in the very life of God, the Holy Trinity. As we consecrate ourselves to Mary and let her guide us, how can her special relationship with the Holy Spirit and Christ help us share more fully in the life of the Trinity?

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Unveil for me the meaning of the Immaculate Conception.

Day 10

Who Are You, O Immaculate Conception? (Part Two)

1. We prayed for the unveiling of the meaning of the Immaculate Conception yesterday. Why do we need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand the meaning of Mary's Immaculate Conception? Besides her being conceived sinless within St. Anne, what might it mean? (Remember to pray to the Holy Spirit as you meditate on this.)

2. Within the Trinity, God is Love, and God loves himself. How can we imitate this, and why would we want to?⁴

3. “Everything that is material occurs in time,” we read. Consider that, though we are material, we are also spiritual, and our ultimate end is union with God. How do we prepare for that eternal union with God in heaven? Mary was the one created human being who lived that intimate union with God while still on earth. How can she help us deepen our relationship to God through our consecration?

4. Mary and the Holy Spirit are united in a very special relationship: She is his spouse.⁵ Today’s meditation suggests that this relationship may even be deeper than human spousal relationships. How might Mary intercede with the Holy Spirit about issues of modern marriage and the family: divorce, domestic violence, abortion, non-marital unions, single parenthood? What might you ask of her regarding these modern spiritual problems? Consider instances of them in your family and among your circle of friends. Bring them all (the people and the situations) to Mary.

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Unveil for me the meaning of the Immaculate Conception.

Day 11

The Immaculata Always Does God’s Will, Perfectly

- 1. We have prayed for the unveiling of the meaning of the Immaculate Conception and gained some insights. John’s Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is also called the Apocalypse, or the “unveiling.” Read Revelation 12. What might John be revealing in this chapter?

- 2. The union of Mary, the created Immaculate Conception, and the Holy Spirit, the uncreated Immaculate Conception, results in Mary’s doing God’s will always and perfectly! Nice for her, but not for her alone: God wills for us to be perfect (“as your heavenly Father is perfect,” Mt 5:48), and he wants her to lead us to perfection in his will. How will Marian consecration change how you perceive — and do! — the will of God?

3. The Incarnation of the Word and his Paschal mystery are the greatest events of history and unique to the faith of Christians. The Incarnation, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ reconcile the world with God. Reflect on how we can give glory to God for this great gift of salvation. Ponder Mary’s special role in our salvation. How will Marian consecration help us give glory to God for this great gift?

4. Saint Thomas Aquinas says all creation is in a circular motion from God and back to God. Have you experienced this movement in miniature in your prayer and spiritual life? What is usually the precursor of your feeling distant from God and then returning to him? What do you ask of Mary to help you become closer to God for longer periods or more frequently? (see CCC, nn. 2742-2745).⁶

Closing Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.
Renew the face of the earth, so that all creation may return to God.*

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Day 12

To Be an Instrument – Rather, to Be Instruments

1. We ended yesterday’s meditations with a prayer for renewal, the renewal of the face of the earth. What renewal events do we perform in ordinary life? Rest and relaxation on vacations? Wedding anniversary trips or celebrations? Family reunions? How is Sunday Liturgy a weekly renewal?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 1.

2. All happiness, St. Maximilian says, is contained in the will of God in our lives. Mary Immaculate chose freely and perfectly to let God’s will be done in her. In a list of things you believe are God’s will for you at this point in your life, write a short request for help from Mary in imitating her attitude of “*fiat mihi*” (“let it be done unto me”).

Horizontal lines for writing answers to question 2.

3. Though we probably don't see angels, we do receive "divine messengers," St. Maximilian assures us. Can you recall some of the messages to which you said, "God's will be done"? What prompted your reluctance to accept God's will in other instances?

4. Mary is often invoked as "Mediatrice of Grace." In other words, through her fervent prayers, which are inspired by her motherly love for us, God is pleased to give us so many graces. It didn't have to be this way, but it was God's good pleasure to give us a spiritual mother through whose hands we receive grace. Mary's motherly care for us in the order of grace is depicted in the Miraculous Medal shown first to St. Catherine Labouré, where rays of grace flow to the world through her hands. Which graces do you desire to come from her hands to you, to your family and friends, to your country? ⁷

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Unite my will to the will of the Immaculata, which is one with your will.

Day 13

Who Are You, O Holy Saints of God?

1. There are many kinds of instruments: musical instruments, kitchen utensils, implements of war, garden tools. They are only as good as the person who knows how to use them. It takes a great musician to make use of a Stradivarius violin in a concert. Mary will use you as her instrument; you will become an instrument of her love for her children. In writing, try to explain this being an “instrument of love” to someone and how important this privilege is to you.

2. Satanic possession, unfortunately, is a reality. But so is possession by God in holiness. What progress are you making toward being “possessed” by Mary (in the manner described by St. Maximilian) so you can grow in holiness? Do not say “not much.” You are very near the 14th day of progress, a whole half-month of progress. List the prayers, changes in attitude, longings for holiness, etc.

3. Words like *militia* and *knighthood* appeal to men. They are “fighting words;” however, how can this ideal of winning the world for the Immaculata be made appealing to a wider audience, including teens and women, even children? Perhaps you don’t think it even needs softening — your thoughts?

4. Love and trust are always partners. Learning to love the Immaculata takes a great deal of *trust*, which involves dependence on her intercession, letting ourselves be led by her, accepting her direction, speaking our prayers to her directly from our hearts. What experiences with trust, becoming dependent on someone and taking direction from him or her, have you had in the past? Do you look forward to these experiences of dependence on Mary?⁸

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Prepare me to be a fit instrument in the hands of the Immaculata.

Day 14

Kolbe's Prayer of Consecration

1. Preparing to be a fit instrument in the hands of the Immaculata, there are two key points to remember: acceptance of the will of God and acceptance of the intercession of Mary before God. Do we really believe that our Mother Mary will overcome everything? What might be standing in the way of this trust?

2. Mary's identity, revealed in her apparitions at Lourdes, is the Immaculate Conception. Through her, God's tender mercies are dispensed. We experience these mercies through Mary's humility, gentleness, tenderness, and love. Reflect on how you might imitate these virtues as you live out your Marian consecration.

3. Kolbe expresses Marian consecration not as a gift of self for the sake of achieving “the greater glory of God” (as does de Montfort) but rather as becoming an instrument in the hands of Mary for the purpose of “extending the Kingdom of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.” Thus, his focus is this: Mary’s love of Jesus and her desire to lead all men and women to the Merciful Heart of her Son. How much do you want to be renewed and transformed by the Holy Spirit, through Mary’s powerful intercession, for the sake of the kingdom? How much do you hesitate?

4. “Take me with all that I am and have as your possession and property” is a radical gift, but it is well worth it, because Mary will take you and all that you have and use it to give great glory to God. Also, she’s such a gentle mother, so we don’t need to be afraid. List what you will lay at the feet of Mary. Describe how you will wrap it as a gift (symbolically) with your motivations and intentions for your total consecration to Jesus through Mary.

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Prepare me to give all to the Immaculata for the sake of the kingdom.

SMALL-GROUP SESSION OUTLINE

~ St. Maximilian Kolbe ~

A. Prayer

1. + *Sub Tuum Praesidium*

2. *Come, Holy Spirit, and be with us. We wish to contemplate the mysteries of Jesus and Mary in our lives, as we prepare for consecration to Jesus through Mary. Amen. +*

B. Personal Response

[Selections from the Pondering, Prayerful Response of Week 2. The following questions are only suggestions. Do not feel as though you have to answer every question during the small group discussion time.]

1. Purity of Intention: “A person practices purity of intention when he directs his thoughts, words, and actions not to himself or another creature but to a divine purpose or mission, and ultimately to God.” Such an attitude of the heart avoids doing things for selfish reasons and instead tries to do all things out of love for God and for his glory. Can you give an example from your life of a situation in which you believe you acted with purity of intention? What do you need from God (through Mary) to make this a regular virtue in your life?
2. Saint Maximilian’s most important reflection on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception comes in a sudden burst of insight just two hours before his arrest by the Nazis. Have you ever experienced a sudden or surprising understanding about a relationship with a person or a lifelong question? Was it after or during prayer? How did it change you or the situation?
3. Mary and the Holy Spirit are united in a very special relationship: She is his spouse. Today’s meditation suggests that this relationship may even be deeper than human spousal relationships. How might Mary intercede with the Holy Spirit about issues of modern marriage and the family: divorce, domestic violence, abortion, non-marital unions, single parenthood? What might you ask of her regarding these modern spiritual problems? Consider instances of them in your family and among your circle of friends. Bring them all (the people and the situations) to Mary.
4. Saint Thomas Aquinas says all creation is in a circular motion from God and back to God. Have you experienced this movement in miniature in your prayer and spiritual life? What is usually the precursor of your feeling distant from God and then returning to him? What do you ask of Mary to help you become closer to God for longer periods or more frequently?
5. Mary is often invoked as “Mediatrice of Grace.” In other words, through her fervent prayers, which are inspired by her motherly love for us, God is pleased to give us so many graces. It didn’t have to be this way, but it was God’s good pleasure to give us a spiritual

mother through whose hands we receive grace. Mary's motherly care for us in the order of grace is depicted in the Miraculous Medal shown first to St. Catherine Labouré, where rays of grace flow to the world through her hands. Which graces do you desire to come from her hands to you, to your family and friends, to your country?

6. Love and trust are always partners. Learning to love the Immaculata takes a great deal of *trust*, which involves dependence on her intercession, letting ourselves be led by her, accepting her direction, speaking our prayers to her directly from our hearts. What experiences with trust, becoming dependent on someone and taking direction from him or her, have you had in the past? Do you look forward to these experiences of dependence on Mary?
7. "Take me with all that I am and have as your possession and property" is a radical gift, but it is well worth it, because Mary will take you and all that you have and use it to give great glory to God. Also, she's such a gentle mother, so we don't need to be afraid. List what you will lay at the feet of Mary. Describe how you will wrap it as a gift (symbolically) with your motivations and intentions for your total consecration to Jesus through Mary.

Generous Additional Response (if there's time):

Which of the seven days or pondering, prayerful responses most interested you, most inspired your prayer, or moved you to meditation?

C. Petition

[Leader] + Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary...

[Group response] Make me pure in body and spirit and help me to die to myself.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary,

Unveil for me the meaning of the Immaculate Conception.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary,

Renew the face of the earth, so that all creation may return to God.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary,

Unite my will to the will of the Immaculata, which is one with your will.

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary,

Prepare me to be a fit instrument in the hands of the Immaculata

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary,

Prepare me to give all to the Immaculata for the sake of the kingdom.

Individual petitions...

Response: Come, Holy Spirit, and help me. +

SESSION 3 — DVD NOTES
St. Maximilian Kolbe

Three Key Points

1. Kolbe’s Incredible Zeal

2. Mary’s Relationship with the Holy Spirit

3. Kolbe’s Tender Love for Mary

Notes