

August 14, 2023



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

Image by Christine Sponchia from Pixabay

WHAT DOES THE LORD, YOUR GOD, ASK OF YOU?

By Sr. Christine Hilliard, CSJ

Reflect on The Life of St. Maximilian Kolbe

Maximilian Maria Kolbe was a Franciscan priest who, at the end of his life, was known by the prison tattoo on his arm: 16670. In September of 1939, Poland was conquered by Nazi Germany. The publisher of a magazine, Maximilian spoke out against the war and aided Jewish refugees, which led to his imprisonment in the death camp of Auschwitz. In this prison, whenever a prisoner escaped, 10 other prisoners were randomly chosen to die. One day in the summer of 1941, a prisoner disappeared and so was assumed to have escaped. (Later he was found dead on the prison grounds.) Franciszek Gajowniczek, one of the ten chosen to be killed, cried out: "I'll never see my wife and children again!" Maximilian stepped forward and volunteered to take his place. He, along with nine other men, were placed in an underground cell to starve to death. Over two weeks all but three died. Maximilian was one who was still alive. They were all executed with lethal injection on August 14.

Today's First Reading

Moses said to the people: "And now, Israel, what does the LORD, your God, ask of you but ... to love and serve the LORD, your God, with all your heart and all your soul ...?"

DEUTERONOMY 10:12



Sculpture of hands holding a heart
Photo by Alexas Fotos

Reflection

“What does the LORD ask?” is a life-question for people of faith. The Book of Deuteronomy responds to the question saying the LORD asks that Israel love and serve the LORD with all of one’s heart and soul. In the biblical world, the word **heart** refers to the vital center of life, which includes the will and the intellect. The heart is also the chief bodily focus of emotional activity, experiencing joy as well as grief and disappointment. It is the source of thoughts, desires, and actions. Moral qualities are attributed to the heart as the center of decision-making. A person is what her/his heart is. In a number of Old Testament phrases, **soul** translates as the concrete existing “self” or “person.” It is understood that the “heart” and “soul” are the energy behind loving [relationship with] and servicing [expression of relationship].

For Pondering

- How would you describe what God asked of Maximilian Kolbe? In what way did he respond?
 - What is the LORD God asking of you? In what ways are you responding?
-

For Prayer

*LORD God,
even as I desire to serve You with all my heart and soul,
I thank You for serving me and all of creation
with Your Divine heart and soul.
Amen.*

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