

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF MISSION

A Year for Reflecting and Re-launching with Confidence and Vigor

The year 2017, during which the 100th anniversary of the founding of the MI occurs, is an invitation to appreciate the precious legacy of thought and works that St. Maximilian Kolbe entrusted to future generations. By establishing an association, the Militia of the Immaculata, he allowed his legacy to continue and to expand. A fundamental aspect of the life of the MI is mission. Missionary thrust has always been a specific feature of this Movement and represents both its past and its future. Mission has been and still is a priority in the journey of the Kolbean association. In keeping with Kolbe's style, it is important, therefore, to look back at the past one hundred years and to look to the future from this missionary stance.

Here are the significant words of Saint Maximilian: "The goal of the MI (the abbreviation comes from the Latin *Militia Immaculatae*, or Militia of the Immaculata) is, in fact, to make sure that all become saints. In all this activity, what strikes the eye most of all is its Marian thrust. This is a consequence of a precise understanding of the mission of the Immaculata." (KW 1220)

The MI has a simple yet efficacious plan: the sanctification of all! This goal is accomplished by praying, working, offering one's dedication and apostolate, in order to foster a greater fervor in the believers in Christ, committed to a generous journey of faith. Moreover, the MI strives to encourage those who are far from God's love to embark on a spiritual journey in the Lord. This was the answer that Father Kolbe and his companions offered to the delicate social, political, financial and religious situation of their time. The MI became a solution and motivating factor in facing the great challenges that afflicted the Church and mankind. Noteworthy is the extraordinary surrender to Divine Providence and Our Lady manifested by the young friar Maximilian and his confreres. With little means at their disposal they not only imagined, but were indeed confident, that the Immaculata would carry out the project that, on that notable October 16, 1917, they were able to see only as a mustard seed.

Today St. Maximilian Kolbe teaches those who wish to dedicate themselves to the mission that all legitimate means may be employed in order to disseminate the Gospel: the press, the radio and the arts. For Saint Maximilian there are no limits in the proclamation and the witness given to the love of Christ and the Immaculata. He moves beyond the traditional preaching, proving that evangelization may be carried out through the most sophisticated and advanced means, adapted to the missionary goal.

In other words, for the Polish Martyr evangelization is not stagnant, but always dynamic and innovative, according to the possible receptivity of human beings. Apostolic work cannot be limited by space and time. It has to be carried out everywhere and with the largest participation of people who share in the same ideal and evangelizing goal. The whole world is mission territory; therefore, the best theological and cultural formation is necessary to ensure the best reception of the Gospel message. The missionary is a person who thinks and works on a grand scale, supported by divine grace. Saint Maximilian dreamt "big" and therefore the MI and all his apostolic initiatives were born with a wide goal and a universal dimension. The MI, faithful to its Founder, continues to be attentive to the "signs of the times" in the ongoing search for effective and current ways and means for communicating the ever-new Gospel message through the Kolbean charism, marked by its Marian spirituality.

MI International President