

The Beginning of a Great Adventure

“A lot of water has already passed under the bridge: it all took place nearly 18 years ago, so I have almost forgotten a number of details.” Thus, at the prompting of his superior, Fr. Kornel Czupryk, Fr. Maximilian begins to unveil the beginnings of the Militia of the Immaculata (MI) in one of his unpublished writings (*KW 1278*) - a precious gift for us!

It is winter of the year 1917. Friar Maximilian is in Rome, at the International Theological College of the Franciscan Order, preparing for his priestly ordination. He is only 23 years old, but his mind and heart embrace already universal horizons. He takes deep interest in the life of his Franciscan family, the Church and the world. He loves God and the Immaculate Virgin with evangelical simplicity, and desire to live the Gospel to the letter, serving the Lord with the generous dedication of his seraphic father Francis, the knight of the Great King. Goodness attracts him to the highest ideal, while the manifestations of evil move him to action.

“When in Rome the Freemasons started coming out in the open daringly, flaunting their banners under the windows of the Vatican, depicting, on the black banners of the followers of Giordano Bruno, St. Michael the Archangel crushed under the foot of Lucifer, and openly lashing out against the Holy Father in propaganda pamphlets, the thought came of setting up an association committed to fighting Freemasonry and other servants of Lucifer. To make sure that such idea was coming from the Immaculata, I sought counsel from my spiritual director at the time, Fr. Alessandro Basile, a Jesuit... Having obtained assurance from holy obedience, I decided to get down to work.”

Young Friar Maximilian observes with lucidity the destructive effects of atheistic secularism, represented by the Freemasonry that impudently celebrates its 200th anniversary. He is aware of the spreading of dangerous religious indifferentism and various antireligious theories, as well as of the subtle decline of morality. He suffers in witnessing a certain quietism among Catholics, despite the persecution the Church undergoes in various nations and the popes’ unrelenting appeals to live out the missionary dimension of the Christian calling.

However, Friar Maximilian does not stop at a pessimistic outlook of reality. He knows that Jesus is the Lord of history, the Prince of peace. He understands that the Immaculate Virgin is the new Woman, called by Jesus Himself to be the model, guide and Mother of grace for all men of every time and place: “Woman, behold your son” (Jn 19:26). Maximilian ponders, prays and discerns.

A few months later, the young Franciscans spend their vacation outside Rome, at the “Vigna” friary. “During a football game, blood started coming out of my mouth. I drew aside and lay down on the grass. Br. Girolamo Biasi, of blessed memory, took care of me. I spat up blood for quite a while. Soon after, I went to the doctor. Two weeks later, the doctor finally allowed me to go out for the first time. In the company of another cleric, Br. [Giovanni] Ossanna I got to the ‘Vigna,’ albeit with difficulty. When the clerics saw me, they cheered and were in high spirits, and brought me fresh figs, wine and bread.

“Having had something to eat and drink, my aches and pangs ceased, and for the first time I mentioned the idea of starting an association to Br. Girolamo Biasi and Fr. Iosif Pal, who had been ordained a priest before me although we were attending the same year of theology. However, I stipulated that each of them should consult their spiritual directors first, to make sure that it was in fact God’s will.”

As it happens often, a great adventure begins with the coming together of friends who share one grand ideal... sometimes around a basket of fresh figs!

ADP