

Corporal Work of Mercy

Feed the Hungry



St. Maximilian Kolbe
1894 – 1941
Feast Day – August 14

Catechism of the Catholic Church

“The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aide of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. The Corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead.” - (2447)

Sacred Scripture

*“For I was hungry and you gave me food.”
Matthew 25: 35*

To Feed the Hungry is an ethical imperative for the universal Church, as she responds to the teachings of her Founder, the Lord Jesus, concerning solidarity and the sharing of goods. The right to food has an important place within the pursuit of other rights, beginning with the fundamental right to life. It is therefore necessary to cultivate a public conscience that considers food and water as universal rights of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination (Pope Benedict XVI, encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, 27).

Hunger must not be confused with malnutrition. Hunger threatens not only people’s lives but also their dignity. A serious and protracted lack of food breaks down the organism, generating apathy, a loss of social sense, and indifference or even cruelty towards those who are weaker, particularly children and the elderly.

How is St. Maximilian Kolbe a model for living out the Corporal Work of Mercy – To Feed the Hungry?

Prisoners at Auschwitz were slowly and systematically starved, and their pitiful rations were barely enough to sustain a child: one cup of imitation coffee in the morning, and weak soup and half a loaf of bread after work. When food was brought, everyone struggled to get his place and be sure of a portion. Father Maximilian Kolbe however, stood aside in spite of the ravages of starvation, and frequently there would be none left for him. At other times he shared his meager ration of soup or bread with others.

In the harshness of the slaughterhouse Father Kolbe maintained the gentleness of Christ. At night he seldom would lie down to rest. He moved from bunk to bunk, saying: *‘I am a Catholic priest. Can I do anything for you?’*

A prisoner later recalled how he and several others often crawled across the floor at night to be near the bed of Father Kolbe, to make their confessions and ask for consolation. Father Kolbe pleaded with his fellow prisoners to forgive their persecutors and to overcome evil with good. When he was beaten by the guards, he never cried out. Instead, he prayed for his tormentors.

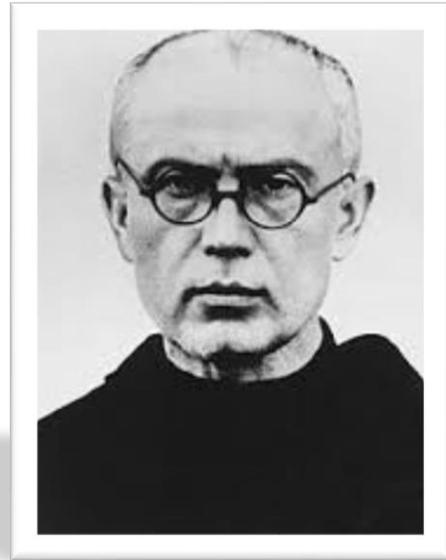
“I do not want to send them away hungry.” Matthew 15:32

Feed the Hungry

St. Maximilian Kolbe

Fast Facts:

Born	• January 8, 1894 Zdunska Wola
Feast Day	• August 14th
Canonized	• 1982 by Pope John Paul II
Quote	• "For Jesus Christ I am prepared to suffer still more."



His Life:

- January 8, 1894 Raymond Kolbe was born in Zdunska Wola, Poland.
- The Kolbe home was poor but full of love. His parents were hardworking and religious.
- In 1906, an extraordinary event took place that would mark a fundamental milestone in his life. After a prank played on his mother, she asked, "My son, what will ever become of you?"
- He pleaded with the Blessed Mother in prayer to tell him 'what would become of him.'
- It was then that the Blessed Mother appeared to him, holding in her hands two crowns: one white the other red.
- The white one signified that I would preserve my purity and the red that I would be a martyr. She asked with tenderness if he wanted these two crowns. – He answered, 'I accept them both.'
- When he was 13 years old he entered the Franciscan Fathers Seminary. It was here that he accepted the name Maximilian.
- He completed his studies in Rome and was ordained a priest in 1918.
- In 1917 he founded a movement called the *Militia of the Immaculata*, whose members would consecrate themselves to the Blessed Virgin Mary and whose purpose would be to fight, through all morally valid means, for building the Reign of God in the whole world.
- He initiated the publication of his monthly magazine, "*Knight of the Immaculata*."
- In 1939, in the midst of the Second World War, he was imprisoned and sent to consecration camps in Poland and Germany. He was eventually released.
- In 1941 St. Maximilian Kolbe was arrested by the Gestapo in Niepokalanow – the city of the Immaculata, and taken to Auschwitz.
- Fr. Kolbe was beaten and received great cruelties for the simple fact that he was a Catholic priest.
- St. Maximilian was a light in the darkness, he brought peace to the hearts of those troubled, and the grace of God through the Sacrament of Mercy, prayer and sacrifice.
- Maximilian offered himself to die in the place of another inmate chosen to be executed.
- He was condemned to die of starvation, days after he was still alive, they administered lethal injection on the 14th of August 1941.
- 1973 he was beatified by Pope Paul VI and in 1982 canonized by Pope John Paul II.

"Do not forget that holiness consists not in extraordinary actions, but in performing your duties towards God, yourself, and others well." – Maximilian Kolbe

Practices to Foster growth in Feeding the Hungry

- **Read a passage of Scripture that give examples of *Feeding the Hungry*. Re-read the passage and pick a word or phrase that stood out for you.**
 - Proverbs 22:9
 - Isaiah 58:10
 - 2 Kings 4:42-44
 - Matthew 14:15-21; 25:35
 - Luke 3:11; 9:12-17
 - John 6:35
- **Memorize the *Our Father* and pray this prayer each morning.**
 - Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.
- **Catechetical Texts that speak to *Feeding the Hungry*:**
 - “Christians are at the service of their brothers and sisters in every aspect of their work and their lives. Love put into practice appeals to all Christians in their daily work, and in their personal initiatives. The commitment of Christians, like their humanitarian and charitable work, stems from the same call to mission. Christians will seek to link their work, whatever it is, to the One who speaks directly to our hearts, through the mouths of all the poor.”
(World Hunger - A Challenge For All: Development in Solidarity)
 - At the very heart of social justice lies the principle of the universal and common destination of the goods of the earth. Pope John Paul II has expressed it in the following words: "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone." (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 36)
 - "Social Justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man. The person represents the ultimate end of society, which is ordered to him: What is at stake is the dignity of the human person, whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom the men and women at every moment of history are strictly and responsibly in debt." (CCC – 1929)
 - “From the crib to the cross, Jesus shares his life with the poor; he knows hunger, thirst and want. Even more: he identifies himself with the poor of all kinds and transforms the active love towards them into a condition in order to reach his Kingdom.” (CCC – 544)
 - Visit the USCCB website to learn more on their initiative to Feed the Hungry:
 - [For I was Hungry and You Gave Me Food](#)
- **Name some people from the Bible or saints who lived out the Corporal Work of Mercy, *To Feed the Hungry*.**
 - (Examples: St. Anthony, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Dominic, etc.)
- **Ask the Lord how he is calling you to live out the Corporal Work of Mercy, *To Feed the Hungry*?**
 - (Examples: Donations to food banks, volunteer at soup kitchens, set-up a can food drive.)