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## OBSERVATIONS ON FR. McCURRY'S PAPER

The great value of Father James' paper for us today is that it not only points out to us the salient features of St. Maximilian Kolbe's speculative Mariology, and thus informs us of his contribution to the Church's maturing grasp of Mary's relationship with the Three Divine Persons and her role in salvation history, but the special value of Father James' paper is that it also zeroes in on the practical thrust of Kolbe's theological speculation: his great awareness of the need of the Church and of individual souls for the knowledge this speculation brings in order to nourish their spiritual lives and apostolates.

Kolbe was always eminently practical. Even his scientific interests were practical. As a student, he was passionately interested in the future of travel in outer space; he sketched a design for a space vehicle to show the possibility and feasibility of space travel—and even checked into the possibility of getting a patent for his design. He also sketched a design for some improvements his fertile mind had projected for radio telegraph. In 1931, he was already projecting the use of television for the work of evangelization.

In the same way, Kolbe was never interested in theological speculation for its own sake. He wanted to know the truth about all the relationships between Mary, the Three Divine Persons and us, in order to use his knowledge to enrich our participation in these relationships and bring them to full, happy maturity. Kolbe was passionately interested in life—and he saw speculation as a key for understanding and perfecting life.

This is the fact which Father James' paper has captured: Kolbe's practicality, especially Kolbe's success in translating knowledge into love—a love that bore fruit in constantly growing service, in self-sacrificing service, and ultimately in the heroic immolation of himself for Jesus, for the Immaculata, for the souls of all his brethren.

Father James himself has been very practical in this paper. After introducing us to Kolbe's particular significance as a Marian theologian, he has given us further information on his own credentials as a person thoroughly familiar with Kolbe the saint and the theologian, and on the sources available regarding Kolbe's Marian theology. He then points out to us the objective—the practical goal of all Kolbe's life and theological speculation: his frank and uncompromising commitment to win the whole world and every individual soul for the Sacred Heart of Jesus through Mary.

Secondly, he traces for us the theological roots that fed Kolbe's ideals, goals, and theological speculation, namely: the Franciscan theological tradition regarding the primacy of Christ and the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and Kolbe's awareness that he was entrusted by God and the Immaculata with the task of initiating a new stage in this tradition: its practical insemination in souls. This would involve the task of clarifying and illustrating the identities of the Three Divine Persons and of Mary, for, after all, the relationship between Persons depends most practically on these identities. My relationship with you depends not only on who you really are and who I really am, but also on our mutual knowledge and acceptance of who each of us is. Without this knowledge and acceptance, a true, authentic, and sincere relationship between us is impossible. The more we mutually and truly understand who each of us really is, and the more we sincerely accept each other in these true identities, the more true, substantial, enduring and authentic will be our relationship. Thus we see Kolbe's thrust to identify in a practical way—available and accessible both to theologian and to every soul, no matter how humble and simple—who Mary really is, who the Persons of the Trinity are, and how each of them relates and wishes to relate to us.

Father McCurry has outlined for us the fruits of Maximilian's lifetime of theological Marian speculation—a speculation road-tested and validated both by the experience of his own life and heroic sanctity and by the astounding works and fruits of his apostolate. St. Maximilian, in keeping with the Franciscan School, discovers in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception

the true and authentic concept of Mary's identity. Father McCurry in the fifth part of his paper presents to us a most satisfying trilogy, relating the Immaculate Conception to the Holy Spirit and his mission, to the Son in his mission, and to the Trinity in the relationships of its Persons *ad extra*, based on these relationships one to the other *ad intra*. Thus, Kolbe's speculation is eminently practical and prolific.

One of the things missing in this presentation is Kolbe's concept of one's self—his own self-identity and the concept of self-identity he had of the souls he tried to reach. After all, the relationships he was trying to build up between himself, the Trinity and Mary—and between every soul, the Trinity and Mary—require a knowledge and understanding of these relationships, and these also will be clarified by theological speculation. Kolbe certainly had very clear ideas on these pedestrian identities—at least instinctively—for otherwise he could not have developed his amazingly fruitful apostolate as he did. Without this vision of our own identities and those of the persons and masses we want to reach in union with Kolbe, our own personal spiritualities and apostolates will be anchored in midair no matter how high they reach into the vision of the mysteries of the Trinity and the Immaculata.

For instance, Kolbe did not hesitate to evangelize the Shintoists, Hindus, and other religionists in Japan by telling them about Mary—trying to implant and stimulate in them an immediate acceptance of the Immaculata in her true identity and a growth in a personal relationship with her. Thus, we see that he was very conscious not only of Mary's identity and her relationship with the Trinity, but also of the real identities of his Japanese public, conditioned as they were by Japanese history and culture.

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