

St. Maximilian Kolbe Prayer Service



This prayer service focuses on the life and ministry of St. Maximilian Kolbe, the patron saint of prisoners and the pro-life movement. The service lifts up the work of all pro-life advocates and highlights in a particular way the Catholic call to end the use of the death penalty.

St. Maximilian Kolbe was a Polish Conventual Franciscan who was ordained a priest in 1918 and was killed in the German Death Camp of Auschwitz in 1941. As World War II began, St. Maximilian became one of the only ones to remain in his Franciscan monastery in Germany. He opened up a temporary hospital to aid those in need and provided shelter for refugees, including hiding 2,000 Jews from German persecution. On February 17th, 1941, the monastery was shut down; Kolbe was arrested by the German Gestapo and three months later, was transferred to Auschwitz.

Toward the end of his second month in Auschwitz, men were chosen to face death by starvation to warn against escapes. Francis Gajowniczek, a married man with young children, was among those chosen to die. But Maximilian volunteered to take Francis' place, and died as he had always wished — in service.

St. Maximilian Kolbe died on August 14th and his remains were cremated on August 15th, on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary. He is the patron saint of drug addicts, prisoners, families, and the pro-life movement and his feast day is celebrated on August 14th each year.



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Opening Song:

The Summons, John L. Bell
(Suggested)

Opening Prayer:

God of compassion,
Guide us as we work to lift up the value and dignity of all life,
especially those who are incarcerated.
Allow us to remember the tireless efforts of your servant St. Maximilian Kolbe
who dedicated his life to the service of his neighbor.
Help us to find the strength to spread your mercy and grace,
to transform our culture of death to a culture of life.
Amen.

Scripture Reading: John 15:12-16

"Jesus said to his disciples: 'This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.'"



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Reflection:

Let us take a moment to reflect on the words of St. Maximilian Kolbe, the patron saint of prisoners and the pro-life movement:

"We need to love our neighbor not just because one is pleasant or helpful or rich and influential or even because one shows us gratitude. These motives are too self-serving, unworthy of our Lady's Knights. Genuine love rises above creatures and soars up to God. In God, and through God it loves all, both good and wicked, friends and enemies. To all it stretches out a hand filled with love; it prays for all, suffers for all, wishes what is best for all, desires happiness for all — because that is what God wants."

- St. Maximilian Kolbe

We are all children of God. Even those who have committed acts of grave harm possess the God-given dignity inherent to all human life. As we continue to be advocates for life, we are challenged to live with the zeal and faith of St. Maximilian Kolbe.

May all the life of St. Maximilian inspire us as we work to end the use of the death penalty and promote a more restorative criminal justice system.

Intercessions:

For Pope Francis and those in leadership within the Church, as they work to end a culture of death and promote a culture of life. Give them strength as they work to end all that which threatens the God-given dignity and value of human life. We pray, **Saint Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us.**

For all those impacted by violent crime and acts of grave harm. May all victims of crime and their families know Christ's healing power and be transformed by God's mercy. We pray, **Saint Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us.**

For all those on death row awaiting execution and those whose lives have been lost to capital punishment. May they know your unending love and forgiveness a children of God. We pray, **Saint Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us.**

For all of us who serve as advocates for the sanctity of all life. May we be inspired and transformed by God's grace and mercy as we live our pro-life mission. We pray, **Saint Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us.**

For all those prayers we now voice aloud: _____. We pray, **Saint Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us.**

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Closing Prayer:

Prayer to Saint Maximilian Kolbe

St. Maximilian Kolbe, faithful follower of St. Francis, inflamed by the love of God you dedicated your life to the practice of virtue and to works of the apostolate.

Look down with favor upon us who devoutly confide in your intercession. In your close conformity to our Divine Savior, you reached such an intense degree of love that you offered your life to save a fellow prisoner.

Implore God that we, inflamed by such ardent charity, may through our living faith and our apostolic works witness Christ to others, and thus merit to join you in the blessed vision of God.
Amen.

Closing Song:

The Servant Song, Richard Gillard
(Suggested)

