



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
IN THE CHAPEL DEDICATED TO BLESSED MAXIMILIAN KOLBE
IN THE MAGLIANA SECTION OF ROME**

18 February 1979

Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

At the end of the Eucharistic Celebration in the parish church of St Gregory the Great at Pian due Torri, I am happy to be able to express my cordial greeting and blessing also to you, young people, workers, all you faithful who gather for your liturgical and sacramental meetings in this subsidiary chapel of Magliana, nobly entitled after the Blessed Maximilian Mary Kolbe, my venerated fellow-countryman.

I thank you sincerely for the enthusiasm with which you have welcomed me in this place of worship and, above all, for the fervent spirit of faith with which you attend it.

I also express to you my fatherly satisfaction at the significant choice of your protector, described by the ever-lamented and great Pope Paul VI as "a luminous image for our generation" (*Gaudete in Domino*). As you know, during the most tragic ordeals that stained our age with blood, the Blessed Kolbe spontaneously offered himself to death in order to save a brother whom he did not know (Francis Gajownicek), an innocent man condemned to death as a reprisal for the escape of a prisoner in the Osviecim concentration camp. The heroic martyr was condemned to die of hunger until, on 14 August 1941, his noble soul returned to God, after he had assisted and comforted his companions in misfortune.

A humble and meek son of St Francis, and a knight enamoured of Mary Immaculate, he traversed the ways of the world, from Poland to Italy and to Japan, doing good to everyone, following the example of Christ who "pertransivit benefaciendo" (cf. Acts 10:38). Jesus, Mary, and Francis were his three great loves, that is, the secret of his heroic charity: "Only love creates", he repeated to all

those who approached him. This is the expression which, like a lamp, illumines his whole life. It was this superior ideal, this essential duty of every true Christian, that enabled him to overcome the cruelty and violence of his tremendous ordeal by the splendid testimony of his brotherly love and his forgiveness of his persecutors.

May the example and the help of Blessed Maximilian lead us, also, to true and disinterested Christian love for all brothers in a world in which hatred and vendetta are continually rending human society.

Invoking on you his protection and the smile of the Immaculate Virgin, I bless you all, and with you also the members of your families, relatives and friends.

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