

"WITNESSES TO LOVE"

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Foundress

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Dear Brothers and Sisters:

"In this they will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13, 35). Jesus tells us in the gospel of St. John that love is the great sign which identifies authentic Christianity. It is love that moves the human heart. It is in being visible and authentic witnesses to love that the greatest force for the New Evangelization resides. Love is the building force of a new civilization.

In his Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, the Servant of God John Paul II, invited the Church to enter into the Third Millennium with a clear conviction: her missionary effort ought to be inspired by and flow from the "new commandment": "as I have loved you, you must love one another."

The great call today for the Church is to form living and ardent witnesses to love. It should be a love that leads to profound communion; a love that embraces the greatest sacrifices; a love that heals, restores, elevates, purifies, and as Saint Maximilian Kolbe would say, a "love that creates."

Love is truly the heart of the Church. Today it is up to us to rediscover the fact that love must be the origin and also the goal of the Church's entire mission. The Church is born of love because it is born from the Pierced Heart of Christ. In love the Church is unified, being of "one heart and one mind" (Acts 4, 32). It is because of love that it fulfills its mission throughout history. It is for this reason that the Holy Father tells us we ought to make the Church "the house and school of communion," and that this is the great challenge we face in the Third Millennium.

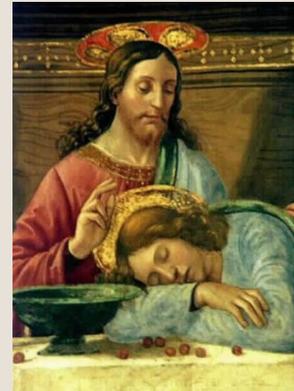
The great Doctor of the Church, Saint Therese of Lisieux tells us, "I understood that only love moves the members of the Church. I understood that all vocations were rooted in love, that Love was everything." Perhaps it was because her heart arrived at this awareness that His Holiness John Paul II recently proclaimed her Doctor of the Church, an expert in the "scientia amoris" (the science of love).

Could it be that in a particular way in this new millennium the Holy Spirit desires to give the Church the gift of the charism of Love? Could it be that this Millennium will be written in the History of the Church as one of a great manifestation of heroic love? I do not know. However, the Holy Father is calling us to build up the civilization of love and has given us a great sign and prophet for this mission: Saint Maximilian Kolbe. This great Marian saint has shown us what it means to love others as Christ has loved us. Amidst the horror, hatred, injustice and violence of the concentration camps, he chose to love. The darkness around him did not keep him from loving. In fact it did just the opposite - as Christ, he loved to the extreme of giving his life, of choosing love, and in that way, he conquered the horror of the culture of death and hatred.

With his love for all, Saint Maximilian converted a place of such darkness into a place of light for those who would open themselves to his words and testimony of life. In that terrible place of anguished cries, blasphemies, desperation and offenses, he made it possible for many to pray and to sing to Jesus and Mary. In that place where each one would understandably struggle to survive, he gave up his life in exchange for a prisoner condemned to death, taking a step forward and responding to the Nazi: "I want to take the place of that man." Faced with such an act of love and courage, the guard asked him, "Who are you?" to which Saint Maximilian responded, "I am a Catholic priest."

That alone was sufficient; it was not necessary to give his name; he was a priest of Christ, a sacrificial offering, a victim of love for humanity. It was not necessary to give his name; it was sufficient to be a member of the Church, to be a son of God, to be a disciple of Christ. It was not necessary to give his name because that act of love would never be erased from the history of the Church, and that priest who had pronounced a "fiat" to love would become beatified as a confessor of the faith and later canonized as a martyr. The two crowns that the Blessed Mother offered to him as a child, a white one and a red one, were lifted high that day in the concentration camp when he stepped forward and witnessed to oblation love and life-giving purity. This Marian heart, this son of the Immaculate, was called by the Servant of God, John Paul II a great prophet of the civilization of love.

To be witnesses to love is the great call that the Lord is making to His Church at the beginning of the Third Millennium. He calls Her to be witnesses in every place and in every situation without considering how dark or difficult it may be. It is a challenge that requires a necessary change of heart. The great work that the Holy Spirit wants to do in the Church is to give us a new heart that is capable of loving to the extreme, capable of giving one's life heroically for others, capable of transforming the world and modern civilization into a place in which the love of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary reign.



Let us dispose ourselves, my brothers and sisters, to work arduously to make ourselves witnesses of love. Just as Saint John, we too have contemplated Him who has loved us to the extreme. We too, therefore, are witnesses to love, and that is why we can become witnesses in the world, witnesses that reveal what we have seen. I ask the Pierced Heart of Jesus that, as we contemplate Him, we may receive the grace of acquiring a heart that is like His own, so as to be able to reveal to the world what love is.

In the Love of the Pierced Hearts,

Mother Adela, Foundress SCTJM

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