

# TO JESUS THROUGH MARY IN THE SPIRIT OF ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

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## Apparition Of Our Lady Of The Miraculous Medal

The Miraculous Medal owes its origin to the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Chapel of the Rue du Bac, Paris in the year 1830. She appeared as the Immaculata to St. Catherine Laboure, a novice with the Daughters of Charity. On July 18, the Immaculate Virgin, seated in the same chapel, had spoken gentle words of encouragement to the young novice. On November 27, the Virgin Mother showed St. Catherine the design of a medal which would remind people of the love and protection that Our Lady continually offers to God's children.

## Meaning Of The Medal

### The Front

Here, we see a woman, the Mother of God, encircled by a short and famous prayer: "O Mary conceived without sin. . . ." Being conceived without sin—the mystery of her Immaculate Conception—means that from the beginning this woman was full of grace.

Mary stands on a globe, the world. Around her feet a twisted serpent, the devil, struggles for mastery. It is a conflict between good and evil. Satan's is a world of darkness and disgrace; Mary's is a world of light and grace. But hers is the victory won by Christ—the light of the world. So we see the light and grace of Christ flowing from her hands; and those who choose grace rather than darkness turn to her for help: "pray for us who have recourse to thee."

### The Back

On the back of the medal we see a large letter M with a cross above it. M is for Mary and Mother because she is indeed the Mother of God's people—a people founded on the twelve Apostles, signified by the twelve stars arranged around the rim.

The two hearts are those of Jesus and Mary. God's message for Mary was one of suffering "a sword will pierce your heart too"—just as the heart of her Son would be pierced by a soldier's lance. The showing of the two hearts in one grand alliance is a reminder of God's love for us. Mother and Son are united in the work of redemption as Christ offers himself on the cross and Mary stands compassionately at his feet, assenting in faith so that the world might be saved.

The medal, then, is a summary in itself of the Church's teaching on Our Lady—a mini-catechism of the faith for everyone.

## The MI Movement

One of the most celebrated cases of a conversion, through the use of the Miraculous Medal, was that of the agnostic, Alphonse Ratisbonne. In January 1917, while still a seminarian at the Conventual Franciscan Friars' Seraphicum in Rome, St. Maximilian Kolbe heard the Miraculous Medal conversion story of Ratisbonne. This wonderful account inspired St. Maximilian to recognize the powerful role that God had given Mary in the work of leading people to conversion and growth in holiness. He understood that the Miraculous Medal symbolized her active presence in the Church as Mediatrix of All Graces. For the next nine months St. Maximilian meditated upon the Miraculous Medal, the

apparition of Our Lady to St. Catherine Laboure, and the marvel of Ratisbonne's conversion.

On the evening of October 16, 1917, St. Maximilian was ready to put these Marian insights into a concrete plan of action. He gathered six Franciscan companions in a

room at their seminary on Rome's Via San Teodoro to establish what he called in Latin the Militia Immaculatae (MI), that is, the "Knights of the Immaculata." This movement, which now numbers millions of members worldwide would bind people together around one compelling and fruitful ideal: spiritual union with Mary the Immaculata. This ideal would attract various kinds and classes of people (clergy, religious, and laity), stirring each to form a person-to-person relationship with Mary by means of the "Act of Total Consecration," and entrustment of self to her.

St. Maximilian made the Miraculous Medal the insignia of the MI movement. He recommended that people wear it as an external sign of their Total Consecration to the Immaculata. Mindful of Mary's promise to St. Catherine that "all who wear it will receive great graces," St. Maximilian saw the medal as a means of safeguarding the consecration. It reminds MIs that by their consecration they are to belong to Mary, work for her, and become one with her, so that she might act through them as her instruments.

The Miraculous Medal helps MIs to love Jesus through Mary, so as to hasten the transformation of individuals, families, and society into a "civilization of love."

### **Purpose of the MI:**

Pursue the conversion and growth in holiness of all people, under the sponsorship of the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary.

### **May I join the MI?**

All Catholics are welcome to join. One's "work" in the MI is simply to live the spirit of Total Consecration to Mary as taught by the saints and popes. MIs try to bring the presence of Mary into daily life, by offering up daily duties, prayers, sufferings, and good works for the conversion and sanctification of souls. MIs need not attend meetings, nor pay dues, nor follow complicated rules.

### **Miraculous Medal Invocation Prayer**

O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us  
who have recourse to you, and for all who do  
not have recourse to you, especially the enemies  
of the Church and those recommended to you.

### **Meditation Prayer with the Miraculous Medal**

Mary, this medal is a sign and a guarantee of your presence. You are present because your power is present, your voice is present and your love is present. Therefore, O wonderful Sinless Woman and our Mystical Mother, we call on you now to fulfill your guarantee. Bring us the great graces you promised to those who carry this medal, especially to those who wear it around their neck. Make us perceive your presence now and always. Make us consciously experience your power, your love and your guidance, that in their strength we may begin to share in your perfect response to God and to each of his creatures, and join in your war with the ancient Serpent. Help us utterly abandon our self-centered feelings and preoccupations. Help us hear and understand you. Teach us to listen and learn.

Help us respond to you today and always;, that made one with you we might more fully respond with the rest of the Church to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, participating in their life and unity.

*The family finds in the plan of God the Creator and Redeemer not only its identity, what it is, but also its mission, what it can and should do.” – Familiaris Consortio*

Marriage and family life is the basic unit of every society. A society is only as healthy, as stable, as energetic, and as imbued with moral values as its families. Take stable families away and Minnesota’s source of responsible citizens begins to dry up.

Both Church and state must link efforts to promote healthy marriages and family life. We support public policies that edify the importance of mothers and fathers in society, and their distinct tasks in raising and nurturing healthy children.

Additionally, we seek to educate Catholics on the fullness of marital love by providing resources for strengthening marriages and families in the home, and at the parish and community level. When we have a better understanding of marital love, we see more clearly the nature of authentic social justice and what public policy, on whatever issue, we can and cannot faithfully support.

The Catholic belief that marriage is between one man and one woman remains unchanged. It is rooted in the universal teachings of the Church, which are informed by natural law, human reason, and the Gospel teachings of Jesus Christ.

Catholic teaching maintains that marriage’s essential *public* purpose is to help protect a child’s fundamental right to be known and cared for by his or her mom and dad, to whatever extent possible. Not all marriages have children, but all children have a mom and a dad. And while there are many types of valuable, loving relationships, marriage is *more*.

All citizens should care about the government’s treatment and definition of marriage because civil authorities are charged with promoting the well-being of children and the broader common good, and marriage is indispensable for both purposes.

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For further information write:  
Marytown  
St. Maximilian Kolbe Shrine  
1600 West Park Avenue  
Libertyville, Illinois 60048  
708-367-7800 - Fax 708-367-7831  
marytwn@TheRamp.net

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Provided Courtesy of:  
Eternal Word Television Network  
5817 Old Leeds Road  
Irondale, AL 35210  
[www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com)