

NEW SAINT - NEW HOPE!

—by JOHN M. HAFFERT—

Nothing is more exciting to me as a sign of hope in 1982 than the rather sudden decision of the Pope to canonize Maximilian Kolbe next October 10.

The new saint, whose vocation paralleled that of the children of Fatima, prophesied that one day Our Lady's statue would be over the Kremlin.

This next October 10, when Bl. Maximilian will be canonized, the **Queen of the World** plane...which will have been kept for this purpose...will carry another major pilgrimage to Rome, this time first visiting Fatima where the Immaculate Herself assured us of the victory of which Bl. Maximilian spoke, and then to Lourdes...where Our Lady named Herself "The Immaculate Conception"...a title about which Maximilian Kolbe received an amazing insight shortly before he died.

Is It "Coincidence"?

Is it mere coincidence that this is also the 800th centenary of the death of St. Francis, or that the grotto to Our Lady of Lourdes which the pilgrims will visit in Assisi was erected a short distance from the tomb of St. Francis by the new saint, Maximilian Kolbe?

But why do I say that "for me" this unexpected decision of the Pope is a sign of special hope for us at this very moment, and perhaps even more for the immediate future?

It is because of that "revelation" of St. Maximilian concerning the meaning of the title Our Lady assumed at Lourdes: "I am the Immaculate Conception." The priests of **Bethany House**, in their amazing new book (see p. 21) explain:

In answer to St. Bernadette's question, "Who are you?" Mary replied, "I am the Immaculate Conception." This phrase was the source of a lifetime of reflection for Father Kolbe. He liked to

point out that she did not say "I am Immaculately Conceived," but rather said, "I **am** the Immaculate Conception." It was like saying, "I am whiteness" rather than saying, "I am white." Mary in describing Herself as the Immaculate Conception described Herself in terms that really apply to the Divinity itself. How could She apply this term to Herself? Father Kolbe's insight was that at Lourdes Mary revealed an appropriate and meaningful name for the Holy Spirit Himself.

Many tend to think that Maximilian Kolbe was beatified, and will now be canonized, just because he gave his life that the father of a family might live. This great act of heroism tends to overshadow the fact that Maximilian was an outstanding theologian, missionary, and apostle of the Immaculate recognized by his confreres as a "saint" long before he gave his life in Auschwitz.

What It May REALLY Mean...

And this great saint has a special message from the Immaculate for our time: "**She is, as it were, an incarnation of the Holy Spirit.**"

What a daring, what an almost incredible statement! And yet we see this statement fleshed out and real in the consecration of the world which the Pope made in St. Mary Major last December 8 when His Holiness made the Act of Consecration to the Heart of Mary in **the Holy Spirit.**

Is it too soon for most of us to grasp what is happening? (I remember my own "shock" when I heard Fr. Bonamy's explanation at the Marian Congress in Rome in 1975.)

Perhaps the "revelation" of St. Maximilian can be put in these terms:

When the Angel saluted Mary as "full of grace," it would appear

that he was not meaning that She was "full" just for Her own sake but because She was "overshadowed by the Holy Spirit" to become the new Eve, to bring Grace to all. We might describe Her Immaculate Heart as **the great reservoir of the Holy Spirit...holding sufficient grace to inundate and to**



Above: St. Maximilian Kolbe

flood the world...to conversion and to the reign of Jesus.

This was essentially the message of St. Maximilian, and this is why his canonization, which sets a solemn seal on his almost incredible words, is a sign of hope. It could mean that the door to the triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart...the opening of the floodgates of this Reservoir of the Holy Spirit...is coming, perhaps **sooner** than we had dared hope.