

Marytown—the National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe is a pilgrimage site and sacred space in Libertyville, Illinois in the Archdiocese of Chicago. It is a ministry of the Conventual Franciscan Friars of St. Bonaventure Province. Here the Friars live together in community with the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience according to the ideals of Saint Francis, and daily celebrate the Eucharist in the Holy Mass, pray the Divine Office, adore the Blessed Sacrament and participate in the devotions of the Liturgical year. At the center of Marytown is the Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, considered one of the most beautiful pilgrimage sites in the nation. It is referred to as the “Third City of the Immaculate” modeled after the evangelization centers created by Kolbe at Niepokalanów, Poland and Nagasaki, Japan. The grounds have been a sanctuary of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament since June 7, 1928, when a temporary chapel was blessed and opened for 24-hour Exposition. The permanent chapel was dedicated on October 2, 1932. At that time, the monstrance was transferred to its current location and the chapel has remained open to the public 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe, as declared by the U.S. Catholic Bishops in the Jubilee Year 2000, is a place of pilgrimage for the faithful. It is dedicated to promoting the witness and life of St. Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish Conventual Franciscan friar, priest, scholar and patriot martyred in the Holocaust at the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II. St. John Paul II referred to him as the “prophet of the civilization of love” and a “Martyr of Charity” for Kolbe’s exemplification of love without limits.

Today, Marytown serves the spiritual needs of a broad community of people—locally and nationally—through our Eucharistic Adoration apostolate, Prison Ministry, daily Masses, weekday confessions, catechesis, retreats and conferences. Known throughout his life as the “Knight of the Immaculata,” St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe, OFM Conv., was born in Poland in 1894. When he was about ten years old, the Immaculate Virgin appeared to him and offered him two symbolic crowns: the white crown of chastity and the red crown of martyrdom. He chose them both. Maximilian entered the Franciscan Order at the age of sixteen. So intent were he and his brother, Francis, on becoming religious, that they crossed secretly in a haycart from the Russian to the Austrian partition of Poland to enter the seminary. Max was sent to the Order’s International Seraphic College in Rome for his philosophical and theological studies. On October 16, 1917, while still a student-friar in Rome, Maximilian founded the Militia Immaculatae (MI) Catholic evangelization movement. Its purpose was to bring about the reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus by encouraging each and every soul to make a total consecration of themselves to the Immaculate Virgin Mary. He was ordained a priest in 1918 and returned to Poland in 1919, with doctorates in philosophy and theology, and he had contracted tuberculosis. Nevertheless, he immediately began spreading the MI Catholic Evangelization and in January of 1922, began publishing the monthly magazine, Knight of the Immaculata. So great and rapid was the growth of the magazine Knight, today known as Immaculata, and the community of Conventual Franciscans that formed around Kolbe, that in 1927 he founded a large apostolic center near Warsaw, the “City of the Immaculata.” Kolbe’s method of evangelization through the sponsorship of Mary was a major development of the Franciscan charism, stimulating considerable growth in the Franciscan Order itself. For instance, the City saw its original staff of eighteen friars grow to over 650 members in just twelve years. While living in strictest religious poverty, the friars utilized the most modern printing equipment and administrative techniques available, enabling the Knight magazine to reach an incredible monthly circulation of one million and a daily newspaper to reach 230,000. In 1930, Father Maximilian took four brothers to Japan and founded another city there. Future plans called for a City in every nation with the Knight magazine published in every language. Kolbe went back to Poland in 1936, for treatment of advanced Tuberculosis, and reassumed direction of Niepokalanow – by then the largest Catholic publishing center in Poland, possibly in the world. Fr. Maximilian was a profound theologian as well as a heroic martyr. While the Gestapo thundered toward Niepokalanow to whisk him away to the death camp, Kolbe hurried to finish his book outline on Mary’s self-title at Lourdes, France: “I am the Immaculate Conception.” For Kolbe, Mary, “full of grace,” is so united with the Holy Spirit that in a sense she is the incarnation of the Spirit. This and other insights have helped develop further the understanding of Mary as Mediatrix, or “gateway” of the graces of Jesus’ redemption, and Advocate for the people of God. When the Nazis overran the country in 1939, they eventually imprisoned Kolbe in the Auschwitz death camp, where in 1941 he offered to take the place of a man condemned to die in reprisal for an escaped prisoner. His offer accepted, he died two weeks later on August 14, the vigil of Mary’s Assumption. In the process he ministered to nine others dying with him from starvation. Pope Paul VI beatified Maximilian in 1971. In 1982, St. Pope John Paul II canonized him as a “martyr of charity,” calling him “patron of our difficult century.” He is the patron saint of journalists, media communications, the family and the chemically addicted.



## *The Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ*

### **Readings for the week: June 7 - 12**

Monday

2 Corinthians 1:1-7  
Ps 34:2-3,4-5,6-7,8-9  
Matthew 5:1-12

Thursday

2 Corinthians 3:15-4:1,3-6  
Ps. 85:9ab,10,11-12,13-14  
Matthew 5:20-26

Tuesday

2 Corinthians 1:18-22  
Ps 119:129,130,131,132,133,135  
Matthew 5:13-16

Friday

Hosea 11:1,3-4,8c-9  
Ps 146:1b-2,6c-7,8-9a,9bc-10  
Ephesians 3:8-12,14-19  
John 19:31-37

Wednesday

2 Corinthians 3:4-11  
Ps 99:5,6,7,8,9  
Matthew 5:17-19

Saturday

2 Corinthians 5:14-21  
Ps 103:1-2,3-4,9-10,11-12  
Luke 2:41-51

Area Catholic Community parish websites are: [www.brownsvalleycatholic.org](http://www.brownsvalleycatholic.org)  
<https://assumptionofmorris.org> <https://stmarysmorris.com>

