

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time



As adult children of dysfunctional homes, we know the feeling of being on the edges—often unseen, unheard, and undervalued. We grew up managing chaos or avoiding it, and we carried survival patterns into adulthood. In recovery, we are learning that God's mercy lifts us out of isolation and into a new way of living where we are fully known and loved.

The Church's August celebrations of Saint Maximilian Kolbe (August 14) and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15) offer us encouragement. In the Gospel for Mary's feast, Elizabeth honors her (Luke 1:42–45):

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.

Mary responds with her Magnificat, praising God for His mercy and for raising up the lowly (Luke 1:46–49):

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy
is his Name.*

For those of us who were rarely affirmed growing up, this moment between Mary and Elizabeth shows the healing power of being truly seen and valued. Mary's humility and her trust in God's will are the opposite of the self-reliance and hypervigilance we learned in dysfunction.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe's life also reflects this trust. Offered the "white crown" of purity and the "red crown" of martyrdom in a vision, he accepted both. His final act—offering his life for another prisoner—shows how trust in God frees us from self-protection and fear.

Recovery invites us to trust God's love the way Mary and Kolbe did. The Big Book reminds us (p. 100):

"When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!"

In time, we find that God replaces our fear with peace, our isolation with community, and our uncertainty with purpose.

Reflection Questions

- How does Mary's example of humility speak to your need for safety and belonging?
- Where do you see God inviting you to replace self-reliance with trust in Him?
- What would it look like to accept "both crowns" in your recovery journey?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40:2, 3, 4, 18

Second Reading: Hebrews 12:1-4

Gospel: Luke 12:49-53