

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time



As people in recovery, we know what it's like to live on the margins—isolated by our addiction, weighed down by shame, or convinced that we were beyond hope. But we have also experienced the mercy of God, who “lifts up the lowly” and restores our dignity. In mid-August, the Church celebrates two feast days that speak powerfully to our recovery journey: Saint Maximilian Kolbe (August 14) and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15).

On the Solemnity of the Assumption, we hear the Gospel account of Mary visiting her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth greets Mary with joy and honor (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.*

Mary's humility and her willingness to say “yes” to God's will, even when it led her into uncertainty and suffering, make her a model for our recovery. She shows us that we can be lifted up no matter how far we have fallen, and that true greatness comes from surrender to God.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe's life reflects this same surrender. At age 12, he had a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary offering him two crowns: one white for purity and one red for martyrdom. He accepted both. As a Franciscan priest, Kolbe ministered courageously during World War II, using every means available to serve those in need. His life of service culminated in the concentration camp at Auschwitz, where he volunteered to take the place of a condemned prisoner with a family. After surviving starvation, he was executed on August 14, 1941, and cremated the next day—the Feast of the Assumption of Mary. His life reminds us that God's will often calls us to love sacrificially, even when it costs us everything.

In recovery, we are asked to practice a similar openness of heart. We do not always know where the road will lead, but we trust that God's plan is better than our own. As 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!”

Like Mary and St. Maximilian Kolbe, we are invited to place our lives entirely in God's hands, confident that His grace will lead us where we need to go—and that the journey will be worth it.

Reflection Questions

- How have you experienced God “lifting you up” since beginning your recovery?
- What fears or uncertainties make it difficult for you to say “yes” to God's will?
- In what ways can you follow the example of Mary and St. Maximilian Kolbe in your recovery this week?

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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