

# *A Coffee with Alessio*



## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the End of World War II

Tomorrow, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II – otherwise known as Victory in the Pacific or V-P Day.

I am no war historian by any stretch of the imagination, but if we look back on most wars in the world's history, not too many of them achieved anything positive. In most cases, it was a waste of human life and other resources that could have been distributed to achieve so much good! We must honour the bravery and courage of all service personnel, past and present, who laid down their life for their friends, so that those of us who have followed would be able to live in peace and freedom. In the past week, there has been a long-delayed award of the Victoria Cross to Teddy Sheean who died defending his fellow sailors from a Japanese attack on HMAS Armidale off the coast of what is now Timor-Leste in 1942.

Speaking of bravery and courage today is the feast of Saint Maximilian Kolbe, a martyr during the Second World War.

Maximilian Kolbe was born on 8 January 1894 in Poland, and joined the Franciscans in Lwów in 1910, and was ordained in 1918 – a time when Poland became free and independent for the first time in over 120 years.

In 1927 he founded a community, a "city of Mary," at Teresin, which was centered around the Franciscan friary. This community attracted many lay people, and became self-supporting by publishing many periodicals and running its own radio station.

Poland's independence wasn't to last that long, as the Nazis invaded in 1939. During the Second World War, the community at Teresin sheltered thousands of refugees, most of whom were Jews.

In 1941 Maximillian was arrested and sent to the concentration camp at Aushwitz, where he helped the inmates. In August of that year a prisoner escaped and so the authorities were choosing ten people at random to die by starvation. One of the men chosen had a family, and so Maximillian offered to take his place. Maximillian spent his last days comforting his fellow prisoners.

If we fast forward four long years we come to the end of the war on the feast of Mary's Assumption. I don't think that was any coincidence. However, we must ask ourselves what have we learnt from the atrocities that occurred. If we look to the example of Saint Maximillian, he took great risks, sheltering Jews from harm, a crime he knew was punishable by death. Yet, he didn't think to himself, well, even if a law is wrong, I'll go along with the flow. On the contrary, he challenged the leaders of his day and paid the ultimate sacrifice for it.

We pray that Mary, assumed body and soul into heaven, will lead those soldiers who paid the ultimate price to live with her Son forever in heaven. Heaven is where we hope to go one day. So, let us turn our Mother Mary, praying for her help and to lead us closer to her Son Jesus.

We have composed a prayer to commemorate the end of World War II and we have reprinted it here for your use:

## **PRAYER FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR II**

God our Father,  
You sent your Son Jesus into the world to be the Prince of Peace.  
As we commemorate the anniversary of the end of World War II,  
we commend to you our service men and women,  
both living and dead.

For those who are living, we ask your blessing upon them,  
that with your grace and strength,  
they will have the courage to continue to serve our country.

For those who have died, we commend them to your care  
and pray that they will enjoy the eternal banquet in heaven with your Son.

May those of us who enjoy the freedom of our country  
because of the sacrifice made by those who serve in our defense forces  
ever be grateful to them for laying down their lives.

May we also plant the seeds of peace in our homes, workplaces and communities  
so that we may be images of your Son in the world.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Pray for us.  
Saint Maximilian Kolbe, Pray for us.

I know I would normally make music suggestions for the upcoming Sunday, but mindful of the focus of this column, I would suggest a setting of the Magnificat for the Masses of the Assumption –  
CWBII #212 *My Soul Rejoices*, which is a very simple and yet joyful setting of the Magnificat.

The text of the Magnificat is the Gospel reading for the Assumption, so this hymn will fit the liturgy perfectly. This text also serves as a reminder to us all that God will bring dictators to justice.

So, before I get onto the coffee and cake for this week, let us take heart from the example given to us by Saint Maximilian Kolbe who like Jesus, sacrificed Himself for others.

As for a coffee and cake this weekend, Martineau's in Nedlands is a fitting place to go. I was there with a friend a few weeks ago, the company was very enjoyable as were the delectable delights and the service the staff give to their customers is friendly and welcoming! Yes, we aren't glorying in the war this weekend, but rather giving thanks to God for those who laid their lives for us and for the fact that the war ended, so that all could enjoy peace in life, worship the Lord freely and give witness to Him in their daily lives.

Till next week – enjoy your coffee and cake!

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