

Q. How did St. Maximilian contribute to our understanding of Mary's mediation of grace?

A. He advanced the Church's understanding of Mary's universal mediation of grace by developing a Trinitarian approach to salvation.

St. Maximilian sees Mary's role in the order of grace as flowing from her profound relationship with the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. When the Holy Spirit preserved her from Original Sin at her conception, he entered into such an intimate bond with Mary that words are insufficient to describe the mystery.

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For Maximilian, Our Lady revealed the nature of this mysterious union at Lourdes, when, in answer to visionary Bernadette Soubirous' question, "Who are you?" she responded, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Throughout his adult life, St. Maximilian strove to penetrate the depths of the meaning of Mary's words to St. Bernadette.

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In his final writing, on the day he was arrested by the Nazis and whisked away to the death camp, Maximilian reached a profound level of mystical insight. He referred to Mary as "in a sense, the 'incarnation' of the Holy Spirit." Of course, Mary is not the enfleshment of the Holy Spirit. Instead, in her qualities of receptiveness and fruitfulness she mirrors the Holy Spirit, who is the Person of receptivity and fruitfulness within the Trinity.

Because of this "inexpressible but perfect union" between the Immaculata and the Holy Spirit, theorized Kolbe, Mary is in a sense grafted onto the Trinity, as its love goes into the world from the Father, through the Son by means of the Spirit, and back again in an "order of love."

Therefore, Kolbe concludes, "the Holy Spirit does not act except through the Immaculata, his Spouse. She therefore is the Mediatrix of all the graces of the Most Holy Spirit."

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Because of these insights, some have called St. Maximilian Kolbe the "prophet" of the proposed fifth Marian dogma, which would define Mary's universal mediation of grace as an infallible truth of the Faith.