

## Reflection Friday Week 19 2020

### St Maximilian Kolbe (1894 - 1941)

Born 8<sup>th</sup> January 1894 in occupied Poland, Maximilian joined the Franciscans in 1910 and was ordained 8 years later. He believed that the world was passing through a time of intense spiritual crisis, and that Christians must fight for the world's salvation with all the means of modern communication. He founded a newspaper, and a sodality called the Knights of Mary Immaculate, which spread widely both in Poland and abroad. In 1927 he founded a community, a "City of Mary," at Teresin. It attracted many lay people, and became self-supporting, publishing many periodicals and running its own radio station. In 1930 he went to Japan, studied Buddhism and Shintoism, and through the Japanese edition of his newspaper spread the Christian message in a way that was in harmony with Japanese culture. In Nagasaki, he set up a "Garden of the Immaculate," which survived the atomic bomb. He also travelled to Malabar and to Moscow, but was recalled to Poland in 1936 for health reasons. When the Germans invaded in 1939, the community at Teresin sheltered thousands of refugees, most of them Jews. In 1941 he was arrested and sent to Auschwitz, where he helped and succoured the inmates. In August of that year a prisoner escaped, and in reprisal the authorities chose 10 people to die by starvation. One of the men had a family, and Maximilian Kolbe offered to take his place. The offer was accepted, and he spent his last days comforting his fellow prisoners. The man he saved was present at his canonization. For Maximilian the words of scripture were not just hopes and dreams but words to be lived. St John writes Ch15:12 *"This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends."* Giving his life to God in the Franciscans also meant giving his life to everybody without exception. Loving God truly meant loving his neighbour. His love for Our Blessed Lady was expressed by his devotion to her, most probably because he modelled his life on hers. Like her we wanted to bring the love of Christ into the world and like her he did just that. As the Psalmist said *"Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful!"*

### Neighbours . . .

"How's your flat in London, Jock?" asks his mother when he calls home to Aberdeen. "It's okay," he replies, "but the woman next door keeps screaming and crying all night and the guy on the other side keeps banging his head on the wall." "Never you mind," says his mother, "don't you let them get to you, just ignore them."

"Aye, that I do," he says, **"I just keep playing my bagpipes!!!"**