

AUGUST 14, 2025, FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

That's quite a bit there in the Gospel reading.

At first, it looks like seven, of course, is perfect. Seventy-seven times is infinitely perfect. To give perfect forgiveness is so important.

But then, of course, we have that story about the slave—the slave who owed 10,000 talents. And 10,000 talents... you might as well compare that with owing \$20 million or more—so great a debt that he never would be able to pay back anyway. And yet, when he pleaded with the king, he was forgiven.

And so, this is also for us as we go about life. The more we realize that we are forgiven, the more it is important that we are compassionate with those around us—and not like the wicked slave, who, as soon as he was forgiven, comes and sees another slave who owes him just a minor amount, and makes a big deal out of it.

Of course, it came to the knowledge of the king, and he was thrown out into darkness. And this is for us also to remember: that we are not going to be thrown out in utter darkness, that we know we are forgiven. We are a sinful people—nobody is exempt. But if we have that forgiveness from God, if we really internalize it, then there's such a great call to show forgiveness to others.

And, of course, today is the memorial of Maximilian Kolbe, the famous saint in the Second World War who died in Auschwitz. Maximilian Kolbe, who tried in his own way to build a better world. And he also, through his own life experiences, came to understand that forgiveness is so important—but also to work toward the good.

His own dad was hung by the Russians during World War I, and that made a big impression. But also, in his priesthood, in his studies for the

priesthood, he witnessed anti-Church protests in Rome. And in 1917, he established the Army of the Immaculate One—basically about publishing.

He knew about media. One of the early saints who really understood media—just like we are using media today. But he really promoted the love of Mary, and to be compassionate to others.

Of course, his martyrdom in Auschwitz—he’s called “The Martyr of Charity.” The ultimate charity: giving his life for others. As many of you would know the story—how a prisoner had escaped, and an example had to be set. Ten prisoners were randomly chosen to die of starvation in the bunker. And a young father with two children was one of the ones chosen.

He was screaming, “Have mercy! I have two children!” And Maximilian Kolbe calmly walked up to the commander and said, “I give my life.” The commander stood there for a little while, stunned, and he granted him.

As we know, after 10 days, they gave him a lethal injection. He led the prisoners in song and prayer as they were sitting in that bunker, starving to death. It’s almost unimaginable for our imagination—even today, only 80 years later—how he was able to do that.

And it can only be done by God, of course. God who works through time. God who works through all generations. And a God who continues to call each in our own way, each in the culture where we are—to make that difference for others, to be that merciful sign of God.

And of course, in the first reading, we have the crossing through the Jordan. People went through the Jordan. It’s actually a bookmark—the crossing through the Jordan and the crossing through the Red Sea. The

Israelites were there for 40 years in the desert, not seeing the results of their lives.

The same with Maximilian Kolbe. He could not ever have foretold how his life would end, or how it would look. But it was the giving of himself to God—to be used for the good of others.

And as it's documented, he also, as a little child, was offered two crowns by Mary—a white one and a red one. And he said, "I'll take them both." And of course, red is for martyrdom, and the white one is giving his total life to the Church, to God, to be used for the good.

What an example for us to pray with, and to learn from—each in our own families. How to be a pacifist. How to be that sign of Christ, of love, in a very messy world. A world that only knows conflict.

Amen.