



THE ST. ANTHONY COMPANION

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A direct link to history & St. Maximilian Kolbe

He is a man of myth and legend and he still walks among us.

On the verge of celebrating his 100th birthday as well as his 80th jubilee as a Franciscan Friar (both in 2019), Fr. Lucjan Krolikowski is literally a window into the past, specifically the World War II era of the last century. He is also one of last living Friars to have lived and worked with St. Maximilian Kolbe in war-torn Poland.

Inspired by the work of St. Maximilian, Fr. Lucjan entered the seminary in Niepokalanów, Poland in 1934 at the age of 15 and began an amazing journey of service, sacrifice, persecution and heroism that would have made St. Maximilian proud.

"I grew up in a Catholic home with parents who were very simple, but saintly, said Fr. Lucjan during a 2015 interview with the *National Catholic Register*. "My father was a baker; my mother worked in a grocery store. I was an avid reader of *Maly Dziennik*, the daily newspaper of Niepokalanów; Father Maximilian was a contributor. I read it from cover to cover. From a young age, I wanted to be a priest like Maximilian Kolbe."



Fr. Lucjan Krolikowski, OFM Conv., a contemporary of St. Maximilian Kolbe, has lived an incredible life of service and sacrifice.

When Fr. Lucjan entered Niepokalanów it was a thriving seminary and monastery of more than 800 friars, dedicated to publishing. At that time, St. Maximilian Kolbe was in Nagasaki, Japan, establishing a similar Franciscan media enclave, but Fr. Lucjan got to know him well when he returned to Poland in 1937.

"I knew him for three years and met with him almost every day," said Fr. Lucjan. "He wanted all of us to be Franciscan missionaries."

He recalls playing chess with St. Maximilian who he called a "mathematical genius."

"St. Maximilian could beat anybody and he would play five or six of us at the same time,"

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Fr. Lucjan Krolikowski, OFM Conv. has always had a special affinity for children, especially the Polish orphans he saved from communists rule by leading them from East Africa to Canada near the end of World War II. Here, he visits with young children at a school of Polish language and culture in 2015, in Western New York. (Photo courtesy of Monika Satur Photography)

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said Fr. Lucjan. “But, sometimes he would give us a chance to win.”

Fr. Lucjan’s time with St. Maximilian, who he described as strict but very loving and maternal towards the young Friars, came to abrupt end in 1940 when Fr. Lucjan was taken prisoner by invading Soviet troops at the start of World War II and sent to a concentration camp in Siberia. He spent 13 or 14 hours per day cutting down trees. With communists firmly in control of Poland, they drafted Fr. Lucjan into the Polish army and sent him to the Middle East. He eventually gained his freedom

and was finally ordained a priest, in 1946 at St. Joseph University in Beirut, Lebanon, before being assigned to become the chaplain of the Polish orphans from Siberia at an East African settlement.

It was in East Africa where he met Polish children who were orphaned after their parents perished in Soviet prisons during the war. At this time, Poland was under communist control and the communists demanded these children be repatriated to Poland. Fr. Lucjan, however, had other ideas.

In a heroic effort, Fr. Lucjan, despite being charged with kidnapping by the Polish government, risked his life to help the

children migrate to Canada, via an elaborate journey, where they were able to start a new life and remain free.

“I knew that personally I had no responsibility for these children, but I began to take care of them anyway,” said Fr. Lucjan.

The children were first boarded on a secret train from Italy to Germany and then sailed to Canada, the only country that would agree to sponsor them. Through the years, Fr. Lucjan has remained in contact with these children, many who are now elderly themselves, and has enjoyed several reunions with them.

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In 1983 Fr. Lucjan published the first of his two books, *Stolen Childhood: A Saga of Polish War Children*, which detailed this incredible story.

Later, Fr. Lucjan would publish *Siberian Prisoner and Displaced Person*, which provided more detail on his time in Russia.

Fr. Lucjan has lived in the United States for the last 34 years having arrived in Athol Springs, NY, in 1966. In the spirit of St. Maximilian Kolbe, who did his missionary work through his media, Fr. Lucjan spent 32 years as a member of the editorial staff of “The Father Justin Rosary Hour,” a Franciscan radio program aired in Western New York.

During those programs Fr. Lucjan often spoke of the great adventures of his life and revealed that faith was the greatest factor in his ability to survive.

“We prayed every day,” he said. “Those who believe in God survived. Others couldn’t find the means to go on. Some committed suicide.”

In 2013, Fr. Lucjan, at the age of 93, was inducted into the Order of the Smile, an international honor founded in Poland in 1968 and awarded at the request of children.

He also spoke of hunger.

“The greatest plague is hunger. I can’t explain hunger to you. You have to live it. They told us you will forget everything about yourself: your religion,



Fr. Lucjan reunited with some of the children he helped relocate to safety after World War II, circa 2000.

your family, your country. It was true. We were dreaming about a piece of bread.”

His enduring message to the young is, “Avoid ideologies.

“Mein Kampf was beautifully written, but it was a poison. Ideologies are ideas born in the heads of people, especially atheists, who look at you as an animal. Maybe a better animal, but still an animal that can be killed or do whatever they want. Hitler had an ideology.”

Fr. Lucjan resides at Our Lady of the Angels Care Center in Enfield, Connecticut.



At right, Fr. Lucjan Krolkowski celebrating Mass in 2015 at the age of 96. At left, he is pictured celebrating Mass with orphaned children aboard a ship in the Indian Ocean, 1942. He turns 100 in 2019.

St. Maximilian Kolbe: A Reflection

By Fr. James McCurry, OFM Conv.

Nearly 30 years ago, before our friary in Ellicott City, Maryland, became the Shrine of St. Anthony that we all know today, it was a house of formation for friars starting Franciscan life. At that time, I brought there a very elderly gentleman from Poland, who had survived the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Mr. Francis Gajowniczek.

Among Mr. Gajowniczek's fellow Polish prisoners at Auschwitz, was the Franciscan Friar, Father Maximilian Kolbe. Mr. Gajowniczek had been in the Polish underground resistance army and ended up in Auschwitz as a captured prisoner of war. When a fellow prisoner escaped in the summer of 1941, the Nazis chose 10 men from the escapee's barracks to be executed in reprisal. In the ranks of those 600 or so men were Francis Gajowniczek and Maximilian Kolbe.

Gajowniczek was one of the unlucky 10 to be chosen. He cried out, "What will happen to my wife and my children?" Moved by the plight of this father, Father Kolbe, stepped forward to the commandant and said, "I'd like to take that man's place."

Surprisingly, the substitution was allowed. Gajowniczek's life was spared by the heroic gesture of Father Kolbe,



who with the nine others was taken to their terrifying place of execution. They were all stripped naked and forced into a subterranean bunker that became known as the "Block of Death." They were deprived of food and water. After two weeks, six of the 10 had died. Among the four still clinging to life was Father Kolbe. The Nazis hastened their deaths with carbolic acid injections.

Forty-one years later, in 1982, St. Maximilian Kolbe was canonized a saint, the first to be given the title "Martyr of Charity." Since that time, shrines and chapels have been dedicated to St. Maximilian all over the world. However, there

exists no tomb, where pilgrims may honor this saint-martyr, seeking his heavenly intercession. At Auschwitz, all the victims, including Maximilian Kolbe, were cremated and their ashes were dumped in nearby marshes. No remains were left.

In the case of St. Maximilian, however, something did remain – a unique relic preserved by the Providence of God, namely, his beard. Here is how that happened. In 1930 when he went on mission to Japan, it was the custom for missionaries to grow long beards. Six years later, when he returned to Poland, he kept wearing the beard. After the Nazi invasion of Poland in

1939, Father Kolbe wanted to carry on his large publishing ministry as long as possible during the Nazi occupation. In order to buy time before the Nazis shut down his presses, he decided he would be more inconspicuous without the beard.

Against Fr. Kolbe's wishes, the friar-barber who shaved his beard actually kept it! Those precious hairs from his beard are now the only existing relics from St. Maximilian's earthly remains.

Why would we honor hairs from the beard of a holy man like Maximilian? You can still visit Auschwitz, which is now a museum. You can descend the same steps to the starvation bunker in which St. Maximilian died. Why did Maximilian offer his life there? He did not simply want to save the life of Mr. Gajowniczek. He wanted, as a friar, and as a priest, to minister to those other nine who were condemned. Think of it!

In Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 25, Jesus said, "I was hungry. You gave me to eat. I was thirsty. You gave me to drink. I was naked. You clothed me. I was homeless. You sheltered me. I was sick and in prison, you visited me." Maximilian went into that bunker because those other nine condemned were hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless, sick, imprisoned! Maximilian understood that by ministering to them, he was ministering to Jesus – the hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless, sick, imprisoned Jesus! To those prisoners in the starvation bunker, Maximilian demonstrated that Jesus feeds our hungers and quenches our thirst, that Jesus clothes us with Himself, shelters us in His home which is the Kingdom, and heals and frees us from whatever holds us captive. Maximilian taught his bunker mates that Jesus shared their plight, and that Jesus was present with them.

I have interviewed scores of survivors of Auschwitz and asked them to tell me what happened while Maximilian was in that bunker. The gist of their testimony was this: "You wouldn't believe it. Instead of hearing the usual moans and groans and shrieks and cries and curses, we heard songs and prayers emanating from the window of that bunker. We heard the rosary. We heard hymns to Our Lady." Maximilian turned

“...we heard songs and prayers emanating from the window of that bunker.”

that horrible death cell of Auschwitz into a prayer cell, and it became an oasis of love.

Today, long after World War II and the Nazi monstrosities, we scarcely remember the names of those leaders at Auschwitz who tormented the poor prisoners, but we do remember that little friar-prisoner with the number 16670 stitched on his uniform and tattooed on his arm. Maximilian Kolbe demonstrated that love triumphs over hate. That is why Pope John Paul II declared him a saint: because in our troubled and difficult centuries, we need witnesses who show that good triumphs over evil and that love conquers hate.

I shall never forget how Mr. Gajowniczek ended his final talk on his last visit to America. He said, "Saint Maximilian Kolbe did not die just for me. He died for all of you – to show all of you that love without limits is possible. They burned his body, but his ashes have spread to the ends of the world." He used the ashes of Maximilian as a metaphor for the saint's lesson of love without limits. I hope that every one of you will be inspired by his witness to keep practicing that charity--without limits.

About Fr. James



The Very Rev. Fr. James McCurry, OFM Conv. was elected the first Minister Provincial of the Our Lady of the Angels Province in 2014 and was re-elected to a second term in 2018. Fr. McCurry is a past president of the Militia Immaculata and a scholar of St. Maximilian.

Bucknell partners with Church efforts in coal region



Bucknell students with Fr. Martin Kobos (holding a portrait of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini – aka Mother Cabrini, and her plate of Pierogi).

Pierogi, a Polish delicacy consisting of a savory filling wrapped in dough, is the unlikely first course of an outreach by the Franciscan Friars of the Our Lady of the Angels Province to help two struggling coal mining cities of Northeast Pennsylvania.

Pierogi making is part of the culture at parishes in the region where they are made regularly as part of their fund raising efforts. It also presented a chance for Mother Cabrini Church pastor Fr. Martin Kobos, OFM Conv., co-founder and former Director of the Companions of St. Anthony.

Fr. Martin noticed how a parish in a neighboring town had engaged with students of Bucknell University and explored how he could bring them to Shamokin.

"A number of things seemed to have converged all at the right time," said Fr. Martin. "Bucknell has the 40 Mile Project, by which the University gives back to the local region with the knowledge

and enthusiasm of its senior interns and the expertise and resources of its professors."

To bring the interns to Shamokin, Fr. Martin and his staff went to Bucknell and made a presentation about the parish's pierogi program. Drawing upon what they learned from their Managing for Substantiality major, five students observed all aspects of the program and ultimately presented a detailed report with suggestions to sustain, improve and grow the program. The relationship with Bucknell was established.

In addition to Mother Cabrini, the Friars minister at two other local parishes in the region - Our Lady of Hope (Coal Township, Pa.) and St. Patrick (Trevorton, Pa.). Earlier this year, the Friars hosted a gathering of approximately 30 stakeholders from all three municipalities to brainstorm possible broader topics of interest for the Bucknell interns.

To assist with the effort, Our Lady of Hope pastor Fr. Steven Frenier, OFM Conv., donated the use of a former rectory building as a work space. A generous donation of furniture and household items was made from the Franciscan Center, a former OLA Province ministry in Buffalo, NY, to outfit the facility.

"The people of this region are struggling," added Fr. Martin. "The coal is all gone and with it the economy of this region is depressed. In addition, residue of the coal mining days has negatively impacted the area."

The efforts of the Cabrini Friars are an example of the Franciscan commitment to Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). "This work we're doing fits perfectly with the mission of our JPIC office, directed by Fr. Michael Lasky, OFM Conv. Fr. Michael continually helped us, providing guidance and expertise in moving the program forward."

"God Gave Us Brothers..."

Franciscan Vocation News

2018 Jubilarians



On July 16, 2018 the Friars of Our Lady of the Angels Province honored our Jubilarians celebrating the anniversaries of their professions and/or ordinations. The celebration began at the Daily Noon Mass at the Shrine of St. Anthony in Ellicott City, MD, for friends, family and pilgrims, which was followed by a luncheon.

Profession Jubilarians

70 years

Friar Emmett Carroll, OFM Conv.

60 years

Friar Benedict Fagone, OFM Conv.

50 years

Friar John Ruffo, OFM Conv.

Friar Justin Ratajczak, OFM Conv.

Friar Carl Zdancewicz, OFM Conv.

40 years

Friar Kenneth Lucas, OFM Conv.

Friar James Doyle, OFM Conv.

Friar Gerald Waterman, OFM Conv.

Friar Michael Duffy, OFM Conv.

Friar David Blowey, OFM Conv.

Ordination Jubilarians

60 years

Friar Duane Mastrangelo, OFM Conv.

Friar Briant Cullinane, OFM Conv.

Friar Alvin Somerville, OFM Conv.

50 years

Friar Hilary Brzostowski, OFM Conv.

Friar Romuald Meogrossi, OFM Conv.

Friar Nicholas Swiatek, OFM Conv.

Friar Charles Jagodzinski, OFM Conv.

40 years

Friar Mark Szanyi, OFM Conv.

Friar Ross Syracuse, OFM Conv.

Friar Dennis Mason, OFM Conv.

25 years

Friar Brad Milunski, OFM Conv.

From Investiture and Sending to Simple Vows



On July 12, 2018, Friars from the four Franciscan Friars Conventual Provinces of North America, including our own Our Lady of the Angels Province, gathered at the Interprovincial St. Francis of Assisi Friary Novitiate (Arroyo Grande, California) to celebrate the 2018 Investiture of the new class of five new Novices and to Send Forth five graduating Novices onto their continuing studies. Four days later, during the OLA Province Jubilarian celebration in Ellicott City, MD, Fr. Alejandro Maria Arias Mosquera, OFM Conv., Fr. Fabian Adderley, OFM Conv. and Fr. Richard Rome, (pictured above with Fr. Mark Szanyi, OFM Conv), Professed their Simple Vows. The tradition of Professing on the day we celebrate our jubilarians began in 2017, to create a day full of fraternal witness. Please celebrate in prayer our 2018 Jubilarians and newly Professed.

Priestly and Diaconate Ordinations



(Above left) On June 22, 2018: Friar Emanuel Ventura Vasconcelos, OFM Conv. (at left) and Friar Moises Maximilian Avila Pacheco, OFM Conv. (at right), both friars of Our Lady of the Angels Province, were Ordained to the Sacred Order of the Priesthood at Saint Louis Roman Catholic Church in Buffalo, NY. (Above right) Friar Christopher Dudek, OFM Conv. celebrated his Diaconate Ordination on July 7, 2018 at the Basilica of St. Stanislaus, Bishop & Matyr (Chicopee, MA).

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Even This Cloud Has a Silver Lining

For some, the swirling cloud of questions surrounding the whole topic of writing one's will can be so confusing that it paralyzes the individual into inaction.

Do I really need a will? How do I get started? What will it cost? Is there a way I can remember my favorite charities in my will? Can I make changes in my will without rewriting everything? These are a few of the typical questions people ask when they think of writing their wills.

Unfortunately, inaction in this important area of one's life can lead to heartbreak and misunderstanding for one's survivors. Inaction can also compromise assets for which one worked so hard during one's lifetime. But, it need not be the case.

Perhaps the best first step one needs to take in the responsibility of writing a will is to find an attorney competent in this field. Friends, family members, one's doctor, parish priest, coworkers or neighbors are all good sources for recommendations of competent attorneys.

A simple phone call initiates the process and the attorney will be able to answer your questions and guide you through the will writing process.

After remembering family members and special acquaintances, you may also wish to remember the Companions of St. Anthony in your will. By doing so, you will honor the memory of St. Anthony and further the

important mission of his Franciscan brothers in today's world.

There are several ways to make distributions to the Companions in your will. The following are some examples you may take to your attorney.

Percentage

"I give, devise, and bequeath to Companions of St. Anthony of 12290 Folly Quarter Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042, _____% of my estate for its corporate needs and purposes."

Residue

(Whatever is left after other bequests have been granted.) "All the residue of my estate, including real and personal property, I give, devise, and bequeath to Companions of St. Anthony of 12290 Folly Quarter Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042 for its corporate needs and purposes."

Specific Dollar Amount

"I give, devise, and bequeath to Companions of St. Anthony of 12290 Folly Quarter Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042, \$_____ for its corporate needs and purposes."

Specific Property

"I give, devise, and bequeath to Companions of St. Anthony of 12290 Folly Quarter Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042 (description of property) located at (Exact Location), for its corporate needs and purposes."

A remembrance in your Will allows us to care for our ailing and senior friars, educate our youngest friars in their formation years, support our missionaries and their good works in some of the poorest parts of the world, and advance the Kingdom of God through our various Franciscan ministries.

A special offer to the Companions of St. Anthony

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The Peace of the Lord be with you
12oz. Libbey container with lid
PERSONALIZED

THE PEACE OF THE LORD BE WITH YOU
The Peace of the Lord be with you
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Manger Scene
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