
Westminster Abbey

Learning



Modern Martyrs: St Maximilian Kolbe

Born: 8th January 1894

Died: 14th August 1941

Occupation: Priest

Biography

He was born in Zdunska Wola, Poland. When he was 18, he studied Philosophy and Theology in Rome.

He formed a group called Militia Immaculatae, which focused on worshipping the Virgin Mary and performing good deeds. They developed a community of followers and wrote about their ideas.

When World War Two broke out, Maximilian Kolbe stayed in Poland, was soon arrested and taken to Auschwitz, a Nazi concentration camp. In 1941, he made his ultimate sacrifice when he volunteered to die in place of a stranger in the concentration camp. He was killed by lethal injection. The cell where he died is now a shrine. He was made a saint (canonised) in 1982.

Activities

“A single act of love makes the soul return to life.”

Discuss this quotation with a partner. What do you think St Maximilian Kolbe meant when he said these words? How does that make you feel?

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.”

(1 Corinthians 4-5)

Discuss this Bible passage with a partner. How is this passage similar to St Maximilian Kolbe’s quotation?

Write a paragraph about what people can learn from the behaviour and teachings of St Maximilian Kolbe.



For teachers:

We recommend you read our "[Introducing Modern Martyrs: primary teachers' guide](#)" before using this activity sheet.

Thank you for downloading this resource. We hope that it will be a useful teaching tool in your classroom.

As we continue to grow our free catalogue of teaching resources, we'd really appreciate a few minutes of your time to let us know what you liked and what could be improved. Please complete this [five-question survey](#).