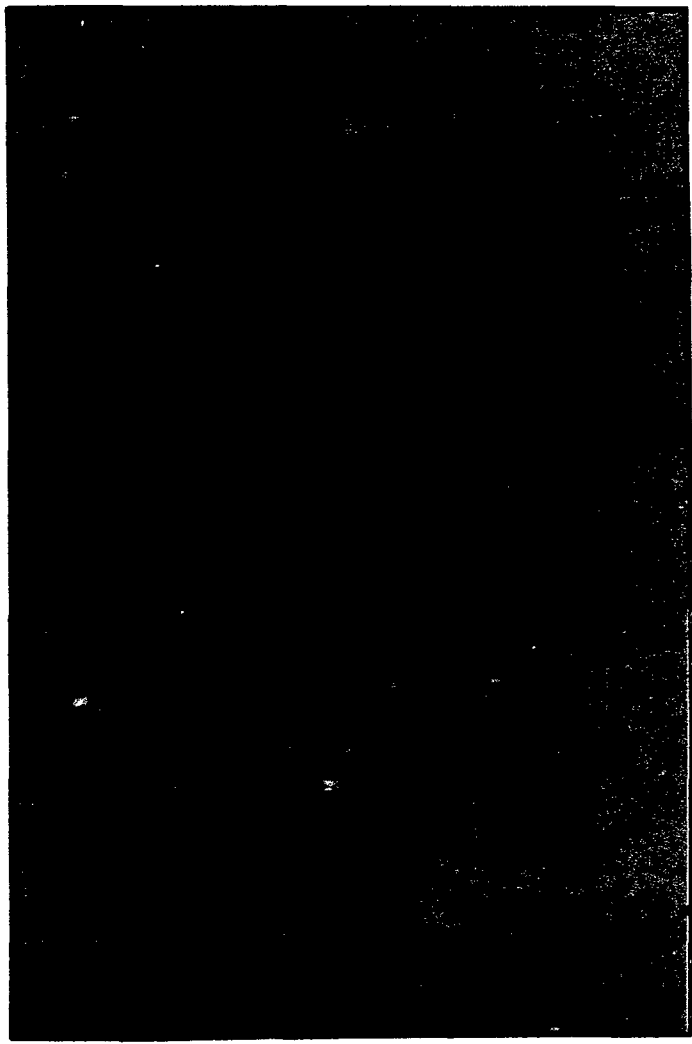


# Travelers

at himself.  
 rever. So we are one with all Christians of  
 as human, as weak, as sinful as we are.  
 by Scripture offers so many stories about  
 stories which do not gloss over their faults  
 it portray them as successful in spite of all  
 of God. Their victory encourages us.  
 it idea movingly: "Everything written before  
 1 for our instruction, that we might derive  
 ns of patience and the words of encourage-  
 es. May God, the source of all patience and  
 le you to live in perfect harmony with one  
 5).  
 crews urged Christians to remember their  
 the word of God to you; consider how  
 1 imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same  
 1 forever" (Hebrews 13).  
 are the same yesterday, today and forever.  
 ement to be found in the lives of the saints  
 ot only encouragement, but companionship

one with us in what we call, for want of a  
 union of saints.

aches at St. John's Seminary, Plymouth,



# need saints in my life

Kenna  
 wondered what  
 been like if he  
 Italian parents  
 ? Or what effect  
 d if he had  
 an, a black, a  
 he had lived  
 ed man or as a

any absolute answer to those  
 ponderings. Still, for me, looking  
 at the saints can provide some  
 clues. Looking at someone who  
 seems saintlike, listening to the  
 person, maybe even touching the  
 person, can provide insight to  
 what Jesus might have been like  
 as a woman, or a black, or a  
 Hispanic.

Christians are called to live the  
 "Christ-life" in the particular cir-  
 cumstances in which they find  
 themselves. Each Christian has  
 the potential to be the hands,  
 heart and presence of Christ to  
 others. But because the task is  
 difficult, many get sidetracked.

The image of God's love with  
 a human face is seldom seen ex-  
 cept in a blurred and confused  
 way in the real world.

But throughout history many  
 people have tried to bring to life  
 St. Paul's comment: "I live now  
 not I but Christ lives in me."

That's a reason why Christians  
 cherish saints, past and present.  
 The saints mirror the image of  
 God's love to us. As we look in-  
 to the eyes of a saint or recall the  
 memory of a saint from another  
 era, we encounter Christ looking  
 back. These disciples of Jesus,  
 from every century, culture, race,  
 gender and life circumstance,  
 have responded in sometimes  
 amazing ways to the work of the  
 Spirit in them.

St. Maximilian Kolbe is one  
 such person for me. He is the  
 Franciscan priest martyred at  
 Auschwitz in May 1941. He  
 volunteered to die in place of a

Polish soldier who had a wife  
 and two children.

It is difficult to say why his act  
 of selflessness affects me so  
 strongly. Perhaps because it bears  
 the hope — in an age in which  
 torture and death are refined  
 technologies in many countries  
 — that the Spirit of Christ still  
 causes compassion to bloom in  
 people.

Or perhaps it is because the ac-  
 tion of this saint holds out an  
 ideal of the priesthood in which  
 a minister literally lays down his  
 life for the people...represented  
 in this case by a family.

I find Maximilian Kolbe tugging  
 at my soul because in a world of  
 hype and broken promises, I can  
 sense God's creative energy  
 bringing value and meaning into  
 the heart of the modern  
 nightmares.

I need saints, and Maximilian  
 Kolbe in particular, to help me  
 make sense out of contemporary  
 absurdities.

Every society in the human  
 family needs heroes, people who  
 embody the values, ideals and  
 aspirations of a particular people.

The saints do this for the  
 Catholic community — and  
 more. They represent a dramatic  
 act of God in the course of  
 history and life. Through our lov-  
 ing retelling of their dramas, we  
 can touch Christ.

(Father Kenna works in Young  
 Adult Ministry in the Education  
 Department of the U.S. Catholic  
 Conference.)

# FOOD

## ...for thought

One hundred three Korean  
 martyrs are among the church's  
 newest canonized saints. The  
 canonization of these martyrs  
 from a troubled and divided na-  
 tion in the Far East took place  
 this spring when Pope John Paul  
 II visited South Korea.

The ceremony in Korea mark-  
 ed the first time in modern  
 church history that a canoniza-  
 tion occurred outside Rome.

There are many interesting  
 stories of these Catholics mar-  
 tyred in the 1800s during a time  
 of persecution in Korea. Many —  
 47 women and 45 men — were  
 lay people, involved in many dif-  
 ferent occupations.

One martyr, Father Andreas  
 Kim, was Korea's first native  
 priest. He was beheaded in 1846.

Ten of the martyrs were  
 missionaries.

A factory worker named Pro-  
 tadius Chong earned his daily liv-  
 ing by weaving ropes out of  
 straw. He was baptized around  
 the age of 30 and took an active  
 role in promoting Christianity by  
 providing housing for Catholics  
 in rural areas when they came to  
 receive the sacraments. Chong  
 was arrested in 1839, put in jail  
 and tortured.

Buckling under the interroga-  
 tion, Chong agreed to renounce  
 his faith and was released from  
 jail. Later, however, Chong  
 reconsidered and returned to tell  
 the judge that he wanted to

retract his renunciation. Once  
 again Chong was imprisoned and  
 beaten. He died from his injuries  
 at the age of 41.

Now, once a year, people  
 throughout the world will recall  
 the stories of these newly  
 canonized saints. The Korean  
 martyrs' feast day will be  
 celebrated Sept. 20.

These saints are valued for a  
 number of reasons. Pope John  
 Paul II indicated during the  
 canonization. For one thing, their  
 undying spirit sustains the Chris-  
 tians in "the church of silence"  
 of North Korea, the pope said.  
 Little is known of what has hap-  
 pened to the Christians of that  
 region under communist rule.

In South Korea, the pope  
 noted, the church is growing  
 rapidly today. He said that is  
 "the fruit of the heroic witness  
 of the martyrs."

The martyrs are ancestors of  
 the Korean people in two ways,  
 said the pope. They are ancestors  
 "according to the flesh, language  
 and culture." But they also are  
 "your fathers and mothers in the  
 faith."

And they point to the whole  
 history of the 200-year-old  
 church in Korea — "a communi-  
 ty unique in the history of the  
 church by reason of the fact that  
 it was founded entirely by lay  
 people," the pope commented.

For the church, he added,  
 these martyrs are like leaven.

## ...for discussion

1. As Father David K. O'Rourke  
 traces his spiritual heritage back  
 100 years, he encounters his  
 grandmother — a woman of  
 determination. In an article this  
 week, he tells her story: As you  
 glance back in time to your  
 spiritual ancestors, who do you  
 encounter? What is that person's  
 story?

2. Like the yeast that makes  
 bread rise: That is what the  
 church's martyrs are like, Pope  
 John Paul II said recently in  
 South Korea. The martyrs are like  
 leaven for the church, he ex-  
 plained. What do you think he  
 means?

3. The story of Franz Jagerstat-  
 ter, an Austrian peasant, is told in  
 our article by Katharine Bird. In  
 an article on the communion of  
 saints, why do you think Ms.  
 Bird pointed to this man?

4. What does the phrase,  
 "communion of saints," mean to  
 you?

## SECOND HELPINGS

"User Friendly," by Father  
 Eugene Hensell, OSB. Using a  
 lively style and a fresh approach  
 to a familiar book, Father  
 Hensell provides suggestions  
 on reading the Bible. His article  
 appears in the March 1984  
 issue of Marriage and Family  
 Living magazine. He observes  
 that though the Bible is a library  
 of many small books, all are  
 "held together by a strong bond  
 of unity...this unity is faith ex-  
 perience." The scripture  
 scholar adds: "Every book of  
 the Bible is in some way the col-  
 lected faith experience of a par-  
 ticular people at a particular time  
 in history." He notes that the  
 "collected memories of that  
 faith experience always revolve  
 around the relationship between  
 God and the human communi-  
 ty." He recommends browsing  
 leisurely through the Bible to  
 get a taste of its fascinating  
 people and events. (Marriage  
 and Family Living, Abbey Press,  
 St. Meinrad, Ind. 47577. Single  
 issue, \$1.25.)