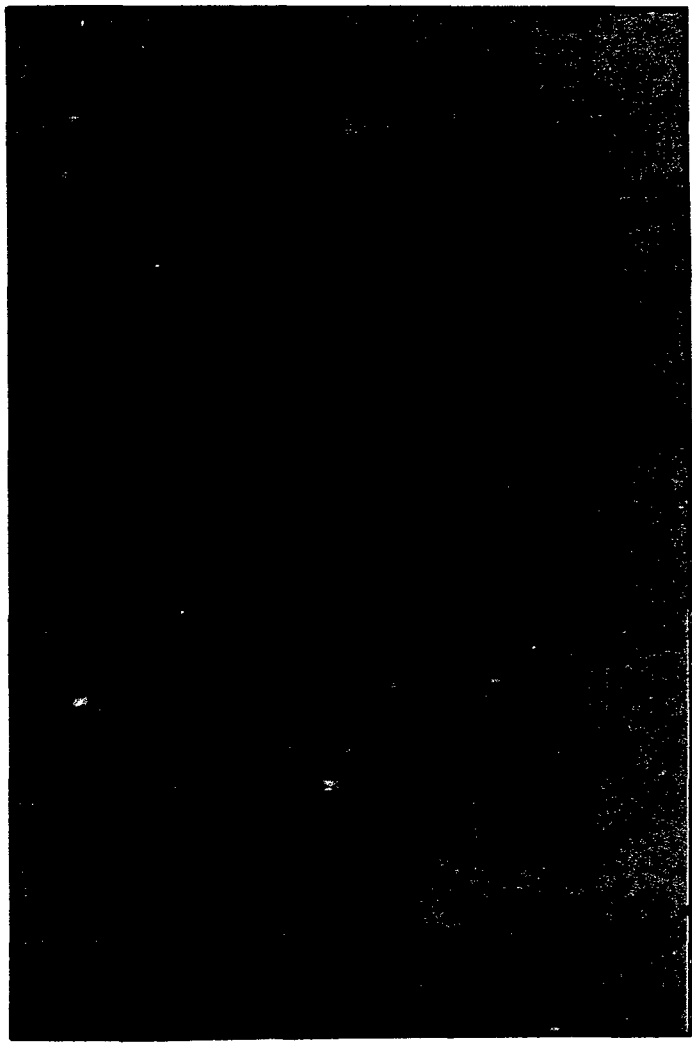


Travelers

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).
 rews 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

will never be

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.)