

Although he experienced fear and sorrow, he continued to trust God. His writings showed great love for his family and confidence in eternal life. Even in suffering, Franz remained committed to Christ.

Excerpts from his letters

“If God had not bestowed on me the grace and power to die for my faith — if this is demanded of me — then I would be doing the same as the majority of the people are doing. God can give someone as much grace as God wants. If other men and women had received as much grace as I have obtained, they would have perhaps done much more good than I have done.” (Letters and Writings from Prison, “Text no. 88,” p. 224)

“Out of my own experience I can say that life is painful when one lives as a lukewarm Christian. To exist in this way is to have more the existence of a vegetable than to truly live.” (“Text No 85,” p. 237)

“What we suffer in this world, we need no longer to go through in purgatory. If one often thinks about eternity, which one must do here, then nothing is too difficult.” (Letter of March 10, 1941, p. 72)

On August 9, 1943, Franz was executed in Brandenburg, Germany. He was 36 years old. At the time of his death, many people viewed his actions as unnecessary or impractical. Yet, over the years, his witness came to be recognized as an example of Christian courage and fidelity.

The Catholic Church later recognized Franz Jägerstätter as a martyr who gave his life in faithful witness to Christ and moral truth. He was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI on October 26, 2007.

Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, pray for us.

Sources include the Vatican Biography of Bl. Franz Jägerstätter, *National Catholic Register*, foryourmarriage.org & Wikipedia



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Bl. Franz Jägerstätter *Layman and Martyr*



Born: May 20, 1907
(St. Radegund, Upper Austria)
Died: August 9, 1943
(Brandenburg, Germany)
Beatified: October 26, 2007, by
Pope Benedict XVI
Feast Day: May 21
Patronage: Conscientious
objectors

Blessed Franz Jägerstätter is remembered today as a husband, father, farmer, and faithful Catholic who courageously followed his conscience during one of the darkest periods in modern history. His witness continues to inspire Christians around the world to remain faithful to Christ, even

when faithfulness requires sacrifice.

Franz was born on May 20, 1907, to Rosalia Huber and Franz Bachmeier, who could not afford to marry. They decided to baptize him the day after his birth. His paternal grandmother, Elisabeth Huber, first cared for him. She had a reputation as a devoutly religious woman. Franz’s father was killed during World War I. His mother later married Heinrich Jägerstätter, and Franz took his stepfather’s last name.

As a young man, Franz worked as a farmer and lived a simple, rural life. He was considered a good student and enjoyed reading. He left school around the age of 14, which was allowed at the time.

People in his village remembered young Franz as cheerful, energetic, and confident. He liked trying new things and was often ahead of others in his interests. In fact, he was the first person in his village to own a motorcycle.

Although Franz regularly attended Mass, there was little at that time to suggest the deep faith he would later become known for. On one occasion, he surprised the village priest by asking whether the Virgin Mary may have had other children after Jesus.

While he was not especially known for holiness in his younger years, his life gradually changed as he matured in responsibility and faith.

Franz was a strong fighter. He once spent several days in jail after fighting members of an Austrian nationalist group due to the attention they were giving to local girls.

In August 1933, Franz fathered a daughter named Hildegard with a local farm worker, Theresia Auer. Even though some questioned whether he was the father, Franz chose to support the child financially and visited her often.

Around this time, Franz seems to have left St. Radegund for several years, possibly due to the circumstances surrounding that situation. He worked in the iron mines of Eisenerz. During this period, he experienced a personal struggle about the meaning and directions of his life but eventually returned home with a much deeper Catholic faith.

A major turning point came in 1939, when he married Franziska Schwaninger. Their marriage was deeply rooted in the Catholic faith. Together, they raised three daughters and centered their family life on prayer, sacrifice, and trust in God.

Franziska later spoke about the deep faith they shared as husband and wife. Their home life was filled with Catholic practices, including prayer and preparation in the sacraments. Franz attended daily Mass whenever possible, and spent time reading Scripture and spiritual writings.

During the 1930s, political changes began sweeping across Europe. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime gained increased power, promoting ideas that opposed Christian teaching and human dignity. When Austria was annexed by Nazi Germany in 1938, many people welcomed the change. Franz, however, became deeply troubled by the Nazi ideology.

He recognized that many Nazi teachings conflicted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Franz believed Christians could not separate their faith from the moral decisions they made in public life. As he reflected prayerfully on the situation, he became convinced that supporting the Nazi regime would violate his conscience.

He once wrote: “It is very sad to hear again and again from Catholics that this war waged by Germany is perhaps not so unjust because it will wipe out Bolshevism... But now a question: what are they fighting in this country – Bolshevism or the Russian People?”

Franz understood the seriousness of the situation. He knew that resisting the Nazi government could lead to suffering, imprisonment, or even death. Still, he believed that faithfulness to God mattered more than personal safety or public approval.

Like many Austrian men, Franz was eventually called into military service. After prayer and careful discernment, he decided he could not swear loyalty to Hitler or fight for the Nazi cause.

This was not an easy decision. Franz loved his wife and daughters deeply, and understood the hardship that his decision would bring upon his family. Many people encouraged him to comply outwardly for practical reasons. Some argued that he could serve without supporting evil personally. Others believed resistance would accomplish nothing.

Even some fellow Catholics questioned his choice.

Despite the pressure, Franz believed conscience must be followed when it is properly formed according to truth and faith. He believed he could not knowingly cooperate with evil.

He wrote: “Through his bitter suffering and death, Christ freed us only from eternal death, not from temporal suffering and mortal death. But Christ, too, demands a public confession of our faith, just as the Führer, Adolf Hitler, does from his followers.”

Franz’s decision eventually led to his arrest in 1943. While imprisoned, he wrote letters filled with faith, peace, and love to his wife and family.