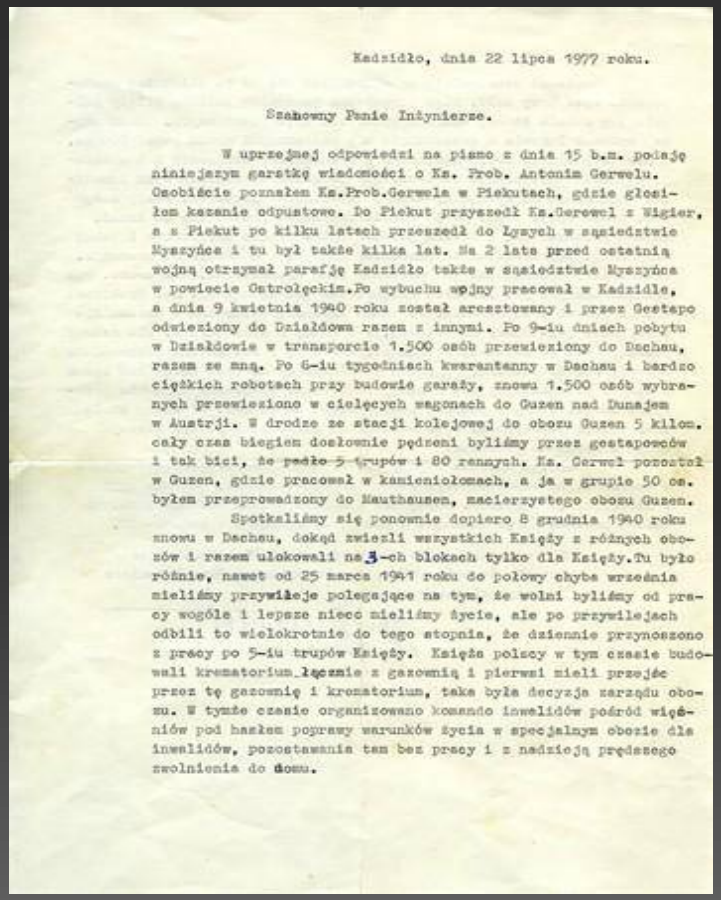
Polish Priests in Dachau, 1939-45 Story of Father Antoni Gerwel

Father Antoni and his Family

Letter from Father Zelaznicki



Kadzidło, dnia 22 lipca 1977 roku.

Szanowny Panie Inżynierze.

W uprzejmej odpowiedzi na pismo z dnia 15 b.m. podaję niniejszym garstkę wiadomości o Ks. Prob. Antonim Gerwelu. Osobiście poznałem Ks.Prob.Gerwela w Piekutach, gdzie głosiłem kazanie odpustowe. Do Piekut przyszedł Ks.Gerwel z Wigier, a z Piekut po kilku latach przeszedł do Łysych w sąsiedztwie Myszyńca i tu był także kilka lat. Na 2 lata przed ostatnią wojną otrzymał parafję Kadzidło także w sąsiedztwie Myszyńca w powiecie Ostrołęckim.Po wybuchu wojny pracował w Kadzidle, a dnia 9 kwietnia 1940 roku został aresztowany i przez Gestapo odwieziony do Działdowa razem z innymi. Po 9-iu dniach pobytu w Działdowie w transporcie 1.500 osób przewieziony do Dachau, razem ze mną. Po 6-iu tygodniach kwarantanny w Dachau i bardzo ciężkich robotach przy budowie garaży, znowu 1.500 osób wybranych przewieziono w cielęcych wagonach do Guzen nad Dunajem w Austrji. W drodze ze stacji kolejowej do obozu Guzen 5 kilom. cały czas biegiem dosłownie pędzeni byliśmy przez gestapowców i tak bici, że padło 5 trupów i 80 rannych. Ks. Gerwel pozostał w Guzen, gdzie pracował w kamieniołomach, a ja w grupie 50 os. byłem przeprowadzony do Mauthausen, macierzystego obozu Guzen.

Spotkaliśmy się ponownie dopiero 8 grudnia 1940 roku znowu w Dachau, dokąd zwieźli wszystkich Księży z różnych obozów i razem ulokowali na 3-ch blokach tylko dla Księży.Tu było różnie, nawet od 25 marca 1941 roku do połowy chyba września mieliśmy przywileje polegające na tym, że wolni byliśmy od pracy wogóle i lepsze nieco mieliśmy życie, ale po przywilejach odbili to wielokrotnie do tego stopnia, że dziennie przynoszono z pracy po 5-iu trupów Księży. Księża polscy w tym czasie budowali krematorium łącznie z gazownią i pierwsi mieli przejść przez tę gazownię i krematorium, taka była decyzja zarządu obozu. W tymże czasie organizowano komando inwalidów podród więźniów pod hasłem poprawy warunków życia w specjalnym obozie dla inwalidów, pozostawania tam bez pracy i z nadzieją prędszego zwolnienia do domu.

Record from Dachau

- **Your request from 09.04.2012** Dachau, den 3.5.2012
-
- Dear Mrs. Gerwel,
- Thank you for sending the scans of the letters and the photography concerning Father
- Antoni Gerwel. Had the photo been taken on the burial ceremony for him? Do you
- have any photograph of him? To enlarge the collection of the memorial site we
- would appreciate very well if you could send us originals or good scans of the
- documents. Often there are scientific requests for Polish priests.
- We have examinated the name-lists and the prisoner-numberbooks and we can confirm that
- Antoni Gerwel had been imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp or in its
- subcamps and that he died in Dachau.
- The length of the imprisonment and further information you will find on the next
- page. His name is mentioned in a book about the priests in Dachau. We are
- sorry to inform you that there are no other documents.
- For your further requests we give you all the information willingly.
- Kindly regards
- Albert Knoll
-
- **Häftling**
- **Vorname** ANTONI
- **Nachname** GERWEL
- **Geburtsdatum** 14.01.1894
- **Geburtsort** Sejny
- **Wohnort** Kadzidlo
- **Region** Ostroleka
- **Geschlecht** m
- **Beruf** Pfarrer
- **Konfession** römisch-katholisch
- **Quellenangabe** Wendel-Gilliar:Das Reich des Todes (...)Band III, S. 382;
- NARA Zugangsbuch Nr. 109 / 021969
- **Bemerkung** Vorname lt. NARA Zugangsbuch 109: ANTON
- Geburtsdatum auch: 17. Januar 1894
- **Haftverlauf**
- Datum Haftnummer Haftänderung Außenlager Zu-/Abgangsstelle
- 19.04.1940 4880 Zugang
- 25.05.1940 0 überführt Mauthausen
- 08.12.1940 21988 rückgeführt Mauthausen
- 30.08.1942 0 gestorben Dachau
- **Haftkategorie**
- Geistlicher; Schutzhäftling
- **Nationalität**
- Polen
- **Quellen**
- Name Sterbeurkunde Dachau 1942 3297
- **Bibliothek**
- Sachgebiet M 5
- Titel Das Reich des Todes hat keine Macht auf Erden

Why the Polish Catholic Church?

“Polish Catholic church not only played a significant religious role, but most importantly a political and cultural one, in the thousand year history of our country. German occupier understood that killing priests and destroying the church, is, ultimately, the most effective way to undermine both fabric and foundations of the Polish nation”.

Dachau:
A history and an overview

Dachau's Motto

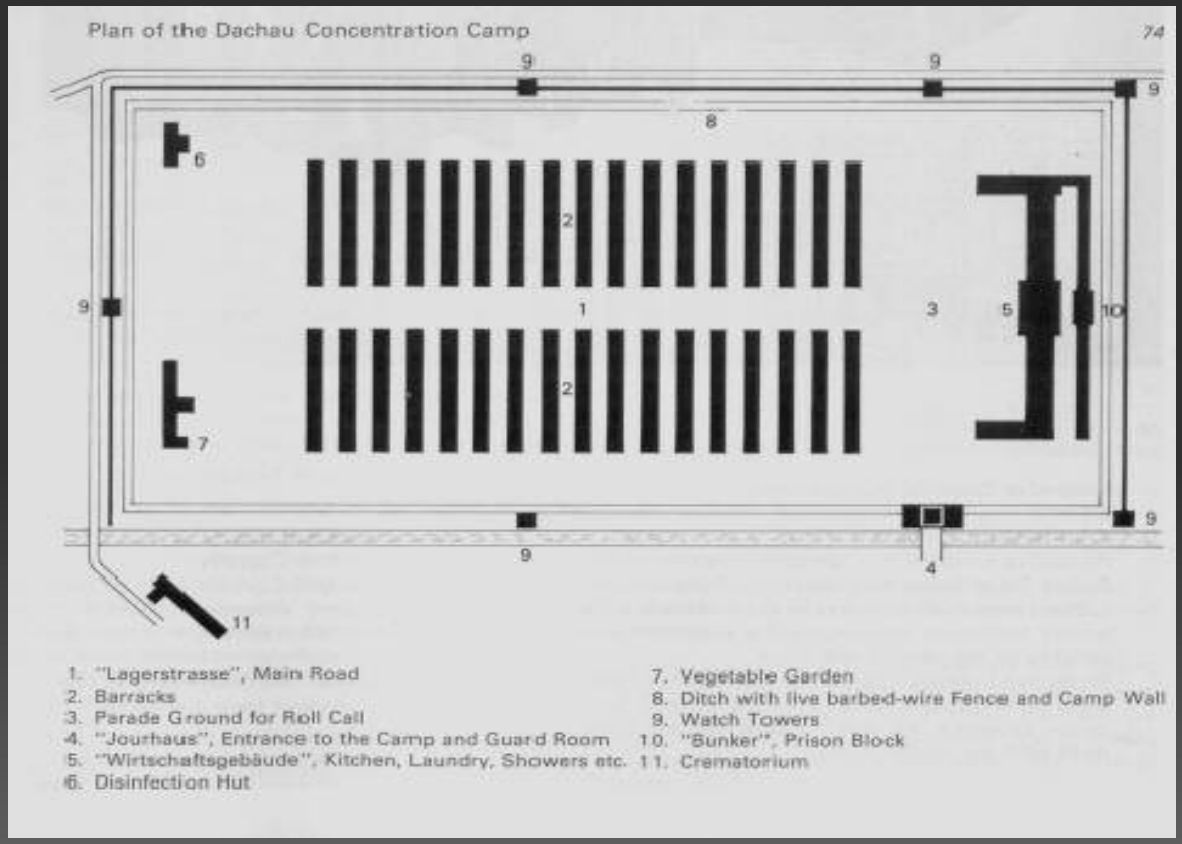
There is one road to freedom and its milestones are
Obedience, Diligence, Honesty,
Order Cleanliness, Temperance, Truth, Sacrifice
and love of one's country

Priests in Dachau

Note: any discrepancy in figures is because some of the priests were transferred to other camps or died from other causes of the war after being released from Dachau. This data concerns Dachau only.

Nationality		Died in camp	Survived
Polish	**1,780**	**868**	**830**
German	**447**	**94**	**45**
French	**156**	**10**	**137**
Czech/Slovak	**109**	**24**	**74**
Dutch	**63**	**17**	**36**
Yugoslav	**50**	**4**	**38**
Belgian	**46**	**9**	**33**
Italian	**28**	**1**	**26**
Others	**41**	**7**	**21**
	2,720	1,034	1,240

Dachau Structure



Arrival in Dachau

A day in the life of a prisoner

Work Conditions

Pseudo-medical Experiments

Victim of a medical experiment immersed in freezing water at the Dachau concentration camp. Dachau, Germany, between August 1942 and May 1943. YV

An Apology from German Doctors

- German doctors apologize for Nazi-era crimes against Jews and other ethnic groups during Holocaust
- **Horrors not just committed by doctors but by leaders in medical community: Nuremberg statement**

- **Friday May 25, 2012**

- "Germany's medical association has adopted a declaration apologizing for sadistic experiments and other actions of doctors under the Nazis.
- In the statement adopted earlier this week in Nuremberg, the association said many doctors under the Nazis were "guilty, contrary to their mission to heal, of scores of human rights violations and we ask the forgiveness of their victims, living and deceased, and of their descendants."
- In addition to performing pseudo-scientific experiments on concentration camp inmates, German doctors also were key to the Nazi's program of forced sterilization or euthanasia of the mentally ill or others deemed "unworthy of life."
- The medical association says "these crimes were not the actions of individual doctors but involved leading members of the medical community" and should be taken as a warning for the future"…

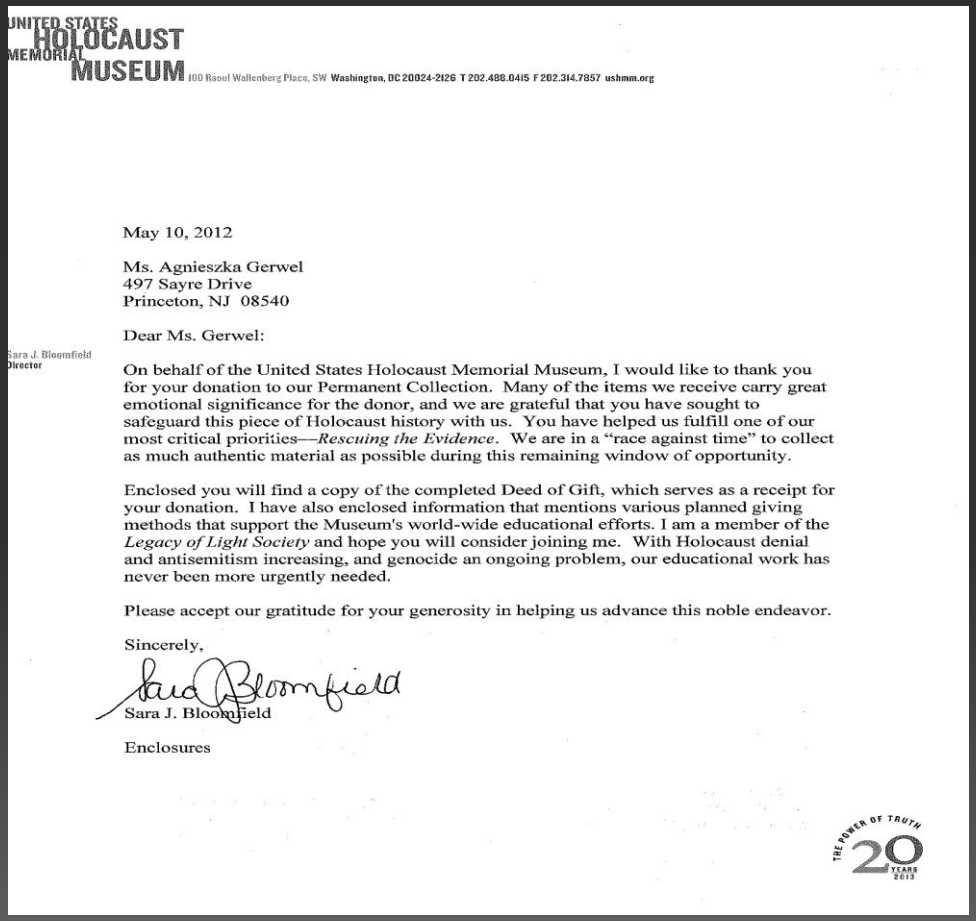
Punishment and Sadism

Religious Life in Dachau

Liberation

Dachau camp prisoners cheer their American liberators, April 29, 1945.

Holocaust Museum Washington D.C.



UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW Washington, DC 20024-2126 T 202.488.0415 F 202.314.7857 ushmm.org

May 10, 2012

Ms. Agnieszka Gerwel
497 Sayre Drive
Princeton, NJ 08540

Dear Ms. Gerwel:

Sara J. Bloomfield
Director

On behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, I would like to thank you for your donation to our Permanent Collection. Many of the items we receive carry great emotional significance for the donor, and we are grateful that you have sought to safeguard this piece of Holocaust history with us. You have helped us fulfill one of our most critical priorities—*Rescuing the Evidence*. We are in a "race against time" to collect as much authentic material as possible during this remaining window of opportunity.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the completed Deed of Gift, which serves as a receipt for your donation. I have also enclosed information that mentions various planned giving methods that support the Museum's world-wide educational efforts. I am a member of the *Legacy of Light Society* and hope you will consider joining me. With Holocaust denial and antisemitism increasing, and genocide an ongoing problem, our educational work has never been more urgently needed.

Please accept our gratitude for your generosity in helping us advance this noble endeavor.

Sincerely,

Sara J. Bloomfield

Sara J. Bloomfield

Enclosures

THE POWER OF TRUTH 20 YEARS 2013