

Franz Jägerstätter ***A farmer against Hitler***

I write and have my hands tied

- moral and religious considerations, intended as teaching her daughters, his notes on how to behaving at such very difficult times.
- letters that Franz wrote in 1943 and during his period in prison, addressed mainly to his wife Franziska

Connection to the Order of Secular Franciscans

- The environment for Franz during his military service becomes more and more difficult ... In this situation of isolation Franz seeks support in a religious community. He is devoted to St. Francis of Assisi.
- Franz's Franciscan breviary

Secular Franciscans Order

- He makes solemn profession one year later in his native country. It seems as if Franz was trying to build more solid faith, getting more stable to withstand the trials, and supported by belonging to a community. To Franz solemn profession means a commitment declared in front of everyone, but also in front of himself to "live according to the form of the holy Gospel".

His family

On March 12th 1943, Franz wrote:

- "Soon it will be time to sow oats. When you have questions about the farm, write me because I help with my tips. However, God knows I would prefer to help you in person. "
- He addressed his father-in-law tactfully and gave him a little suggestion: "Don't let them work too hard, so that it still remains a little time to meditate and pray."
- My dearest husband, "God's will be done, even if it hurts a lot!" "Your three little girls always ask about you and offer Lenten sacrifices for your coming back»

«I could never imagine that getting married would have been something so nice»

- On April 9th, Franz writes to his wife for their seven-year marriage anniversary
- When I think of all graces I received last seven years, it looks like a miracle to me... That's why, even though we fear the future, we can be sure that He, who has always supported and fulfill our lives, will not abandon us. If we let ourselves give Him our gratitude and continue our efforts toward perfection, God will grant us with eternal Joy "if I had to pass this life, I would have rest in peace in my grave because you know that I'm not a criminal. "

His doubts about faith

- If you have doubts about faith, from which almost no one is spared, then think of miracles and saints ...
- From the death of Christ, almost every century, there were persecutions of Christians and many heroes and martyrs sacrificed their lives for Christ giving witness of their faith, often after a horrible martyrdom. If we want to pursue our purpose, we must become ourselves heroes of the faith, because if we fear men more than God we will not succeed".

Christ's soldier or Hitler's soldier?

- "Christ asks us also to give witness of our faith openly, just as Adolf Hitler claimed to his followers."
- "Christ or Satan cannot be in a same heart. Soldier of Christ or soldier of Hitler? You can't get mistaken ... "

- Giving witness of faith through your life belonging to God: this is the laity's task. Franz speaks of "secular priesthood" that participates in building up the Kingdom of God through praying and good works.

A maverick lay

- "We have been caught by a strong tide in which all of us German Catholics swim and have to fight; until we remain there, it is irrelevant whether diving into it or getting dragged by the others. You can get back to the shore happily only if you swim against the tide; the ones who jumped alone and dragged others will surely make it harder to get out of the stream. "
- Those who let themselves overcome by the current, they endanger their own eternal salvation and even their personal responsibility.

A rightful or wrong War?

- Jägerstätter writes: "today it is probably the same thing make a rightful or wrong war? Is there anything worse than being forced to kill and despoil men who are defending their homeland, just to support a anti-Christian power to win and build an empire without God? "

"I think we can also pay blind obedience but only if doing so doesn't harm anybody."

- "You always try to doubt my resolution through the fact that I got married and have kids. But do a wife and children change maybe any bad deed in a good? Or could an action become any good or bad simply because thousands of Catholics act the same?
- Why should we ask God for granting us with the Holy Spirit seven gifts, if we are asked to practice blind obedience? What' s the intellect and free will we received from God for, if, as you claim, it is not Him to discern whether this war made by the Germans is right or wrong? "

Obedience and responsibility

- "What does it mean being humble? It means to submit and serve the one who is above us. First of all let us to the Lord, who gives us everything, the highest obedience. We must also obey the earthly authority, though we find it hard to be faithful to sovereigns and superiors because sometimes we find them unfair to us.
- "And will you say serving the man who has erased Austria from the map is patriotism? "
- Shall I say that we still have a homeland, when I have only duties and no rights?"

Who can and wants to answer my questions?

- "Who is capable of being a soldier of Christ and a soldier of National Socialism at same time? Who is capable of fighting for the victory of Christ and His Church and that of Hitler at the same time? "

On the Bishops' decision

Franz deplores the silence of the Church and her pastors about the political situation. Perhaps they were not prepared to take this fight and decide whether to live or die ... That is why we can easily imagine the difficult decision our bishops and priests faced in March 1938.

"They probably thought it would not last long and then everything would crumble. But it has been different, many years passed and thousands of men died for this mistake. "

Desire for peace

But how can we ask for peace if we do not want it, because otherwise we should finally lay down the weapons. We should pray God to enlighten our conscience to finally recognize that other people have the right to exist in this world ... "

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Although I write with tied hands, it is better to have no free will. Sometimes, God manifests himself by giving his strength to those who love Him and do not put earthly things above eternal realities. Neither prison, nor chains, nor death can separate someone from God's love, rob their faith and free will. The power of God is invincible

From verbal from death sentence

In front of the Court Franz confirms that if he had fought for the National Socialist State, he would have been acting his religious conscience

as a Catholic, he could not do any military service; he could not be at the same time national socialist and Catholic: that it was impossible.

If he had accepted the first call to arms, he would have done it because he believed he had to obey the orders by the State

Now God grant him with the certainty that it is not a sin to refuse the use of weapons; there are cases where we must obey God rather than men; on the basis of behavior "love your neighbor as yourself" he couldn't fight using weapons

However he was ready to serve as a soldier in healthcare.

Monday, August 9th 1943

Finally it comes the time for taking a decision and Franz Jägerstätter, though alone, follows what his conscience suggests.

In his farewell letter, written a few hours before the execution:

"Dearest wife and mother, I thank you very much for all that you have done for me in my life, for all the love and sacrifices you have made for me, and I beg you to forgive me for anything that may have offended you. "

He was taken to Brandenburg on the Havel and there he was decapitated.

"I wish I had kept you safe from suffering for my cause. But you know what Christ said: the one who loves his father, his mother, his wife and his children more than me is not worthy of me. "

Franz Jägerstätter was 36 years old, married and had 3 daughters.

"Dearest wife and mother, I was not able to spare you the sufferings for my cause. Even for our Savior, it must have been very hard to procure to her mother, with her suffering and her death, such a deep sorrow; both have endured everything for the sake of our sins. "

I thank our Savior for suffering and even die for Him ... May God be worthy to accept my life as a sacrifice of expiating sins not only for me but also for others.

Faithfulness to the Gospel and the value of the human person

Where does this simple man's strength come from? And how did his clear thoughts come to a close and so clear reading of Hitler's regime?

Franz did not have any particular information but read newspapers and talked with people. He followed the Church in the person of Pope XI who had denounced Nazism as an idolatrous and anti-Christian phenomenon. His connection with the Pope remains a great support for him. In prison, he received the Pope's prayer intentions every month.

Destiny of Franziska Jägerstätter

To better understand Franz, we must also look at his wife Franziska who was 95 when she attended the beatification of her husband on October 26, 2007

Until the last years of her life Franziska has encountered some incomprehensions in the country. But she lived in their house in St. Radegund until she passed away.

On March 4th 2013 she is 100 years old

She died surrounded by her family on March 16th, 2013

“Franziska did not say anything about Franz’s final decision to their daughters and to the local people in the village, she told them he was leaving for the front. "Not everything that is considered a crime on Earth remains that according to God’s judgment," wrote Franz. After her husband’s death, Franziska suffered even more because people isolated her completely and she was addressed as responsible for the exaggerated faith that her husband had and led him to his decision and death.

In 1946 Franziska applied for support by the Austrian authorities paid to the widows of war. Her application was rejected because: *she was not a widow of war nor a widow of a fighter against Nazism. Her husband had not fought to free Austria and did not want to fight for Hitler. The religious foundation of his choice could not be regarded as a will to fight National Socialism for a free Austria.*

After many appeals, she found who could help her and received the pension in 1950.

Franziska always supported her husband even though she said it was not easy for her to accept his choice.

Her faith, she shared with her husband so deeply, has always been a foundation in her life.

In Franziska’s life the apostolate has always been very important to her, being active in parish activities as long as she could.

During the beatification process, Franziska declared she was proud of Franz.

She said she was happy and looking forward to meeting Franz again because she was still in love with him!

Beatification...his witness questions us...

He was not an intellectual, he was not a pacifist, he was not a politician ... he was a man of faith, a faithful man in his parish, a farmer!

Integrity, courage, and faith are three words that characterize Franz Jägerstätter.

Franz was not a fool, not a fanatic and did not seek any martyrdom. He was a normal man well rooted in his affections, tied to his family and land. He loved life

Jägerstätter never judged others, but only obeyed his conscience until the end.

What does his life tell us today...

Taking care of the memory of our martyrs in '900 belongs to that part of the contemporary humankind and the “hopeful strength” by the Christians that has not yielded to the dehumanization projects in our times.

Franz Jägerstätter is a prophet with such a width of views and depths that few of his contemporaries had; he is an example of fidelity to human conscience, a defender of nonviolence and peace, a sentinel against ideologies, a man of faith for which God was really at the center of his life.