

Personal Commitment

In a letter to Franziska, Franz states that what is needed in the world is “spiritual warfare.” For Franz, this is prayer and action. In the space below, please write your own “prayer” and “action” so you may follow more closely the path of Jesus, the Peacemaker.

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Write a prayer expressing your desire to live a more peaceful and peace-filled life: _____

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Action I will take in my life to follow the non-violence of Jesus: _____

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How will you accomplish this goal? _____

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Who will support you in this endeavor? _____

“Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.”

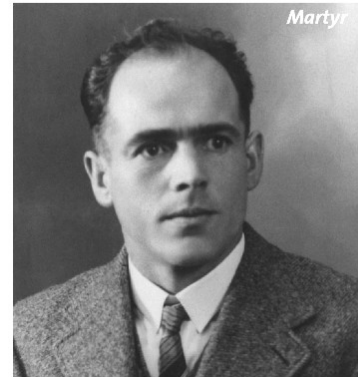
Phil. 4:9

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Franz Jägerstätter



Blessed Franz Jagerstatter

(1907-1943)

By Teresa LeCompte

What is the most important decision you ever made? Was God a part of that decision?

For Franz, an Austrian, a life-changing decision he was faced with was whether or not to become a part of the violence of the Nazi regime. He chose not to.

As a result of refusing to serve in the German Army during WW II, he was beheaded in Berlin August 9, 1943. Today,

he is honored as a pacifist and a martyr of Nazi resistance.

What led Franz to this act of civil disobedience and eventual martyrdom? There was little in his background to suggest that he was radically different from his peers. He is remembered as being rather wild in his adolescence. Franz was popular, enjoyed dancing, drinking, playing cards, and girlfriends. In fact, he was part of a small village gang and sometimes fought.

As he grew older he had children, married, changed his behavior and became devoted to the Eucharist. Attending Mass became a daily ritual. Villagers observed him stopping in the midst of his farming to read Scripture or pray the rosary.

In 1937 Franz married his wife Franziska. He loved his family deeply and had no desire to cause them suffering, yet, his conscience would not allow him to participate in the unjust war Hitler was waging. He steadfastly followed his conscience until his untimely death, even though his family, spiritual advisors, and even the presiding officers at his trial unsuccessfully attempted to convince him to change his mind.

In his farewell message to those he loved, he wrote, “though people charge me with a crime and have condemned me to death as a criminal, I take comfort in the fact that not everything which this world considers a crime is a crime in the eyes of God. And I hope that I need not fear the Eternal Judge because of this crime.” This statement echoes that of Saint Peter before the Sanhedrin: “We must obey God rather than any human authority.” (Acts 5:29)

While others scheduled for execution cried out in rage and terror before their execution, the chaplain remembered that “Franz’ eyes shined with joy and confidence, his face was full of peace.” After Franz’ beheading, the pastor remarked, “This man who had lived as a saint has died as a hero.”

The legacy left to each of us by Franz Jagerstatter is to remember that the most important decision any of us will ever make is to follow Jesus, the Peacemaker. Franz was beatified on October 26, 2007, in Linz, Austria.

Reading Guide

Prayer: God of Peace, As we begin our study of Blessed Franz Jagerstatter, fill us with your vision of peace for this world. Grant us the courage to confront the challenges of this world and the grace to love you with our minds and hearts and follow you by our actions. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Guide.

Describe Franz' dream. What did it symbolize? _____

Who/what inspired Franz? _____

How did the culture of Nazism influence the people of Franz' hometown? How was Franz different? _____

Comment on what you learned about Franz and Franziska from their letters? _____

What was the "Concordat?" How did the Church respond? _____

Personal Reflection

As we look back at the world Franz' was a part of, we are able to clearly see the evil that was present. Yet, unlike many of those living at the time, Franz saw the situation while in the midst of it and refused to be part of it. What are similar situations in our world today? How would you respond? _____

Franz was a conscientious objector. His conscience would not allow him to participate in an immoral and unjust war. He chose to follow Jesus—not Hitler. Write about a time you stood up for your faith and the truth. What were the choices and risks involved? _____

How can Blessed Franz Jagerstatter be a role model for you today? _____

Why is the story of Franz meaningful for the world today? _____

"To choose the road of discipleship is to dispose oneself for a share in the cross. To be a Christian, according to the New Testament, is not simply to believe with one's mind, but also to become a doer of the word, a way-farer with and a witness to Jesus." The Challenge of Peace, Par. 276

How is God calling or challenging you to be disciple? What will you need to sacrifice? _____
