
"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

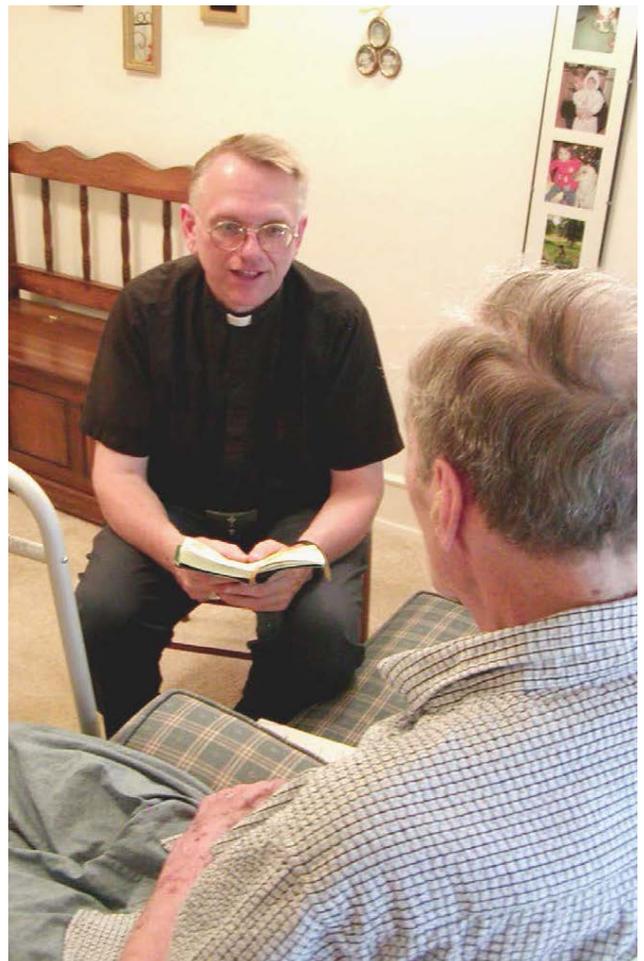
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it's a wonderful life!

Borrowing my title from the classic Christmas movie "It's A Wonderful Life," I truly believe I have been blessed with a wonderful life as a Pallottine brother. Years ago a friend of mine asked me why I became a brother instead of a priest, and I jokingly answered him, "Because I didn't want to work on weekends like the priests have to." But that is not the real reason at all.

After graduating from Bay View High School in 1976 I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do with my life and decided to try my hand at technical college. It was during this time that I sat down with the vocation director of the Franciscans about becoming a brother, a calling I had felt for some time while I was growing up. But I think God had other plans for me. About six months after I entered the Franciscan Order my dad was diagnosed with cancer and was given six months to live. It was at this point that I was faced with making another important decision in my life and returned home to help my mother and family. After my dad died, I got a job working for an industrial distributor and was put in charge of the shipping department, a job I held for 14 years. During that time the Franciscans and I lost contact, but every so often I still heard that "little voice" inside my head calling me to be a brother.

I next decided to go to my home parish, St Veronica's, and talk to my pastor who just happened to know a number of the Pallottines. He suggested that I talk to their vocation director about becoming a brother, which I did, and in 1995 I entered the Pallottines as a postulant. With the Pallottines I was given the opportunity to live in community with other religious men, to deepen my spiritual and prayer life, and at the same time to be of service to God's people. I made my first profession in 1998 and my final in 2001.



Although I have been stationed at our main house, Pallotti House, since 2001, I have worn many “hats” in my service to my community and others. For a while I was kind of a “wandering Pallottine” visiting with students in some of the classes at St Vincent Pallotti grade school and talking to them about our founder. For many years I have been visiting many of the sick and home bound of the parish, praying with them and bringing them communion on First Fridays and at other times during the month. I am currently a member of the Knights of Columbus and I work with the St Vincent de Paul group at St Vincent Pallotti Parish that reaches out to the poor in the Milwaukee area.

Presently my main ministry is serving as the administrator of Pallotti House. Talk about wearing many hats! As administrator I am in charge of just about everything: keeping the house running smoothly by making sure the roofs don't leak, the driveway and grounds are in good repair and plowed and shovelled during our unpredictable Wisconsin winters, purchasing the groceries, hiring cooks and house cleaners, paying the bills and making up the community schedules so that everyone knows what's up and who has Mass and confession help-outs. I am also on our Provincial Council, a position to which I have been elected over the past 12 years now. In this age of priest shortages, the “jobs” I do take on a special importance for keeping the community running like a well-oiled machine and at the same time freeing up our priests so that they can attend to the sacramental needs of others.



When I think back over the years, I must admit that God certainly works in mysterious ways when it comes to finding one's vocation in life. I thank Him for ultimately leading me to the Pallottines. I love my work, my community and am happy to be a Pallottine brother.

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he loved to the end!



Józef Stanek was born on 04 Dec 1916 in Łapsze Niżne (Poland) and baptised the following day. During the sixth year of his life he lost his parents.

Having finished his studies in the secondary school of the Pallottines in Wadowice, he entered the Society in 1935 and made his first consecration in 1937. Ordained priest during the 1941 Nazi occupation, he dedicated himself to pastoral work and at the same time attended clandestine university courses in sociology in Warsaw. After the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising (01.08.44), aimed at liberating the city from the invader, he became chaplain to the insurgents.

He met the pastoral and charitable needs of those in want with uncommon dedication. He did not take advantage of the opportunity offered to him to save himself by crossing the river Wisła on a barge. He gave up his place to a wounded man while he remained on board with those under siege, in order that they not be deprived of pastoral care. Then realising that a continued uprising made no further sense, he did everything possible to save the maximum number of people.

For this reason he also tried to negotiate with the occupying forces. He

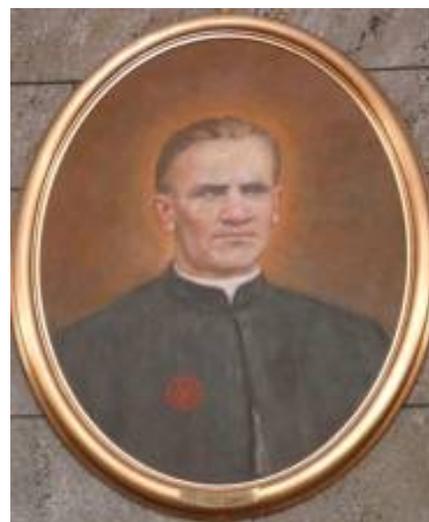
was arrested by Nazi soldiers when he went to the German command to organise the surrender of the insurgents and the following day, 23 Sep 1944, was hung before the eyes of the people amassed in the place of execution. He was only 28 years of age. In Warsaw, on 13 Jun 1999, he was proclaimed blessed by [St] John Paul II, along with 107 other martyrs of that Church.

Ryszard Czugajewski, a writer, one of the greatest promoters of the Cause of Beatification, published a book on Fr Stanek entitled *"He loved to the end"*. This title can be regarded as a synthesis of his spirituality. His pastoral zeal was seen in every priestly service carried out over the course of three years in the very dangerous circumstances of the Nazi occupation and the persecution of the Church and, on the other hand, the awakening of patriotism in the people of Warsaw who organised the resistance in various ways. Numerous witnesses note that the fundamental motivation behind the activity of Fr Józef was love for God.

Among others **Fr Józef Dąbrowski**, a Pallottine confrere and colleague from their time of study, declared:

"Considering the life of Fr Stanek from the perspective of today, I am convinced that he felt obliged to live guided always by an exceptional love for God and that God... prepared him for the heroic offering of his life in defence of the faith and of the nation".

The extremely difficult situation in which he found himself after the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising revealed in a striking way the heroism of his love for neighbour when, as chaplain to the insurgents and without using weapons, he sacrificed himself in continual danger for his life, in order to bring pastoral and charitable help to the dying, the wounded and to all who were suffering. His love for neighbour showed itself in an extraordinary way in a fact referred to by Mrs Stanisława Żórawska, an eye-witness to his death. She recounts how Fr Stanek did not take advantage of the afore-mentioned possibility of saving his life "because he believed that, as a priest, he was useful to the combatants, to the insurgents, to people who were suffering and in agony".



Fr Józef Warszawski sj, a chaplain himself captured with the other insurgents, recounted what followed:

"A long line of people emerged...from the depths of the ruins. They were heading towards us...preceded by German uniforms, after which came a priest....Finally I was able to make out that it was the Pallottine, Fr Józef Stanek. [Nazis] were hitting him in the face with their fists, beating him until he reached our lines. While doing this they shouted out their Nazi beliefs with the words: 'These are the most evil! Not the English! Not the Jews! But these with the black skirts! These are the devils!'...Pulling him here and there, they pushed him towards the nearby ruins... and so he died – because of hatred of the faith and in reprisal".

Another eye-witness, **Mrs Halina Darska** completes the picture, saying:

"On 23 Sep of the year 1944, before midday, the insurgents in Czerniaków who were still alive, together with the civil population, were gathered by the Germans among the ruins of a factory in Solec. I saw a priest by a wall, wearing a habit, but without shoes, bareheaded. The people who were already there informed the others that it was the priest "Rudy" (i.e. Fr Józef Stanek)... Two girls were brought close to the priest... After a short time the priest and the two girls were taken among the ruins of the pavilion, where – from iron beams – some of the insurgents were already hanging. The Nazis

began to speak with the three of them, but we could not understand what they were saying... At the moment when they led us away from the ruins, the nooses were already being put on the necks of the girls and the priest and the ropes were already being hoisted up. The priest visibly lifted one or possibly both of his hands as if he wanted to greet, bless or absolve all present in the pavilion of the factory, not less than two hundred people. This image of the priest has remained in my memory....Fr Józef held his hand aloft as in the gesture of giving a blessing and moved his lips as if he were praying. He was in absolute silence, calm, fully resigned to death”.

The body of the martyr, by order of the military, was left for some time on the gallows in order to frighten the people who were forced to pass close to it.

According to eye-witnesses, from the very beginning of Jozef’s life a constant commitment to dedicate himself entirely to the glory of God was notable. He distinguished himself by great trust in God and radiated this to others. He tried to convince those close to him to themselves entrust everything to Divine Providence and, if necessary, to accept even death with dignity, believing that this was not futile but rather that it should be a message for others.

The wide circle of people who knew Fr Stanek and those who were present at his execution, always interpreted his death as a martyrdom for his faith and his country. All of the witnesses called during his cause gave voice to this conviction. Different graces obtained from God have also been attributed to his intercession. His liturgical memorial, together with that of blessed Józef Jankowski, is celebrated on June 12.

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you commented...

on # 195 It was wonderful to read of the celebration at the children’s home in South Africa in last week’s E Bulletin, it reminded me very strongly of the call of Pope Francis to go to the peripheries. This has certainly been a historical and ongoing response from the Pallottine Missionary Sisters for many years. May their great work continue to be blessed.

CS 25.11.15