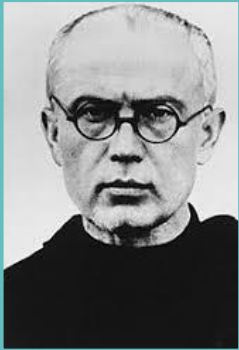


# STORIES OF POLISH RESISTANCE



Irena  
Sendler



Maximilian  
Kolbe



Emanuel  
Ringelblum



Mordechai  
Anielewicz



Witold  
Pilecki



Janusz  
Korczak



Jan  
Karski



Zofia  
Kossak-  
Szczucka



Father  
Marceli  
Godlewski



Jan &  
Antonina  
Zabinski



Józef &  
Wiktorina  
Ulma

About half of the six million European Jews killed in the Holocaust were Polish. In 1939 a third of the capital city Warsaw, and 10% of the entire country was Jewish. By 1945 97% of Poland's Jews were dead.

These eleven examples of Polish resistance *do not* purport to give an overview of what happened in Poland during The Holocaust. They have been chosen to reflect the unimaginably difficult choices made by both Jews and non-Jews under German occupation – where every Jew was marked for death and all non-Jews who assisted their Jewish neighbours were subject to the same fate.

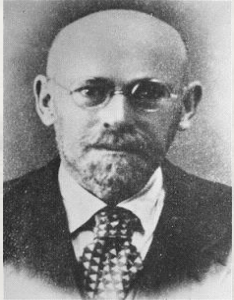
These individuals *were not* typical; they were exceptional, reflecting the relatively small proportion of the population who refused to be bystanders. But neither were they super-human. They would recoil from being labelled as heroes. They symbolise the power of the human spirit – their actions show that in even the darkest of times, good can shine through...

Created by



Learning from the Righteous  
Inspiring children with the courage of the few

# STORIES OF POLISH RESISTANCE



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Józef & Wiktoria Ulma

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# FATHER MARCELI GODLEWSKI 1865 - 1945

When the German Army invaded Poland in September 1939 Father Marceli Godlewski had been the parish priest of the All Saints' Church in Warsaw for almost 25 years and was planning to spend his retirement in Anin, a small town just east of the Polish capital.



*All Saints' Church dominated  
Grzybowska Square in Warsaw  
since its completion in 1883*

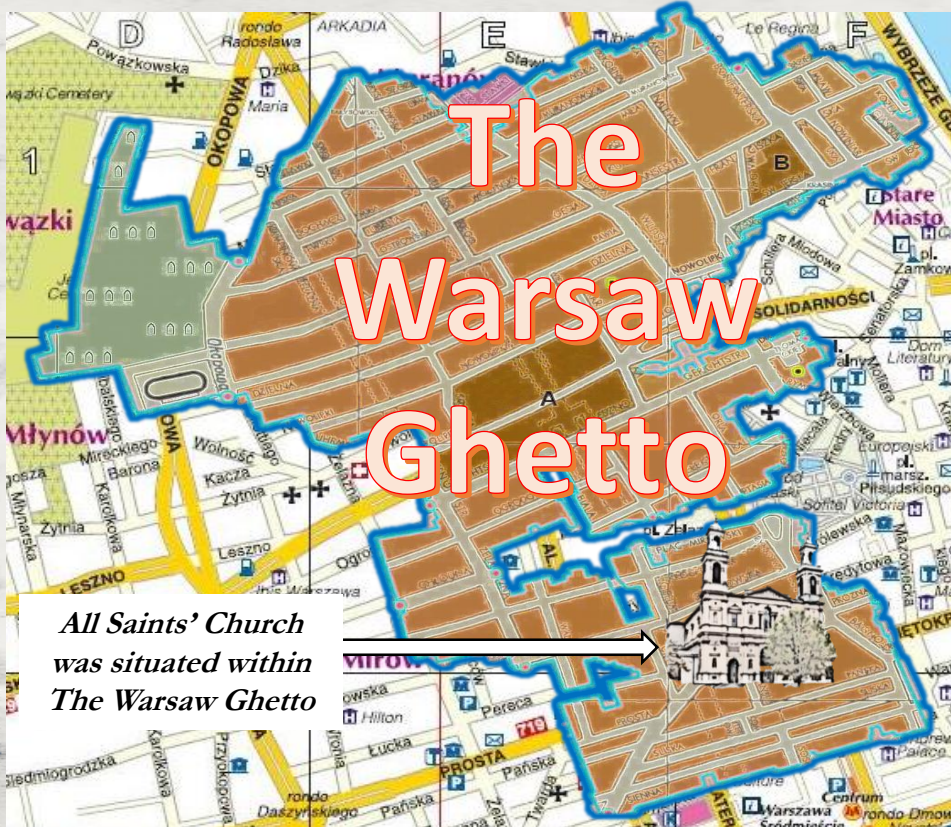
Between the end of World War One, when Poland regained its independence, and the eve of World War Two, Warsaw's population grew by 30%. The city struggled to cope with this increase in humanity and many families lived in unsanitary, over-crowded conditions, relying upon the charity of the Catholic Church to alleviate the effects of the such poverty. Father Godlewski considered it to be his duty to do everything he could to help his parishioners,



but although about a third of the city was Jewish he refused to extend a helping hand to them. Both in sermons from the pulpit and in his many newspaper articles he urged his fellow Catholics to avoid any dealing with Jews. “ ‘Each to his own’ is a wonderful slogan” he once said. In fact his anti-Jewish views were widely known, which makes the acts of rescue and resistance he embarked upon during the German occupation of Poland all the more remarkable. This one-time hater of Jews was to risk his life to save hundreds...



# THE CHURCH IN THE GHETTO



In the weeks prior to The Warsaw Ghetto being sealed, in November 1940, there was a massive forced movement of people – Jews who lived outside the boundaries had to move inside and non-Jews who lived where The Ghetto was to be, had to leave. There were also about 2000 “baptised Jews”, who had converted



*Part of The Ghetto wall being built*

to Christianity. Although they no longer considered themselves to be Jewish, the Germans did and so they were forced to live within The Ghetto walls as well. All Saints Church was now located within The Ghetto and Father Godlewski chose to remain inside as well, so that this small group of people could continue to worship.

But Father Godlewski was providing much more than just the chance for people to pray...



# RESCUE AND RESISTANCE



*Starvation ravaged the ghetto residents*

Movement into and out of the ghetto was restricted to those who had been issued with official passes from the German authorities. As priests Father Godlewski and his staff were able to obtain these passes, which enabled them to smuggle in much needed food and medicine. At first such assistance was specifically for the parishioners of the church, but as starvation and disease claimed more and more lives, Father Godlewski decreed that, as all life is of equal worth, then all residents of the ghetto were deserving of help.

A soup-kitchen was established in the church where starving ghetto residents could supplement their meagre diet and part of the building was turned into a temporary shelter for those who could no longer afford to rent their own homes. And as conditions deteriorated, and more and more desperate Jewish ghetto residents decided to risk escape, Father Godlewski issued false baptismal and identity documents to help them survive.



*A queue outside a ghetto soup-kitchen*

# RESCUE AND RESISTANCE



*Orphaned Jewish child  
in The Warsaw Ghetto*

Father Godlewski was particularly concerned with the plight of orphaned children begging on the streets. At first he organised a kindergarten in the grounds of the church, but later, through his contacts in convents around Warsaw, he arranged for children to be secretly taken out of the ghetto and placed in the care of the Franciscan Sisters. Many of these convents were run by Sister Matylda Getter, who never refused to take on another child despite the considerable risks. Father Godlewski eventually gave the building he was planning to retire to in Anin to the Franciscan Sisters who established an orphanage.



*Sister Matylda Getter*

When the daily transports of Jews to the Treblinka Death Camp began in July 1942, the boundaries of the ghetto shrunk. Eventually All Saints Church was no longer in the restricted area of the city, but Father Godlewski continued to support the many people he knew who were in hiding, despite the fact that if he had been discovered by the Germans he would have been killed. It is impossible to say how many people benefited from the work that Father Godlewski undertook, as most of them would have died in Treblinka. But those who managed to survive the Holocaust because of his efforts always emphasised how much they owe him.

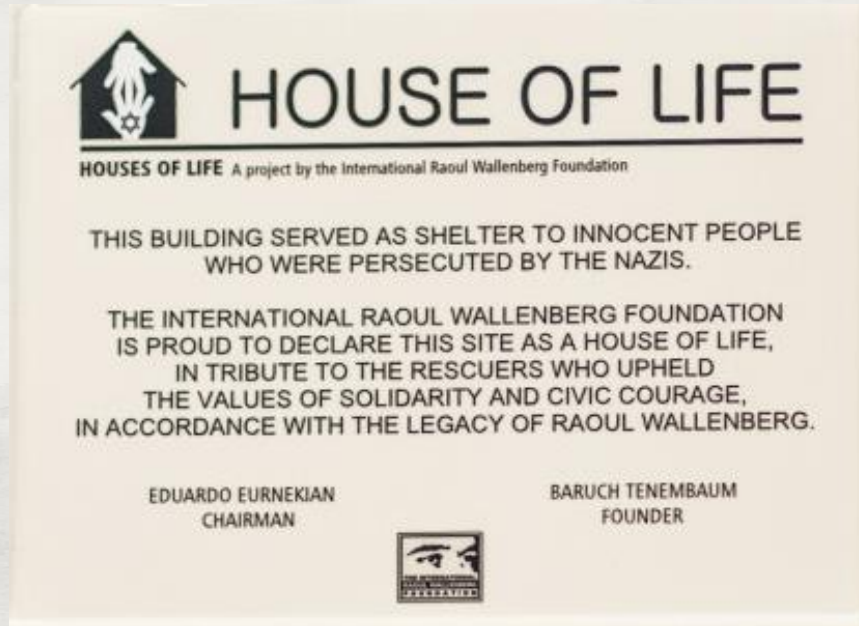


# LEGACY

Father Godlewski and many of the Priests and Sisters who worked with him have been recognised as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem. It is particularly significant that a person who was once openly antisemitic was able to alter his views and put himself in considerable danger by devoting his life to saving Jews.



*All Saints Church was extensively damaged during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising*



*In 2017 All Saints Church was declared a "House of Life" due to the work that Father Godlewski undertook.*

