

June 12

BL. JULIA RODZIŃSKA, VIRGIN, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Memorial

Blessed Julia Stanisława Rodzińska was born in 1899 in the village of Nawojowa in the diocese of Tarnów in Poland. At the age of seventeen, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Dominic. Moved by the spirit of prayer and filled with zeal for the apostolate, she worked with children and young people as a teacher and catechist. In 1943, she was arrested by the Nazis and imprisoned in Vilnius in Lithuania (then part of the Polish Commonwealth) and was later transferred to the concentration camp of Stutthof near Gdańsk. With unwavering faith and hope, she organized common prayer for fellow prisoners and showed heroic love in the service of her neighbor. On February 20th, 1945, she gave her life while caring for the victims of typhus. In 1999, Pope John Paul II beatified her along with 108 Polish martyrs of the Second World War.

From the common of several martyrs.

Office of Readings

SECOND READING

From eye witness accounts of the life and martyrdom of Bl. Julia Rodzińska

(Archives of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Dominic)

She performed works of mercy where there was no mercy.

I got to know Sister Julia in that ghastly concentration camp of Stutthof near Gdańsk, where we suffered humiliation at every turn. The initial selection after arrival at the camp was already horrible and people were sent to the gas based on physical appearance.

I accompanied Sister Julia until her last days. She never concealed that she was a religious. She showed unwavering faith and hope in God. She consoled all of us, entrusted us to God, and encouraged us to pray. She organized and led common prayers. We always prayed the rosary, the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, hymns or any number of prayers she composed according to our needs and situation. Prisoners of different nationalities came to pray. The word spread: let's pray the rosary with Sister Julia. The image will always stay with me: the small, poorly lit room overflowing with people on bunk beds, three or even four levels high; here and there, rags drying in the air. Kneeling on a wooden plank, straight, with her head lifted up and eyes aimed at the Infinite is our Sister Julia. She holds a rosary in her strong, shapely hands. Her face is focused... She was very pious and her piety influenced others. In her presence, one felt the need to pray.

She was outstanding in her love of God and the Church. She secretly made arrangements to meet with a priest—also a prisoner—to go to confession and to give others an opportunity for reconciliation. On many a Sunday morning, when the circumstances allowed, we walked in silence around the barrack taking part in the Mass spiritually.

When I encouraged her to talk about the convent, she spoke about the noble customs and lofty ceremonies of religious life. In those moments, she became absorbed by what was highest and dearest to her. She thanked me at the end of such conversations, whereas it was I who should have thanked her for what those conversations meant to me.

Sister Julia performed works of mercy in the camp, where people had nearly forgotten that mercy even existed. She was cheerful, prayerful, obliging, and self-sacrificing even to the

point of risking her own life to help others. She cared for those who despaired and actively sought them out to enkindle their spirits. Her attitude was the same toward everyone, regardless of nationality or religion. She knew how to offer consolation because of her profound hope in God. She literally shared everything—to the last piece of bread—with those who suffered hunger more than she did.

She reminded us frequently that God guides everything and that we needed to obey God's will, even if we had to suffer everything in such humiliation or die in the camp. For her, everything was in God's hands. Sister Julia accepted her fate in the spirit of faith in Divine Providence, even as she sensed that she would not survive the camp. She prayed constantly and served her neighbor until the very end.

She visited the victims of typhus—so terribly contagious—when others did everything to avoid them. Although she was ill, she wouldn't lie down in order to help others. Led by love, by sacrificial love, she eventually succumbed to the disease. Despite everything, she couldn't imagine abandoning those who needed her help. Her sacrificial love was stronger.

As she sensed her imminent death, she missed her Community and those she would not see again. She cried in her helplessness; but it wasn't despair. She overcame the moments of weakness by prayers, serving the sick until the end. Sister Julia died from typhus, giving her life for others. The survivors spoke of her as a great and holy person.

RESPONSORY:

See Psalm 84:6-7a; Matthew 5:10

Happy the men whose strength you are;
their hearts are set upon the pilgrimage:
—When they pass through the valley of the mastic trees,
They make a spring of it.

Blest are those persecuted for holiness' sake;
the reign of God is theirs.
—When they pass through the valley ...

Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, you allowed Blessed Julia and her companions to share in the passion of Christ. Support our weakness with your grace so that, by imitating the martyrs who did not hesitate to die for you, we will bear witness to you courageously with our lives. Grant it through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.