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# Franz Stock



## English

"Abbé Franz Stock - this is no name, it is a program". Nuncio Roncalli, the later Pope John XXIII, declared on February 28, 1948.

Franz Stock was born in 1904 in Arnsberg / Westphalia. His character was shaped by the World War 1914/1918 and the subsequent time with its political and economical disorders. Parallel to his religious vocation, he decided to engage himself to improve international understanding, especially between the German and French youths. After semesters in France and travels to francophone regions, he was appointed in 1934 as priest of the German-speaking community in Paris, an activity which he carried on apart from a brief interruption due to the outbreak of the war.

As priest of the prisons of Paris and the execution sites on Mont Valérien during the occupation period, he has become part of history. Frenchmen gave him the designation "L'Aumônier de l' enfer, The Minister in hell and "L'Archange en enfer" - The Archangel in hell." He alleviated inexpressible pains, prepared more than a thousand convicts for their death and accompanied them up to their end at the execution site.

In addition to this assigned hard and woeful activity, he clandestinely informed the families of prisoners, whenever possible. He also warned members of the resistance about impending dangers.

*Painting by Sieger Köder. It belongs to a winged altar of German speaking catholic community church in Paris.*



Many resistance fighters, for instance Edmond Michelet, Jean de Pange, Robert d'Harcourt, Gabriel Péri and Honoré d'Estiennes d'Orves, paid homage to him. Today the locality in front of the "Mémorial de la France Combattante", a reminder of the French resistance against the German occupation forces, has been named Abbé Franz Stock.



Nuncio Roncalli, the later Pope John XXIII, during one of his visits to the seminary behind barbed wire

In 1945 his feeble health after the war years had been damaged badly and he would have been allowed to return to his home, but he accepted a new task: the founding and assuming of control for a special kind of seminary in the Prisoner of War Camp of Le Coudray near Chartres, where captured German priests and seminarists were brought together. Thus the "Seminary behind Barbed Wire" came into existence. During the period 1945 to 1947 about 1,000 young men were trained for their future tasks in a new Europe.

Unexpectedly Franz Stock, still a prisoner of war, died in 1948 due to exhaustion in a Paris hospital. For the time being he was buried in the cemetery Thiais/Paris.

The first public commemoration ceremony for Franz Stock was already conducted in 1949 in a cathedral for the disabled in Paris. Never before has there been a German so honored. He was to be the first one. The mortal remains were moved on June 15/16, 1963, to Chartres.



*Painting of Franz Stock, 1946*

Joseph Folliet, one of the renowned men of the French intellectual life throughout the fifties and sixties years, said about him: "I believe, there exist only a few Christian Curriculum Vitae who contributed directly such a lasting testimony, continuing to exist in the future like the one of Franz Stock."

There are probably not many French or German personalities who have served with their intelligence, their deep humanity and their courage so comprehensively to a cause which at that time appeared to be almost hopeless--namely the German/French understanding and enduring reconciliation. Franz Stock was more than a reconciliatory, he has become a path -breaking symbol, and such symbols should not be permitted to die. Franz Stock is not gone. His faith in friendship among nations and their tolerance as well as philanthropy continues to live on and serves as an exemplary testimony to all.