

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Events – May 1940

Friday May 2, 1940



China: Nanjing

Minnie Vautrin (aged 53, missionary, U.S. citizen, Ginling College vice president, as of [December 13, 1937 \[the beginning of the Rape of Nanking\]](#) had continued preparations to house female refugees at Ginling College, would over the following months protect 10,000 women from rape; slapped by a Japanese soldier on [December 17, 1937](#) when he could not gain access to a locked dormitory, forced to stand at the campus front gate while the Japanese were deciding to take several male employees to be shot, convinced the Japanese to release the employees, the soldiers left after another group of soldiers abducted 12 women from another campus gate; threatened by a Japanese soldier with a pistol on [December 18, 1937](#) when she confronted him to make him leave the campus; threatened by a Japanese soldier with a knife on [February 8, 1938](#) after she rescued a woman from rape; **UPDATE:** announced to fellow staff that she could no longer continue her work, told them she was a failure, said she wanted to die because she did not want to become a burden to others, two weeks later began her trip to the U.S.)

Katherine Schutze (missionary, U.S. citizen, later accompanied Minnie Vautrin on her trip to the U.S., organized a suicide watch over her)

Rev John Magee (missionary, U.S. citizen, **UPDATE:** later accompanied Minnie Vautrin on her trip to the U.S., organized a suicide watch over her)

https://openlibrary.org/books/OL7976980M/American_Goddess_at_the_Rape_of_Nanking

Tuesday May 6, 1940



Austria: Vienna

Fr Johannes Maria Lenz SJ (aged 38, arrested on [December 5, 1938](#); **UPDATE:** acquitted)

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Maria_Lenz - with translation

Wednesday May 7, 1940



Germany: Freising prison

Fr Korbinian Aigner (aged 54, arrested in [Hohenbercha](#) on [November 22, 1939](#) for a homily on "Thou shalt not kill" in which he said the recent failed assassination of Hitler might have saved a million people, sent to [Freising prison](#); **UPDATE**: sentenced on [May 7, 1940](#) to seven months' imprisonment)

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korbinian_Aigner - with translation

Wednesday May 8, 1940



Poland: Dzialdowo

Fr Jozef Wojciech Guz (aged 50, arrested by the Soviets in [Grodno](#) on [March 21, 1940](#), later escaped, crossed into German occupied Poland and was arrested; **UPDATE**: transported to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp in Germany)

<http://missionimmaculata.com/index.php/mi-saints/blessed-martyrs-of-niepokalanow>

Thursday May 9, 1940



Germany

Martin Gauger (aged 34, attorney, resigned from the judicial service in [Monchengladbach](#) on [August 25, 1934](#) to avoid the loyalty oath to Adolph Hitler; **UPDATE**: swam the Rhine river into the Netherlands to escape military service)

<http://en.evangelischer-widerstand.de/html/view.php?type=biografie&id=10&l=en>

Friday May 10, 1940

Germany invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France

Saturday May 18, 1940



Austria: Vienna

Fr Johannes Maria Lenz SJ (aged 38, arrested on [December 5, 1938](#); acquitted on [May 6, 1940](#);
UPDATE: arrested by the Gestapo)

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Maria_Lenz - with translation

Sunday May 19, 1940



Netherlands

Martin Gauger (aged 34, attorney, resigned from the German judicial service in [Monchengladbach](#) on [August 25, 1934](#) to avoid the loyalty oath to Adolph Hitler; swam the Rhine river into the Netherlands on [May 9, 1940](#) to escape military service, Germany invaded the Netherlands the following day; **UPDATE:** arrested, attempted to escape but was shot, returned to Germany, held in Dusseldorf-Derendorf prison)

<http://en.evangelischer-widerstand.de/html/view.php?type=biografie&id=10&l=en>

Thursday May 23, 1940



Poland: Lomza

Fr Piotr Gaca OFM Cap (aged 33, arrested by the Soviets, charged with resistance activities)

<https://biographies.library.nd.edu/catalog/biography-0803>

Friday May 24, 1940



Ukraine: Kholodnaya Gora prison, Kharkiv

Archbishop Aleksandr Feofanovich Petrovsky (aged 88; church in [Poltava province](#) closed in 1919; arrested in [Kharkiv](#) on [June 20, 1938](#) for refusing to share his church building with the collaborative Living Church; sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on [July 17, 1939](#); **UPDATE: died in prison**, body saved from cremation at the morgue by a Christian and secretly buried)

https://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/alex_har_e.htm

Thursday May 30, 1940



Germany: Buchenwald concentration camp

Fr Otto Neururer (aged 58, arrested in [Gotzens, Austria](#) for advising a woman to not marry a Nazi; **UPDATE: died after being hung upside down** for having performed a baptism for a condemned prisoner)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_Neururer

May 1940, date unknown



USSR

Fr Bogdan Agopsovich (aged 32, **killed** while trying to illegally cross the border in an attempt to escape the country)

<https://biographies.library.nd.edu/catalog/biography-0006>



Germany: Landsberg prison

Pastor Julius von Jan (aged 41, Confessing Church member, delivered a **November 16, 1938** homily in **Lenninger** entitled "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!" in which he condemned the persecution of the Jews and said great corruption was to come to Germany; beaten by the SA on **November 23, 1938** for being a 'Jewish servant', arrested and placed in 'protective custody'; sentenced in **Stuttgart** on **November 15, 1939** to 16 months imprisonment; **UPDATE**: released from prison in late May, survived the war but in ill health)

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_von_Jan - with translation