

Blessed Maria Teresa Kowalska

(Mieczysława Kowalska)

born 1902, Warsaw, Poland

died 25 July 1941, Działdowo, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Poland

At age twenty-one, Mieczysława Kowalska entered the convent of the Capuchin Poor Clares and took the name Marie Teresa. Since the Russian Revolution of 1917, her father and other relatives had embraced atheistic Communism and enthusiastically supported the new Soviet Union. Maria Teresa did not share these beliefs and had entered the convent to make reparations for her family's choices.

For seventeen years, Maria Teresa lived an austere and hidden life devoted to prayer and Eucharistic contemplation, trusting completely in the providence of God. She was suffering from tuberculosis when German soldiers invaded her cloister at Przasnysz on 2 April 1941. The Nazis arrested all thirty-six nuns and transported them to a concentration camp at Działdowo. With little food or fresh water, disease was rampant and Maria Teresa's tuberculosis worsened. Too weak to leave her bunk, she abandoned herself to prayer, saying: *"I will not leave here alive; I offer my life in sacrifice so that the Sisters might return to the convent."* That night, she died of a pulmonary hemorrhage. Maria Teresa's body was removed and no one knows what became of her remains, but her holy death strengthened the surviving nuns. Confident that she had been welcomed into heaven, they held her in special veneration. They believed that Maria Teresa interceded for their liberation on 7 August, just two weeks after her death. When they finally returned to their convent at Przasnysz in the Soviet Union, they were free to go public about her devotion and martyrdom. Maria Teresa is also commemorated on 12 June with the Capuchin Martyrs of the Concentration Camps, the only woman in that group, and with the Polish Martyrs of World War II.

The Genius of Maria Teresa Kowalska

Even when she lay helpless in her bed, Maria Teresa continued to serve others through the power of her prayers.

Reflection:

"Jesus told her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me, will never die.'"

John 11.25-26

Source:

Gallick, Sarah [The Big Book of Women Saints](#) p. 225