Opinion
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Blessed Franz Jagerstatter, an Austrian farmer, was beheaded in 1943 after refusing to fight i

Franz Jagerstatter, an Austrian farmer, was beheaded in 1943 after refusing to fight in the Nazi army. (CNS)

Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian peasant and devout Catholic, was executed on Aug. 9, 1943 for refusing to serve in the German army.

Today marks the 75th anniversary of his martrydom.

This is what Robert Ellsberg in his book about saints, Blessed Among Us, tells us about Jägerstätter:

> "Known in his village of St. Radegund as a man of honesty and principle, devoted to his family and his faith, he was also known as a fervent opponent of the Nazis ...

> In 1943, when served with an induction notice, Franz turned himself in and announced his refusal to take a military oath. Before taking his stand, he had sought counsel from his parish priest and the local bishop. They advised him to do his duty and serve his Fatherland. But Franz belived the Nazis were a satanic movement and that any compromise represented a mortal sin. ...
>
> He was beheaded August 9, 1943. ... His beatification in 2007 was attened by his widow and surviving children. His feast day is May 21."

The NCR archives contatins a wealth of information about Jägerstätter. Here's just a few of note:

The Friends of Franz Jägerstätter peace group want their message of nonviolence to take root with U.S. Catholics. It may be a challenge, they admit, but they've turned their focus to what they hope is a more sympathetic group: young Christians. **Catholic peace group seeks to spread Franz Jägerstätter's story**.

From April 2013: **Franz Jägerstätter's widow, 'a warm, gentle soul,' dies at 100**.

This is a homily Bishop Thomas Gumbleton preached at the Village Church of St. Radegund, Austria, Jägerstätter's hometown in 2011. **Franz Jägerstätter acted on the Word of God**.

The mind, heart and spirit of Jägerstätter Book, DVD illuminate life of a farmer executed for refusing to serve in the Nazi army.

Jack Gilroy tells the story of someone many would call "an American Franz Jägerstätter": Ben Salmon. **Imprisoned war resister rooted in Catholic faith**.

My story as a Catholic conscientious objector by Tony Magliano.

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