

# PARAMENTS AND LITURGICAL VESSELS

FROM THE "PRIEST BLOCK" OF THE FORMER CONCENTRATION CAMP DACHAU

*"This clergy was really European: 138 dioceses and, I think, 25 congregations were represented [...] The whole hierarchy of the church was there, the bishop (of Clermont-Ferrand) as well as the young seminarian. All Christian denominations were represented: Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Old Catholics [...]."*  
León de Coninck SJ, Remembering Life in the Concentration Camp Dachau.

Many clerics were detained in concentration camps. Starting at the end of 1940, clergy were moved from different concentration camps to the KZ Dachau, detained in the barracks 26, 28 and 30 (up to that point, they had been in the "penal blocks" 15 and 17) and to some extent separated from the other prisoners. When the camp was liberated on April 29, 1945, 1240 clerics were still there from a total number of over 2700.

A chapel was established in January 1941 in block 26 that could be frequented only by German priests starting in September of the same year. The clerics had to work on the plantation; furthermore, they had to take the food in tall pots to single barracks, from spring 1941 on to the whole camp.

Again and again, priests heard other inmates' confession or distributed Holy Communion, always risking to be spotted and to be severely punished. Along with 20 others, father Leonhard Roth OP tended to typhoid and spotted fever patients; at least 4 of these men – father Engelmar Urzeitig, Josef Kos, Stefan (Wincenty) Frelichowski and father Richard Henkes – got infected themselves and died.

Among the clergymen, the 1780 Polish detainees outnumbered the other nationalities: 868 of the 1034 dead clerics were Polish. 332 Catholic clergy (310 of them Polish) were murdered as "invaders" in the gas chamber at Schloss Hartheim, a euthanasia centre near Linz. Frequently, clerics were chosen to be part of medical test series.



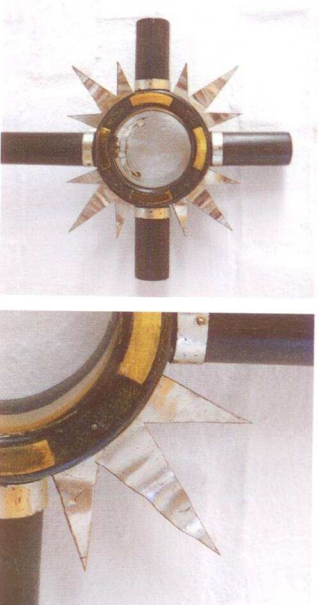
KASEL / CHASUBLE

Gabriel Piguet, bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, ordained the deacon Karl Leisner to the priesthood on the third Sunday in Advent 1944. (Josefa) Maria Imma Mack (code name "Mädi"), who would later enter a convent, smuggled the necessary documents, books, and a mitre of cardinal Faulhaber as well as communion wafers and wine for this ordination into the camp via the greenhouse of the plantation; in May 1944 she had already started to secretly deliver medicine and news. Protestant priests prepared a special meal for the newly ordained to show their solidarity.

From July 1941 on, particular religious prisoners were not detained in the "priest block" but in the bunker ("Kommandaturarrest"); Martin Niemöller (protestant) and the Munich canons Michael Höck and Johannes Neuhäuser, who would later become auxiliary bishop. As such, he consecrated the Mortal Agony of Christ chapel on August 5, 1960 during the Eucharistic World Congress and on November 22, 1964 the church of the Carmel convent, where he was also buried (12/14/1973).

The existential need, but also the steadfast faith in God of those imprisoned in the "priest block" is reflected in the paraments and vasa sacra shown here. They are made of very simple materials taken from the concentration camp prisoners' everyday lives. Sheets became pontifical vestments, shirt buttons became ornamental stones, and strips of a flowered dress became ornamental braids. Silvery canning tin is the precious setting for the sacrament in the monstrance and the tabernacle. The meagreness and simplicity of the vestments and vessels made for the celebration of the holy mass turn into extraordinary beauty and dignity when the circumstances of their origin are taken into account.

This unique collection has been transferred to the Carmel convent for conservation and care by auxiliary bishop Johannes Neuhäuser. After a thorough restoration, paraments and vasa sacra are presented in a new display created by Matthias Larasser-Bergmeister and Allmann Raithel Design under the auspices of the building department and the art department of the archdiocese. Archbishop Dr. Reinhard Marx reopened the presentation to the public in a celebration commemorating the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the Mortal Agony of Christ chapel on August 8, 2010.



MONSTRANZ / MONSTRANCE

- 1 CHASUBLE** / The chasuble is the most important liturgical vestment of the priest. It doesn't have sleeves and is worn over the alb (undergarment).  
Front: formerly yellow linen, back black linen, beige braid
- 2 STOLE** / The long textile band is the actual symbol of priesthood and belongs to the liturgical vestments; it is worn around the neck, the two long ends hanging down in front.  
Front: formerly yellow linen, back black linen, beige braid
- 3 MANIPLE** / The maniple is a short ornamental band that was worn hanging from the left arm as a part of the liturgical vestments up until the Second Vatican Council.  
Front: formerly yellow linen, back black linen, beige braid
- 4 MOZZETTA** / The mozzetta is a shoulder cape hanging down to the elbows that can be buttoned up in front. It is worn by church dignitaries – e.g. bishops – as part of their festive robes.  
Linen, formerly dyed light red
- 5 PECTORAL CROSS** / Bishops and abbots wear a pectoral cross as symbol of their office.  
Brass, hemp fibre string
- 6 MITRE** / Aside from the crozier, the mitre is the most important sign of the office of bishop. This headdress is worn only for liturgical acts.  
White dress fabric, braid made of plaited threads, plastic buttons
- 7 ZUCCHETTO** / The skullcap is the ordinary headdress of bishops.  
Silk, formerly dyed light red
- 8 PONTIFICAL GLOVE** / The gloves are part of the old pontifical vestments, but generally, they aren't worn any more.  
Thin white fabric, crosses made of metal braid
- 9 TABERNACLE DOORS** / The tabernacle is a cabinet for safe-keeping and veneration of the bread that has become the Body of Christ in the Eucharist. It is the symbol (sacrament) of the constant presence of God (Real Presence). The doors bear the carved words "ICH BIN BEI EUCH ALLE TAGE" ("I am with you always").



PYXIS / PYX



ALTARGLOCKE / ALTAR BELL

These are the last words of the gospel according to Matthew (Mt 28,20) that are about Jesus' great commission to his disciples. In the "priest block", they are an example for the trust in God's help in times of need.  
Glazed softwood, doors covered with canning tin

**10 MONSTRANCE** / Jesus Christ in the consecrated host (bread) is shown to the believers in this ostensory for adoration and for benediction.  
Glazed hardwood, beams and lunette made of canning tin

**11 BURSE** / This flat textile bag is meant for storing the corporal, a white cloth to place underneath the chalice and the paten during the celebration of the Eucharist. Like the chalice veil (15), it belongs to the basic accessories for the liturgical vestments and is always of the same colour as the vestments.  
Made of dyed sheets, beige braid

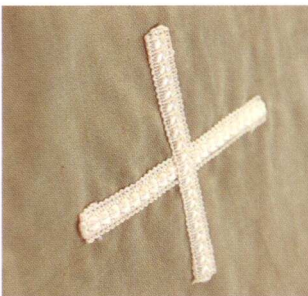
**12 CHALICE** / The wine that becomes the Blood of Christ in the Eucharist is poured in this cup. Therefore it always has to be made of a valuable and worthy material.  
Cup made of nickel silver

**13 PATEN** / The host (bread) that is transubstantiated into the Body of Christ is placed on this flat dish.  
Iron, gold coloured coating material

**14 ALTAR CROSS** / The cross marks the altar as the table on which the Eucharist is celebrated, a meal of thanks and remembrance of the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.  
Glazed oak, glazed softwood, beams made of canning tin

**15 CHALICE VEIL** / Chalice and paten are covered by this veil up until the preparation of the Gifts and after communion.  
Black linen, beige braid

**16 ALTAR BELL** / The small altar bell calls attention to the most important parts of the liturgy (e.g. the transubstantiation).  
Metal



KELCH VELUM / CHALICE VEIL



DETAIL DALMATIK / DALMATIK

**17 PYX** / Hosts that are meant for example for the communion of the sick are kept in this small round vessel.  
Formerly a tin

**18 PYX** / The inscription on the small, square vessel reads "IHS", the Greek abbreviation for "IESUS".  
Glazed hardwood

**19 ALTAR CROSS** / The cross marks the place of the altar (see 14). The letters "INRI" are short for "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum" – "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews".  
Blond softwood, corpus and INRI plaque made of plastic

**20 CROSS** / The cross is placed into the hands of the dying as a sign of solace and hope.  
Blond softwood, corpus and INRI plaque made of plastic

**21 DALMATIK** / The dalmatic (with sleeves) is the liturgical vestment of a deacon. It is also worn by bishops underneath their chasuble as a sign that several (lower) offices are included in the office of bishop.  
White sheet, trimming made of floral dress fabric

## CONTACT

**Katholische Seelsorge an der KZ-Gedenkstätte Dachau**  
Pastoralreferent Ludwig Schmidinger,  
Bischöflicher Beauftragter für KZ-Gedenkstättenarbeit  
in der Erzdiözese München und Freising  
Alte Römerstraße 75, 85221 Dachau, Telefon 08131/321731  
www.gedenkstaettenseelsorge.de

**Karmel Heilig Blut Dachau**  
Alte Römerstraße 91, 85221 Dachau, Telefon 08131/210 68  
karmel.dachau@t-online.de