

## The 75th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. Maximilian Kolbe

Week 30

Auschwitz



Auschwitz was the German name for the then Polish city of Oswiecim, located in southern Poland west of Kraków.

The area had few inhabitants and was a crossroad of rail transportation and was situated at the fork of two rivers making it an ideal place for genocide.

The farmers and other people were given one hour to vacate their home before they were taken over by the Nazis.

It was originally an abandoned Austrian military barracks when Poland had been partitioned. There were 14 single story and six two story buildings which were surrounded by concrete posts and barb wire which was electrified.

Auschwitz was a concentration camp to house prisoners and support the war machine and an extermination camp to kill primarily Jews and anyone who was an enemy of the Reich.

The camps were infested with lice and other vermin and latrines were not installed until 1943 and the average calorie intake was around 700 calories.

One quarter pounder (545) and a 12 oz can of Coke (140) is 700 calories.  
That is the total number of calories the average prisoner ate and ENTIRE day EVERY day.

While the Gestapo ran the camps, the Capos under them were hardened German criminals given authority over the prisoners.

As prisoners walked through the gates they had to pass a gauntlet of guards who whipped, beat and cursed at them.

Standing in line the commandant then told them that the only way out was through the crematorium or you can throw yourself on the electric fence.

They received a striped prison uniform, often blood stained from the previous prisoner who wore it, and wooden shoes and no socks.

If you were Jewish you had the right to live no more than 2 weeks, a priest, one month and anyone else, three months.

Death came in various ways.

Starvation, disease, hanging, shooting and gassing.

Auschwitz was also a place for medical experimentation, not on animals but on human beings. Experiments too gruesome to recount here.

Roll call would begin at 4:30, lined up outside rain or snow or beating sun.

Even the dead had to be present and counted, held up by other prisoners.

After roll call the prisoners marched usually past an orchestra composed of inmates.

The purpose of the music was not to cheer up the prisoners but to actually assist in the orderly marching out into the fields and when they returned.

Work days were 12 hours with no break except for the toilet.

Roll call was performed every evening to account for all prisoners.

Prisoners slept in or on their clothes and shoes to keep them from being stolen.

Sunday was reserved for the weekly shower and cleaning the barracks.

Prayer : Heavenly Father, I thank You for the clothes I wear, the food I eat, the house where I live and bed on which I rest. Amen

Meditations and Questions

1. What did I eat yesterday and how many calories did I consume ?
2. What did I wear today?
3. Where did I sleep?
4. What did Maximilian and the other prisoners eat, wear and sleep in Auschwitz.