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Summary from Radio Kielce

Episode 6: The Stolarczyks family from the village of Dąbrowica in the Jędrzejów Powiat

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<https://polacyratujacyzydow.com.pl/en/the-stolarczyks-family-from-the-village-of-dabrowica-in-the-jedrzejow-powiat/>

Stories about Poles

Fr. Witold Stolarczyk (son)

Apolonia Stolarczyk (mother)

Franciszek Stolarczyk (father)

The people in the hiding

Czesław Pankowski (father)

Róża Pankowska née Krieger (mother)

Józef Pankowski (daughter)

Irena Olbrychtowicz, née Pankowska (daughter)

Maria Pankowska (daughter)

Maria Krieger (Rose's sister)

The story told by

Fr. Witold Stolarczyk, the Righteous

Ewa Kołomańska, historian

Tomasz Domański, historian

“Germans would not a venture a visit here, because they were too afraid. Forests everywhere. Lots of partisans. They even called it the Jewish Republic” – says Fr. Witold Stolarczyk, one of the Righteous Among the Nations.

During World War II, the Stolarczyks family gave shelter to a six-person Polish-Jewish family in their house in Dąbrowica in the county of Jędrzejów. For some time, Apolonia and Franciszek Stolarczyk did not know that there were Jews among those who were helped, only Witold Stolarczyk, the Stolarczyk family son knew this secret from the very beginning. Witold Stolarczyk became a priest later. “They were looking for a place to stay in. They wanted to live undisturbed where people did not know who they were” – says Fr. Witold.

Czesław Pankowski was Polish, he was married to Róża Krieger. She was a Jewess who, having got married to a person of Christian denomination converted to Christianity. She also baptised Józef – her son from his first marriage. Czesław and Maria had two daughters: 9-year-old Irena and 6-year-old Marysia. Later Róża’s sister Maria joined those in the hiding in Dąbrowica. Only then did Fr. Witold’s parents found out that there were Jews in the family. They did not refuse to carry on helping. The family of six lived with Stolarczyk almost throughout the whole war.

“They lived in a flat larger than ours. My brother and I moved to a cubbyhole we used to keep various clutter before” – adds Fr. Witold.

Fr Witold Stolarczyk graduated the pre-high school before the war and got the so-called a “little high school diploma”. During the occupation he would read much and he was preparing for the final exams at the secret, unofficial classes. He also taught Róża and Czesław’s daughters. “What was my task? Because they converted to Christianity, the two girls were preparing for the First Holy Communion. Everything was kept a secret. The handbooks were kept in a sack, in a hiding” –says Fr. Witold.

Czesław Pankowski dealt with small-scale trading in order to support his family. Together and his step-son Józef also joined the Home Army division where he received a pay for his service.

All the neighbours thought that it was a Polish family that stayed with the Stolarczyks. “Germans could not learn about the Jewish family. That was the most important thing. Otherwise we would have been all killed” –says Fr. Witold Stolarczyk. The Germans clearly defined the Jew race, even people who had only one Jewish grandfather and did not recognise themselves as Jewish, were regarded Jews according to the German laws.

However at the end of the war someone denounced that Jews were probably were hidden in the Stolarczyks’ house. That was the threat for the family. In the summer of 1944 Czesław Pankowski and his family fled to the forest where they were given help and shelter by the Home Army’s branch Pankowski served in. The family survived and stayed there until the end of the war.

After the war the Stolarczyks and Pankowskis families stayed in touch, for about 20 years, they would write letters to one another. The relationship was revived when, by accident Fr. Witold Stolarczyk and Irena Pankowska met, the younger of the girls who were in the hiding. It was her efforts and testimonies which resulted in bestowing Apolonia and Franciszek Stolarczyk and their son, Fr. Witold Stolarczyk with the “Righteous Among the Nations” medal in 1995."