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**Summary from Radio Kielce**

**Episode 18: Deeds speak louder than words – Bishop Szczepan Sobalkowski, Kielce**

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<https://polacyratujacyzydow.com.pl/en/deeds-speak-louder-than-words-bishop-szczepan-sobalkowski-kielce-2/>

### **Stories about Poles**

Fr. Szczepan Sobalkowski

Fr. Jan Wiślak

### **The people in the hiding**

the Walter couple

### **The story told by**

Fr. Radosław Sobalkowski (Fr. Szczepan was his grandfather's brother)

In 1919, Szczepan Sobalkowski enrolled the Kielce seminary. He was an outstanding student and was therefore sent to Innsbruck where in 1924 he was ordained a priest and obtained his PhD. in moral theology. Having returned to Poland, Fr. Sobalkowski was a lecturer and deputy rector of the Kielce seminary.

During the occupation times, Fr. Sobalkowski joined the conspiracy; he was the National Armed Forces and Home Army chaplain and the head of the chaplains of the fifth Kielce-Radom National Armed Forces district. He used the "Andrzej Bobola" pseudonym.

As the director of the Saint Stanisław Kostka bishop's junior high-school, Father Szczepan Sobalkowski lived in a building next to the school. During the war time, the school building was occupied by the German gendarmerie. This fact did not stop Fr. Szczepan from giving shelter to Jews – Mr and Mrs Walter from Wieluń were young people who had just started a family. Father Sobalkowski prepared them for baptism -tells Fr. Radosław Sobalkowski, Father Szczepan's relative. With the SS troops just behind the wall, the couple stayed in Fr. Szczepan's flat until 1942. However Fr. Szczepan was involved in the conspiracy. He was the chaplain for the Polish underground. Thus Fr. Szczepan was concerned about the safety of those in the hiding. One night, Fr. Szczepan smuggled the couple to Miechów. They were hidden by a local parish priest, Fr. Jan Wiślak. The Walters, supported by Fr. Stephen happily lived to see the end of the war. After the war they left for Switzerland, but they maintained contacts with Fr. Stephen.

After years of suffering in communist prisons and for his fidelity to God, on 3 June 1957, Pope Pius XIII appointed Fr. Stephen the auxiliary bishop of the Kielce diocese. The Walter family sent him material for a beautiful purple Episcopal cassock as a gratitude for the salvation of their lives -Fr. Radosław tell his relative's story. Fr. Szczepan Sobalkowski was Radosław's

grandfather's brother. In the family home of Fr. Radosław, the father kept the memories of Fr. Szczepan alive.

Having experienced the harsh, communist prison conditions, Fr. Szczepan Sobalkowski fell seriously ill. The day after the Episcopal consecration, during his first Holy Mass as a bishop at Jasna Góra, Fr. Szczepan died.

Many priests, including the Kielce Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek helped the Jewish population during the war times. The priests provided shelter for a short time or a permanent stay. They also issued false birth certificates that confirmed that a person has been baptised. This made it possible to obtain a Kennkarte. However, there was only one priest from the Świętokrzyskie Province who has been honoured with the Medal of the Righteous Among the Nations – Fr. Ignacy Życiński from the Sandomierz diocese."