

Source: <https://bistum-augsburg.de/Heilige-des-Tages/Heilige/RICHARD-HENKES>

Richard Henkes

Religious priest, witness of faith

Meaning of the name: rich and strong

Memorial day: February 22nd

Dates: Born on May 26, 1900 in Ruppach near Montabaur, died on February 22, 1945 in the Dachau concentration camp

Biography: Richard Henkes was a student of the Pallottine high school in Vallendar and was consecrated in 1925 in Limburg to the religious priesthood. He worked as a teacher at the religious schools in Schoenstatt and Alpen and was transferred to Upper Silesia in 1931, where he opposed the Nazis' access to schools and youth. Due to dissenting homilies, he was accused of opposing the Nazi regime in 1938 but was not executed due to an amnesty. For his protection, the religious congregation took him out of the school and he became youth pastor and retreat master in Branitz before becoming the parish administrator in Strandorf in Hultschiner, Ländchen. In his homilies in the great churches of Upper Silesia and Annaberg, he had thousands of listeners – including Gestapo spies.

On March 12, 1943, Father Henkes said in a homily: "Today one needs no longer intelligent people, but the herd man, the mutton-(he means people who receive commands and act without thinking!). One would like to have a uniform for him. In the third century, people fought for their Christian faith, gave it all, risked their livelihood, their children, their families, even their lives. That's how it will be again. Today, we have nothing more to say in the education of our children in the schools. We have nothing left to say outside, and soon we will have nothing more to say here. When I go out in my home on the Rhine, I can see churches named after Roman legion leaders. The men were so faithful that churches were named after them. Today, I want to see the Catholic officer who is so faithful that one could build a church in his name."

Because of this homily, he was sent on April 9, 1943 to the prison of Racibórz, from where he was transferred on July 10 to the Dachau concentration camp. Together with the later Prague archbishop and Cardinal Josef Beran, from whom he learned some Czech, he led the canteen in the access block. When a typhus epidemic broke out in the concentration camp in February 1945, Henkes volunteered to care for the mainly typhus-affected Czechs and was enclosed. He became infected himself and died five days later.

Worship: In 1985, the former priest prisoners of the Dachau concentration camp requested that the bishop of Limburg Franz Kamphaus open a process of beatification, which took place in 2003 with the support of the Czech Bishops' Conference. In December 2018, Pope Francis recognized Henkes martyrdom of "faith hate". His beatification will take place on September, 15th 2019 in Limburg.