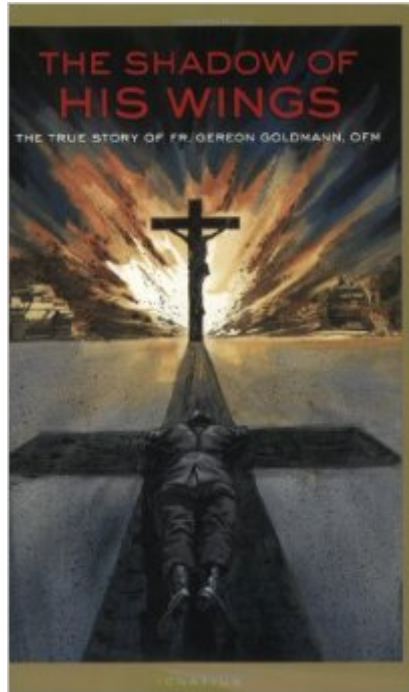


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# The Shadow Of His Wings: The True Story Of Fr. Gereon Goldmann, OFM



## Synopsis

We had to do it. We had to reprint this book. Rarely has a book had such an impact on so many of us here at Ignatius Press. It is one of the most powerful and moving books we have come across. If you can only buy one book this season, this must be the one. Here is the astonishing true story of the harrowing experiences of a young German seminarian drafted into Hitler's dreaded SS at the onset of World War II. Without betraying his Christian ideals, against all odds, and in the face of Evil, Gereon Goldmann was able to complete his priestly training, be ordained, and secretly minister to German Catholic soldiers and innocent civilian victims caught up in the horrors of war. How it all came to pass will astound you. Father Goldmann tells of his own incredible experiences of the trials of war, his many escapes from almost certain death, and the diabolical persecution that he and his fellow Catholic soldiers encountered on account of their faith. What emerges is an extraordinary witness to the workings of Divine Providence and the undying power of love, prayer, faith, and sacrifice. Illustrated

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is the memoir of a Franciscan priest originally published in 1964, and with an appendix and epilogue that expands and updates the original through his years as a missionary in Tokyo. Gereon Goldmann was drafted in 1939 into the Wehrmacht while a seminarian. What follows is an incredible string of events, close scrapes with death at the hands of the Nazis and Allies, and what to a person of faith will be seen as small miracles. Goldmann survived the war only to fall into the even deeper abyss of the worst prisoner of war camps in North Africa. Throughout all (the word all cannot convey

the challenges he faced), his faith and sense of purpose gave his otherwise miserable existence meaning. The best stories of modern war from the foot-soldier's ground-level perspective (*All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Forgotten Soldier*, for example), convey the horror, misery, chaos, fog, and in the end, meaninglessness of the soldiers' lives and deaths. But Gereon Goldmann shows how faith injects purpose and meaning even onto battlefields and into prison camps. Where all earthly forces worked relentlessly to dehumanize and destroy, Goldmann worked resolutely among his fellow soldiers and jailers to bring them dignity and hope. The early parts of his story, with his childlike faith, will strike postmodern ears as hopelessly naïve. However, eventually the reader will be rewarded by seeing how Gereon's faith is nothing less than a rod of steel penetrating his entire life and being. It will be difficult to read another dogfoot's story of war without inevitably contrasting it with Goldmann's. Although no GI is able to view his situation as a Field Marshall does his strategic maps, it is Goldmann, not only protected by the shadow of His wings, but carried very, very high on those same wings, that rises to a vastly higher level yet.

A friend gave me this book to read and told me that I would enjoy the story of Fr. Goldmann. She warned me that it had moments of ugliness and horrible accountings; since it was written about the life of a Nazi. Fr. Goldmann started out in his village as a simple altar boy with a strong faith in God. This faith stayed with him during his trials as a Franciscan novitiate, caught up in the life of an SS officer for Hitler, through filthy and depraved situations and led him to his ultimate destiny. The Holy Father gave him special permission to serve as a priest to the many people surviving the horrors of war in camps and prisons. With the prayers of devout nuns and friends and his constant, guiding faith and fortitude in God, Fr. Goldmann helped many souls to their final rest by administering the Sacraments and the offering of the Mass. The simple everyday gifts of food and shelter and our local parish church mean so much more after I discovered the situations that faced people caught up in the struggle to stay alive and keep their Faith during the wartime. In the epilogue, I marvelled at Fr. Goldmann's missionary work that he accomplished in Japan starting with his primary struggle in learning the Japanese language. His childhood dream was to go to Japan. He managed to build up the Church there and inspire many Japanese to become devout Christians and serve the Lord. His further work with the poorest in Tokyo, "the ragpickers", gave us insight into the conditions of the people. How he helped students and mothers with families was a constant inspiration. This story makes you want to go out and work for the Faith and offer prayer wherever it is needed.

In light of all the controversy surrounding whether Pope Pius XII did enough for the Jews, and on

the recent Papal apology for the past sins of the Church comes a book that demonstrates the actions of some in the face of Nazism. This true story follows the experiences of a young German seminarian, Gereon Goldmann, drafted into Hitler's SS in the beginning of World War II. The story tells how Goldmann, in the face of evil, was able to continue his training for the priesthood and minister to others. This is the best book of 2000!

If you're looking for a book this Christmas season that will appeal to anyone, high school age and up, this is it. It's a quick read, but profoundly compelling and more than just a war story or story of a priest's life. It reveals the depths of the human spirit and the heights it can achieve when linked with an authentic love of God. You don't have to be Catholic or even Christian to appreciate the universal themes of this book. Highly recommended!

This is an excellent book of faith, hope and the inestimable power of prayer. It is the story of Father Goldmann, a seminarian, soldier and priest, who despite, the evils of his time, achieves his goal of becoming a priest through the prayers of many. It also shows the evils of propaganda on both sides which tries to paint the enemy as all evil and that all must be dealt with harshly. Yes, the Nazis were evil and their plans and goals were evil. They were merciless to their enemies. We see also that the Allies were not the "knights in shining armor" as portrayed in our history books. They often acted in the same manner as the Nazis. Above all this book shows what the Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity can do. It shows, above all, the mysterious workings of God and the power of prayer and sacrifice. This book is highly recommended for all.

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