



*The following is the finding aid for the Rev. Walter Gawinek collection located at the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Archives. A finding aid is a catalog tool used in archives that briefly describes the material found in a collection. These records are not available digitally unless otherwise noted.*

*[Researchers must make an appointment with an archivist to view the material.](#)*

**Walter Gawinek, 1908-1996**  
**Papers, 1948-1958**  
**MC 220**

**Volume**

0.2 cubic ft

**Access**

Open/unrestricted

**Biographical Note**

Walter Gawinek was born June 5, 1908 in Lany Wielke, Poland. He was ordained a priest in Kielce, Poland on June 15, 1935 and served as an assistant in a variety of parishes in Poland. On June 11, 1940 he was arrested by the German Gestapo as they found a young Jew hidden in his rectory. Father Gawinek was imprisoned in Kielce, Poland until July 16, 1940 when he was sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp and then on December 14, 1940 he was transferred to the Dachau concentration camp where he remained until it was liberated in April 1945. In June 1945 Father Gawinek was appointed chaplain and served at several displaced persons camps and for Polish military units in Germany.

In December 1949, Father Gawinek emigrated to the United States and came to live in Hartford, Wisconsin for two months until he was sent to St. Casimir Parish in Milwaukee where he worked until January 27, 1955 when he was appointed assistant at St. Stanislaus Parish in Milwaukee. He served there until he retired from active ministry on June 30, 1983.

Father Gawinek became an American citizen on June 4, 1955. He was incardinated into the Archdiocese of Milwaukee on September 18, 1957.

As a note, Father LeRoy Petta, administrator at St. Stanislaus Parish, gave the story that Father Gawinek was sent to the gallows three times while imprisoned, where a rope was placed around his neck but the trap door never opened. He was then released back to the cellblock he shared with other Catholic priests.

**Scope and Content** *a brief description of the types of materials in the collection.*

This collection contains photographs and papers (most written in Polish) pertaining to Father Gawinek's life. It also contains the pages from a 25th anniversary book that was given to him on that occasion.

**Box and Folder List** *This is a list of folders names within the collection. The folders have been arranged alphabetically. "B" is an abbreviation for box and "F" is an abbreviation for folder. This list will help the researcher narrow down exactly what folder they want to look at.*

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Folder Title</b>
B 1	F 1	Photographs, 1948-undated
B 1	F 2	Photographs, correspondence, papers, 1958-undated
B 1	F 3	Twenty-fifth anniversary book, n.d.