

# Polish Catholic Saved Thousands of Jews

Irena Sendler, a Polish Catholic who helped save thousands from the Nazis, died this morning at the age of 98. Between 1940 and 1943, Sendler and other members of an underground organization smuggled Jewish children—from infants through teens—out of the Warsaw Ghetto. Sendler worked to give these kids a chance at survival by passing them off as Catholics. She kept detailed records so they could one day be reunited with their families. Despite enduring arrest and torture at the hands of the Nazis, Sendler never revealed the location of these records.

In 1965, she was honored by the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial for her life-saving efforts. Her story was recently made into a play by Kansas high school students impressed by her selfless service to others, and she received official honors from her native Poland just last year. Despite these accolades, Sendler never considered herself a heroine, and said, “We who were rescuing children are not some kind of heroes. Indeed, that term irritates me greatly. The opposite is true—I continue to have qualms of conscience that I did so little.”

It is unfortunate that Sendler’s faith is not mentioned in the otherwise fitting tributes to her life that were released today from the Associated Press and Agence France Press. It is all too common for news stories to make note of a subject’s Catholic faith if the subject of the article is cast in a bad light. Furthermore, the Catholic Church is often unfairly and inaccurately maligned for not doing more to help Jews during the Holocaust. It would have been appropriate for these two major news outlets to recognize the Catholic faith that one brave Polish woman held so dear.