

Nikolaus Groß

Nikolaus Groß was born on 30th September 1898 in Niederwenigern on the Ruhr. He was family father, leader of Christian workers and resistance fighter against National Socialism. His empathic social commitment and his conflict with National Socialism as chief editor of the „Westdeutsche Arbeiterzeitung“ („West German workers' newspaper“) were characterised by a deep faith and an unwavering trust in God. On 12th August 1944 the „Gestapo“ („The Secret State Police“) arrested Nikolaus Groß, because he was a member of Catholic resistance circles. In a court case conducted before the „Volksgerichtshof“ („The people's court“) in Berlin, in which he was accused of high treason, the death sentence was passed on 15th January 1945. It was executed in Berlin-Plötzensee on 23rd January 1945. He was denied a Christian funeral by the then rulers. His corpse was cremated and the ashes were scattered over the irrigation fields. After his arrest on 12th August 1944 he wrote numerous letters to his family from the prison in Berlin-Tegel. The overall 29 letters which he wrote from 3rd September 1944 to 21st January 1945 were released by his children for the first time in 1993 and published in a book.



Farewell letter

Berlin-Tegel, 21st January 1945

Dearest mother!

You dear and good children!

It is St. Agnes day, when I write this letter, which, when you receive it, along with another letter that I wrote in November, will tell you that the Lord has called me. Before me are your photos, and I often take a long look at your faces which are so familiar to me. How much had I wanted to do for you - the Lord has decreed otherwise. The name of the Lord shall be praised. His will shall be done unto us. Do not fear that I am troubled by great storm and restlessness in the face of death. Every day I have prayed again and again for the strength and the grace that the Lord will make me and you strong, to accept with patience and humility what he has destined and decreed for us. And I feel, how I have found calmness and peace through prayer.

With heartfelt love and deep gratitude I think back to you. How good is God and how rich has He made my life. He gave me His love and grace, and He gave me a beloved wife and good children. Am I not indebted to Him and to you in life-long gratitude? I want to thank you, my beloved, for all you have done for me.

And forgive me, if I hurt you or neglected my duty or obligation towards you. I must thank especially you, dear mother. When we said farewell in this life some days ago, I thanked God on returning to my cell, from the depth of my heart, for your Christian strength. Yes, mother, with your courageous farewell you have shed a bright light on the final days of my life. The fulfillment of our heartfelt love could not be any more warm-hearted and happier than you have made it with your strength of character. I know: It has been a testing time for your and my strength, but we want to be grateful that the Lord has granted us this strength.

In the long months of my imprisonment I have sometimes been thinking about what your future might be, if I should no longer be able to be with you. I have long realized that your fate does not depend on me at all. If it is God's will that I should no longer be with you, He will also provide his help for you which will be with you even without me. God does not leave anybody, who is faithful to Him, and He will not leave you either, if you follow Him.

Do not mourn for me - I hope that the Lord will accept me. Has He not decreed everything wonderfully? He let me stay in a house, in which I received many a sign of love and human compassion, even during the weeks of my captivity. He granted me

a time of more than five months - truly a time of grace - to prepare me to go home. Yes, He did far more: He came to me in the sacrament, often, to be with me in all storms and sufferings, especially in the last hour. All this could of course have been very different. It would have only taken a small change: Had I been transferred to a different house after the air raid of 6.10. like many others I would not have received much that was of crucial importance to me. Must I not praise God's wise and gracious providence and render thanks for His mercy and paternal care? Look, dear mother, however humanly difficult and painful my early parting may be - God has hereby certainly shown his great grace towards me. So do not weep and do not mourn; pray for me and thank God, who has called me in love and taken me home. For every one of you I have written a personal last word on a card with a proverb or devotional. May it be a small memory for everyone, asking you not to forget me in prayer.

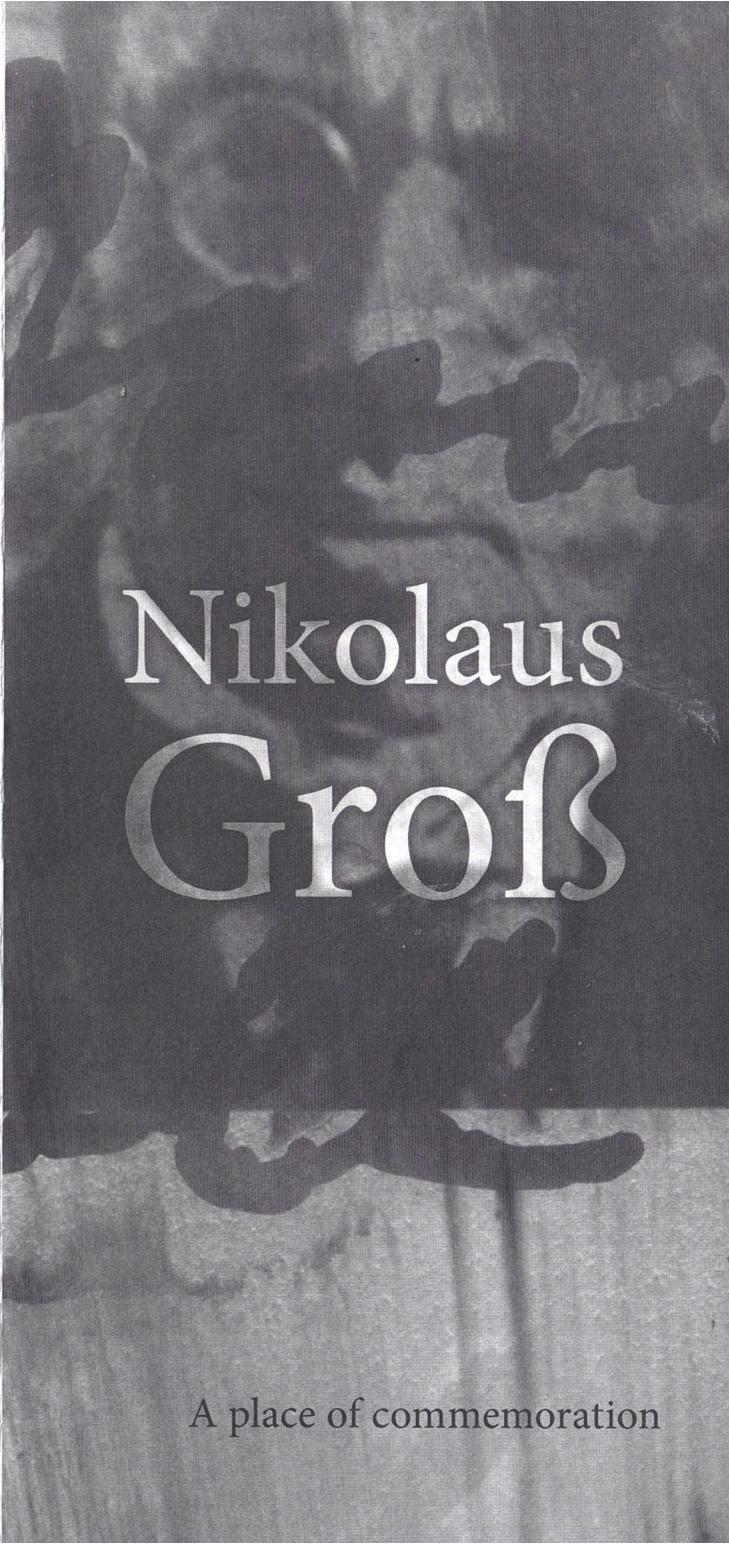
It was a great joy for me to receive the death cross and the rosary which you, dear mother, sent me into the cell. I wear the cross day and night on my chest, and the rosary is also my constant companion. I will take care that both come back into your hands. They will also be a sign of loving memory for you.

Now I have settled my earthly matters. I want to dedicate the days and the hours which remain for me fully to prayer. May God have mercy on my poor soul, and may he always be at your side with his blessing and his grace.

In the love of Christ, which redeemed us and which is all our hope, I bless you: You, most beloved, good mother, You Klaus and You Berny, You Marianne and You Elisabeth, You Alexander, You Bernhard and You Leni. Once again I greet all my dear relatives, my father and father-in-law, my sisters, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law with their children, all relatives, friends and benefactors.

May God reward all the love and the goodness, you have bestowed on me. Trusting his grace and mercy and hoping for an eternal reunion in His kingdom of peace.

*Your
Father*



Nikolaus Groß

A place of commemoration