

As Nazism broke out in Germany in the thirties, there were many - not only in Germany but also in many other countries - who let themselves be charmed by Hitler's ideas.

It is actually true for one of the airmen buried here in Svinø memorial grove.

Some months ago I came across a biography of Charles Woodbine Parish, written by his father, and one cannot help being deeply touched when you read the father's description of the life of his late son.

Charles Parish grew up in a family with four children. His father participated in World War I and during the interwar period in the early 20s, the family lived for a time in Paris, where his sister was born.

When Charles Parish was 15 years old, the children's mother died. Charles was the eldest of the siblings, so it was very tragic.

Charles Parish went to Eton and altogether received a fine international education, where he also studied in several other countries. He stayed in Germany where he was very impressed by the emerging Nazism.

But Charles Parish became more clear-sighted, and in 1939 he enlisted as a volunteer in the RAF, and after completing flight training, he participated in the war against Nazism, which he had earlier been impressed by.

He completed 54 bombing raids. But the night between the 20th and 21st of April, 1943 he and six other crew members died when his plane crashed near Kirke Stillinge.

They were all buried here in Svinø.

There was one survivor of the crash, namely the Canadian Donald Smith, who was rescued to Sweden, and who many years later - in 1999 - was buried here in the cemetery.

They had participated in a bombing raid towards Stettin and were heading home when they were attacked three times by a German Messerschmitt. At the third meeting with the German plane the RAF aircraft was so damaged that it crashed, and only Donald Smith, who sat at the back of the plane, managed to get out and get his parachute to unfold.

The other crew members died - including Charles Woodbine Parish, who was the plane's pilot.

Charles Parish's father finishes his narrative of his son's life with the words:

*“And so that morning, as parents at home prayed for their safety, this group of boys lay dead in and around their smouldering aircraft, having given all they had to give that others might live on in freedom.*

*So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.”*

One cannot help being moved by this father's writing about his late son.

A son who at first seemed impressed by what he later died fighting against.

Life requires alertness and alertness requires courage to choose another direction in your life, if you realize that you have been misled.

During our life we will meet many ravenous wolves that might look like harmless sheep.

In the Gospel Jesus also warns against the ravenous wolves that come to us in sheep's clothing.

But you will know them by their fruits, he says.

Now, it is relatively easy to point fingers at others and say that they are wolves in sheep's clothing - who says one thing and do another. But we could also try to turn our eyes slightly inward and see what the situation is with ourselves.

Perhaps we might not be ravenous wolves but often we find it difficult to practice what we verbally express.

We might be able to get away with pretending to be something we not really are - when it comes to other people - but towards God, we won't succeed.

God sees clearly who are wolves and who are sheep - and who pretend to be something they are not.

And it gives us something to think about.

Each of us has to ask ourselves the question: Am I pretending something, I'm not?

And if realizing I am, will I then be willing to reconsider my life?

Reaching this far, it will have consequences for one's life, if you are an energetic human being.

This happened to Charles Woodbine Parish, who suddenly saw through what had blinded him in Germany, and then chose to fight against it - and pay with his life.

If you are less energetic - you can ask God for the strength to change in your life, what you can see is wrong.

You can ask for the strength to live truly and sincerely in relation to God and to your fellow human beings - and then try to defeat the wolves - both when we see through those around us - and when we discover them within ourselves.

Amen.