

SP3RN HISTORY

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Amateur radio operators wish to celebrate the birthday of their patron, St. Maximilian (8 January 1894). Although his life ended in martyrdom in unusual circumstances, today we want to express the joy of his birth and works: the foundation of the first Catholic broadcasting station, **Radio Niepokalanów**, and appreciation of **Amateur Radio**.

Father Maximilian issued millions of printed publications and was interested in the cinema, radio, and TV in their pioneering days. When on a mission in Japan, he got acquainted with a radio station network (1930) and started his own shortwave station in 1938. He applied for the same in Poland.

The **Polish Radio** commenced broadcasting in 1926. Father Maximilian spoke on the Polish Radio twice (08.12.1937 and 02.02.1938). To prepare his **Radio Niepokalanów** for future service, he sent Brother Manswet Marczewski to attend an amateur radio course conducted by the **Warsaw Shortwave Club**. At the same time, he ordered the construction of the radio building, antennas, and the transmitter in the Niepokalanów Monastery.

Father Maximilian obtained oral permission for test transmissions. On 8 December 1938, radio listeners heard the station whose callsign was spelled as follows: **SP3RN – Stacja Polska 3 Radio Niepokalanów**, similarly to the way licensed amateurs would do it. The assumed callsign, **SP3RN** is typical for Polish amateur radio operators or radio clubs, not any broadcasting stations. Thus, there were monks in Niepokalanów who knew about amateur radio movement and they chose that callsign deliberately. The following evidence is provided by quotes from Father Maximilian's writings:

(08.12.1938) "This Station [SP3RN] can be found in your receivers outside the Polish amateur radio band, 41.4 m, between 41.1 m and 41.4 m; ...Allegedly, there are 50,000 radio amateurs. Some will listen to us out of curiosity, others maybe with sadness ..."

(14.01.1939) "The Radio Niepokalanów station worked on the day of Immaculate Conception and the Sunday after, based on oral permission. ...we had to suspend transmissions until a written licence is issued. However, our radio station can be rather of an amateur type."