

“The Cross of Honor for the German Mother”: Three-Tiered Medal for Mothers with Four or More Children (1938)

Abstract

To increase the birthrate, the Nazi regime ran a non-stop propaganda campaign that glorified starting a family and having children. One manifestation of the Nazi “cult of the mother” was the “Cross of Honor for the German Mother” (also known as the “Mother Cross”), which the NSDAP awarded in Hitler’s name to mothers with four or more children. The Mother Cross was first awarded on Mother’s Day in 1939; that year alone about 3 million women qualified for the honor, which was supposed to be awarded only to “genetically fit,” politically reliable, and socially worthy German mothers. The crosses were awarded according to the number of children a woman had: bronze (level three) for four to five children, silver (level two) for six to seven children, and gold (level one) for eight or more children. Award recipients were chosen on the recommendation of either the Nazi party or government officials (the mayor, for example). A number of financial privileges were connected with this honor, including preferential service when shopping. (The receipt of a Mother Cross, however, was not tantamount to permanent recognition. For instance, it could be revoked if a mother ceased to be “worthy”: if she neglected her children, cheated on her husband, or exhibited problematic behavior.) Additional honors were awarded for other “exceptional birth achievements.” For example, Hitler himself served as godfather to the tenth child in any family.

Source



Source: “The Cross of Honor for the German Mother.” Three-tiered badge of honor (bronze, silver, gold) created after the French model in 1938 for mothers with four or more children.

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