

World Youth Day USA
Pilgrimage Leaders Guide
Auschwitz Supplement
for WYD Pilgrim Groups



As Catholic young adults from around the world come together to be a witness to God's love and mercy in Poland, it is important not to forget the history of war, violence, and genocide that happened on Polish land at the hands of the Nazi regime. Gathering at this place serves as a somber reminder of the need for a culture of encounter, inclusion, and mercy. The world cannot forget the atrocities that were committed against the Jewish people; nor can we stand by as others around the world are faced with persecution for practicing their faith today.

Pope Francis' anticipated visit to Oświęcim (Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau) in July 2016, in conjunction with the World Youth Day celebration in Kraków, offers pilgrims an opportunity to reflect on this grim history and the anti-Semitic hostility that allowed for the genocide of six million people. During this time, at this place, it is also vital to remember the 50 years of friendship and collaboration between the Catholic Church and her Jewish brothers and sisters, initiated by *Nostra Aetate*.¹ The Catholic Church and the Jewish tradition have made significant efforts to reconcile past wounds and to move forward in a more full and intentional friendship, with mutual esteem, as children of Abraham.

For those who will travel for World Youth Day 2016 in Kraków, and in particular for those who will have the chance to visit Oświęcim/Auschwitz (or other sites related to the Holocaust and the Jewish experience in Poland), keep in prayer the Jewish people, that their faith and culture may flourish. Keep in prayer all victims and perpetrators of violence and genocide. Keep in prayer the friendship and dialogue shared between the Catholic and Jewish people over the past fifty years, that it may thrive and be a common witness to God's grace and mercy in the world.

Leaders might consider leading their pilgrims in prayerful reflection using the following prayers provided by the USCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, either on a trip to Oświęcim/Auschwitz, at another appropriate site in Kraków or Poland, or when the pilgrim group gathers daily for prayer. Leaders can also facilitate a conversation about the persecution of the Jewish people and/or about religious persecution taking place today. Resources for discussing Jewish-Catholic relations can be found online at the USCCB website at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/jewish/index.cfm>.

For those who will experience World Youth Day stateside, a similar interfaith experience may also be possible (including opportunities for prayer, conversation, and a visit to a local site of Jewish heritage). Stateside leaders may consider engaging local pilgrims in prayers and pledges of solidarity in standing against anti-Semitism, religious persecution and oppression, and bigotry.

¹ *Nostra Aetate* is the Second Vatican Council's declaration on the Church's relationship to non-Christian traditions. It is foundational for the Church's practice of interreligious dialogue.

Prayers for Pilgrims

For Victims and Perpetrators of Genocide

O Lord, weep with us, as we remember those lost in horrific violence.
O Lord, witness with us, in the midst of great tragedy.
O Lord, walk with us, on the path out of fear to love.
O Lord, we search for you, to love in the midst of hate.
O Lord, we cry for you, our hearts weighted down with sorrow.
O Lord, we yearn for you, to quench our thirst for justice.
O Lord, we mourn with you, for the perpetrators of atrocities lost to evil.
O Lord, we hope with you, for global peace and true kinship.
O Lord, we love with you, the stranger and our neighbor. Amen

For Jewish and Christian Friendship

In our time, O Lord, draw us closer together;
Strengthen our common bond as your children
Assist us in promoting unity and love.

You created us as one human family;
Accompany us as we walk in your light,
As we seek answers to the common questions that stir our hearts.

May the spiritual love revealed in sacred scripture
Move us to decry all hatred, persecution, bigotry, and acts of anti-Semitism,
And embrace the love and grace you freely give.

Remind us of our shared heritage in you;
Bestow upon us the courage and strength to reflect
Your image in our common witness to the world. Amen.



*Secretariat for Ecumenical
and Interreligious Affairs*