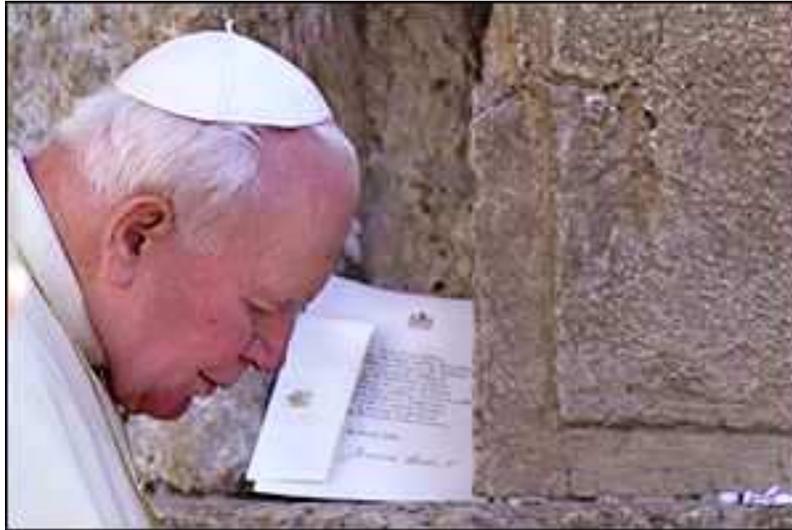


The 75th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St. Maximilian Kolbe

Week 40

The Shoah



The death of St. Maximilian Kolbe will be forever tied to Auschwitz and the Holocaust.

The Shoah, was Nazi Germany's systematic attempt to murder every Jewish man, woman and child in Europe. By the end of the war, two out of every three Jews were dead.

Every Catholic should become familiar with the document from the Holy See in 1998 entitled "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah. In it one reads.....

"No one can remain indifferent, least of all the Church, by reason of her very close bonds of spiritual kinship with the Jewish people and her remembrance of the injustices of the past. The Church's relationship to the Jewish people is unlike the one she shares with any other religion. However, it is not only a question of recalling the past. The common future of Jews and Christians demands that we remember, for "there is no future without memory".

"The fact that the Shoah took place in Europe, that is, in countries of long-standing Christian civilization, raises the question of the relation between the Nazi persecution and the attitudes down the centuries of Christians towards the Jews."

"In a large part of the "Christian" world, until the end of the 18th century, those who were not Christian did not always enjoy a fully guaranteed juridical status. Despite that fact, Jews throughout Christendom held on to their religious traditions and communal customs. They were therefore looked upon with a certain suspicion and mistrust. In times of crisis such as famine, war, pestilence or social tensions, the Jewish minority was sometimes taken as a scapegoat and became the victim of violence, looting, even massacres.'

'Jews were often accused of exercising an influence disproportionate to their numbers. By the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, there began to spread in varying degrees throughout most of Europe an anti-Judaism that was essentially more sociological and political than religious.'

In response to the rise of Anti-Semitism, On 6 September 1938, Pius XI asserted: "Anti-Semitism is unacceptable. Spiritually, we are all Semites".

In spite of homilies from German pulpits and other statements, Pope John Paul II recognized, that alongside courageous men and women, the spiritual resistance and concrete action of other Christians was not that which might have been expected from Christ's followers.

"The Catholic Church desires to express her deep sorrow for the failures of her sons and daughters in every age. This is an act of repentance (teshuva), since, as members of the Church, we are linked to the sins as well as the merits of all her children."

"Looking to the future of relations between Jews and Christians, in the first place we appeal to our Catholic brothers and sisters to renew the awareness of the Hebrew roots of their faith. We ask them to keep in mind that Jesus was a descendant of David; that the Virgin Mary and the Apostles belonged to the Jewish people; that the Church draws sustenance from the root of that good olive tree on to which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles (cf. Rom 11:17-24); that the Jews are our dearly beloved brothers, indeed in a certain sense they are "our elder brothers"."

Prayer :

God of our fathers,
you chose Abraham and his descendants
to bring Your name to the nations:
we are deeply saddened
by the behavior of those
who in the course of history
have caused these children of Yours to suffer,
and asking Your forgiveness
we wish to commit ourselves
to genuine brotherhood
with the people of the Covenant
Jerusalem, 26 March 2000.
John Paul II at the Western Wall in Jerusalem

Questions and Mediations:

1. How am I a Spiritual Semite?
2. How have the sins and actions of people in the past affected me?
3. How will my sins and actions affect people in the future?
4. How can I remember the Shoah?