

A prayer to commemorate the Shoah

Proposal to Christian communities for Sunday, April 26, 2020

During the Second World War, the Nazis murdered six million Jews and many others. Jews call this disaster the Shoah, the “annihilation”, and commemorate it every year. In 1999, the National Assembly of Quebec officially recognized Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day) and encouraged people to join in, as did the Government of Canada in 2003. On the occasion of Yom HaShoah 2020, observed on April 21st, Christian communities are invited to offer the following prayer, prepared by the **Christian Jewish Dialogue of Montreal**, during their religious services on Sunday, April 26th. This prayer and the accompanying rite inspired by Judaic liturgical practice can easily be adapted for online worship if necessary.

Set up and unfolding

If it is allowed by the liturgical rules of the congregation, six commemorative candles are placed on a table. They are lit one after the other before each intention. Otherwise, a visual or musical support evoking the memory of the Shoah may be used.

Introduction (by the leader)

These days, Jewish communities are commemorating the Shoah, also known as the Holocaust, a catastrophe in which six million Jews and one million others were murdered. We now join these communities in (lighting six commemorative candles and) praying for the victims of the Shoah and other tragedies caused by hatred and exclusion in the past and today. Let us remember what happens when respect and tolerance are forgotten. Let us commit ourselves to preventing such atrocities from ever occurring again.

1. Jewish victims

(First candle is lit)

Leader: We first remember the Jewish victims who were murdered in the camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmo, Majdanek, Sobibor, Treblinka and elsewhere during the Shoah. And let us say:

All: We remember the Jewish victims of the Shoah and we commit to perpetuate their memory!

2. Survivors

(Second candle is lit)

Leader: We also remember the survivors: our Jewish sisters and brothers who still bear the scars of this horrible event, but who have rebuilt their lives, here and elsewhere in the world. Let us remember and commit to honour life!

All: We remember and commit to honour life!

3. Other victims of Nazism

(Third candle is lit)

Leader: We remember other victims of Nazism: Christians resisting because of their faith, Jehovah's Witnesses, disabled ones, Roma or Sinti, gay or lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Let us remember and commit to respect differences.

All: We remember and commit to respect differences!

4. Victims of other genocides

(Fourth candle is lit)

Leader: We remember the victims of other genocides, persecuted because of their origin, culture or religion, and those who are displaced or exiled by wars and ethnic conflicts. Let us remember and commit to help!

All: We remember and commit to help!

5. Righteous

(Fifth candle is lit)

Leader: We remember the "Righteous among Nations" and the people who risked their lives for others. We think of the righteous who campaign today for human rights. Let us remember and commit to righteousness.

All: We remember and commit to righteousness.

6. Liberators and peace makers

(Sixth candle is lit)

Leader: We remember the brave soldiers who liberated the camps, those who served with the allied forces to put an end to oppression, and all people who have devoted their lives to peace and freedom. Let us remember and commit to peace making.

All: We remember and commit to peace making.

Final prayer

Leader: Holy One of Blessing, welcome the prayer of our hearts. As we remember, help us to move into action and to keep such horrors from happening again. Beyond our words, guide our work, as we build a way of justice and peace for all humanity. And let us say together:

All: Amen!

A video of this prayer is available on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/406184450>



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