Remembering the victims of the Holocaust

**The Saint**

We have examples in history reminding us of how groups of politicians in certain countries paralyzed the will of the good society and revealed the worst qualities of the people. On the other hand, manifestations of faith, hope, and sacrifice emerge. One of these relates to a Polish Franciscan friar Maximilian Kolbe. He was arrested for the second time in 1941 for anti-Nazi activities, including the rescue of people, and taken to the concentration camp in Auschwitz. There he comforted and gave hope to the weaker, shared his food. At the critical moment, when ten inmates were selected by decimation following the escape of several prisoners, M. Kolbe offered himself to be sentenced instead of a crying young inmate. After two weeks of forced starvation, he and several inmates were injected with poison. Forty-one years later, Maximilian Kolbe was canonized as a saint by Pope John Paul. The inmate, whose life was saved by this sacrifice, lived until 1995.

**Death March**

Over a million people, predominantly Jewish, were imprisoned and exterminated in the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz from 1940 through 1945. As you know, at the beginning of the war, when the Nazi occupied Poland, a place in the former barracks near the town of Auschwitz (Auschwitz) was chosen to detain Polish civilians and prisoners of war. Initially, this place was intended to isolate individuals. With further expansion, hundreds of thousands of people were being transported to Auschwitz from all over the world, from Oslo to the island of Rhodes. At the closure of the war and as the Soviet army approached Auschwitz, the Nazis decided to march the prisoners who could still walk to the concentration camps on the German territory. Along the way, many people died and those unable to walk were shot by marching guards. That is why the prisoners' march was named the Death March.

**Memory**

After the war, many years later, when the communist regime of the Soviet Union began to weaken, Poland got also somewhat more accessible, former prisoners, and later their family members began visiting Auschwitz. Thus an idea was born - to walk for life, but not death, to prove that Hitler and his collaborators - did not win because there were survivors; new generations were born who keep coming, remembering, and passing on the memory. The first March of the Living took place in 1988. The March of the Living is organized during Holocaust Remembrance Day, which in Hebrew is called Yom HaShoah and is historically associated with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which began on April 19, 1943., and was suppressed by the Nazi on May 16. This day falls on a different date every year in Europe due to the Gregorian calendar used. According to Judaism, Yom HaShoah is always observed in Israel on the 27th of the month of Nisan, unless it coincides with the Sabbath, then it is moved to the following day. The victims of the Holocaust and the heroic resistance to Nazism are commemorated on that day and are the rescuers of the Jews. Yom HaShoah has been observed in Israel since 1953, when the Knesset of the Israeli Parliament, together with Prime Minister Ben-Gurion and Israeli President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, formally signed the resolution. In Israel, it is an official Holocaust Remembrance Day. On that day, flags are lowered halfway,

entertainment places are closed, and at 10 a.m. all over Israel sirens start (2 min.), and everything stops at that time (cars, people, etc.) to remember and not to forget.

The March of the Living is an international event that was initiated annually before the pandemic by the March of the Living organizations operating in various countries: Europe, Israel, USA. In 2019, before the pandemic, the March of the Living was held on May 2. About 10,000 people from around the world manifested "No" to anti-Semitism, racism, terrorism, and xenophobia in the march from the Auschwitz concentration camp to the Birkenau extermination camp. People, indifferent to the memory of the victims, joined the march – teachers, students, youth groups, and seniors.

**Teachers from Lithuania on the March**

Then, in 2019, a group of Lithuanian teachers from Alytus, Ariogala, Dieveniškės, Kaunas, Kėdainiai, Klaipėda district, Panevėžys, Varėna and Vilnius participated in the March of the Living event for the first time. The pedagogues were organized by the Secretariat of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, in cooperation with the European network of the March of the Living Organization (EMOTL). This organization unites 17 partners in 14 European countries. Lithuania was represented by teachers working in schools with Tolerance Education Centers. At present, there are 151 Tolerance Education Centers in Lithuania, which focus on the topics of tolerance, historical memory and the educational development of common human values.

It is said that the internalisation of values ​​is facilitated by the creation of the right conditions: cognition, understanding, the experience of the meaning and assessment, the need to realize experience, the determination to achieve it and the specific actions taken. Participating together with the tens of thousands of people on the March of the Living made it feel that it is a mixture of all this and looking at history with certain commitments…

**The commemoration event this year was online**

This year, on April 8, people of all ages and nationalities were invited to participate in an online observance of the Holocaust victims and heroic resistance to nacizm remembrance day, the day to honour rescuers of the Jews. You coud leave your note or thoughts on a special website[www.nevermeansnever](http://www.nevermeansnever) (in Lithuanian it reads: Niekada Reiškia Niekada) , it could also be your aspirations on a memorial plaque aiming at the never-again approach –never again to the Auschwitz case or any similar sites of WWII.

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