



On the 70th Anniversary of the Deportation of the Jewish Population of Rome

31.10.2013 | Pope Francis

Message of Pope Francis, 16 October 2013.

Distinguished Chief Rabbi

Esteemed Members of the Jewish Community of Rome,

I wish to join, through spiritual closeness and prayer, in the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the deportation of the Jews of Rome. As we remember those tragic hours of October 1943, it is our duty to keep before our eyes the fate of those who were deported, to understand their fear, their pain and their desperation in order not to forget them, and to keep them alive in our memory and in our prayers, along with their families, relatives and friends who mourned their loss and felt consternation at the barbarity the human being can attain.

Commemorating an event, however, does not mean simply having a memory of it; it also and above all means making every effort to understand the message which it represents for our own times, so that the remembrance of the past may be a lesson to the present and become a light which illumines the road to the future. Blessed John Paul II wrote that memory is called to play its necessary role “in the process of shaping a future in which the unspeakable iniquity of the Shoah will never again be possible” (Introductory Letter to the document: Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism, We Remember. A Reflection on the Shoah, 16 March 1998) and Pope Benedict XVI stated at the concentration camp of Auschwitz that “the past is never simply the past. It always has something to say to us; it tells us the paths to take and the paths not to take (Address, 28 May 2006).

What the day commemorates could be described as a *memoria futuri*, an appeal to the younger generations not to be indifferent to their own existence, nor to allow themselves to be swept away by ideologies, never to justify the evil we encounter, always to be on the alert against anti-Semitism and against racism whatever their origin may be. I hope that, through initiatives such as this one, networks of friendship and fraternity between Jews and Catholics may be formed and nourished in this, our beloved city of Rome.

The Lord says through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah: “I know the plans I have for you, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer 29:11). May the memory of the tragedies of the past become a commitment for everyone of us to adhere with all our strength to the future that God wills to prepare and build for us and with us.

Shalom!

Francis

From the Vatican, 11 October 2013

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