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Pope Benedict XVI visited the death camp at Auschwitz, Poland, on May 28, 2006, and offered prayers in memory of those who had died there and in a commitment to work towards peace among all nations. "In silence," he said, "we bow our heads before the endless line of those who suffered and were put to death here; yet our silence becomes in turn a plea for forgiveness and reconciliation."

The Pope had visited Auschwitz before, first as Archbishop of Munich-Freising when he accompanied the late Pope John Paul II on his visit in 1979, and then as part of a delegation of German bishops in 1980. Now visiting as Pope, he expressed his sense of the special difficulty of a Pope from Germany to speak in this place. He paid tribute both to the Jews and to the Poles and members of the Sinti and Roma peoples who perished there as victims of the Nazi extermination program.

"The place where we are standing is a place of memory, it is the place of the *Shoah*," the Pope said. "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." He called for "the purification of memory demanded by this place of horror," and praised the joint initiatives in works of love and justice being undertaken by Jews, Catholics, and others.

From press releases and news reports

Full text of the Pope's address

Further remarks at General Audience