

DAY 9 | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2026 | AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU • KRAKÓW

Auschwitz-Birkenau: The Duty to Remember

GRACE TO ASK

To stand in truthful lament and return with a conscience more vigilant against every language of contempt.

Morning Prayer with the Church

Morning Prayer, Monday of Psalter Week II, Liturgy of the Hours, Volume IV. Optional memorials may be observed according to the Church's norms. Keep a deliberate silence before beginning.

Additional pilgrimage intercessions

- For the Jewish people, for Holocaust survivors and their descendants, and for every community marked by genocidal violence.
- For the grace to recognize and resist antisemitism, racism, and dehumanization before they become normalized.

After the Liturgy of the Hour

God of Abraham, receive our lament. Keep us from the obscenity of easy explanations. Purify us of contempt and every theology that excuses hatred. Make memory a guardrail for conscience and courage. Amen.

BEFORE WE STEP OFF

Today I will say less. This ground does not need us to improve it with eloquence. We will listen to the museum educators, attend to names and objects, walk without staging ourselves, and honor Jewish memory at the center of what happened here. If prayer comes, let it be humble. If words fail, do not rush to fill the silence.



Auschwitz II-Birkenau: enter without performance; remember without appropriation. [Photo credit](#)

A few words before the memorial

When we enter Auschwitz-Birkenau, we enter quietly. It was the largest German Nazi concentration and extermination camp complex. More than 1.1 million people were murdered here, about one million of them Jews. Poles, Roma and Sinti, Soviet prisoners of war, and others were also killed. Oświęcim is the Polish town. Auschwitz is the name imposed upon the camp by Nazi Germany.

Before the war, Jewish people made up nearly ten percent of Poland's population. Their centuries of faith, family life, learning, work, and culture were almost destroyed in the Shoah. As Christian pilgrims, we must keep this truth at the center. We also come honestly, aware of Christian antisemitism and the times Christians failed to defend our Jewish brothers and sisters.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe was imprisoned at Auschwitz. He died after offering his life in place of Franciszek Gajowniczek. We honor his courage without allowing his story to overshadow the immense Jewish suffering or the suffering of other victims. His sacrifice does not explain this place. It shows that even in a evil and dark place like here, one person could still choose love.

Pay attention to how people were stripped of their humanity: Their names were diminished to numbers. Their belongings were taken. Lies, laws, paperwork, hunger, forced labor, and fear prepared the way for death. The gas chambers came at the end of a long process of teaching people to look upon their neighbors as less than human. This is what dehumanization of the world does to human hearts.

Please follow every memorial rule. No selfies, staged photographs, loud conversation, or prayer performed for a camera. Do not hurry to give this place a comforting spiritual meaning. Remember one person, one object, or one detail. Then, when you hear someone reduced to a label or spoken of as less than human, have the courage to speak... here.

How we enter as pilgrims

- Keep phones silent and use the camera only when permitted, without placing yourself at the center.
- Listen for names; do not reduce persons to numbers or categories.
- Do not force consolation. Let lament remain unfinished and become moral vigilance.

Polish for the day: Nigdy więcej — never again.

Today's movement

- 7:00 a.m. breakfast; drive to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum.
- 9:00 a.m. guided visit.
- 12:00 p.m. Mass is listed for the Auschwitz-Brzezinka area; another itinerary note points toward Oświęcim/Harmęże. Final worship location and permissions are required.
- Lunch on your own; return to Kraków; dinner on your own.

CATHOLIC DAILY MASS

MONDAY OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

12:00 p.m. • Oświęcim/Brzezinka area • Final worship location required

Schedule marker only • Use the separate worship aid for Mass

Evening Prayer with the Church

Evening Prayer, Monday of Psalter Week II. Keep a longer silence before beginning.

Additional pilgrimage intercessions

- For every person murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau and for all who carried the trauma home.
- For the conversion of those who deny, trivialize, exploit, or repeat the ideologies of dehumanization.

After the Liturgy of the Hour

Lord, we cannot gather this day into a satisfying explanation. Receive the dead, console the living, judge the lies, and keep our consciences awake. Let remembrance become vigilance and vigilance become protection of the threatened. Amen.

Evening examen and pilgrim notes

What person, story, or detail from this place will I carry home, and how will I live differently because I remember it?

When have I remained silent while another person's dignity was being attacked, and how will I speak differently now?

PLAYLIST

Oceans

HillSong UNITED

Cover by Andre Valdez

Scan me!



PLAYLIST

Kol Nidrei¹

Max Bruch

Zuill Bailey, cello; Michael Buttermann on piano

Scan me!



PLAYLIST

Sound of Silence

Music by: Simon & Garfunkel

Pentatonix Version

Scan me!



¹ **Kol Nidrei** is Aramaic for “**all vows.**” It is the solemn declaration chanted at the opening of Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement. It asks release from certain personal vows made to God rashly, unintentionally, or beyond one's ability to fulfill. It does **not** cancel responsibilities or promises made to other people, and it does not excuse dishonesty. Its haunting melody expresses human frailty, repentance, and the desire to begin again before God.