



Remembering *Kristallnacht*

9 November 1938

'Night of Broken Glass'



What is *Kristallnacht*?

Kristallnacht is the name given to the night of 9 November 1938, when a Nazi-inspired violent rampage in Germany and Austria destroyed Jewish businesses, synagogues, sacred books and human lives.

Kristallnacht is generally viewed as a critical step in the furthering of Nazi policy that led to the Shoah/Holocaust. Today the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* is a date widely commemorated.

Why remember?

In writing this page for a Christian audience, we ask: Why should Christians, in particular, remember *Kristallnacht*?

- *Kristallnacht* occurred in Christian Europe where many of the protagonists and bystanders were baptised Christians.
- As an ideology Nazism had no basis in Christianity, however its propaganda drew on anti-Semitic stereotypes that had been entrenched in Christian thinking, and therefore in European societies, for centuries.
- Thus *Kristallnacht*, and the Holocaust itself, is a chapter, not only in Jewish history, but in Christian history as well. As a Church we must own the dark aspects of our past in order to be freed from them.
- *Kristallnacht* speaks of the critical importance of 'now.' It recalls a specific moment in history when *there was still time* for people to speak up; a moment which passed all too silently. Evil triumphed because good people did nothing.

- Each year the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, 9 November, is a summons to vigilance and responsibility for the human family. It is a moment when Christians along with people of every race and creed can join together to say 'never again' to anti-Semitism and to every form of destruction of human dignity.

Ways to commemorate *Kristallnacht*

Become informed

- Visit the website of Yad Vashem/International School for Holocaust Studies and make use of their resources for education and e-learning. YadVashem.org
- The Sydney Jewish Museum in Darlinghurst has a diverse range of educational programs. Visit the museum in Darlinghurst, and their website: sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au
- Read the 1998 Vatican document *We Remember: a Reflection on the Shoah*. This and other important Church documents on Jewish-Christian relations are available at: ccjr.us/dialogika-resources
- There are still high levels of antisemitism in the world today. Be alert and informed. Visit the Anti-Defamation League website: adl.org/anti-semitism

Did you know?

The only known private demonstration against *Kristallnacht* was led by an Aboriginal Australian, William Cooper, in 1938.

With supporters he walked to the German Consulate and attempted to deliver a petition (which was rejected) protesting the treatment of Jews.

In 2010 Cooper was formally acknowledged at Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial with the establishment of the Chair for the Study of Resistance during the Holocaust, in tribute to William Cooper.

Share a message with your networks

- Share this page, or a portion of it, via your newsletter, website, social media.
- Download this page at: dbb.org.au/ecumenism-interfaith

Attend or create a memorial service - see overleaf.



Photos at top of page depict scenes from *Kristallnacht*: a synagogue burns; destroyed interior of a synagogue; Torah scrolls rescued from fire; arrest of Jews by SS; destruction of a Jewish-owned store. Photos from Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum, Israel. Used with permission. http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/learning_environments/kristallnacht.asp



Acknowledge the anniversary of Kristallnacht

- Attend a *Kristallnacht* memorial service in your locality.
- Conduct a memorial service in your home, classroom or parish. This might be as simple as lighting a candle and sharing a story and prayer (see below).

A ritual of remembrance

For the home, classroom, parish:

- Read the story
- Pause to remember
- Pray the prayer
- Share a thought

Leader

We gather to remember for a purpose, namely to remember the millions of innocent victims of Nazism, and to ensure that never again will such evil prevail. May our active faith commitment be part of that 'Never again.'

Story

Donia Rosen was 12 when she hid in the forest after her family was murdered. Donia survived and immigrated to Israel. The following are words she wrote in her diary:

"Words fail me, but I must write, I must. I ask you not to forget the deceased. I beg and implore you to avenge our blood... I ask you to build a memorial in our names, a monument reaching up to the heavens, that the entire world might see. Not a monument of marble or stone, but one of good deeds, for I believe with full and perfect faith that only such a monument can promise you and your children a better future."

(Rosen, Donia, *Forest, My Friend*, Yad Vashem: Jerusalem, 1985, p. 94)

http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/ceremonies/auschwitz_final_stop.asp#18

Candlelighting & Silence



In response to the plea of 12 year old Donia, let us light a candle of remembrance and pause in silence.

Prayer

Leader: The words of the ancient psalm echo in our hearts:

*I have become like a broken vessel.
I hear the whispering of many -
terror on every side - as they scheme
together against me, as they plot
to take my life. But I trust in you, O
Lord: I say, 'you are my God.'*

(Psalm 31:13-14; prayed by Pope John Paul II on his visit to Yad Vashem, Israel)

All: *I trust in you; I say: you are my God.*

L: We pray for all who were murdered on *Kristallnacht* and in the Holocaust, and for those who survived and who kept alive their names, their memories.

All: *May we never forget.*

L: We pray for the courage and commitment to stand against anti-Semitism and every kind of racial and religious hatred in our day.

All: *May God strengthen us.*

L: We pray that our and future generations of Christians will never again tolerate the conditions which allowed *Kristallnacht* to occur.

All: *Never again. Never again.*

L: We pause for further prayers, shared aloud or silent in our hearts. [pause]

L: Living God, Source of life, Creator and healer of the world; hear all our prayers as we place our hope in you who reign, forever and ever.

All: *Amen*

Final thoughts

Individuals may wish to share a personal connection with this confronting topic. E.g., perhaps you know personally a Holocaust survivor; perhaps you have visited Yad Vashem in Israel or the Jewish Museum in Sydney. Briefly share a thought, a reflection, if you wish.

St Pope John Paul II

"Where Catholics are concerned, it will continue to be an explicit and very important part of my mission to repeat and emphasize that our attitude to the Jewish religion should be one of the greatest respect, since the Catholic faith is rooted in the eternal truths contained in the Hebrew Scriptures, and in the irrevocable covenant made with Abraham. We, too, gratefully hold these same truths of our Jewish heritage, and look upon you as our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

"For the Jewish people themselves, Catholics should have not only respect but also great fraternal love; for it is the teaching of both the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures that the Jews are beloved of God who has called them with an irrevocable calling. No valid theological justification could ever be found for acts of discrimination or persecution against Jews. In fact, such acts must be held to be sinful."

Excerpt from address to the Jewish community in Sydney, 26 November 1986:

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