

# German-born pope says he still feels pain of 'Kristallnacht'

VATICAN CITY – German-born Pope Benedict XVI said he still feels “pain for what happened” in his homeland in 1938 when Nazi mobs went on the rampage against Jews, an event that became known as Kristallnacht.

The pope was 11 years old when, on the night of Nov. 9-10, 1938, “the Nazi fury against the Jews was unleashed in Germany.”

Marking the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht – German for Night of the Broken Glass – the pope asked Catholics to pray for the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, and he condemned all forms of anti-Semitism.

Pope Benedict spoke about the anniversary during his midday Angelus address Nov. 9 at the Vatican.

During Kristallnacht throughout Germany “stores, offices, homes and synagogues were attacked and numerous people were killed, initiating the systematic and violent persecution of German Jews that concluded with the Shoah” or Holocaust, the pope said.

“I still feel pain for what happened in that tragic circumstance whose memory must serve to ensure that similar horrors are never repeated again and that we commit ourselves, at every level, to fighting anti-Semitism and discrimination, especially by educating the younger generations in respect and mutual acceptance,” the pope said.

He also asked Catholics to pray for the victims of the Nazis and “to join me in showing deep solidarity with the Jewish world.”

The obligation to remember the Holocaust and to educate future generations in respect for all peoples also was reaffirmed by the secretary of the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education at a Nov. 6 meeting of European education ministers.

Meeting in Nuremberg, Germany, site of many of the largest Nazi rallies and later the seat of the courts that tried Nazi war criminals, Archbishop Jean-Louis Brugues said the city was witness to “the drama of an age in which freedom and justice were denied and human dignity was trampled.”

The education ministers’ meeting focused on the importance of teaching about the Holocaust in European schools.

Archbishop Brugues told the ministers, “Remembering the drama of the victims, paying homage to their memories,” means working to ensure that “such tragedies are never repeated in any angle of Europe or of the world.”

“We risk falling into barbarity again if we do not have a passion for justice and liberty and if we do not make a commitment, each according to his or her ability, to ensure that evil does not prevail over good, as happened in the case of millions of the sons and daughters of the Jewish people,” the archbishop said.

Education, he said, is the key to building a Europe marked by greater solidarity and democracy, “respectful of diversity and aware of its identity.”