

666

the antichrist's

almanac

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Lest we forget the Holocaust
Catholic Church (WLD)

On March 12, 2000 Pope John Paul II endeavoured to purify the soul of the Catholic Church by apologising for 2000 years of "sins" committed by the church.

Many Vatican officials feared that an apology would concede only the victims' perspective on history and may open the floodgates to compensation ...

One "error", "fault" or "sin" John Paul requested forgiveness for was the church's inaction during the Holocaust, which claimed the lives of 6 million Jews ...

In Israel on March 23, 2000 John Paul II deplored the "terrible tragedy" of the Holocaust in a speech at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem.

One of Israel's two chief rabbis said he was disappointed that the pope fell short of an explicit apology for the Vatican's inaction during the Holocaust.

"I expected him to say things touching not only on church members who sinned against the Jewish people, but also on

the Catholic Church itself which more than once has spread hatred against Jews," Israel Lau told state television ...

Coinciding with John Paul's arrival, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial published *The Holocaust and the Christian World*, a 271-page collection of essays and documents.

The cover photo shows high-ranking German Catholic clergymen giving the Nazi salute, the right arm stretched out, as they stand next to Nazi propaganda chief Josef Goebbels.

In a chapter on Pius XII, who has been described as "Hitler's Pope", historian Michael R Marrus wrote that as fascism spread across Europe, the Catholic Church remained aloof and rarely spoke out against the persecution of Jews.

The top priority of the pope was the survival of the church, not saving lives, though individual nuns and priests took personal risks to save Jews, wrote Marrus of the University of Toronto.

"Seeing the institutional church as a supreme value in its own right, those in charge of its fortunes tended unhesitatingly to put these ahead of the victims of Nazis," Marrus wrote.

In the fall of 1943, with Rome under Nazi occupation, the Nazis began rounding up Jews "virtually on the doorstep of the Papal Palace", he added.

Ilena Steinfeldt, an editor of the Yad Vashem collection of essays, said the book was not meant to indict the Catholic Church, but to raise questions.

For a more informed debate, the Vatican should grant free

access to World War II-era documents in its archives, she said.

"There is a general feeling that not enough was done (to stop the genocide)," Steinfeldt said.

"Still, we are not interested in a declaration of guilt, but a real reckoning ..."

In 1994, the author had the opportunity to visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem and to pick up a tour guide that reads:

"The hatred nurtured by ancient Christian concepts regarded the Jews as the people of Israel and the people of the Messiah, but also as the people who had rejected its Redeemer Jesus, and thus had condemned itself to ostracism and the eternal enmity of the Christian world.

"The Jews had to be kept in a state of servitude, misery and degradation. Moreover, their eternal wandering among the nations forever at the mercy of Christians, seemed to confirm the veracity of Christian teachings.

"Six million Jews of all ages, strata and affiliations were murdered in the Holocaust.

"The hundreds of thousands who escaped, whether by hiding or by joining the underground or partisan units and the few who survived the camps refused to return to their former homes.

"Those lands had become graveyards to them, and they could not face the prospect of resuming life in those countries.

"The very few who had survived the period of darkness, suffering and death and who had returned to their native

cities and villages in Eastern Europe, were received with anger and hostility ..."

Read on ...

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*"Civilisation will not attain to its perfection
until the last stone from the last church
falls on the last priest"*

(Emile Zola)

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