Holocaust Memorial Day 27th January

27 January this year marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp. The Holocaust Memorial Day started in 2000 when representatives of 46 governments met in Stockholm to discuss Holocaust education, remembrance and research. At the end of the meeting all those who attended signed a declaration committing to preserve the memory of those who were murdered in the Holocaust. Approximately six million Jews were killed in the death camps but there were many other victims of Nazi persecution who lost their lives, including the handicapped, political opponents and even some Christians. Holocaust Memorial Day is recognised worldwide, including the European Union, United Kingdom and United States.

The Holocaust in France refers to the persecution, deportation and annihilation of Jews and Roma between 194 and 1944 in occupied France, metropolitan Vichy France and Vichy controlled French North Africa. The persecution began in 1940, and culminated in deportations of Jews from France to Nazi concentration camps in Nazi Germany and Nazi occupied Poland. Of the 340,000 Jews living in metropolitan/continental France in 1940, more than 75,000 were deported to death camps, where about 72,500 were killed.

Other genocides are also remembered on 27th January, for example the Armenian genocide during the First World War and later genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Dafur.

Sadly, there are still people who believe the Holocaust never took place, one of the most notorious being the historian David Irving.
There seems to have been a growth of anti-Semitism in recent years. The Labour party in UK has been accused of anti-Semitism. In France, according to a report in the Independent newspaper, episodes of anti-Semitism rose by 78% in 2018.

In remembering Holocaust Memorial Day we should not just think of anti-Jewish feeling but of anything which leads to any form of racism, discrimination or even hatred. We are all made in God's likeness.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28