

Letter from Bulletin of September 8, 2002

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Dear Parishioners,

This week our nation with sadness, concern and also hope, recalls the **tragedy of September 11th**. We will have a brief time of remembrance after communion at all masses this weekend, and our Church will be open for prayer throughout the day Wednesday – but, especially with 8:00 am Mass, followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8:30 – noon – with benediction at 12 noon.

Over the past 365 days we have prayed for the victims, we have prayed for their families and loved ones; we have contributed to funds to help survivors and their families recover from their losses; we have prayed for the police and firefighters lost or who suffered the loss of their comrades; we have prayed for the young people in the armed services risking themselves for our security and we have prayed for the oppressed, the poor and the unjustly treated on our earth whose communities of poverty fuel anger, hatred and terror. We have prayed and will continue to do so.

Even as monumental a tragedy as September 11th has in some ways left us better as a nation rather than worse. Saddened by the loss of life, shocked by our own vulnerability, we have also been inspired and strengthened by acts of heroism, deeper appreciation of our own loved ones and the gift of time together, bonded somehow with the weak of our world who face tragedy and terrorism as a daily thing, and driven to join hands as a nation across differences that are political, ethnic, racial and religious. Tragedy can bring out the best in us.

On the Sunday after September 11th- I preached on “Our Faith and the

National Tragedy.” I’m never sure that words on a given weekend will wear well past the test of time – even of one year! But I reprint the hopes I shared, not all realized, but perhaps still a measuring rod for our behaviors. “ I realize what I would hope for may, at one level, be unrealistic and impossible. *But, if we are clear about what we hope for, about what we think the ideal should be, then we will be clear on what we will settle for and what we will refuse to settle for. Four things...*

First, I would hope for an international effort to find those responsible and hold them accountable, an international effort.

Secondly, and this might be the most idealistic, I would hope for an international court, like the war crimes tribunal after the Second World War. That would publicly, and in the name of humanity, ask for justice, because these crimes were not just against the United States, but against humanity.

Thirdly, I would hope that every step and precaution humanly possible would be taken that we do not harm the innocent. I got a call yesterday from a priest in New Jersey, right across from the World Trade Center, a lot of his parishioners are involved and connected with the victims. One of the young women he was counseling was a 26 year-old secretary who got out of the World Trade Center just before one of the towers, the one she was in, collapsed. She had two strong feelings. One was a feeling of guilt, that she didn’t go back and get a few more people out. Maybe she could have made a difference. The other, the feeling of real upset and hurt, when she heard all the rage and anger because, as she said, “I don’t want some 26 year-old woman like myself, going about her normal business in another part of the world, harming no one and hurting nothing, being killed because of our anger at this.” So, my third hope is that we take every step and precaution possible, that we do not harm the innocent.

And the fourth is that we have the moral strength and the strong resolve, as a nation, to look at our national policy and our national practice, and ask, “Is there anything we’ve been doing that continues to fuel the hatred and anger towards the United States, which helps produce and perpetuate terrorists.” And, if so, what can we reasonably do to undo that? What

changes can we make so that our grandchildren and our great grandchildren don't just play out the same tragic scenario of terrorism and retaliation again and again?

Tuesday evening, we had a Eucharist here. It wasn't well-publicized but about four hundred people were with us. Pam Brady, who was there grieving about her missing brother, came up and said to me, "You know, we either have God or we have nothing. . . And we have God."

In the end, we still have God. Amen."

Your Pastor,
Brian Joyce

A Remembrance of September 11th

When we remember the stockbrokers, office workers, maintenance workers, bystanders, window washers and all the others who worked together so valiantly to help each other, we can say together,

All: We remember great courage.

When we recall the firefighters who rushed upstairs as most everyone else was racing out, we can say together,

All: We remember selfless service.

When we recall the police officers who stood to protect and defend the people and performed their duties until the towers came crashing down on top of them, we can say together,

All: We remember selfless sacrifice for the safety of others.

When we recall the thousands of workers, women and men, old and

young, single and married, American-born and those born in countries around the world who did not escape the building, we can say together,

All: We remember the loss of human life.

When we recall those citizens who rushed to help and did all they could to help, we can say together,

All: We remember and give thanks for dutiful commitment to those in distress.

When we remember the young men and women of our armed services who put themselves in harm's way to give us a safer future, we can say together,

All: We are grateful for courage and generosity of heart.

In our sadness, horror and shock we acknowledge when our own fears turned murderous and we have looked for revenge, sometimes against even the innocent.

All: We confess and regret our own anger and recognize its danger to our spirits, our health, our community, and others.

In striving for national security and domestic peace we have sometimes stood in danger of confusing might for right, participating in the very behaviors we condemn.

God of the ages, before your eyes all empires rise and fall yet you are changeless. Be near us in this age of terror and in these moments of remembrance. Uphold those who work and watch and wait and weep and love. By your Spirit give rise in us broad sympathy for all the peoples of your earth. Strengthen us to comfort those who mourn and work in large ways and small for those things that make for peace. Bless the people and leaders of this nation and all nations so that warfare, like slavery before it, may become only an historic memory. We pray in the strong name of the Prince of Peace Amen.

