



## **September 11: A Time to Reflect on the Hope that Comes from Faith in Christ**

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In a few days we as a nation will recall the tenth anniversary of the shocking terrorist attacks in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C., now known simply as September 11. It changed the world and our lives in significant ways.

I recall Mass that following weekend. When it was announced that the closing song was not in the hymnal but that every one knew the words to God Bless America, a server sitting next to me said, "I don't know the words." His comment brought home to me the fact that for many of the youth and young adults the specter of war was unknown to them. Sadly, ten years later, the harshness of war is only too well known. We now face the reality of terror and hate every day in many ways, yet we can do so with the hope that comes from faith in Christ the Prince of Peace.

"There is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still." Those reportedly were the last words of Betsie Ten Boom a Christian who died in a Nazi death camp, sent there for hiding Jews from sure death during the Holocaust of World War II. She encouraged that the horror of what evil men can do should not be the legacy we inherit. Rather what should be remembered and celebrated is the strength many show in overcoming tragedy and the forgiveness that is possible when Christ is at one's core.

On this September 11 we will remember and pray for not only for those who died that day ten years ago, but also for the courageous men and women who responded in sacrificial ways, especially the police, fire and rescue workers. We also remember and pray for all those who have died since in service to our country, and for those who are in the military today and for their families who serve by separation.

One of the beautiful gifts of our faith is that it lifts us beyond the moment and brings perspective. For instance, when we look at the crucifix we remember that God became man and experienced the horror of the cross, an act of violence, for our redemption. We remember Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, standing at the foot of the cross, weeping for her son. Yet when we celebrate holy Mass we recall that the cross was not the end, that Mary saw her son again resurrected, and that He remains with us until the end of time in the Blessed Sacrament and through his Church.

It is my prayer that the restored Cathedral of St. Joseph will serve as a reminder that hatred and violence will not win out, and that it will be a place of rest and consolation for those who are anxious or face loss. We do not know what tomorrow will bring and we cannot mould it to our liking. What we can do is live today with the hope that comes from our faith in a loving God who promises that life will overcome death, who offers light in the midst of darkness. We need to share that hope with one another, especially the young. There is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still.

I was privileged to offer brief remarks at the State Capitol in Madison, Wisconsin the Sunday following September 11. These words still resonate with me ten years later:

“We come together this day as one family under God, a family of great diversity and yet of common creation and common purpose.

“As one family we grieve for the martyrs for freedom and compassion taken from us this week. We look to the sky and find stars missing. Haunting us is the question: why, why now, why in this way? Why we ask does God allow those filled with hate to steal the innocent and burst the dreams of those who remain?

“St. Augustine centuries ago wrote: ‘I sought whence evil comes and there was no solution.’ Over a millennium later there remains no solution which settles our anguished hearts. It is a mystery which, with humility, we must live, as have generations before us.

“We can do so with faith in the loving God who promises life will overcome death and who specially cradles the innocent. We will do so if we are mindful of the needs and dignity of each person gifted by God with life.

“May our leaders be granted the wisdom to discern that delicate balance of response which brings justice without fostering injustice. We pray for those men and women who will be in harm's way in the days ahead, stars still glistening in our sky.

“Tomorrow we do not know; it has always been so. We approach tomorrow with apprehension, yet with hope. This is a time when we must walk by faith, not by sight, as one nation under God, witnessing values worthy of the sacrifice of those we remember today.

“May they rest in peace.”