

September 11, 2024

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

LET US SEEK TO BE LOVE

By Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Call To Prayer

Today I want to reflect on the experience of 9/11 and all that transpired in New York, in the Pentagon, and to those heroic passengers of UA flight 93 on that fateful day in 2001. Since then, countless other men, women, and children have lost their lives to senseless and hateful violence. Today, as you read this, innocent lives are being lost by those who choose hatred over love, and vengeance over understanding.

I remember my own experience of 9/11 and the utter shock as I watched the second plane hitting the tower, followed by the images of the Pentagon after it was hit by a passenger plane. I sensed a rising fear in me for what might happen next. And then it came: Flight 93 had crash-landed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. I remember experiencing the urgent need to drive to St. Jude Medical Center in Fullerton, California, because my role at that time was Vice President for Mission Integration and my presence was needed. I couldn't help but think that some of our staff and patients might have loved ones in the Towers, at the Pentagon, or on flights that were still airborne.

I wanted to weep for the loss of life, the hate that fueled these actions, and the grief of all those who knew loved ones had perished. I held it in until I got home and just sat in the solitude of God's loving embrace. I pictured God weeping at the death of his created ones; and at the evil we can do to one another in the name of false gods and ideology.

As the years have gone by, I have not forgotten this tragedy. I still pray for those children who lost their mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, cousins and siblings on that day. I include in my prayers all people around the globe who die at the hands of another because of some misguided belief. I have a sense of death and destruction hanging in the air we breathe, and my desire is to counter it with prayers of love. I believe in the preciousness and sacredness of each life, and remembering through prayer those who have needlessly died is one way to remember that God's love surpasses all. As men and women of faith, it is our mission to bring the Good News into our everyday lives and model what it means to "love one another as I have loved you." The more our lives attest to the goodness of others, the more we can counter the forces of evil that propel people to such untold violence.

Reflective and Prayerful Response to 9/11

Our eyes scanned the skies and saw the planes torpedoing into the towers. What a juxtaposition, our faces looking heavenly while the consequences of evil, of hatred, marred that beautiful blue sky on September 11, 2001.

Our responses were immediate and visceral; a weight of stone settling into our being, shattering our sense of safety and peace. Why, O Lord, such evil?

There were no easy answers to soothe our disbelieving eyes. Reason is not the source of this destruction; it is hatred and misguided faith far from you, Source of all Being. There are no justifiable answers.

For so many, 9/11 is a demarcation in their lives. It is the day that a loved one perished so abruptly and cruelly. It is a day of national mourning when hatred raised its ugly head; and the ripples of these senseless acts continue to reverberate through the decades.

Ribbons of anguish and pain wrap themselves around our hearts. It is the grief from the loss of innocent life as the towers, level by level, collapsed. Men and women were going about their daily activities with no thought to the terrible chaos that befell them. We watched in utter horror.

First responders rushed to the towers, knowing they were moving toward death; their last actions on earth were ones of bravery and commitment, and remain a testament to their own sense of vocation and call in life. “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13).

The Pentagon was struck with such force and fiery impact that some inside could not fathom what was happening. Stories have been shared of the bravery and care of those trapped inside the Pentagon. In the midst of terror, love prevailed as, working together, lives were saved.

Read the stories of those who survived and listen to their faith, love of the stranger beside them, and desire to raise above their own fear. Listen to the phone calls from the Towers and Flight 93; you hear words of love, gratitude, and faith.

Let us not turn a blind eye to the death and destruction that continues to play out across the world. Innocent life after innocent life is lost; lives full of promise and hope, destiny and gift. Let us work tirelessly for the end of senseless and useless wars, where in the end, no one wins and lives are lost, and others left in tatters.

May we see the face of our Lord in others who do not look like ourselves. May we remember that God has created all persons and creatures. When we destroy villages, towns, cities, and structures, we are maiming God’s creation and there is no honor and glory in such actions.

May we seek understanding, so as not to inflict violence.

May we value and cherish life in all its forms and enable all people to flourish.

May we not remain silent when injustice reigns supreme; may our voices ring from the rooftops.

May we seek to be love in our thoughts, words, deeds, and actions, countering the toxicity swirling through the airwaves.

May we be who God created us to be ... in faith, hope, and love. May we be people of the light. May we simply be.



Faith Love Hope Clouds
Illustration by Gerd Altmann

For Pondering

- How has 9/11 impacted your life? For whom and for what do you pray as you reflect on that fateful day and all the days that have unfolded since then?
 - In the face of senseless violence in our world, what helps you stay grounded in faith, hope and love?
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For Prayer

*O God,
we lift up all those who are encountering violence in all its forms.
May we be a presence of healing and hope,
using all that is within our power to contribute to the good
that is within us and in every human person.
Amen.*

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