Remembering, reflecting, and restoring: A pathway to healing and peace

As we begin our 2011-2012 academic year we walk together as a nation as the tenth anniversary of the tragedy of September 11, 2001, approaches. Our nation and our world have changed drastically since that day. The lives of individuals, families, whole communities, and a nation have been affected in a way that altered lives forever. As a university community we are united with our nation as we reflect and remember those whose lives ended so tragically when our nation was attacked by terrorist extremists.

Many heroic women and men responded and gave their lives for others. Policemen, firemen, clergymen, and persons of good will responded with great courage and bravery to the unprovoked misery that had been inflicted and unleashed on our country. These heroes embody the very spirit of the best of who we are as a nation. As we remember, pray, and continue to mourn the loss of family, friends, or loved ones, our eyes, hearts and souls are drawn to look toward the God who loves us. Let us “look to the mountains from where shall come our help, our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.” Psalm 141

Ten years later I believe that God desires to heal the brokenness we feel. Such calamities inflict great pain and instead of being consumed by it, we ask God to heal us. We implore God to fill us with his love and grace and to heal our wounds. Our God has conquered the greatest evil which is death itself, through the resurrection of his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I remember where I was at 8:28 a.m. on September 11, 2001. I had just finished morning prayer with Father Tom Potts, S.V.D., and was standing in the kitchen at Saint Nicholas Parish in Saint Louis, MO, having a cup of coffee. We watched in horror as the day unfolded. I remember talking on the phone with one of my parishioners, Congressman Clay, as he spoke to me on his cell phone having just passed the Pentagon on his way to his office on Capitol Hill. He shared with me the tragic moment when we were attacked. I am sure we can each remember where we and our loved ones were on that day. It will forever remain in our memory.
As persons of faith we turn to our Lord for help and strength to move forward, not forgetting those who gave their lives, but honoring and remembering them. In a very real way we can honor those who have died, and their memory, as we seek to live our lives with love seeking peace and harmony in a world that is so divided. To reach out to those who mourn, and are so deeply affected by this tragedy, we also seek to make a difference in a polarized world. Love is the very heart of who we are as a people of faith; the love of God is seen through the sacrifice of His only Son and gives us courage to step into the future. When we seek to reach out in love through prayer, a letter, a word of encouragement, a healing embrace, or some act of kindness, we move from odium to love and from despair to hope.

We have assurance from the transformative power of Christ to heal and to restore, to strengthen and to encourage. We reach out across nation, race, language, culture and religious affiliation and look into the eyes to see in our sister and our brother the very face of God. Wherever a human being suffers, grieves and is in pain, we share in that pain and we are inextricably linked due to our common humanity.

University Ministry invites each and every member of the Saint Leo family to gather as a University Community for a prayer service on Sunday, September 11, at 6:30 p.m. prior to the university Mass. The service will take place in Dempsey Plaza between the Student Community Center and the Student Activities Building at University Campus. Following the prayer service all members of the Saint Leo community are invited to attend Mass, which will be offered for those who have died and their families and friends. We will also pray for the men and women who serve in our military that God will bless them and keep them safe as they continue to protect and serve our nation and strive to uphold freedom and democracy in our very troubled world.

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September 6, 2011
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