

September 15, 2019

From Fr. Jim . . .

September Eleventh: On September 11, 2001, there was a terrorist attack on the United States of America that involved the bombing and collapsing of the Twin Towers in New York City. It was eighteen years ago, last Wednesday, that this most tragic event happened.

This was such a tragic happening for our country that I am certain most of us remember exactly what we were doing on that day when the airliners were used as bombs to strike terror into the heart of our nation. I was pastor at Corpus Christi, in Dayton. I had just finished morning mass and I was at the dining room table reading the morning paper and listening to The Today Show when the sad news was being reported. On television, I saw the second plane strike the Twin Towers. It was live reporting, not a replay. I called an impromptu staff meeting with whoever was present at the time to discuss how we should share the news with our school children and teachers. We asked them to all gather in church for a spontaneous prayer service and we began the important process of praying our country and all the victims and their families through the hurt and pain. Eighteen years later, the important task of the Church of God is to keep praying everyone through the hurt and pain and to be thankful for the healing that has occurred.

Soon after the tragedy of September 11, the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral statement offering words of consolation, criteria for moral discernment, and a call to action and solidarity. In it, they identified what would be required to effectively confront terrorism in the future: "We need to nurture among ourselves faith and hope to strengthen our spirits by placing our trust in God, rather than ourselves; courage and compassion that move us to action; humility and kindness so that we can put the needs and interests of others ahead of our own; patience and perseverance to endure the long struggle for justice; civility and charity so that we can treat others with respect and love." In hindsight, are these not the virtues that have promoted healing so far and are they not the virtues to continue to promote the healing and peace that are still needed?

Eighteen years later, it is still the task of the church to keep praying everyone through the hurt and pain, especially since the threat of terrorism is so imminent in many countries of the world, today. It is still the task of the church to conquer evil and hatred with love, mercy, forgiveness and grace. It is the task of the church to show civility and charity and to restore life with dignity and respect. It is the task of the church to find the lost and put the needs and interests of others before its own. All Christians are called to this positive action as hope for a fallen world. Resurrection and new life always gets the final word.

