

Sermon on board a ship of the Princess Line, on the first anniversary of Sept 11th. The service was taken jointly by a Rabbi and me for everyone on board. Fr. Ron Barnes

Anniversary of Sept 11th

In St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, we find these words:

"...Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places..."

Few would argue that the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon represents one of the darkest moments in American history. On TV screens across the country, we saw the reality of evil doing its worst—death and destruction rained from the skies over New York and Washington. We had seen the face of evil—we would never be the same.

But as the numbness and shock of those first few days has faded into the past, it becomes possible to recognize some points of light. We feel gratitude for the heroes that emerged in the midst of tragedy. The firefighters who rushed into the twin towers—these men were heroes to us. Jesus said: "Greater Love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." We saw the truth of His words demonstrated by Firefighters, Emergency workers, Police Officers, Nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers—all became heroes that day, as they worked to save lives in the midst of evil and death. The priests from Holy Trinity Episcopal Church on Wall St, just next to the World Trade Centre, turned their church into a rescue centre for the wounded, a rest centre for firefighters, and a peace centre for all who came to pray. Ordinary people struggled to care for unknown others—it was enough to know that they were brothers and sisters in need.

Of course, we cannot forget those courageous men and women who fought back on Flight 93, and by their heroism, saved the lives of others on the ground.

But there were acts of compassion in other places. When air traffic was closed in the United States, Canada reached out as a place of safety for planes already in the air; 43,000 passengers were given sanctuary for days at Canadian airports and in Canadian homes. People around the world responded with compassion and support. It was not only America that was attacked by terrorists that day—when America is attacked, we are all attacked. Terrorists are the enemy, not just of Americans, but of all freedom loving people around the world.

Today we have learned that the lunatic terrorists who caused such evil and death see us in the West as the cause of their pain, their famine, and their poverty. You and I know they are horribly twisted in their thinking—but as people of love, we can no longer ignore

the poverty of the third world. Though we in the West are not the cause, we are the ones who hold the solution. Jesus said: "To whom much is given, much is expected."

Therefore, can we continue to sit in comfort at "our tables with a view of the ocean" and ignore the starvation in the third world? The prophets of Israel would say NO. Jeremiah would tell us that we cannot hide from the effects of neglect or injustice. Injustice will come home to roost, as the continuing cause of wars and terrorism in our world. As Isaiah saw it, it is only if you plant justice that you will have peace.

Sept 11th has taught us about the power of evil, and how much we need God and our Faith. Only by walking together with God, can we find the Grace that is needed to live beyond ourselves. God is not above our pain, but instead He has taken pain and evil onto Himself. The prophet Isaiah tells us how God accepts the sin and evil of this world, and in dying, defeats it. Christians believe that Jesus took the sin and evil of this world and destroyed it on the Cross. Sept 11th was a day of evil for all of us—but with God's grace, we also have the power to turn it, not into a Day of Anger, but a Day of Forgiveness and Renewal.

Today, as people gather on this Sept 11th all around the world, we gather too on the Sea Princess, to pray for those who died, to give thanks for those who were heroes, and to pray for wisdom to walk together with God into tomorrow.

We pray for strength:

- to protect liberty and justice and freedom for all
- to care for the poor and the hungry of our world
- to work for peace in our own family, our workplace, our school, our communities,
- to forgive those who planned this evil attack, asking God to bring them to repentance,

Finally let us pray that God will so bless us this day, that we may be a blessing to others tomorrow.

O God the compassionate one, whose loving care extends to all the world, we remember this day your children of many nations and many faiths whose lives were cut short by the fierce flames of anger and hatred. Console those who continue to suffer and grieve and give them comfort and hope as they look to the future. Out of what we have endured, give us the grace to examine our relationships with those who perceive us as the enemy, and show our leaders the way to use our power to serve the good of all for the healing of the nations. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord whom, in reconciling love, was lifted up from the earth that He might draw all things to Himself. Amen.

[Announce song "Mine Eyes have seen the Glory of the Coming of the Lord"]

Prayer (said by everyone, led by the priest and rabbi together)
Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name,
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. AMEN