



## September 11: Remember, pray and change

*September 11, 2002*

One year ago this week, terrorists murdered more than 3,000 innocent men, women and children in attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. In the aftermath, we have three obligations: to remember; to pray; and to change.

First, *we must remember*. In daily life, we often deal with sorrow by submerging ourselves in the demands of work or family. All of us eventually lose people we love. All of us know the suffering that comes with that kind of loss. All of us are tempted to let our memories grow dull in order to continue with life. That's human nature. We long for the familiar and the normal.

But, in a sense, nothing can be "normal" after Sept. 11, 2001. The victims are still gone; their families still suffer; and those who planned the murders still have their freedom to kill. The world is a changed place, and if Americans return to our "normal" routine of comfort, political bickering and self-absorption, we neglect the duties which 9/11 placed on us. We need to remember that innocent people died, their families need our support, and justice has still not been done. We need to pursue that justice without bitterness, but also without rest.

*Second, we must pray*. We cannot pursue justice without anchoring our hearts in God. Justice is not vengeance, and pursuing it requires wisdom and restraint, as well as courage and action.

In the weeks after the attacks last year, people crowded America's churches and other places of worship because they knew, instinctively, that only their faith could make sense of the tragedy. We need to hang onto that faith. We need to recommit ourselves to the work of sincere, daily, personal prayer for the 9/11 victims and their families; for the men and women who serve in our armed forces; and for the elected officials who have the burden of guiding our country in a dangerous time and building real peace in the world. More than ever before, we need to listen for God's voice in our lives, and we need to place our nation and our world in His hands.

*Finally, we must change*. We cannot be the distracted people we were a year ago. We need to change. America is a great nation — a nation whose founders rooted our institutions in ideas, principles and moral integrity unique in history. We need to reclaim that legacy. We need to live up to that dignity. We are more than the sum of our possessions and marketing campaigns. God made us to achieve more than that — not just for ourselves, but for the poor and hungry around the world who look to us in hope. God has blessed our nation. We need to be a blessing for others.

In the readings for the liturgy of Sept. 11, St. Paul tells us that "time is short" and "the world as we know it is passing away." The time to remember, to pray and to change is now. May God use this anniversary of 9/11 to begin a renewal in all our hearts.

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