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ARCHPASTORAL LETTER FOR THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

Sunday ~ September 11, 2011

Beloved in the Lord:

Christ is in our midst!

It is hard to believe that today is the 10th Anniversary of the tragic events that have come to be known simply by two numbers – 9/11. This date commemorates one of the darkest days in American history, alongside that of Pearl Harbor. It recalls the immeasurable loss of thousands of innocent lives at the hands of terrorist attacks and the many fallen heroes who tried to save them. It marks the first time in more than a century that anyone living in the lower 48 states could recall an invasion on American soil by a foreign power. It was indeed a day that will live in infamy.



The immense suffering caused by this tragedy has raised questions within groaning minds and broken hearts, seeking to make some sense of the horrific event. These questions echo the cries of the Psalmist and of our crucified Savior who said, “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*” (Psalm 21: 1, LXX; Matthew 27:46). No doubt this verse sums up what so many Americans felt, and still feel, in the face of such incredible barbarism: where was God when this happened?

But this passage of Scripture is not just a declaration of despair and abandonment; it is also an utterance tempered by faith and hope. For the Psalm ends with an affirmation of faith in the compassionate presence of God: “*For the Lord did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; He did not hide His face from me, but heard me when I cried to Him*” (Psalm 21:24, LXX). And, in the strength and peace that comes from above, the Psalmist goes on proclaiming in hope, “*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before Him*” (Psalm 21:27, LXX).

Centuries later, the cry of Christ upon the Cross was, to be sure, a manifestation of the terrible suffering He endured as He bore the indescribable burden of our sin. But His plea also makes plain the fact that through the Son of God’s act of sacrificial suffering, the limitless power of God’s love was revealed – a power of love that was stronger than death, proven by the Lord’s glorious Resurrection. The answer to our question is simply, God was in the same place on 9/11 that He was on Good Friday – standing over the shattered gates of Hell; trampling down death by death. For in His power, in His love, death is not the hopeless end of the story – there is the victory and the joy of the Resurrection.

Thus it is that our Christian response to the devastating tragedy of 9/11 must be grounded in our faith in the Crucified and Risen Lord. Our answer to this adversity must be revealed in words of comfort and deeds of service. Our yearnings to understand this horrible moment in history and to cope meaningfully

