

## Homily for the 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

I was sitting at my desk when the phone rang. It was a very close friend of mine...a friend since high school. His first words were prophetic: "Our lives will never be the same." It was September 11<sup>th</sup>, ten years ago today. The planes had crashed, the towers were burning, the Pentagon was attacked and a field in Pennsylvania had become the burial place for a crashed plane. In a few hours the towers would crumble to the earth and we, as a nation, would be in total shock.

My friend was correct...life has not been the same. We have gone to war and then gone to war again. We live in a world of heightened security. More to the point, we live in a world of heightened suspicion where we call into question those whose faith is different from ours and whose nationality makes them suspicious by virtue of the place they were born. And we mourn...we mourn those who lost their lives. We mourn those who gave their lives in an attempt to rescue those trapped by this vicious act of terrorism. We mourn those who have died by valiantly putting their lives on the line in places like Afghanistan, Iraq and countless other Middle-East countries. And we pray...we pray for healing, we pray for compassion, we pray for safety and we pray for all our young men and women serving in the military to come home...and to stay home.

On this Tenth Anniversary of such an horrific and terrifying experience how should we act and what should we do? I would suggest that the answer to that question is before us.

The readings are clear. They are a call to forgiveness. Sirach says: “Forgive your neighbor’s injustice; then...your own sins will be forgiven.” Notice the writer does not say, forgive when the other person asks for forgiveness. Nor does it say forgive when the other person deserves the forgiveness. It simply says forgive. And Jesus in the Gospel not only underscores that, He carries it one step further...forgive and forgive and forgive and forgive. The cycle of hatred, the trap of revenge upon revenge, will only be broken when we learn to live together as friends rather than dying together as fools. Forgiveness is the key.

And beyond forgiveness, there must be action. In light of this anniversary there is a website, a program, entitled “I Will.” It invites us to make a decision to do something to build a better world. It invites us to finish the sentence by saying what action we will take to make this a better world. “I will dedicate my time to helping youth in my city.” “I will tell my children what happened ten years ago.” “I will pray with Jewish, Christian and Muslim women.” “I will spend the day with my son.” “I will learn to respect others.” “I will give blood.”...I will, I will, I will.

Tell me, what will you do to finish the sentence? What will you do today? Tomorrow? And everyday?

When Terry and I met this summer to plan the schedule of events for the coming year, we wondered whether this weekend, this Anniversary weekend, would be the right time to celebrate our annual parish devotion to Mary. The answer became obvious. Mary, the Immaculate Conception, our Blessed Mother, the patroness of our parish, is also the patroness of our country. As we honor her, we beg her intercession on this Tenth Anniversary of 9/11. May her tender heart lead us to healing and hope for ourselves, our country, our world.