

## 15th Anniversary of 9-11-2001: We Must Never Forget!

Sept. 11, 2016—Your Honor, Mayor (Scott) Avedisian, Colonel (Stephen) McCartney, Chief (James) McLaughlin, and members of the Warwick Police and Fire Departments and their families, my dear friends in Christ:

His name was **Father Mychal Judge** and he was the dedicated and beloved Chaplain to the New York City Fire Department. He was a familiar face at scenes of crisis or tragedy in the Big Apple for many years, rendering prayers and comfort to firefighters, police officers and citizens alike. As was often his custom, from time to time, he would FAX messages of inspiration to the many firehouses throughout the city. On Monday, September 10, 2001, he sent the following message:

*“If you want to see God laugh, tell him what you are doing tomorrow.”*

How prophetic a message, telling his men and women that **today** is a gift and it should be lived well for we know not what tomorrow brings.

As we know, the very next day, on September 11, 2001, the Nation was attacked and New York City in particular was hit. Father Judge did his usual and responded in haste to the scene of the Twin Towers to assist with the unfolding crisis. While administering prayers and the Sacrament of the Sick to a dying citizen he was mortally wounded and became the very first official victim of the day that changed history and changed our lives forever. His death certificate has the number 1 on it and the now-famous picture was captured of him being carried by his beloved firefighters bringing him to rest on the altar at St. Peter’s Catholic Church, not far from the event before they all headed back out into the carnage.

Today, as we gather some 15 years later, to the day, we remember those who perished. Two thousand, nine hundred and ninety-six lost their lives in New York City alone, among them 71 law enforcement officers and 343 firefighters, as well as victims in Washington, D.C. and in Pennsylvania. For those of us who were alive that day, it will never be forgotten but we gather to be sure that, as the years progress and the date recedes into the past, those who follow us

will never forget the heroes that day—especially the police officers and firefighters who rushed into that inferno to save others, only to perish themselves.

My friends, that is why we gather today. Yes, to remember but also to proclaim that the **evil** that rained from the skies that day was no match for the goodness that would spring up from our people. The terrorists and their hate failed to crush the good within us, and as the tragedy that day unfolded from New York City to the Pentagon to a cornfield in Pennsylvania and our eyes caught sight of the unspeakable carnage that had been rendered to the innocent, the sleeping giant of America rose up, oftentimes on bended knee with prayer and goodness, love and hope to answer that threat and, in the end, to defeat it.

We are followers of a Savior who came to us from heavenly headquarters to do battle with the first and most cunning terrorist of all; the one who disguised himself in a Garden called Eden so that he could break and crush humanity. But that broken promise would not stand, for Our Blessed Lord armed with powerful weapons, the love of His Father, and the message of His Gospel came to tell us that **evil make take the hour** but, because of Him and His supreme sacrifice, **goodness will always take the day**.

Oh yes, our world and our lives changed that day but the Gospel we proclaim—the one we embrace and we live—reminds us that **death** was put to death by the Cross of Calvary and the Lord of Life rescued us all.

Father James Quigley, a Dominican priest at Providence College, was stationed at the time just three blocks from Ground Zero. He recalls being out on the street a few days later with a woman clinging to him sobbing and asking where God was on September 11, but before he could respond another woman kneeling at a shrine of candles and flowers without lifting her head said, **“God has not stopped crying since September 11.”**

My friends, that is why we are so privileged to have here with us today the police officers and firefighters from our city: the brave men and women who keep us safe and, in these very dangerous times, place their lives in peril so that we might live. We could never repay them nor thank them enough, and so this somber day helps us to remember the debt we

owe and the gratitude that they and their good families deserve. They stand ready every hour of every day to face those unseen evils and to be sure that **goodness** prevails.

May our voices this day blend together to ask the Good Lord to send His peace upon our world and our nation. To put an end to the senseless violence and terror that is breaking our world. To ask the Lord of peace to bless these inspiring souls here with us today, and the thousands outside these walls. And, to keep them all safe in their duties and bring them home to those who love them.

To our special guests here this morning, may God continue to bless you and your loved ones and may He continue to bless America, especially through all of you!

God love you.