



# OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

## ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

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MICHAEL J. DEEGAN, SUPERINTENDENT

September 10, 2021  
Month of Our Lady of Sorrows

Dear Catholic Schools Community,

This Saturday marks 20 years since the World Trade Center and The Pentagon attacks and the downing of an airliner in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Twenty first days of school have passed since then, along with twenty Christmases, twenty Easters, and countless milestones, all celebrated without the more than 3000 people who *should have* been present.

*Not one* student in our K-12 Catholic school system knows a New York skyline with the Twin Towers. *All of our* school children have grown up with a heightened awareness of enhanced security, war, and terrorism. In other words, 9/11 is still very much with us, just as tangible as the absence of the victims from the lives of their loved ones, thousands of whom have connections to our schools.

Sadly, September 11, 2001, is another day in American history relegated to infamy. The only glimmer of goodness to be remembered came from the heroism of the first responders, the selflessness of neighbors and friends of victims, and the outpouring of support and love from every corner of the globe in the direction of New York, Washington, and the hometowns of those on the planes including Flight 93.

Psalm 23 famously reads, “*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*” I have heard one of the interpretations of this beloved passage is that when we are looking at a shadow, it is because the light is behind us. If we turn around and walk into the light - the teachings of Jesus Christ- we will be stepping towards healing, resolution, and or at least the willingness to accept God’s plan for us.

As we reflect on twenty years in a post-9/11 world, we do so while simultaneously struggling to put a global pandemic behind us. Be assured, there is hope for this world, and I humbly submit that all of us in the extended family of Catholic education are blessedly connected to it. Every single day, Catholic school students, principals, faculty, staff, and pastors — led by our Archbishop, Timothy Cardinal Dolan *live* the answer to what ails the world.

Our values-infused curriculum teaches love, mercy, compassion, and respect, the very antithesis of the anger, hate, and intolerance of those who took so many lives on September 11. Our schools’ culture of learning, the desire to succeed, and the willingness to help others succeed is what stands on the tenuous line between right and wrong, good and evil, happy and sad. If you have a moment of despair this weekend, a twenty-year-old familiar feeling of gloom, take a moment, say a prayer and then look at your child. Maybe look at the fridge where their artwork hangs along with family photos. Take out your phone and scroll through our Catholic schools’ social media. Witness the love, the joy, the light.

Please join me in praying for peace on earth, goodwill for all of humanity, and most importantly, for the souls lost to the awful events twenty years ago — eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

Sincerely,

Mr. Michael J. Deegan  
Superintendent of Schools  
Archdiocese of New York