

# **A MESSAGE FROM FATHER VINCENT**

September 12, 2021

Dear Friends:

I hope this finds you all happy and safe and well. This weekend we remember 9/11 on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attacks on our country. It's so hard to believe that 20 years have passed but we will never forget those who lost their lives, their families and all those who were injured on that Tuesday morning.

For our generation, September 11, 2001 is one of those days we remember exactly where we were. I remember being in my office in Roseland. I was there early and as my co-workers were coming into work, they broke the news to me.

Regarding what happened and how I reacted, I don't recall. What I do remember clearly was the walk from my office to the conference room. I strolled my usual, slow pace. It was a walk of ignorance. I met my colleague Vera in the hallway, she was frantic to try to get in touch with her husband who worked in Tower Two. She was calling and calling his cell phone, but it went right to voice mail.

As soon as I passed through those doors of the conference room, everything changed. The first thing I remember was the quiet. Not a single person was talking, yet the room was packed. All eyes were glued to the TV, watching the news. Everyone was in shock. We looked at each other, unsure of anything. Everything seemed to be a blur.

After that day, we remember the stories of those who were lost – our family members, our friends, our co-workers, our neighbors. There is a memorial on Park Avenue in Park Ridge that lists the names of those from our town who lost their lives that day. Their beautiful lives that were taken too soon. September 11th is a day for reflection, and its emotional significance should not lessen with time or be diminished in any way with the passing of years.

Yet somehow — amidst such heaviness — we find something powerful, something unexpected. We think of those thousands lost but also those millions who rose in spontaneous, compassionate, and effective service to help rebuild our spirit and our nation in the aftermath of the attacks. Many of whom suffer from their own illnesses and struggles today because of the services they offered on and after that fateful day.

When we each look back on the time immediately following 9/11, I think we also recall the numerous acts of human kindness that were overflowing in the days following. People helping people. Strangers helping strangers. Churches flooded with people to seek God and to feel comfort knowing that in the face of these horrific acts, God is still with us.

The poet Robert Burns once said that: the kind heart most resembles God. I think back on that time 20 years ago. I remember people of every race and every nationality and every religion, turning to God for comfort and reassurance. That, despite not having the answers that we search for at times, we know that there is a God and that He is all loving and walks with us in our times of sorrow and suffering.

A friend who lost her brother on 9/11 shared something with me that is very, very powerful. She told me that she keeps a note on her refrigerator door which reads:

Before September 11th, we would wake up with a list of “Don’t Forgets”:

Don’t forget to wash your face

Don’t forget to brush your teeth

Don’t forget to do your homework

Don’t forget to wear your jacket

Don’t forget to clean your room

Don’t forget to take a bath.

After September 11th, we wake up with a list of “Remembers”:

Remember to greet the sun each morning

Remember to enjoy every meal

Remember to thank your parents for their hard work

Remember to ask people how they are doing, and look them in the face, and actually listen to their answer

Remember to honor those who keep you safe

Remember to value each person you meet

Remember to do one act of kindness every day for someone

So, as a faith community, on this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11, we will always remember the lives lost, their families, and those who were injured that day. We will never forget!

Just a few things to share:

1. There will be Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on 9/11 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Chapel thanks to our wonderful Knights of Columbus. Come and spend some time with the Lord in quiet prayer.
2. We will join together on 9/11 at 6:30 p.m. outside of the Church for a special prayer service to remember those who lost their lives. Bring your beach chair and spend time together as we remember.
3. On Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at the 11 a.m. Mass, we will honor and pray for all first responders. Please join us and bring your families. Refreshments will be served.
4. We will honor all grandparents at all the Masses this weekend as we celebrate Grandparents Day. We love our grandparents!!!
5. There are still seats available for the trip to the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, MA on September 17<sup>th</sup>. Please see me or email us at [rsvp@urolm.org](mailto:rsvp@urolm.org) for more information or to sign up.
6. Our Parish Picnic will be on Sunday, September 26<sup>th</sup> following the 12:30pm Mass. The rain date will be October 3<sup>rd</sup>. All our welcome!
7. October is the month of Mary and the month of the Rosary...stay tuned for information regarding our Rosary Challenge during October!
8. Finally, I am happy to share the news that the Cardinal appointed me as Pastor of Our Lady of Mercy. The news came to me on September 8<sup>th</sup> - which is the birthday of Our Lady. I am so happy to be at OLM and excited to continue the work we have begun. Please keep me in your prayers. We will have an Installation Mass on October 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am.

Thank you for being a part of the OLM parish family. May God continue to bless each of you.

With love and appreciation for each one of you.

*F. Father Vincent*