



SEPTEMBER 12, 2001

## MY DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

As each one of us struggles to grasp the reality of the horror and devastation at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we are terribly saddened by the loss of life and the suffering of those who were directly affected. When one member of the Christian community suffers, we all suffer. We all share in the pain and sorrow of families and friends whose loved ones perished in the tragic events on September 11. On Monday, September 17, 2001, at 7 p.m. in the evening at St. Anthony Cathedral, we will have a Memorial Mass for all the victims. All are invited to join in this Eucharistic liturgy to pray for the victims and their families.

I was in Washington, D.C., meeting with many other Bishops at the time of the attack. Our Administrative Committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued a statement on the apparent terrorist attacks. The text of our statement is:

"This is a day of national tragedy. Though we do not yet know its full extent, we mourn those who have lost their lives and pray for their eternal rest and for the consolation of their families.

"We pray for the living victims that they may know that God is with them in their sufferings. We pray for those who are rescuing and ministering to the injured, that God may strengthen them in their heroic and often heartbreaking work. We pray for our national community that we will be of support to one another in the days ahead as we come to grips with the enormity of what has happened.

"We express our support for our President and other government leaders, both national and local, who bear the tremendous responsibility of dealing with the aftermath of these unbelievable events. They are in our prayers in a special way.

"If, as seems likely, this tragedy is the result of acts of terrorism, then we pray also for those whose hatred has become so great that they are willing to engage in crimes against our common humanity. May they realize, at last, that such violence creates not justice but greater injustice."

On Friday and Saturday, we celebrate the Feast of the Triumph of the Holy Cross and then honor our Blessed Mother under the title of Our Lady of Sorrows. These are particularly apt days for Catholics to reflect on the ways in which we are called to take up the cross and follow our Lord.

We call upon all our fellow citizens to renew their trust in God and to turn away from the bitter fruits of the kind of hatred which is the source of this tragedy. Especially let us not engage in ethnic, religious, or national stereotyping for what may be the acts of a few irrational terrorists. As the Catholic Bishops of the United States, we unite in prayer to the Lord our God in the words of the Psalmist: 'In you, O Lord, I take refuge. Incline your ear to me, and save me. Be my rock of refuge, a stronghold to give me safety.' (Ps. 71)"

It is my hope that all of us will take this to heart and, as a People of God, come together to console and strengthen one another. We must ask God for guidance as we try to deal with the aftermath of these events. This is an opportunity to reflect about the fact that violence begets violence and to turn to Jesus Christ as the only way to peace and understanding. We must guard against an attitude of vengeance, so that the hatred that brought about the devastation this past Tuesday will not begin to grow in us. We as a great nation have been brought to our knees in our vulnerability. We have experienced our common humanity. Let us turn to God as we pray for the victims, living and deceased, and strengthen our belief that all things work together for the good of those who love God.

Be assured of my prayers for all of you.

SINCERELY IN CHRIST,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Curtis Guillory".

MOST REVEREND CURTIS J. GUILLORY, SVD, DD  
BISHOP OF BEAUMONT