

PAX CHRISTI USA STATEMENT:

On the tenth anniversary of 9-11, The Things That Make for Peace

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In anticipation of the tenth anniversary of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Pax Christi USA has released the following official statement.

On the Tenth Anniversary of 9-11: The Things That Make for Peace

As Jesus came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "If this day you only knew the things that make for peace!" (Luke 19:41-42)

Ten years ago, just scant hours after our nation witnessed the tragic events of September 11th, Pax Christi USA released a statement which said, in part:

We recognize that as the reality of the magnitude of loss becomes clear, our nation's grief will soon move toward rage. As people of faith and disciples of the nonviolent Jesus, we must be willing, even now in this darkest moment, to commit ourselves and urge our sisters and brothers, to resist the impulse to vengeance. We must resist the urge to demonize and dehumanize any ethnic group as 'enemy.' We must find the courage to break the spiral of violence that so many in our nation, we fear, will be quick to embrace. (Pax Christi USA's Official Statement on 9-11, published on September 12, 2001)

On Sunday, September 11, 2011, the tenth anniversary of 9-11, as we gather to celebrate the Eucharist together, a question will be put to us:

Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the Lord?

Can anyone refuse mercy to another, yet expect pardon for one's own sins? (Sirach 28:3-4)

These past ten years, we have witnessed the failure of policies built on vengeance. Our elected leaders manipulated our grief and fear to justify foreign policy decisions which had little to nothing to do with the tragedy of 9-11. Our nation was ensconced in a culture of fear, where the scapegoating of peoples, the fanning of religious intolerance, and the curtailing of civil rights served the needs of political expedience.

We have been witnesses to the dark places where our government's response to 9-11 led our nation—the justification of torture, the moral bankruptcy of pre-emptive war, the daily reports of innocent civilians killed as collateral damage, the deaths of thousands of U.S. service personnel, and the stealing of our national wealth to pay for wars abroad as our children, our elderly, and the most vulnerable are left to suffer at home.

Today, as we acknowledge the ten year anniversary of 9-11, there can be no doubt that responding with war and violence can neither console us in our grief nor achieve the security for which we long.

In the weeks following 9-11, Pax Christi USA proclaimed that very message, and challenged our political leaders to seize this moment for peace by establishing justice for all peoples throughout the world. Until we commit our own nation to the pursuit of peace and justice for the entire human family, we should not be surprised when the violence suffered by those living on the other side of the world—as well as those living on the wrong side of town—eventually engulfs us all.

Ten years have passed, but we believe that the opportunity is still with us. Let us start, now, today, in Washington, D.C. and in every city and town across this land, in our schools and our places of worship and within our own homes. Let us write a new chapter and create a new legacy for all those whose lives were shattered on 9-11. Let each one of us decide what it is that we can do to create a legacy which heals instead of harms. Let us begin with the assurance that such healing will come if we make economic, political and social justice for all our top priority.

On Sunday, September 11, 2011, at the responsorial, Catholics will sing in churches throughout our nation:

*Our God is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.
God pardons all our iniquities, heals all our ills, redeems our lives from
destruction, and crowns us with kindness and compassion. (Psalm 103)*

This anniversary offers us an opportunity to reflect the values of the God to whom we have given our allegiance. Let us remember those who were lost and memorialize this day by committing our lives to “the things that make for peace”—drawing closer to those who suffer, cultivating understanding in the midst of suspicion, finding truth in the arguments of those with whom we disagree, embracing some measure of personal sacrifice today to make a better world for our children and grandchildren tomorrow.

Let us gather one decade from now—not amidst the ruins of all that has been torn down—but in the midst of that new world of peace and security for all which we have built up together.