

My Dear Sacred Heart Parishioners,

I look at the Scripture Readings for this Sunday with the sad and shocking memories of September 11, 2001 still so present and painful to all of us. And yet, we still find time to pause in prayer and silence to honor the deceased, the grieving and the mourning, and all those who sacrificed to rescue, to protect and to heal.

I continue to be moved whenever I drive by Virtua Memorial and see the bold letters out front: HEROES WORK HERE. I make my way through our neighborhoods and see so many signs expressing gratitude to all the courageous care-givers, many of whom are members of our families and our parish. What a profound heartfelt response to the turmoil, the distress, the suffering and the pain that we see all around us?

How often, like Peter in today's Gospel, are we tempted to ask: "How often must I forgive? As many as seven times?" How easy it is to ask the Lord to be patient with us and, moved with compassion, He is. Yet, how difficult it is to show patience and compassion to our neighbor "seventy-seven times." Our First Reading from Sirach exhorts us: "Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor; remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults." Let us turn to the Lord and beseech Him to help us to honor His covenant, to keep His commandments and to love our neighbor as ourself. For as the Psalm proclaims:

"He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your ills.
He redeems your life from destruction,
Crowns you with kindness and compassion."

Let us lift up our nation to the Lord, mindful of the beautiful words of one of our songs:

"I am the Word that leads all to freedom,
I am the peace the world cannot give.
I will call your name, embracing all your pain,
Stand up now, walk, and live!"

The Lord's peace be with you,

Father John

