

My Dear Parishioners of Sacred Heart Church,

For most of us who live in this area, September 11, 2001 began as a beautiful day, the sky a glorious blue, totally cloudless, the air, fresh and invigorating, almost autumn-like. I first received the shocking news right before morning Mass. Regardless of the beautiful day outside all would spend the rest of the day inside staring at the dark day of fire and smoke and unimaginable death on our televisions. The memories of those images never go away. Do they? People calling loved ones, sharing loss, grief, confusion. Early in the evening, people gathered in our Church and all the places of worship and prayer. It was completely filled, as it would be that Friday at noon as Bells rang mournfully throughout the land, and that Sunday and the next Sunday and the next... I remember driving through the streets that night and for weeks afterward noticing how strange it was to look up and see no airplanes flying to their destinations. I remember seeing acts of heroism and sacrifice day after day after day. I remember the father of a family of three sons relating how that morning he went through his home unplugging and disconnecting anything that might bring that disturbing news into their home and was truly surprised when he and his wife and family sat down to pray before dinner to hear their middle child add to their prayer "and for the people in the buildings" How could he have known? Yet, that was the way their grace before dinner concluded for many evenings afterward. I remember gathering at Mass that first Sunday after the day that everything changed and finding comfort in our Opening Song:

"Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you each by name.  
Come and follow me, I will bring you home; I love you and you are mine."

I cannot sing that song without remembering the first time I heard it, sang it, and prayed it. As we gather again in Church in sad remembrance this weekend let us listen to the trusting voice of that little boy, safe and secure at home with his family, now a grown man, and simply and humbly pray out of all the longing and pain still in our hearts, not forgetting, never forgetting to add: "and for the people in the buildings."

May the Lord bless you and keep you safe,

*Father John*