

Dear Brother and Sisters in Christ,

On the fourteenth of this month we celebrate the Great Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. While this feast is rooted in an historical event, it also provides us with an opportunity for a theological reflection upon the Cross and its place in our lives. I recently read a meditation on the Cross which invited us to reflect upon the feelings of the apostles and disciples of the Lord the day after His death on the Cross. This reflection recalled their discouragement, depression, dejections, sadness, and sense of loss and hopelessness. It also recalled their embarrassment for not having stayed with the Lord on Calvary because of their weakness and fear – as well as the loss of their dreams that caused them to feel hopeless and helpless. And so, the day after the Lord's death, they continued to weep, to mourn, to be lost in despair. On that day after Calvary they felt death's sting and experienced its seeming victory.

We know, however, that the way the disciples felt the day after the Lord's death and burial would soon change. From Mary Magdalene and the Holy Myrrhbearing Women they would soon hear the good news of Christ's resurrection. Their despair at His death would soon turn into the joy they received from His resurrection. The Cross, which had been a sign of defeat, had now become a sign of victory.

This month we as a nation will take time to remember just such an "after Calvary" experience of the powers of death... as we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As we remember and pray for the victims of that hateful and senseless crime and as the nation recalls this frightful experience, our conversations will once again focus upon such questions as "Where were you when the planes plowed into the Twin Towers, the first plane crashing into the North Tower at 8:48 a.m, Eastern Standard Time?" "And what was your experience?" That day, the American people- and our friends around the world- felt a sense of hopelessness, helplessness, despair, and anger. And a profound sense of loss.

So many Americans were stunned, frightened, shocked. We asked, "How could this happen?" We stared evil in the face, and saw that was frightening. Here were the powers of death, and they were powerful, indeed. And we had no control over these powers – we couldn't seem to grasp them – something very difficult for us "can do" Americans.

Of course, as we remember that fearful, frightful day, we should not forget the aftermath of this tragedy, the courage and heroism of so many, the compassion and care shown by thousands of volunteers, how we Americans bonded together to console the victims' families and pray for them, and for each other, and for our nation. Recalling the care, love, and compassion that was shown in the midst of tragedy to the victims, their families, and even to strangers, we know, in the end, that the power of good has really overcome the power of evil.

This month as we pause to remember the day of 9/11 itself, we followers of Jesus perhaps can fully understand how the disciples of Jesus felt that day after the Lord's death on Calvary. But

we also know, by faith, that the sting of death and the powers of evil that were experienced by all Americans on September 11, 2001, is overshadowed by the Power of the Cross—that instrument which the Lord turned into a sign of His victory over the powers of death. It can be no “accident” that among the ruins of the Twin Towers there appeared, in the rubble, an image of the Cross formed from steel girders. The power of Christ conquered then—and the power of Christ will continue to conquer. Let us, then, embrace the Cross, and look to the victory that awaits us all.

With love in the Lord,

Father David