

Homily
by The Rev. Priscilla Murdock

(Presented at an ecumenical service at 7 p.m. on Sept 11, 2001 in the Stockton, IL high school gym to over 200 of the 2000 inhabitants of the town.)

We must pause at this moment to remember the many who have died -- men, women, children -- in the tragic terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and its neighboring building and on the Pentagon.

Our friends in humanity have been attacked, killed, maimed, deprived of family members and dear friends through no fault of their own, and we are left stunned and grieving.

It is hard for us to imagine that there are those who are rejoicing in the success of these wanton acts of destruction and the loss of precious lives. Yet we must acknowledge that there are those who put their own political and religious agendas far ahead of the good of humankind and are convinced that they have the right to destroy whole lives, those of children just beginning to know life and of adults who are, like us, ordinary people going to work each day, striving to make a living and to provide for their families and loved ones.

The deepest feelings of our hearts are with those who are, we hope, recovering tonight from their injuries in hospitals all over those two stunned cities and to the families and friends of those who have been murdered so unjustly and so mercilessly.

Ours is just a small blue planet, and we live on it in a world of many kinds of creatures, many kinds of human beings. This earth has not survived all these millennia on hate -- love has found its way in and has proved again and again that it is the salvation of humankind.

In every society and every political and religious tradition there are those whose love is for us an example of all the goodness that human beings are capable of. Yet there are also in each tradition those who have become consumed by bitterness and hate.

While we are looking for the strength and understanding we need to be good and decent human beings, to live our lives so that we may be worthy of our Creator, worthy of our fellow creatures, worthy of our families and friends and all those who love us, there are those who are without that love, without that pity, without the joy that kindness brings.

We cannot understand them; we cannot understand those whose hopes and dreams are so distant from our own, and when they hurt the humanity that we love, we seem to be without answers to the immense questions that confront our hearts.

Yet we are not without hope; we are not without love; we are not without spiritual recourse, for we are a striving people; we are a learning people; we are a growing people. We have the consolation of a love and a reaching-out in compassion that is eternal in its understanding, that is a gift from our Creator, and as such is our help in such hours as these.

Let us pause to share a few moments of silence in memory of our fellow human beings whose sufferings are beyond our comprehension and whose tragedy is our deepest concern.

(Pause) AMEN