

## Homily at the Mass Commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 9/11

Friday, 10 September 2021

Saint Anselm College

Manchester, NH

by

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At 12 noon on September 11, 2001 the Saint Anselm College community came together in this same sacred place, not knowing for sure what was happening or how it would end. We came with the deepest longing of our hearts for peace. We came with sorrow, confusion, and anxiety to ask our just and merciful God for his assistance.

As a campus community we gathered to stand with one another in shock and sorrow for what had happened in our country that morning, to stand with one another on the side of our Christian faith that clearly urges us to stand with one another on the side of peace and non-violence in our world.

We did not know what to say, except to call out to God for help. We had seen the unthinkable happen before our eyes. We saw evil in a way many of us had never seen it before. What happened on 9/11 was a tragedy for our nation that would change forever the way we are in the world. We could no longer say: not here, not us. For it happened. And for the rest of our lives we shall never forget.

Twenty years ago the terrorists wanted us to believe that it was religion, not evil that caused our losses in New York and Pennsylvania and at the Pentagon. But through every day and every month that followed that awful morning as we read accounts of the innocent lives lost, we came to know those men and women who were guilty of nothing else but having gone to work in the morning, guilty of nothing else but going about living their lives in our free country, guilty of nothing else but some putting their own lives on the line, first to rescue then recover.

And we knew even more certainly the evil we had seen. Not religion. Evil.

One New York Times commentator said at the time: "Part of what makes civilization civilized is a natural reluctance to believe unconscionable evil until it is realized in front of us. Because of September 11th our civilization is less civilized...but it is more conscious, and therefore more alive." (NY Times Magazine, Andrew Sullivan)

Twenty years ago not only did our civilization suffer but even more personally our Saint Anselm community suffered as well – as we lost Richard Keane from the class of 1969 and Stephen Roach from the class of 1986, and Orio Palmer, a cousin of several alumni and Rene Olson,

sister-in-law of Trustee Charlie Crowley. They, with hundreds and hundreds of others that day, left behind their families and communities and places of worship.

They can never be replaced. And we have not forgotten them...and for them we mourn deeply again today; as we do for Marine Captain Kyle Van De Giesen, class of 2002, who joined the Marine Corps following his graduation from Saint Anselm partially in response to the attacks on 9/11. Captain Van De Giesen died in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan.

We have seen in the last 20 years what price freedom must sometimes pay. We have seen what oppression and terror can do to a people. We have seen heroism in the face of horror and we have seen a nation convinced that freedom comes from God and not from human laws and have come to understand that freedom shall not be taken away.

So today we pray that peace – God’s peace -- will triumph not only for us but also for the world. We believe that in Christ all things are possible...even peace in a deeply troubled world.

It is our faith that compels us to pray deeply for all who suffer...and for our enemies as well. It is our faith in which Jesus tells us so simply and directly: “remove the wooden beam from our own eyes.” That means that we must remove all prejudice and jealousy, all hatred and evil from *our own* hearts. Only then we can remove those things from our world as well.

For this we pray together today and every day of our lives.

God love you all. And God bless America.