

'I turned on the television at about 11.50 pm on Tuesday night (Sydney time). Headlines on every channel screamed of the 'Attack on America'. I rang a friend - he too had been glued to the television - and we began to pray together over the phone.'

- Anne

'It all seemed so close to home. Just a few months earlier we had been on one of those flights from Dallas to Los Angeles, we had walked the streets of Manhattan, we have a network of friends in New York... Throughout the night our phone kept ringing as family and friends sought news or checked in.'

- Susan

'As soon as I heard the news I went up to the church to pray for the dead and their families. I felt a strong awareness of Mary, the mother of our Lord.'

- Stephen

'All together, we must build a new culture of life...'

- John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, 95

A moment of power

Tuesday 11 Sept 2001. A massive terrorist attack on the USA. Planes crashing, fires spreading, buildings collapsing, global instability, untold loss of life. The evil of this moment is all too apparent. And yet, even in such a deathly moment, the gospel is very much alive - just as it was in the broken body of an innocent man executed on a cross. As Christians, our collective memory gives rise to a radical conviction: *No tragedy, not even the finality of death, can quench the power of God.*

Drawing on our deepest reserves of faith and love, as a Christian community let's claim the power of this moment. Let it not be the triumph of evil. This is God's time.

1. The power of prayer

Prayer: it's the most powerful tool we have when we can do nothing directly to ease the pain of others. As a Church, our life of prayer and worship is a great support in times of trouble. It allows us to express our grief, gather in solidarity and meet disaster with hope. As our community comes to terms with the US tragedy, let's reach out to those who do not have the resources to pray. This might be as simple as inviting a friend to a prayer service.

2. The power of humility

The economic and technological wealth of our society can lead to a false sense of our own power. We start to trust in the accomplishments of humanity rather than in our Creator. The shocking events in the US - jet planes crashing, skyscrapers crumbling - are a stark reminder of our vulnerability and our dependence on God. Painful as it is, this is a moment for acknowledging our need for God.

3. The power of compassion

We are used to TV images showing the plight of the masses in poverty-stricken and war-ravaged countries. But, because of the cultural divide, at some level we may think 'They're not like us.' Now disaster strikes people 'just like us', including Australians caught in the Manhattan blaze, and we are shocked to the core. May we emerge from this experience with a deeper compassion for the sufferings of the whole human family.

4. The power of faith

In this moment our faith is put to the test. Is God stronger than this? Do we really believe that the death and resurrection of Jesus can bring life out of death, hope out of tragedy?

5. The power of a courageous community

Amidst scenes of destruction and carnage, this is also a time of courage and self-sacrifice as rescue workers, medical teams, countless agencies and individuals combine their efforts to save lives and relieve suffering, often risking their own lives in the process.

6. The power of witness

This is a teachable moment for our children. What will they learn by the way we respond to this tragedy? Will they see us cursing or praying? Championing peace or cheering revenge? The days ahead will test our moral fibre as much as that of governments and nations.

7. The power of hope

While suffering has no value in itself, *to suffer with hope in the risen Christ has immense value*. In our community there are people who have endured all kinds of tragedy with heroic courage and faith. They have survived to tell a story of new life. Their witness is a source of hope for us all. In this moment they are prophets in our midst; let's heed their message.

8. The power of gratitude

This is a moment to reflect on the gift of our own nation where we live in relative safety, peace and prosperity. True, this is a fragile gift, yet a gift all the same. For all its problems, let's never take life in this country for granted.

As the anguish of this tragedy unfolds over the coming days, may our own journey into the heart of Christ unfold with ever-greater clarity, fullness and power. In Christ Jesus we place our trust. Amen.