

An Open Letter from Adam Cardinal Maida to the Priests and People of the Archdiocese of Detroit

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

By any measure, our human family has suffered a horrific loss. On September 11th, an unimaginable tragedy began to unfold on our television sets. The images will in be our mind's eye forever. But these worst of times have brought out the best in our fellow Americans. We have witnessed incredible generosity and strength of spirit in the recovery teams, the medical personnel, and all of the volunteers who are still at their posts.

In the face of this tragedy of such incredible proportions, most people feel helpless to respond. Yet there are some things we can do. We have all heard the requests for prayers; perhaps you may even want to *fast* and pray. You might consider offering financial help. Our archdiocese has established a the "[St. Raphael Fund](#)" to process and forward donations to Catholic Charities USA. And, many parishes and institutions have volunteered to serve as locations for blood donations or collection sites. That information has been sent to the parishes and is also available on our archdiocesan website— www.archdioceseofdetroit.org. And while details have yet to be finalized and posted, you might consider attending a special ecumenical prayer service in Detroit being planned for the afternoon of Sunday, September 23rd.

One thing all of us can do is to examine our conscience and consider whether we ourselves are thinking and acting out of prejudice or fear; we also should challenge ourselves to evaluate our commitment to peace and justice at all times and in all circumstances. The Scriptures speak to us of God's mercy and compassion. At every Mass, we recite the Lord's Prayer and these powerful but challenging words "*Forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us...*".

We hear many people speak of retaliation against the perpetrators. And yet, we also know full well the Gospel teaching of Jesus that "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" will never resolve these things; rather such action would only further escalate the cycle of anger and violence.

As our nation and its leaders continue to sort out the best course of action, it is important to distinguish between justly defending our nation and its security and pursuing a more aggressive response. We know the path to genuine and lasting peace can only be trod by steps that are themselves peaceful and just. And as we move forward, let us not engage in ethnic, religious or national stereotyping for the unspeakable terrorist acts of irrational individuals and organizations.

As we reflect on these events, we can wonder why God allows such things to happen. There are no easy answers, but as Christians, we have the consolation of putting things in context to Christ's cross and Resurrection. As we look to Jesus, the Son of God who absorbed human anger, betrayal, and denial in his Passion and Death, we find a reason to hope for new beginnings, reconciliation and peace.

At the [Vatican](#), our Holy Father put it this way: "... those who believe in God know that evil and death do not have the final say. Let us beg the Lord that the spiral of hatred and violence will not prevail. May the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Mercy, fill the hearts of all with wise thoughts and peaceful intentions."

The Holy Father's words offer both compassion and a challenge. Together with our brothers and sisters in the human family, let us join together in a commitment to justice through peace. And let us pray for the victims, their families, our country and our world.

May bless God you, and may God bless America and the citizens of every nation.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

+Adam Cardinal Maida
Archbishop of Detroit

September 16, 2001