



## After 9/11, St. Clare Outreach Program Guided Staten Island Survivors 'Where to Turn'

By CHRISTIE L. CHICOINE

he St. Clare World Trade Center Outreach Program on Staten Island guided grieving survivors of those who died in the collapse of the Twin Towers on 9/11.

They needed to know "where to turn," said Dennis McKeon, a member of St. Clare parish who was asked by the pastor at the time to head a committee that created the program.

McKeon, now 64, said he is proud of the work the committee did. "It really showed how people can come together and help people that are going through really bad situations."

As reported in a CNY article in April 2002, St. Clare WTC Outreach committee members notified victims' families about the program and its purpose: to provide hands-on help immediately. Early on, McKeon visited the WTC Relief Web page, which listed more than 200 organizations and agencies that helped victims, including Catholic Charities, the Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. He contacted each and obtained information and application forms.

The committee put together an information packet and a checklist. Volunteers showed survivors what they needed to do to get help and guided them through the process.

Help included a bereavement support group held at St. Clare's, transportation to doctor's appointments, grocery shopping and general assistance around the house that ranged from mowing lawns and shoveling snow to consulting on financial matters. "We reached out to the entire parish and asked anybody who could provide any type of services," McKeon told CNY last week. "We got a tremendous response from the parishioners...basically everything the lost loved one had done for the families."

Nicole Petrocelli LaMorte, whose late husband Mark Petrocelli had a meeting the morning of Sept. 11 on the 92nd Floor of Tower 1, looks back TREASURE—Dennis McKeon, executive director of Where to Turn on Staten Island, looks over toy donations. Some of the items will be sent to victims of Hurricane Ida which struck Louisiana last month. Below, a sign and display of T-shirts welcome visitors to the Prop Shop, where numerous items are available for loan to local community theater groups and school productions. McKeon belongs to St. Clare parish on Staten Island.

at the St. Clare outreach group with gratitude. The early days following 9/11 were "pure chaos," she told CNY last week. Then a member of St. Clare's, she attended the parish's bereavement support group.

The St. Clare outreach group "quickly evolved to a full service support for families," she said.

McKeon, she added, "emerged so early on" and "jumped right in to help. He came to our homes with all the necessary paperwork that we needed to fill out."

He and the St. Clare outreach group, she said, "were able to bring order to the chaos for us. There was so much information to process. They were so helpful. I don't know what we would have done without them."

Although her late husband did not work at the World Trade Center—he was a trader on the commodities exchange a few blocks away and had just become a broker six days before the scheduled meeting with a number of other brokers. The meeting was supposed to end at 8:30 a.m., his widow said. His birthday was two days later, on Sept. 13; he would have turned 29.

Ms. Petrocelli LaMorte, now 47, is remarried and a member of Our Lady of Good Counsel parish on Staten Island. "If I didn't have my Catholic faith, I don't know where I would be," she said.

Denise Matuza, 54, then and now a parishioner CONTINUED ON PAGE S6

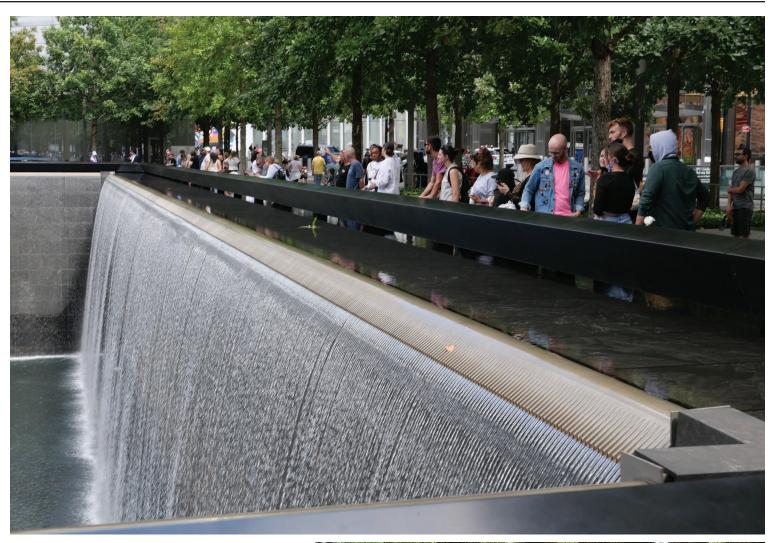


PHOTOS BY MARY DIBIASE BLAICH

#### IN REMEMBRANCE—

People gather around a reflecting pool of cascading water, right, at the 9/11 Memorial in lower Manhattan Sept.

3. The same day, a man and a woman, below, examine a Callery pear tree that became known as the "Survivor Tree" after it endured the 9/11 terror attacks at the World Trade Center.



# Infinite Water at 9/11 Reflecting Pools Is 'Best Representation of the Lost Lives'

By CHRISTIE L. CHICOINE

ere, grief is palpable," said Pope Francis when he visited the National September 11 Memorial and Museum six years ago.

"A Witness to Peace: A Multi-Religious Gathering With Pope Francis" on Sept. 25, 2015, began with a Welcome of the Holy Father by Cardinal Dolan, who accompanied the pope to the solemn service.

Pope Francis read the same prayer Pope Benedict XVI recited when he visited Ground Zero in April 2008, a prayer that includes those who died the same day at the Pentagon in Arlington, Va., and near Shanksville, Pa.

"This place of death became a place of life too," the pope said in his address, "a place of saved lives, a hymn to the triumph of life over the prophets of destruction and death, to goodness over evil, to reconciliation and unity over hatred and division."

Last week, on a sunny, blue sky Sept. 3—weather eerily similar to the day the Twin Towers were felled two decades ago—CNY spoke with several people paying their respects at the outdoor reflecting pools of the 9/11 Memorial where the North Tower and South Tower, respectively, once stood.

The sound of the rush of the water of the two square, below ground reflecting pools was relaxing and rejuvenating as it gently reverberated throughout the serene site.

The Kane family of the Diocese of Boise, Idaho, were visiting the reflecting pool that represented the South Tower.

Sean Kane, 38, said he last visited the memorial 10 years ago. Accompanying him there last Friday was his wife, Andrea, 38, and their three children, all of whom belong to Holy Apostles parish in Meridian,



PHOTOS BY CHRIS SHERIDAN

Idaho. With them was his sister-inlaw, Tricia Kane, 30, who with her husband Joel Kane, attends St. Paul the Apostle parish in Manhattan.

Sean Kane said he and his wife carefully explained to their children, daughters Lia, 9, and Cori, 6, and son Sam, 3, that "someone wanted to hurt our country."

What "made it real for them," he

said, were the "names along the side." He was referring to those who perished whose names are inscribed on parapets that edge the memorial pools.

Andrea Kane, who is principal of St. Ignatius School in Meridian, said, "There are a lot of profound lessons here."

CONTINUED ON PAGE S6

### 9/11 Catholic Memorial at St. Peter's Church Offers Place to Reflect

By DAN PIETRAFESA

9/11 Catholic Memorial is in front of St. Peter's Church on Barclay Street in Manhattan, just a short walk from the 9/11 Memorial and Museum located at the site of the World Trade Center.

Parishioners and visitors come to the site to pray and remember the victims, workers and first responders of 9/11 as they will Sept. 11 when Auxiliary Bishop Edmund Whalen, vicar for clergy, will celebrate a 9/11 Memorial Mass inside the historic church at 4 p.m.

Four bronze statues by artist John Collier, blessed by Cardinal Dolan in 2018, are outside on the church steps as part of the 9/11 Catholic Memorial, which was relocated to St. Peter's when St. Joseph's Chapel closed.

The statues are of St. Michael the Archangel, patron saint of police officers; St. Florian, patron saint of firefighters and EMS workers; St. Mary Magdalene, first witness to the Resurrection; and St. Joseph, patron saint of workers.

Father Jarlath Quinn, pastor of St. Peter and Our Lady of the Rosary parish since 2016, told



#### **MEMORIAL**—

Bronze statues of St. Florian, left, patron saint of firefighters and EMTs, and St. Mary Magdalene, right, the first witness to the Resurrection, form a significant part of the 9/11 Catholic Memorial outside St. Peter's Church in Lower Manhattan. Cardinal Dolan is shown blessing the statue of St. Florian in 2018.



PHOTOS BY CHRIS SHERIDAN

CNY his message for parishioners at Masses on the 9/11 weekend is exemplified by the St. Mary Magdalene statue.

"The proclamation of the Resurrection, that's the message we'll be proclaiming as well as offering words of comfort to those who were affected and the families who are still grieving," Father Quinn said. "For us as Christians, we be-

lieve life has changed, not ended, with death.

"It's our belief in the Resurrection that helps us to move forward."

St. Peter's, founded on the same site in 1785, was the first Roman Catholic parish established in New York state. Venerable Pierre Toussaint was a parishioner of St. Peter's. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American-born saint, made her profession of faith and received her first Holy Communion at St. Peter's; Venerable Father Félix Varela served two years as a parish priest; and

"The proclamation of the Resurrection, that's the message we'll be proclaiming as well as offering words of comfort to those who were affected and the families who are still grieving." Adelaide O'Sullivan was baptized in the church and later became Servant of God Carmelite Mother Adelaide of St. Teresa.

Father Edward Sorin, C.S.C., founder of the University of Notre Dame, celebrated his first Mass in the United States at St. Peter's after he and six Holy Cross Brothers arrived in New York Harbor in 1842.

The church also has historic art-

work such as the four bronze statues in the 9/11 Catholic Memorial, a statue of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and The Crucifixion painting over the main altar by Mexican artist Jose Valleo, a gift from Archbishop Nunez de Haro of Mexico City in 1789.

"It's as historic as you can get," said Cardinal Dolan in his social media video series, "Cardinal Dolan's New York." "This was the only Catholic Church in New York. There weren't too many Catholics, but if they were here in the early days, they came to St. Peter's parish."

### As FDNY Chaplain and Pastor, Msgr. Filacchione Responded

By ARMANDO MACHADO

sgr. Marc J. Filacchione, a longtime FDNY chaplain who was at the scene at the World Trade Center and other venues on 9/11, shared reflections last week on the tragic day.

"It is certainly a date that is going to be remembered forever," Msgr. Filacchione, 67, told Catholic New York—especially by those, he said, who lost loved ones or who know families impacted by the tragedy, such as the families of firefighters and other first responders who developed illnesses.

"They did a wonderful job, and they're still paying the price for that work; many of them are still getting sick from 9/11-related illnesses. We're still losing people...It was a very confusing time. The day was a long day. I didn't get back to the rectory probably until one in the morning."

Msgr. Filacchione has served as an FDNY chaplain since 1995, and since 2016 as archdiocesan director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and director of the Prison Apostolate.

At the time of 9/ll, he was pastor of St. Michael's on West 34th Street, where he served from 1992 until 2004. He also served as pastor of Our Lady of Victory on William Street in Lower Manhattan, 2004-2016.

Msgr. Filacchione, who was ordained in 1980 and named a monsignor in 1995, has also served as director of the Hospital Apostolate. He was a parochial vicar at Blessed Sacrament parish on Staten Island, 1980-1989, and a summer secretary to Cardinal John O'Connor in 1989.

Msgr. Filacchione, reflecting on 9/11, recalled being in the parish office at St. Michael's that morning. "A parishioner had called me up in the morning after Mass, when the first plane had hit the tower," he told CNY. "She told me her son was in the building at the World Trade. I remember putting the television on and sure enough the picture of the smoke billowing from the World Trade Center tower was on all of the channels.

"She said her son had just called, that a plane had just hit the tower, the first tower. (He was in that first tower). He got out; he was working. He did get out. And while I was talking with her, the pager went off, the fire department pager. And of course I knew what that was. I knew that we were being called for that event. So I began to make my way down to the World Trade (Center).

"But hearing the number of ambulances and fire trucks and emergency vehicles that were already on the road, I said I wouldn't make it down there very far. So I took the E train down. I figured it would be easier to get down there by train. I got off at West Fourth Street. The train didn't go any further because of all the police activity down in Lower Manhattan. The people who were on the subway, they were going to work; they didn't know what was going on up on top, on the street level. They didn't know that a plane had hit the World Trade; they just knew that the train was being delayed at West Fourth



COURTESY OF FDN

**ON THE SCENE**—Msgr. Marc Filacchione, an archdiocesan priest who has served as an FDNY chaplain since 1995, confers with Deputy Chief Edward Dennehy outside St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital in Manhattan in response to a fire at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in December 2001. Msgr. Filacchione also responded on 9/11 and for months afterward at Ground Zero.

Street. So I got upstairs, and I did get a ride from a police vehicle down to Church Street.

"Not very long after that, debris started coming down from the building. I guess the first building was collapsing. I guess by that time the second building had been hit, and we had to run down into the subway station; the subway station behind St. Paul's Church, we had to run down there.

"Then the debris started coming down, blocking the entrance to the subway. The police officers down there, they were very helpful getting us out. We walked to the other end of the platform, to the next exit, and that was open and we got out of the subway station. We were filled with powder and everything on our clothes." (The monsignor eventually learned that the parishioner's son was among several people who helped a person in a wheelchair down a staircase during their escape).

Msgr. Filacchione and others were overcome by smoke; they received treatment at St. Vincent's Hospital in Lower Manhattan. He later returned to his parish, cleaned up, changed clothes and then went back to the hospital to comfort firefighters and others being treated there. "Back to the hospital; we weren't allowed (to return) there at Ground Zero," he said. Cardinal Edward Egan, in his Catholic New York column written for the fifth anniversary of 9/11, recalled encountering Msgr. Filacchione at St. Vincent's. "Within minutes another stretcheron-wheels arrived, this one bearing one of our archdiocesan priests, Msgr. Marc J. Filacchione, a Catholic chaplain of the New York City Fire Department. He had been overcome by smoke while helping frightened men and women flee...I anointed and blessed him, and he was quickly taken to a room in the hospital."

In the days, weeks and months that followed 9/11, Msgr. Filacchione and other priests often did return to Ground Zero to bless recovered bodies. "There was a morgue that was set up down there, a temporary morgue," he said.

During his pastorate at nearby Our Lady of Victory, he served as principal celebrant of 9/ll anniversary Memorial Masses at noontime. "The Mass was done in the years before me; we just followed the tradition. The church was always packed. Many of them had worked down there the day of 9/ll. They had their own stories of the events of 9/ll, a lot of the survivors. And a number of them lost loved ones, a son or a daughter in the towers, in the events of 9/ll."

#### **Infinite Water...**

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As a Catholic educator, she explained the importance of "our faith, drawing us to unity" at a time in the nation when unity is lacking. "I see parallels within the pandemic, too," she said, "calling us to come together and have a common, shared vision and mission—and we did that in 9/11. We came together as a country."

It is remarkable to Tricia Kane that 20 years have passed since that tragic day. Although she was 10 years old and lived in Ohio then, she "very vividly" remembers details of the day.

She shared her gratitude that her paternal uncle who worked in one of the towers of the World Trade Center "forgot his lunch that morning and he happened to go back for his lunch" causing him to be late for work. "As he came out of the subway, people were just yelling, 'Go, go, go."

Also, a cousin of her father's whose office was on the side of the Pentagon that was also struck by terrorists that day, happened to be on the other side of the building at the time.

"It's powerful," she said of the

9/11 Memorial.

Ben Taylor, 41, a software engineer from Denver, was gathered with family in the vicinity of the reflecting pool that represents the South Tower near a Callery pear tree that became known as the "Survivor Tree" after it endured the 9/11 terror attacks at the World Trade Center. It stands as a reminder of resilience, survival and rebirth.

The last time Taylor was near the 9/11 site was on another visit to New York 19 years ago, during the aftermath where he observed the Ground Zero demolition from behind a construction fence.

"This memorial is incredible," he said. "I never would have thought for a second that it would be this grand. You see the footprints of the buildings."

Taylor described the reflecting pools, complete with their tranquil flow of water, as "very peaceful" and "a great tribute."

"The way they put this together was very thoughtfully done," he added of the general atmosphere of

the 9/11 Memorial. "It's humbling."

Jorge and Lidia Cerchiara of Cape Canaveral, Fla., had just emerged from the 9/11 Museum when they spoke with CNY near the reflecting pool that represents the North Tower.

Both were visibly moved by the solemness they had witnessed inside the museum, and they shared their sentiments.

"It's very subtle," Jorge Cerchiara, 65, said.

"It was very overwhelming, very moving; I just wanted to cry," said Lidia Cerchiara, 63. The display of photos inside the museum of those who perished on 9/11 was almost too much for her to bear. "How sad it is to see their faces," she said.

In contrast, the cascading water from the reflecting pool was soothing to her husband. "The water, that doesn't have an end, is the best representation of the lost lives," Jorge Cerchiara said.

The Cerchiaras, both of whom are retired, were born in Argentina. Although they had been to New York before, last week was the first time they visited the 9/11 Memorial

and Museum. "It was long overdue," Jorge Cerchiara said.

Peering into the reflecting pool that represents the North Tower were Amit and Neha Pandey and their 10-month-old son Yuvan, of Los Angeles.

"We came all the way from L.A. to visit this memorial site," said Amit Pandey, 34. It was important, he said, to "pay some respect to these people."

He himself has done so two other times: the first, in 2010 and, most recently, five years ago. The third time around, watching the water cascade down the walls still "mesmerizes" him, Pandey said. He also marveled at the magnitude of the design and architecture of the memorial.

The husband and wife are originally from Mumbai, India, and both recalled learning about the 9/11 attacks when they were children there.

It was important to the Pandeys that their young son accompany them to the site. "He was born here" in the United States, Neha Pandey said. "He should know everything about the history."

#### St. Clare...

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of St. Clare's, is also appreciative of the St. Clare outreach group. She lost her husband, Walter Matuza, a computer analyst who worked on the 92nd Floor of Tower 1, on 9/11. They had three young sons, and she would have to raise them without him.

"When it first happened, we were all in the dark," she said of herself and numerous others who lost loved ones that day. "We didn't know what to do, where to go or where to turn."

The St. Clare outreach group "helped us in a lot of different ways," Ms. Matuza said, including finishing painting her house that her late husband had been in the process of painting.

"The bereavement group was very helpful," she added. "We became one. Over time, it was all of us together."

"They said they would never leave us," Ms. Matuza said. "Now it's been 20 years; up to this day, we can still call them."

St. Clare's WTC Outreach Program "laid the groundwork for Where to Turn," McKeon told CNY last week of the name of the 503c nonprofit organization on Staten

Island of which he is executive di-

"We still help the 9/11 families," including by providing free bus service to and from the solemn ceremony at the 9/11 Memorial on the anniversary of the terrorist attack.

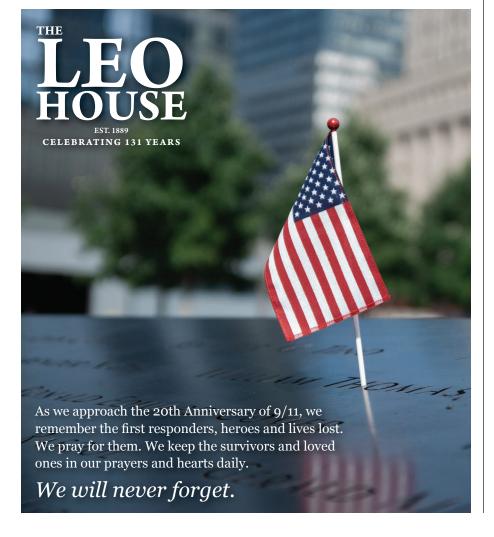
Where to Turn, according to its website, www.where-to-turn.org, offers crisis relief services for victims of any kind of tragedy by aiding them in obtaining the help they need during the recovery process.

Where to Turn's annual Christmas toy drive on Staten Island, now under way, will include a delivery to families impacted by Hurricane Ida in Louisiana last month.

"It amazes me how time has passed," McKeon told CNY, "and unfortunately how many people we have lost since 2001—people dying from not only 9/11-related diseases but people just passing on."

He also marveled at the passage of time for children whose parents perished on 9/11 who "are now grown into 25, 26-year-old adults."

"It's good to see that they have been able to get through, with the help of friends and family, the tragic day of Sept. 11, 2001."



### Old Wounds, New Fears, Endless Faith

his month's column marks 20 years of *Life Lines* in Catholic New York. I remember well my first column, about my then-4-year-old son, Noah, and his nature camp experiences. Except, when that first column ran a month after I wrote it, we were in the throes of 9/11. I can still



MARY DeTURRIS POUST

Life Lines

feel the despair that raced through me when I realized that my happy, life-is-good column was going to run in the aftermath of such horror. Would people think I was being callous in the face of such tremendous loss and pain?

I did write a 9/11 column, which ran in October that year. It drew on the Mercer

Mayer book "There's an Alligator Under My Bed," a favorite of Noah's at the time. When I pulled out that old column to read it, I was immediately taken back to the raw, fearful weeks after that awful day:

The night after the World Trade Center attack,

I lay awake in my bed staring at the ceiling, filled with a sense of dread that I could not quite put my finger on. I was scared, but not by the images of horror that had flashed before my eyes for hours that day. Instead, my fears seemed frivolous, not at all unlike the little boy's alligator: Had I left the dryer on in the basement? Was the window over the kitchen sink still open? Were the kids' pajamas warm enough? I felt a child-like fear of the dark, of things no one else can see, things we parents usually try to hush with a goodnight kiss and a nightlight.

When morning finally arrived, I realized that my sleeplessness wasn't really about what might go wrong within my four walls. It was about what had gone wrong in our world. Long after I had wiped away the tears of sadness that fell as I watched the World Trade Center collapse over and over again on television's seemingly endless loop of horror, I fought back tears of a different kind...tears for a world we don't yet know.

Here we are, 20 years later, with new fears and old wounds and so much water under the bridge and alligators under the bed that it's hard to know which way is up. And the smartphones in our pockets—"tools" we have now that we didn't have then—only serve to muddy the waters even more, keeping us tethered to devastating news around the clock and to an abundance of online

trolls ready to turn people against one another at every turn. It's a deadly brew that can push us into a state of constant fear and panic if we don't make a conscious effort to tune out now and then, not because we are cold-hearted but because we need to be able to get up in the morning and put one foot in front of the other.

Lutheran pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber hit the nail on the head when she wrote recently: "I just do not think our psyches were developed to hold, feel and respond to everything coming at them right now; every tragedy, injustice, sorrow and natural disaster happening to every human across the entire planet, in real time every minute of every day. The human heart and spirit were developed to be able to hold, feel and respond to any tragedy, injustice, sorrow or natural disaster that was happening IN OUR VILLAGE."

When you are feeling overwhelmed by the world and all its sadness, take a deep breath, say a prayer, seek out your village and begin there. And whatever you do, unplug for a day or a week or however long you need to find your center, the Light in the darkness that will guide you through every storm. Be not afraid.

Mary DeTurris Poust is a writer, retreat leader, and director of communications for the Diocese of Albany. Visit her website at www.NotStrictlySpiritual.com.

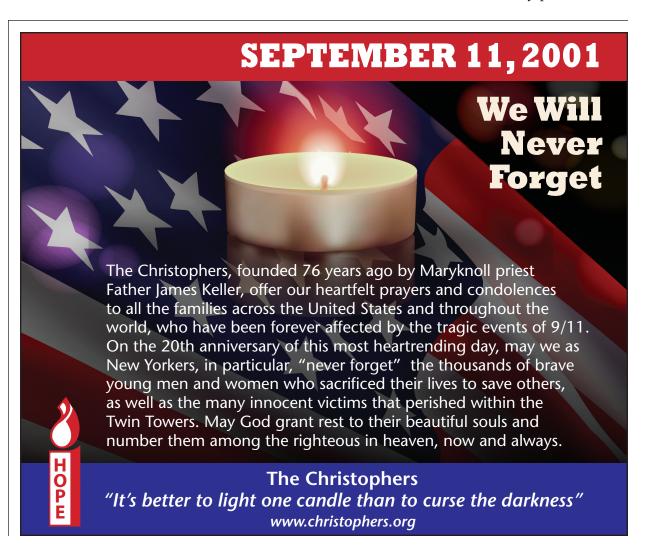
# 9/11 Masses and Ceremonies

A Mass marking the 20th anniversary of 9/11 will be offered at St. Peter's Church, 22 Barclay St., Manhattan, Saturday, Sept. 11, at 4 p.m. Auxiliary Bishop Edmund Whalen, vicar for clergy, will be the principal celebrant.

The University of Notre Dame Alumni Club of Staten Island will hold its annual Evening of Solemn Remembrance at Our Lady of Pity Church, 1616 Richmond Ave., Friday, Sept. 10. Retired Auxiliary Bishop John O'Hara, episcopal vicar of Staten Island, will be the principal celebrant of a Mass at 7:30 p.m., to be preceded by a presentation of sacred music by Maura Molloy at 7 p.m. A reading of the names of Staten Islanders lost on 9/11 and a candlelight procession are other highlights.

A Mass of Remembrance marking the 20th anniversary of 9/11 will be offered at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 70 Carmelite Drive, Middletown, Friday, Sept. 10, at 7 p.m.

The Where to Turn Foundation will bring the United in Memory 9/11 Victims Memorial Quilt to Staten Island for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11. St. John's University will host the quilt display in the student center gym on the Grymes Hill campus Sept. 9-12. Family and friends of 9/11 victims may attend a private reception and view the quilt on the evening of Sept. 9. The exhibit will be open to the public, free of charge, Sept. 10-12, from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m.



S8 CATHOLIC NEW YORK September 9, 2021

# IN SACRED REMEMBRANCE



BOB REERS



CHRIS SHERIDAN



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#### THROUGH THE YEARS—

Moments of reflection are shown on anniversaries of 9/11 and other special occasions. Clockwise from top left: Pope Francis places a rose at the National Sept. 11 Memorial in Lower Manhattan during his pastoral visit to the United States and Cuba in September 2015; American flags are held aloft at the New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade in 2011 representing the 343 firefighters killed in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center; then-Archbishop Dolan leads prayers on Sept. 11, 2009, outside St. Peter's Church on Barclay Street, where a cross formed by two steel beams from Ground Zero had been erected; Cardinal Edward Egan comforts the faithful at a Month's Mind Mass he offered Oct. 11, 2001, at St. Patrick's Cathedral; and visitors to St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan in the fall of 2001 look at the Wall of Hope and Remembrance set up as a memorial to 9/11 victims.



CHRIS SHERIDAN