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September 2021



Reflecting on September 11

On September 11, 2001, I was out of town at a meeting. My day started simply enough with breakfast at the hotel I was staying at. As I was leaving to get to my 9:00am meeting, there was something on the news about a plane crash.

As the meeting got underway my pager went off with a news alert. A second plane had crashed in New York. Then, slowly at first, more information kept coming to us. The meeting was suspended as we attempted to process what was taking place.

It has been twenty years since September 11, 2001. A Google search refreshed my memory of the events of that day. Through pictures, stories and video, I

relived what took place. The more I looked at, the more I realized how much I had forgotten.

Why? Why didn't I remember more? Why did I have to refresh my memory? Why is what I saw and read only vaguely familiar?

I'm sure there are plenty of psychological theories of why we forget. As a defense mechanism we may bury issues that are painful. As a culture, we may simply be trying to process too much information at a time.

But, unfortunately, I think that forgetting is just part of our nature. We tend to move on in life focusing on what is ahead rather than what is behind. And while for the most part this is a good thing, there are some things that we must not forget.

I believe what Jesus did for us on the cross is one of these things.

That is why we celebrate our faith. We remember the sacrifice made for us allowing us to know freedom and forgiveness. We can only move forward in our relationship with God as we look back and remember.

I believe the events of September 11 are another.

That is why we celebrate America. We remember the ongoing sacrifices made for us so we can enjoy freedom. We can only move forward as a Nation as we look back and remember.

--Chaplain Joe LaCognata



Remembering Victim 0001

Father Mychal Judge was a Franciscan friar and Catholic priest who served as Chaplain to the Fire Department of New York. Father Mychal has the distinction of being the first certified fatality of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Father Judge was born in Brooklyn, NY in 1933. Due to his father's illness, at a young age he worked shining shoes at Penn Station across the street from St. Francis of Assisi Church. He was so profoundly influenced by the friars of St. Francis that he pursued religious training and was ordained into the priesthood in 1961. After serving in various roles through the years, he was assigned to his home church of St. Francis in 1986.

While Penn Station was across the street from St. Francis Church in one direction, the Fire Department of New York's Engine 1/Ladder 24 was across the street in the other direction. This set Father Mychal on a journey that would lead him to being appointed as Department Chaplain in 1992.

Throughout the years of serving FDNY as their Chaplain, Father Judge demonstrated the essential qualities of ministry: care, compassion, forgiveness. He was known to be there for those in crisis, as well as for the firefighters that he loved and served.

This is what brought him to the lobby of Tower 1 on September 11, 2001. He responded to this call like he had responded to many calls before. However, when Tower 2 collapsed, and debris was scattered into Tower 1, Father Judge was killed. Father Mychal Judge represented the absolute best of the fire chaplaincy. He was a selfless servant caring for the needs of those who serve every day.

It has been said that the chaplaincy is a ministry of presence. By their presence, fire chaplains bring some peace and comfort as stressful and difficult situations are encountered. I'm proud to be among the fire chaplains that continue the tradition of caring that Father Judge started years ago.

--Chaplain Joe LaCognata



Why I'll Never Forget

The years just keep ticking by. Five, ten, fifteen, twenty years have gone by since the tragic events of September 11, 2001. While the terrorists may have been mocking us by carrying out their cowardly attacks on September 11, they may have inadvertently helped us remember by choosing that date. September 11, or 911, comes to mind twice a day when my clock displays that time. 911 comes to mind every time I see a police car, fire truck, or ambulance displaying how to call for emergency services. For me, September 11, 2001 will always be remembered for these reasons.

However, there is an even greater reason why I'll never forget; I see the same courage, the same commitment, the same sacrifice being made every day. According to the National Fire Protection Association's "U.S. Fire Department Profile," there are 1,115,000 firefighters protecting our country. Over a million men and women have dedicated themselves to saving lives and protecting property.

While the magnitude of September 11, 2001 has never been equaled, the call to serve, the call to sacrifice remains the same. In fact, in the years since 2001, there have been over 1,500 line of duty deaths in the fire service. From sea to shining sea, from cities to wildland settings, from north to south, today's firefighters continue the legacy of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

I'll always remember September 11, 2001 as a day of tragedy, a day of sacrifice. The reason I'll never forget is that I'm reminded of the courage, the commitment, the sacrifice of the American firefighter every day.

--Chaplain Joe LaCognata



In Remembrance

**The following firefighters died in the line of duty
during the month of August**

8/4 - Daniel "Danny" Ireton - Stanton, TX

8/8 - Larry Dean Adams - Yazoo City, MS

8/9 - Derek Poole - Catawba, NC

8/11 - Joshua D. Laird - Frederick, MD

8/12 - Colin McFadden - Burlington, CT

8/15 - Timothy Watson - Winder, GA

8/15 - Tommy Allen Hopson - Carrollton, GA

8/15 - William Stalls - Oak City, NC

8/15 - Joshua Schwindt - Elkhart, KS

8/16 - Dylan Rodiek - Austin, TX

8/16 - Willie Bunch - Oak City, NC

8/17 - Mario J. Moya - Jacksonville, FL

8/23 - Frumencio Ruiz Carapia - Central Point, OR

8.24 - Judy Spencer - Gasport, NY

8/26 - Cody Traber - Mead, WA

8/27 - Donald J. Trout - Sayreville, NJ

8/28 - James Krouse - Colfax, WA

85 firefighters have died in the line of duty in 2021



Our Vision

Imagine an organization committed to one task – supporting fire rescue personnel. From their work in the field to their lives at home, picture an organization working to equip these first responders to be more successful on the job and in life. Envision an organization that extends the support of those serving in fire rescue by offering care and comfort to the people they serve. Finally, picture an organization that would impact emergency services workers all across the country. That organization is Fire Rescue Support – supporting fire rescue personnel before, during and after the call.



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