

We must hold firmly to our unity, born forward now not of tragedy but of loving kindness.

The debris has been cleared away, museums and buildings have been built or repaired, yet we live with the memory of those horrific days. We want it to be “over”, but we know that there are still individuals who are planning more acts of terrorism. We pray today, for those for whom the imminent threat of terror and violence is still frightfully real. Let us remember that all people are God’s children and our brothers and sisters; and that God calls us to love one another – even those who would do us harm.

In Your mercy, O God, hear our prayers.

We pray that all leaders, in our own country and around the world, may exercise restraint in all their actions; as they seek the path that will deal with the cause of the terrorism, rather reacting to the symptoms; the path that will lead to a true and lasting peace.

In Your mercy, O God, hear our prayers.

With the awareness that what hurts one, hurts all, help us to share our message of love, acceptance, forgiveness, and peace.

Unison Prayer:

God of the ages, before Your eyes all empires rise and fall yet You are changeless. Be near us in this age of terror and violence.

Uphold those who work and watch and wait and weep and love. When joy is captive to pain; when hope turns to ashes, and lives are ended too soon; bring us into Your light, and soften our hearts with Your grace. By Your Spirit, strengthen us to comfort those who mourn in large ways and small, those affected by acts of terrorism, by acts of violence, by acts of abuse, by acts of neglect. Inspire within us, and through us, those things that make for peace. We pray this in the strong name of Jesus Christ, the true Prince of Peace. Amen.

Portions of this Litany were written by Rev. Eileen W. Lindner and Rev. Marcel A. Welty of the National Council of Churches.

A Litany of Remembrance, Penitence and Hope

One: We know all too well that we live in an often violent world. We pause in this moment to remember all those who suffer from acts of terror and acts of violence.

God of all, compassionate One, You have told us to choose life that others may live. Through Christ Jesus, You have shown us the way to do this. On this day of remembrance, we lift up before you the victims of terrorism and violence. We lift up before you both those whose lives were ended, and for those living with memories they cannot forget. In the midst of our remembrance of what was lost, we remain confident that we are all under Your loving and protective care. God of life, hear our prayers:

We pray for the innocent, women and men and, old and young, single and married, who 20 years ago, did not escape the towers, the Pentagon or the planes, whose lives were lost swiftly and in violence.

All: May they forever find shelter with You.

We pray for the faithful, the firefighters and police officers who stand to protect and defend the people, whose lives are sometimes lost in service to others, in service to us.

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When we pray for all who came to our aid, especially for those who rushed to the “Ground Zero’s”, in the Manhattan, in Washington, and a Pennsylvania field, to help; the medical personnel, the iron workers, the sanitation workers, the ordinary people who were walking by, and the endless list of those who did what they could to help, some of whom have or are suffering because of their selfless service.

We remember and give thanks for their compassion to those in distress. We pray for their health and wellbeing, as they discover they, too, are victims of the attacks.

And we pray for the innocent, women and men, old and young, parents, students, children and infants, who continue to be victims of acts of violence, who have been injured or killed by gunfire, knifings, and beatings.

We look for protection in Your everlasting arms.

We pray for those who have been wounded by prejudice or violence, whose lives are damaged in body and spirit.

Comfort and heal them, O God, and give them strength.

We pray for the fearful, whose lives are lessened by worry,

Comfort them, O God, and give them Your peace.

We pray for the angry, whose lives are ruled by hatred.

Show them Your way of love, O God.

We pray for the poor, whose lives are ruled by hungers of body and mind.

Fill their emptiness with Your abundance.

We pray for the powerful, whose choices may mean life or death for others.

Grant those is positions of leadership, Your wisdom and compassion.

We pray for the peacemakers, whose lives are daily in harm’s way.

Protect them, O God, and grant them mercy in times of danger.

Remembrance begins with deep, personal identification. It begins with remembering the affliction of our brothers and sisters, and marking their pain as our own. Remembrance is a sacred moment when we raise up and hold to the light of the eternal moment, for the good who have passed.

We do remember, and in penitence, we recognize the need to address the sources of anger, hate, dehumanization, rage and indignation that lead to acts of violence.

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In our sadness, horror and shock we acknowledge that we are angered by those who plan and carry out devastating attacks; towers attacked, schools and theaters invaded, the peacefulness of City parks shattered. We are angered by those who seem to hold such low regard for the human life that You have created.

We confess our own anger and recognize its dangers to our spirits, our health, our community, and others.

The dangers of a constant experience or exposure to violence are indifference, fear and mistrust. We hear of it so often that living with violence becomes a way of life. The unpredictability leaves a constant uneasiness. We don't know who we can trust, so we trust no one, and may take extreme measures in our attempt to keep ourselves safe.

We know that peace will come to us and to our children only when we stand together and affirm that violence is unacceptable, to speak and not remain silent, to act, when necessary, to help bring about the peace we demand and deserve.

When we experience violence in our own lives, there are times when we are tempted to seek only our own good, hear only our own truth, to take matters into our own hands. We call for justice, but what we truly want is vengeance. We want the guilty to hurt as much as we hurt.

When we hurt, we do want to lash out, to retaliate, and to get revenge. When will we learn, O God, that violence is not the answer? When will we learn that vengeance and retaliation changes nothing. It will not take away our pain, but leaves only hollow victories and causes more pain? When will we learn that while restraint and forgiveness can be hard, it is the only path that leads to peace and healing.

Let our remembering serve as a reminder of our commitment to do the things that work for peace, lighting a way to a better world for our children, our children's children, and all the children of God.

We recall with joy the love we feel in the outpouring of help, kindness, thoughtful words and deeds when tragedy strikes our lives, our homes, our community, our nation and our world.