

More on the

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Jessica Durdell (right), 18, listens to a speaker at a candlelight vigil that followed the Sept. 14 McQuaid High School football game. At left is Marissa Deboit, 17. Both girls are parishioners of Church of the Assumption in Fairport.

School community reels from disaster

On the morning of Tuesday, Sept. 11, Jason Kreutter and Andy LaChapelle were among the 21 students attending a social-justice class for juniors at McQuaid Jesuit High School.

"Ironically, their assignment was to write what justice meant to them," said Jesuit Father Fred Betti, the class's teacher.

The irony was this: Just as the class was discussing the topic of justice, arguably the greatest injustice in United States history was just beginning to unfold — four separate but related terrorist attacks on the country.

Jason, 16, had defined justice as "when people can feel safe in the environment around them and can have what rightfully belongs to them." But by morning's end, Jason was worried about the safety of his uncle who resides in Manhattan, not far from where hijacked jets plowed into two World Trade Center buildings, causing them to collapse.

Andy, meanwhile, became alarmed when he learned that American Airline Flight 11 and United Airlines 175 — the two jets to hit the World Trade Center — had originated at Boston's Logan Airport. Andy's parents were in Boston at the time to see his brother, Alan, a 1995 McQuaid graduate, receive his diploma from Boston's Northeastern University.

"I was sick to my stomach. I was sent home because I couldn't compose myself," said Andy, a parishioner at Fairport's Church of the Assumption. "I said some prayers at a special Mass but I was just so 'out there,' I couldn't even go for Eucharist. I started going into the shakes."

Andy, 16, added that he wasn't sure at first how widespread the terrorist attacks were. "I was starting to think like, there was a terrorist here," he said.

The graduation in Boston was canceled and Andy's brother and parents left the city safely and drove back to Rochester. Jason's uncle called that evening saying he was all right.

The same could not immediately be



Photo courtesy of McQuaid Jesuit High School

Brandon Buchanan's senior yearbook picture from 1995.

said about a friend and classmate of Andy's brother. Brandon Buchanan was among those in the World Trade Center, working on the 104th floor as an equities trader, the fateful morning of Sept. 11. There was no evidence that he had survived the devastation.

Father Betti has placed yearbook photos of Buchanan on his classroom's doorway and blackboard. "It's very important for high-school students to have a visual image of who we're praying for," Father Betti said Sept. 13. "It's not that we believe he's dead, but that we're praying for him."

"I taught him for four years. He was involved in service projects — a very, very outgoing young man and an excellent athlete," Father Betti said of Buchanan.

The McQuaid community was also praying last week for Thomas Duffy, whose son, Ryan, is a 2000 McQuaid

graduate. Thomas Duffy, a Pittsford resident, was due to be in a meeting on the 99th floor the morning of Sept. 11 and had not been accounted for by early this week.

Jesuit Father Philip Judge, school principal, added that many current McQuaid students have parents who were supposed to be in New York on business Sept. 11. Fortunately, he said, all of those parents safely escaped the mayhem.

Effects of the terrorist attacks were felt by McQuaid's faculty as well. Father Betti noted that most McQuaid priests have strong ties to New York City because the provincial house of their order, the Society of Jesus, is located there.

Father Judge, a New York City native, said he's not aware of any Jesuit priests who were casualties in the tragedy. However, a high-school friend, lawyer Matt Leonard, was on the World Trade Center's 108th floor the morning of Sept. 11. "A classmate of mine is gone," he said.

Father Judge added that he was due to attend a meeting of Jesuit priests in New York City the following week, but the event was canceled because so many clergy would be performing funerals.

"This was a tragedy with a capital 'T,'" Father Judge said.

Father Judge said the school would carry out its regularly scheduled weekend sporting events. However, a bonfire following McQuaid's Sept. 14 home football game against Edison Tech was turned into a candlelight prayer service.

Meanwhile, students in Father Betti's social-justice class were still struggling to accept the horrifying events days two days after they occurred.

"I don't think anyone really believed what was happening. This was fortress America," remarked Jordan Voellinger, 17.

Jordan and Mike Wilde, 16, said the student body were trying their best to remain upbeat. "You try to forget about it and go on your daily life. But then some subtle thing reminds you," Mike said.

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