

Pathways Toward Peace



New Yorkers struggle to articulate pain of 9-11

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

NEW YORK CITY — On Tuesday afternoon, Dec. 11, three months to the date and day of the terrorist attacks, Maurice Goldstein, an independent bus driver, returned for the first time to the bus stop near the World Trade Center where he used to drop off workers commuting from Staten Island.

"This is painful, very painful," said Goldstein, an Argentinian immigrant and U.S. citizen. "I purposely did not want to come here today, but we have to face it sooner or later."

Goldstein said he gave up the route one year ago, and was visiting abroad when two hijacked planes were deliberately crashed into the center.

"I was in Israel," he said. He paused, then added, "After people had told me it was too dangerous to go there."

Goldstein had to return to World Trade Center area because he was driving a group of Monroe County area religious leaders and lay people on a pilgrimage to Ground Zero. The pilgrimage was organized by the Greater Rochester Community of Churches, to which the Diocese of Rochester belongs, and which is headed by Sister of St. Joseph Beth LeValley.

The trip, which drew 52 participants, was designed to increase knowledge about the attack's impacts on the city and the world, as well as serve as a chance for participants to pray and reflect on the events. Pilgrimage participants included several Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Muslim and Sikh leaders who prayed, reflected and listened throughout the day as the group visited various sites in the city, including a church and an office of the United Nations Association of the United States of America. In this respect, the trip was different from the excursions some people are making to Ground Zero, according to Officer Bob Kaminski of the New York City Police Department.

"You never know who was here for what reason," he said, as he guarded the fenced area in front of the charred wreckage of the center, part of which is near St. Peter's, New York's oldest Catholic church. "I'm kind of losing patience now, it seems," he added, pointing out tourists have asked him if they can take pictures of their children in front of the fencing. For Kaminski, Ground Zero is no tourist site. It's the place where he lost two people he knew, including a Port Authority officer.

"It's a little surreal," he said of guard-



Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Sister of St. Joseph Beth LeValley, president of the Greater Rochester Community of Churches, an ecumenical group, looks at messages posted at a makeshift memorial outside Ground Zero in New York City Dec. 11.

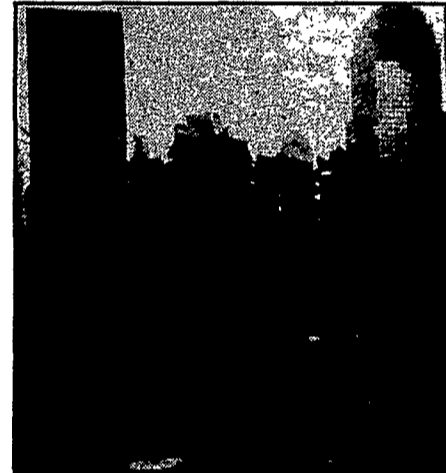
ing a place where friends were killed.

The police officer said that many families who lost loved ones still have not held memorial services because the bodies of their loved ones have not been recovered — something authorities over-seeing the site say probably won't happen in most cases. The police officer echoed the comments of Rabbi Michael Feinberg, executive director of the Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition, who said New York "is in a profound state of denial."

"We need to do a lot of reconciling with this that we haven't done yet," said the rabbi who spoke about Sept. 11 during a noon lunch at Judson Memorial Church, an American Baptist-United Church of Christ congregation in Greenwich Village. The rabbi's offices are located three blocks from Ground Zero. He lived through the attacks, finding himself part of a crowd of thousands of New Yorkers who were enveloped by a dark cloud of dust and debris after one of the twin towers collapsed.

"It was like leaving Sodom and Gomorrah," he said. "I never looked back, and I didn't see the second tower collapse."

Not only did the twin towers collapse, so did the lives of thousands of low-income New Yorkers, he said, pointing out that mostly immigrants were the waiters,



Several people view the charred remains of the World Trade Center, which has become something of an unofficial pilgrimage site.

waitresses, limousine drivers, window washers, hotel employees, delivery persons and others who served the center's financial workers. In addition to the hundreds such people who were killed, tens of thousands more have lost their jobs, and families from Nicaragua to Nigeria who depended on immigrant relatives sending them money are also suffering, he said.

"Literally, there is no place that is untouched by the ripple effects of 9-11," he said.

To help save the jobs of garment workers affected by Sept. 11, Rabbi Feinberg



Courtesy Will Yurman/Democrat and Chronicle

Parminder Singh Soch, Gurdwara of Rochester, listens to Rabbi Michael Feinberg recall the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, which the rabbi witnessed.

said the coalition is joining unions and apparel companies to promote the "Made in New York" campaign. The campaign encourages consumers and retailers to buy apparel and accessories made by "responsible manufacturers in New York." The Greater New York Labor Coalition may be reached at 212/406-2156 for information on how parishes might support its efforts.

The rabbi gave his listeners a written statement on the campaign, which amounted to a plea for solidarity between New Yorkers and the rest of the nation.

"In this season of conscience, together we can bring hope to thousands of workers in our city," the rabbi wrote.

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Interfaith group to visit Hindu temple, Islamic center

The Rochester Interfaith Forum is planning an interfaith journey through which participants are invited to visit various houses of worship.

The first visit of the new year will be at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 9, at the Hindu Temple of Rochester for prayers and a question-and-answer session. The temple is at 120 Pinnacle Road, Pittsford.

The next visit is planned for 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 28, to the Islamic Center of Rochester, 727 Westfall Road, for prayer and a lecture.

The visits are designed to help make bridges to other faiths and help each person grow in his or her own faith through learning about others.

For more information, call 585/325-5260.

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