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Sept. 11

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Even though he didn't lose loved ones last Sept. 11, Bishop Matthew H. Clark said the impact of that tragic day "is still very, very active in people's spirit and awareness."

"People's nerves are still quite raw. It's been on my mind all year; not a day goes by that I, and I'm sure many others, are not somehow thinking about it," Bishop Clark said.

Many observances set

The first anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001, will be noted across the country, including numerous events in the Diocese of Rochester. Masses, prayer services, rosary recitations and open churches for silent prayer are among the offerings on or near Sept. 11 (see box for calendar listings.)

One of the more detailed observances will be at Immaculate Conception Church in Ithaca, where a full day of events is scheduled for Sept. 11. Potorti, an Immaculate Conception parishioner, said her family plans to attend the 7 a.m. Mass and also be present when her son's name is announced; throughout the morning, the parish will read the names of all victims of the terrorist attacks.

"We expect to spend quite a bit of time in church. We don't know where else to be," Potorti said.

Ann Argetsinger, a liturgy-committee member at Immaculate Conception, helped plan the slate of events along with Sister of Mercy Edna Slyck, pastoral associate. Argetsinger said they gauged the parish community's desire for such services based on strong responses to memorial events last September.

"Our parish was deeply touched. (This year) people just felt we wanted to do something to recognize the day together," Argetsinger said.

Several faith communities from Chemung and Schuyler counties have arranged a Mass that will take place at 7 p.m., Sept. 11, at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Elmira. Mary Montanarella, liturgy coordinator at St. Mary's Parish, noted that the theme, Our Hope for Peace, projects into the future "instead of taking the idea of just remembering the past."

At Our Mother of Sorrows in Greece, the regularly scheduled 8 a.m. Mass will be dedicated to Joseph Levey. Coco said she plans to attend that liturgy and then go on to work, rather than stay home and grieve. "It just wouldn't be good," she said.

Bishop Clark will preside at a Mass dedicated to emergency personnel on Sept. 8 at St. Michael's Church in Rochester. On the anniversary date itself, he's scheduled to be in Washington, D.C. — site of another Sept. 11 attack — for a meeting of the U.S. bishops' administrative committee. The bishop said he expects the meeting will include special remembrances of those lost in the Pentagon attack.

For the law firm Harris Beach LLP, Sept.



A close-up of the shrine Nora Coco made in honor of her brother.

11 will involve both sadness and gladness. Two days prior to the anniversary, Harris Beach will celebrate the opening of its new office in Manhattan: the former office was on the 85th floor of World Trade Center Two.

Bill Kedley, Harris Beach's director of administration, said the Rochester-based firm was determined to reopen its New York City branch before the anniversary.

"People are very, very anxious to get to the new space," said Kedley, a parishioner of St. Thomas More in Brighton and treasurer of the *Catholic Courier's* board of directors.

Kedley said the New York City office will be closed on Sept. 11, and in Rochester a tree will be planted outside the firm's Bushnells Basin office while employees observe six minutes of silence — one minute for each Harris Beach employee killed in the attacks.

For surviving workers, Kedley said, hearts will be so heavy on Sept. 11 that it will be a day "we want to see come and go, and have the anniversary behind us."

Perspectives

For many, putting Sept. 11 behind them will be much easier said than done. Coco acknowledged that she can still be moved to tears, although she's crying less frequently as time goes on. She said she finds solace in working on her memorial, and also talking to her deceased brother.

"I talk to him every single day. I've done that every day since Sept. 11," Coco said.

Coco also makes sure to count her blessings — beginning with the fact her brother's body was identified in late October, whereas many victims' bodies never were. Mr. Levey was discovered near a group of civilians, she added. "That was a blessing, too. He was found helping people."

Kedley has blessings to count as well. He was in a taxi outside World Trade Center 2 when he witnessed United Airlines Flight 175 smashing into the building, 18 minutes after World Trade Center 1 had been hit by American Airlines Flight 11. Kedley's cab was able to escape as debris fell around them. He also noted that the group of people he was with that morning was running

slightly behind schedule; if they'd been on time, they probably would have been inside when the building was hit.

"You can't help but think ... it's difficult to put into a short number of words," Kedley said. "God works in strange ways. One cannot help but think, OK, what's the rest of the plan?"

Since then, Kedley said, he's spent considerable time reflecting and has managed to "better identify where my priorities should be placed instead of having them be totally work related."

Ithaca's Sister Slyck, however, lamented that Sept. 11 has not jolted everyone into a spirit of renewal. For instance, she alluded to the spate of child abductions across the country.

"Can't we take (Sept. 11) and say, why are people violating each other here? It should change your life, and you should become more respectful of people," Sister Slyck said.

Bishop Clark said the country as a whole needs to adopt "a willingness to look critically at our own conduct" as to why the attacks occurred in the first place. He cited hatred of the United States in many parts of the world as a result of economic imbalances and our perceived failure to acknowledge smaller countries "as respected players on the international scene."

"There's a growing awareness that we need to probe deeply into what happened and understand it as much as we possibly can. The reaction on television of people in other countries celebrating, as if it were something we deserved and something we had coming to us ... What was anger on our part is now settling into something different," Bishop Clark said. "It's rather sobering to hear these questions raised about our country."

Meanwhile, Potorti noted that another son of hers, David, has focused his efforts on founding peacefultomorrow.org, a Web site created by families of Sept. 11 victims. The site promotes nonviolent alternatives to terrorism and responses to it.

"I think God must be very unhappy with us," she remarked. "Retaliation isn't the answer. There are so many injustices, (but) retaliation isn't the answer, really ... we just have to pray."

Bishop Clark, also, encourages spiritual reflection about Sept. 11, saying, "It's an invitation to remember the Lord's presence, death and resurrection. My faith says to me that the living Christ is with us in all of this. Even in the terror of Sept. 11, his love is there. If we keep facing these events in faith, we'll come to better things. I don't think it's escapism or a Pollyanna attitude. It's a conviction that in Christ, we can make a difference in the world."

Coco has kept her faith in God and has welcomed the prayerful support of others, saying, "People we'll never meet in our lives, I know are praying for us. And that's the only thing I think that will get us through this."

Potorti echoed those thoughts, saying that her family hasn't lost its faith: "Absolutely not. If it weren't for our faith we don't know how we could cope."

Events slated in diocese

The following is a list of events commemorating Sept. 11 that have been submitted to the *Catholic Courier*.

• Sept. 8: Memorial Mass, 7 p.m., St. Michael's Church, 869 Clinton Ave. N., Rochester. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will preside at a liturgy to honor fire and police personnel.

• Sept. 10: Memorial Mass, 7 p.m., Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 1100 W. Church St., Elmira. Sponsored jointly by faith communities in Chemung and Schuyler counties.

• Sept. 11: Evening prayer, 7:30 p.m., Sacred Heart Cathedral, 286 Flower City Park, Rochester.

• Sept. 11: Day of prayer, Immaculate Conception Church, 115 N. George St., Ithaca. 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. The Benedictine Sisters of the Holy Family, 115 N. George St., Ithaca, will be celebrating a day of prayer.

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Planning

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then went to planning groups. "All of the (planning) groups have made good progress in building an infrastructure of cooperation. Now the conversations are going to be much more difficult," Pickett said.

In order to reach decisions about the future of their faith communities, planning groups will utilize extensive data collected during PPNM I. Although Pickett emphasized that planning groups are still responsible for much of the decision making, they must do so within the framework of information about parish membership, attendance and financial health, and how their situations compare to those of other parts of the diocese.

This does not automatically mean churches will close. For instance, Pickett

said, planning groups may instead cut back on Mass schedules — a necessity because many priests are currently celebrating their canonical limit of three Masses of Sunday obligation. Yet Pickett also stressed that every faith community is expected to have no fewer than one Mass every weekend.

Pickett acknowledged that rural and urban parishes, due to limited membership and scant financial resources, have the biggest uphill climb.

Reconfiguration — in which a group of parishes suppress themselves in order to create a single canonical parish with multiple worship sites — is an ongoing option for these smaller parishes. It occurred twice during PPNM I: in southern Cayuga County, where six parishes were suppressed to become the Good Shepherd Catholic Community in 1999; and in Corning-Painted Post, where four parishes were transformed into All Saints Parish in 2001. A similar plan is in the works for the six-

parish Tioga Planning Group.

However, these moves apparently haven't stopped the closing of churches. The Corning-Painted Post churches reconfigured in July 2001, but two months later Corning's St. Patrick's Church became the second diocesan church to close since 1998 (the other was Rochester's St. Francis of Assisi in 2000.) The remaining worship sites are St. Mary's and St. Vincent DePaul in Corning, and Immaculate Heart of Mary in Painted Post.

Pickett further noted that three churches in southern Cayuga — St. Bernard's in Scipio Center, St. Joseph's in Cayuga and St. Patrick's in Aurora — are going unused except for special liturgies. Though that trio of churches has not formally closed, the only worship sites being used regularly for Sunday liturgy by Good Shepherd Parish are St. Patrick's in Moravia, St. Michael's in Union Springs and Our Lady of the Lake in King Ferry.

Although larger parishes don't face issues of this severity, Pickett said they should ready themselves for fewer Masses — and do so with minimal griping. "This is not South America. People aren't going over mountain passes by burro to get to Mass," he commented.

Despite the adjustments that all people of this diocese are facing, Pickett said that much good was achieved during PPNM I as planning groups devised numerous multi-parish staff positions while also identifying such critical needs as youth and young-adult ministry. Pickett also said lay leaders have become more knowledgeable about their faith communities and regions, and continue to be vital parts of a decision-making process as opposed to simply taking orders from the top.

The ultimate goal of pastoral planning, Pickett said, "is to have vital parishes and faith communities. That's the only reason we do all this."