

Homily

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09-11-11

102 Minutes. On a normal day 102 minutes is just a little over an hour and a half.

But on September 11th, at New York's World Trade Center for some it seemed to be an eternity. For others it was an instant. **An instant of death.**

102 Minutes is the time it took from the moment that American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the 98th floor of the north tower to the collapse of the two towers.

Since that day we have all heard many inspiring stories of ordinary men and women who were filled with God's grace and found extraordinary courage, strength, and unselfishness in the midst of the horror of those 102 minutes.

There is the story of the building manager who refused to leave the doomed building and went from floor to floor to pry open doors and free dozens of people trapped in the north tower.

The story of a police officer who had just handed in his final retirement papers when he heard the first call and immediately grabbed his badge from the clerk and sprinted to the scene.

The countless stories of first responders who acted so bravely as they would say **"Just doing our job."**

Especially, Jess your fellow unselfish firefighters who entered those buildings knowing that sure death awaited them. **But they went in to save lives.**

Then there is the story of Father Mychal Judge, the 68 year old Franciscan priest who was the first fatality in the collapse of the Towers.

Father Judge was the chaplain of the New York City fire Department.

He was a beloved figure in the City, helping to run a soup kitchen, ministering to AIDS patients, and presiding at countless baptisms, weddings, funerals, as part of his work with his beloved firefighters.

On the morning of 9-11 a fellow priest ran into Fr. Mychal's room with the news about an explosion at the Trade Center.

Fr. Mychal immediately took off his Franciscan habit, donned his fireman's uniform and ran out the door.

At Ground zero he offered help and comfort to the injured and dying amidst the carnage that had taken place.

While giving the sacrament of anointing to a dying firefighter, Fr. Mychal took off his helmet so he could better hear the words of the dying man.

At that moment a piece of flying debris struck the priest and killed him instantly.

Some of you might have seen the photographs of a group of firemen carrying his body from the site.

In great love, they brought him to a nearby church, wrapped his body in a clean sheet, and laid it in front of the altar, with his badge and the priest's stole he had been wearing.

At his funeral the next week, his friend, Franciscan Father Michael Duffy spoke of the moment of his death.

He said "Look how Fr. Mychal Judge died. He was right where he always wanted to be. Where the action was.

He was praying with the dying man praying: **'Jesus come, Jesus save, Jesus show your infinite mercy and forgiveness.'**

He was talking to God and was helping someone in need.

Fr. Duffy asked "Can you honestly think of a better way to die?"

Fr. Mychal Judge, a priest of St. Francis of Assisi, heard the call of God to Ground Zero on that fateful day. And, he has the number 1 on his death certificate.

However, during those 102 minutes, many men and women heard the call and the cries of the injured, the dying, and the terrified around them.

And, they put aside their own fears to help.

They exemplified what it means for us to be a follower of Jesus.

Jesus who teaches that greatness in the kingdom of God belongs to those who are servants of others.

Servants who have an attitude of unselfishness and forgiveness toward the smallest, the weakest, and the poorest among us.

Humble servants who will be exalted because they serve the common good of family, friends, and community.

It is the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ that calls **US** to seek compassion despite our apathy.

Justice for others despite our own being treated unjustly.

Generosity despite our own needs.

And as we heard in today's Gospel, forgiveness despite our own hurts. Forgiveness that, as Jesus says, comes from the heart.

As disciples of Jesus, God is calling us to His kingdom of peace and justice in a world with wars and tragedy.

He calls us to do His work of reconciliation where there is anger and division.

It is in times of crisis and illness within the family and community that we are sent to be God's loving presence of compassion and healing

So, as we reflect on the events of 9/11, may we be inspired by saints, heroes, and in a certain sense, the martyrs like Fr. Mychal Judge.

Inspired to renew our commitment to transform injustice into justice for all,

Anger into forgiveness,

Bigotry into welcome,

And hatred into love.