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To all the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of Arizona, peace and Our Apostolic Blessing.

This Wednesday, September 11th, the people of the United States will commemorate the first anniversary of the terrorist attack on our country. The images of that day will forever be imprinted in our minds, and the shock and the horror we felt will forever be imprinted in our souls. We recall with sorrow the tragic loss of life and the unimaginable grief and suffering of the families, friends and acquaintances of those who died. We remember our own fear and anxiety as we wondered, “What’s next? Is my family safe? Am I safe?”

In the intervening year we have seen additional pain and suffering as a direct result of the attack; the war in Afghanistan, detainment based on racial profiling, the slow and ongoing erosion of civil liberties in the name of homeland security. And most recently, increased talk of attacking Iraq and removing Saddam Hussein from power, even by murder if necessary. How are we as Christians, as followers of the Way of the Christ, to respond to this?

The political and economic factors that underlie this current state of affairs are complex and convoluted. We must each explore and attempt to discern for ourselves whether our current national policies are legitimate and necessary—or otherwise. Whatever we decide, we must avoid the temptation to give into fear and hate, especially hate, whether that hate be directed at the Arab world or our own government.

The Way of the Christ is first and foremost a Way of Love, a Way that teaches that God “...makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.” (Matthew 5:45) God values all Her children equally. God loves us all without reservation, without distinction, regardless of our actions. Even when our actions bring hurt or harm to another, God continues to love us and forgive us “...not seven times but seventy-seven times.” (Matthew 18:22)

If we take our faith seriously and are not just playing at being Christians, then we too must forgive those who have wronged us or would seek to wrong us. We must let go of our fears and anxieties, which are the breeding ground for our hate and open ourselves instead to the love of God that sees God present in all humanity, including

the hijackers, the Taliban, the leadership of Iraq, the leadership of the United States. And in love we must pray for peace, for the establishment of right relationships between the peoples and nations of the Earth, and for an end to an “us versus them” mentality.

As we pause to remember this tragic day, let us pray for the souls of all who lost their earthly life that day and for those who grieve for them. Let us remember with gratitude the heroism of those who attempted to prevent further loss of life and the dedication of those who worked long hours to rescue people trapped in the debris of the World Trade Center. And let us pray for those whom we fear and those who teach us to fear them, remembering that: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear...” (1 John 4:18)

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