

Finding the Gold: On the First Anniversary of 9-11
Reflection from Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
September 2002

In myths as old as the race, it is always the place that we stumble and fall that we find the gold....We have learned no small amount at this place where we stumbled together a season ago, thinking that we had lost so much but finding instead the gold of the simplest and most lasting of our glories. (9-11: Meditations at the Center of the World, Eugene Kennedy, Orbis Books, 2002)

One year ago this week planes careened into the soul of U.S. Americans in a manner previously unthinkable, immediately bringing life and death, truth and our vulnerability into sharp focus. As Maryknoll missionaries with relationships on nearly every continent, we have been impelled to reflect on the events of September 11, 2001 - and what followed - from a global perspective. We know that each life lost in this tragic process was unique and precious - of utmost value to loved ones, community, our broken world and in the eyes of God. We have witnessed the cost and accompanied the bereaved in the United States and in Afghanistan as well.

One year ago we wrote, "In order to eradicate terrorism of all kinds, we have to address the hatred and exclusion that sustain it and foster global solidarity through understanding by promoting dialogue and defending human dignity... Surely these events will evoke deep reflection on who we are as an American people, and how we are in the world..." (Statement of Maryknoll leadership following September 11 attacks)

Yet we remain engulfed in war - with even more threatening war clouds on the horizon. Again we invite reflection on what is most precious to the project of life. Let us gather in communities across the United States - to recall what has happened in the last year, to examine our response and our "way of life" in the light of the Gospel, and to engage in the search for truth and alternatives to war.

The fundamental posture we suggest for this reflection was vividly and poignantly illustrated by the scramble for life in the rubble of the World Trade Center and Pentagon and in the wreckage of Flight 93 in Pennsylvania - when color of skin, nationality, language, title, level of income, gender and job description mattered not at all. There the lines that so often divide human beings from each other disappeared. Every life was worth saving. What we learned so dramatically in those terrible moments was the value of solidarity, of right relationship. There we found the "gold" described by Eugene Kennedy. May it lead us to peace.