DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO
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My dear brothers and sisters,

In times of great tragedy our intellect seeks understanding, our hearts seek healing, and our souls turn to the only source of strength, consolation and truth: May our God grant you peace!

We will never forget what happened this past Tuesday. September 11, 2001, will remain emblazoned in our memories forever. The incredible images of planes being flown into buildings, and the resultant horrific destruction of innocent life, are grim reminders of the price we pay for freedom and our open society. Our thoughts and prayers are with those whose lives have been forever changed: those who have passed to new life, and those who have lost loved ones in these terrible acts of insane hatred. Let us be consoled by the words of the scriptures, "the souls of the just are in the hands of God."

For me, that awful day began as a tragedy of staggering proportions, and yet within hours, I was experiencing special grace-filled opportunities – opportunities to witness and feel the love of God in the ministry of our sisters and brothers. This miracle of redemption is being reinforced and expressed in the emails and phone calls our office is receiving from all over the world.

I am proud to tell you that from the very first moments following the impact at the Pentagon, in the midst of all the chaos and destruction, chaplains (some of whom had been inside the Pentagon when the plane crashed) began providing ministry to the injured, the traumatized, and the hundreds of relief workers who rushed to the nightmarish scene. Navy chaplains of all ranks and faiths, active duty and Reserve, working alongside their Army and Air Force counterparts and supported wonderfully by Religious Program Specialists (RPs) and chaplain assistants, continue this ministry around the clock at the Pentagon, in area hospitals, in other government facilities throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, and in the homes of the families of those who are missing or declared deceased. Chaplains assigned to the Merchant Marine Academy have provided ministry to the brave civil servants who now risk their lives to save others at the site of the former World Trade Center.

Yet the tragedy continues for so many, and as it does, Navy chaplains and RPs will remain fully engaged. In addition to Casualty Assistance Calls across the Nation and a 24-7 ministry at the Pentagon, chaplains comfort the grief stricken, the traumatized and the fearful at the Navy Annex Counseling Center and at the DOD Family Assistance Center. We have assigned chaplains and RPs to Dover Air Force Base to support Navy families who must now identify the remains of loved ones. We will continue our pastoral presence in New York City, providing ministry to other care providers, and aboard the USNS COMFORT now en route. We are activating more and more Reservists to assist with ministry to care-providers, to conduct myriad memorial services and funerals, and to provide long-term assistance with NYC rescue personnel and care-givers in the days ahead.

Through it all, the events of the past few days illustrate once again the critical role chaplains and RPs play in the lives of the warriors we serve. I am truly humbled and heartened by your response to this national crisis. Let us continue to pray with and for one another in the days ahead, and let us pray for the national healing that will empower our great nation to forge ahead in the 21st Century. May God bless our Chaplain Corps, may God bless those we have been called to serve, and may God bless the United States of America.

LOUIS V. IASIELLO
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Deputy Chief of Chaplains