

# Young People Show Their Support For Those Impacted By Sept. 11

By REV. DONALD HUMMEL

I was invited to go into New York last week. Not terribly unusual under normal circumstances, especially since we live so close. But this trip was different for a number of reasons.

Everything has changed since the events of September 11. We've all felt it – and we still do...our feelings run in many directions even as we deal – or try to deal – with the aftermath. But what do we *do*? Allow me to share a little about this most recent trip to the "Big Apple".

I was invited to join a group of Junior Air Force R.O.T.C. cadets from our own Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School and their leadership. We were escorted by two "Humvees" from the New Jersey National Guard (I was included by virtue of my ministries as Chaplain to local law enforcement and fire service).

The reason for the "visit" was that these young men and women wanted to make a presentation of a substantial check (\$5,000) to a group who had sacrificed – and whose families had sacrificed – on that ominous day and for many months thereafter until the final bell tolled at the site of what had been the World Trade Center.

Now this donation was raised through dedicated and protracted effort, overcoming one obstacle after another.

The money wasn't the only donation; there were numerous hours of unheralded "dirty work" supporting those at the recovery site. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Vietnam Vets' "Rolling Thunder" and the New Jersey State Guard. Working the local byways, working in our neighborhoods to sell pins, to mobilize effort, to garner local business and professional support, to manifest what citizenship, patriotism, service and genuine, embodied love for others can be.

I was invited to be present as this token of esteem, gratitude and tribute was handed to the members of the NYPD's Emergency Service Unit – Truck No. 1 against the background of a still-scarred truck and the pictures of the ESU members who will not be

returning to their families.

I was invited to witness the inherent goodness of young people who *did something* to show that they care and they're willing to work at helping others in need.

I saw the tears well up once again in the eyes of these tough, talented cops who "do it all" under the most extreme and dangerous circumstances as they accepted the check – but far more importantly – the love and support of "a bunch of high school kids across the river in Jersey".

They opened every hatch and door in the truck and explained every piece of equipment to wide-eyed adolescents; they opened the hatches and doors of their hearts to allow these young people (and we privileged and blessed not-so-young witnesses) to help them mourn and heal and explained with actions rather than words both the price and the value of selfless service in the face of daunting challenge and searing reality.

Because I was invited to New York, I now invite you to consider how we may all *do* something to live out the imperative of our lives and manifold blessings. How we might all honor the God of our understanding by selfless service, even in the midst of unexpected tragedy and frustrating obstacles.

I invite you to join me in prayer:

"Lord, Open our eyes,

That we may see you in our  
brothers and sisters.

Lord, Open our ears,

That we may hear the cries of the  
hungry, the cold,

The frightened, the oppressed.

Lord, Open our hearts,

That we may love each other as  
You love us.

Renew us in Your Spirit Lord,  
Free us and make us one."

—Mother Teresa

May you have a blessed, safe and peaceful summer.

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