

Ground Zero cross on the move again

by [Mark Dillon](#) in the [May 3, 2011](#) issue

The cross at Ground Zero was one of thousands of I-beams used to construct the iron skeletons of the World Trade Center towers. This one fell from the fiery, apocalyptic heavens during the 9/11 terror attacks and stuck upright in the ground, in a field of similar but smaller crosses.

The iconic cross rose higher than the others above the twisted steel, concrete slabs and human remains. When the smoke subsided and the dust and ashes settled, it emerged as a beacon—a sacred symbol of both survival and remembrance.

Almost immediately rescue workers and firefighters scratched out memorial messages on the 20-foot cross. A shrine was created, services were held.

It was later blessed and draped with a sheet-metal shroud from the wreckage, then hoisted atop a concrete stanchion from the destroyed plaza at the corner of Church and Liberty streets.

The symbolism was obvious: church, liberty, religious freedom—concepts that separate America from its attackers. The cross stayed there until October 2006, when it was moved for preliminary construction work at the site.

"It was headed to a warehouse in Long Island, but the firefighters and construction workers objected, so we offered to put it here," said Kevin Madigan, the pastor at nearby St. Peter's Church, the city's oldest Catholic parish and where St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first American to be canonized, worshiped.

The cross will soon move again, to the National September 11 Memorial & Museum at Ground Zero.

"The way I understand it, the cross will stand in an apse, which will be built around it," Madigan said. "So the cross has to be in place before construction [of the apse] begins."

The church will not be without a 9/11 cross for long. Sculptor Jon Krawczyk is making a replacement, a stainless steel 9/11 Memorial Cross. "It will be highly polished, so people will be able to see themselves in it and hopefully reflect on their lives and lives lost in the terror attack," Krawczyk said from his studio in Malibu, California.

Krawczyk's 9/11 cross will have three pieces of metal saved from the World Trade Center debris. "That metal will be used where Christ's hands and feet would have been nailed," he said. "Those pieces will stand out because they are rusted."

The vertical beam of the cross will be 14 feet high and the horizontal beam will be 11 feet wide. It's the largest cross Krawczyk has made.

The commission came to Krawczyk after a patron of the archdiocese agreed to fund a cross in New York. "She wanted it in any church," Madigan said, "We knew we were losing the 9/11 cross, so [retired] Cardinal [Edward] Egan offered it to us."

Since then, the benefactor decided to withdraw her offer, so Krawczyk and the gallery that represents his work are raising funds through the church. Krawczyk will finish the cross, then truck it cross-country. It will be installed in early May. —RNS