

Nation marks 9/11 anniversary with prayer, reflection

by [Cathy Lynn Grossman](#)

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WASHINGTON (RNS) Believers across the nation heard from faith leaders this weekend as millions of Americans wrestled with the spiritual challenges and lessons of 9/11.

On the 10th anniversary, Archbishop of New York Timothy Dolan called the attacks in 2001 battles in "a war between sin and grace," a war mirrored within every human soul.

In his homily to the packed St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan on Sunday (Sept. 11), Dolan concluded that God won "as temptations to despair, fearful panic, revenge and dread gave way to such things as rescue, recovery, rebuilding, outreach and resilience."

At the official memorial service in Lower Manhattan, where no clergy were assigned to speak, President Obama recited Psalm 46, which concludes: "The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge."

A group of 50 conservative evangelical pastors and supporters organized by the Family Research Council knelt in prayer and song by the fence surrounding the Ground Zero site Saturday to protest their clergy's exclusion from the official event in New York and from an interfaith service in Washington.

Washington National Cathedral, home to the capital's interfaith memorial service in 2001, held its vigil Sunday with prayers and songs and spiritual commentary in a borrowed sanctuary at the Washington Hebrew Congregation. The massive Gothic cathedral was significantly damaged recently by an earthquake, Hurricane Irene and a week of heavy

rains.

The voices were Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh -- from the call to prayer in each religion, sung from the synagogue balcony, to the concluding call by Rajwant Singh of the Sikh Council on Religion and Education: "Oh God, embrace anyone who reaches to you from any door."

The Right Rev. John Bryson Chane, Episcopal bishop of Washington, said the question always asked in extreme tragedy -- "What kind of God would allow this?" -- is really a prompt to question ourselves. What kind of people are we and how might we affirm that we are all people of God?

The Very Rev. Samuel Lloyd III, dean of the cathedral, called the interwoven prayers and chants in the sanctuary a symphony to "the hidden oneness within the human race." He said, "God yearns to see us like this."

At a cathedral "Concert for Hope" that was moved to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Obama again turned to the Bible, this time from Psalm 30, saying that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"Our character as a nation has not changed" in the decade since 9/11, he said. "Our faith -- in God and in each other -- that has not changed."