Remembering September 11

A Solemn Requiem Eucharist for the First Anniversary of September 11 Requiem by Gabriel Fauré, Senior Choir, soloists, and orchestra September 11, 2002, 8:00 pm, in the Church

Anamnesis

—“Memorial”—

It is difficult to speak of September 11 without cliché because such things are literally “unspeakable.” In this iconic moment of time we saw “the hopes and fears of all the years” collide with unfathomable violence, snuffing out the physical life of 3,041 children of God, shattering the lives of countless others, and leaving the rest of us shaken to the very foundation of our being.

The suffering and death of those who were lost that day will be remembered in many ways around the world this September 11th. At the Chapel of the Cross we will draw upon the inexhaustible depths and timeless soulfulness of the Church’s liturgy and the great music written for it. It is, in part, the absence of cliché and facile “contemporaneity” which gives the liturgy the power to transcend time and lift us however fragmentarily into God’s eternity. Anamnesis – The Eucharist itself is, of course, the ultimate act of remembrance, as in the scriptural words of institution: “Do this for the remembrance of me.”

In celebrating this “memorial of our redemption” we set the uniquely Christian context for remembering the victims of September 11 and for approaching in a more comprehensive way the ultimate mysteries of life and death. In addition to the incomparable Requiem of Gabriel Fauré the choir will sing 20th century composer John Tavener’s “Song for Athene” with texts taken from Hamlet and the Russian Orthodox liturgy. Above the words “Come, enjoy rewards and crowns I have prepared for you” Tavener instructs the singers to sing “with resplendent joy in the Resurrection.” It is not the victories of us mortals or even our sufferings for which we may anticipate “rewards and crowns,” but by virtue of the death, resurrection and ascension of the Son of God who has gone before and leads the way.

It is in anamnesis of this that we will offer our “sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving” on September 11.