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Photo: CNS/ Gregory A. Shemitz



Memorials Dedicated to Victims of 9/11

Remembering the fallen across Brooklyn and Queens

by Paula Katinas, Senior Reporter

WINDSOR TERRACE — Memories of Sept. 11 are still vivid for people in the Diocese of Brooklyn, 23 years later.

In the years since, churches and schools have erected monuments to parishioners and alumni lost on that tragic day, leaving reminders everywhere.

The monuments include sculptures shaped like crosses fashioned from steel beams from the World Trade Center, memorial walls listing the names of those killed, trees planted to symbolize survival and renewal, and even a statue depicting Jesus Christ lovingly cradling the Twin Towers in his arms.

The Jesus-Twin Towers statue stands in the garden outside St. Ephrem Church, Dyker Heights, and still draws a steady stream of visitors.

The statue symbolizes “our faith that God was there to meet our loved ones at their most terrible moment in time,” said Mary Jane La Vache, a parishioner whose mother, Maria La Vache, was killed on 9/11.

The statue was commissioned thanks to La Vache and a group of dedicated parishioners who spearheaded the drive to erect a memorial to the nine church members who died during the attack on the Twin Towers.

“It was not long after Sept. 11 and we realized that nine of our parishioners, including my family, were directly affected,” La Vache said. “People were just grappling, trying to comfort their fellow parishioners. We wanted to [offer] a response to the tragedy and the devastation that the whole country experienced.”

With a blessing from then-pastor Msgr. Peter Kain, they formed a committee that included representation from victims’ families.

The committee came to a quick consensus “that we wanted to do something that would be of comfort to the families, but would also be a public demonstration of our shared faith,” La Vache recalled.

La Vache came across a picture of a sculpture depicting the hand of God and the Twin Towers, which she found comforting. She brought it to the committee’s attention and everyone loved it. Then, they reached out to different art studios to exchange creative ideas.

“We came to the final product, which was a life-sized brass statue, and put it in a beautiful garden setting,” she said.

Her mother, a receptionist at Marsh McLennan, worked on the 99th floor of the North Tower. “She loved her job. She was on the floor where the executive offices were and the IT personnel, who were on the young side. They gravitated toward her because of her nurturing, gentle way. I would go up there to visit her for lunch and there would be a crowd of her young colleagues around her desk. I find comfort in the fact that she was doing something she loved,” La Vache said.

Two decades after the tragedy, she takes pride in the fact the statue not only brings comfort to victims’ families but to the public at large. “You’re seeing, young and old, male and female, and they’re just transcended. You have all the busy noises of the city around but these people aren’t even listening to all that because they’re deep in reflection,” she said.

The statue is eye-catching even to those born long after 9/11. La Vache recently saw a young boy get off his bicycle and kneel by the garden fence to pray. “When I saw that, I said to myself, ‘The statue is doing what we were hoping it was going to do,’” she said.



NEAR BLESSED TRINITY PARISH 20425 Rockaway Point Blvd., Queens

A breathtaking waterfront memorial erected by the Breezy Point community brings together a number of strikingly visual elements. Visitors can go to the shorefront location and contemplate the meaning of sacrifice and faith. The memorial features a steel beam from the twin towers, a statue of Jesus Christ cradling the World Trade Center in his arms, glass panels, and a plaque honoring parishioners who perished that day.

ST. PATRICK’S CHURCH 9511 Fourth Ave., Brooklyn

St. Patrick’s Church decided to do something different to remember the 11 parishioners lost on 9/11. Rather than a statue or a plaque, priests and parishioners opted to refurbish a historic monstrosity that has been in the church for nearly 100 years, giving it a new base to increase its height so that its magnificence could be seen from anywhere in the church.



XAVIERIAN HIGH SCHOOL 7100 Shore Road, Brooklyn

An eternal flame is the centerpiece of the wall of remembrance in the garden outside Xavierian High School. Listed are the names of the 23 alumni who perished in the World Trade Center attack. A cross in the center of the monument reminds all that it is a Catholic school. The quote: “All Lost Some, Some Lost All,” is a sad reminder of the human toll of 9/11.



ST. FRANCIS DE SALES CATHOLIC ACADEMY 219 Beach 129th St., Queens

The survivor tree outside St. Francis de Sales Catholic Academy serves as a memorial to two tragedies — 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy. The tree grew from a seedling that was donated to the parish by the 9/11 Memorial and Museum as part of the Survivor Tree Seedling Program. Launched in 2013, the program offers seedlings from the Survivor Tree at the World Trade Center site.



ST. EPHREM CHURCH

929 Bay Ridge Parkway, Brooklyn

One of the most visually stunning monuments to 9/11 stands in the garden at St. Ephrem Church. Commissioned by parishioners shortly after the tragedy, the statue of Jesus Christ gently cradling the Twin Towers in his arms has drawn a great deal of attention over the years for its beauty and its statement of faith. According to parishioners, the statue symbolizes the fact that the people who were killed on 9/11, including nine from St. Ephrem, were met at their moment of death by a loving God.



OUR LADY OF ANGELS CHURCH

7320 Fourth Ave., Brooklyn

A few months after the World Trade Center tragedy, Our Lady of Angels Church managed to obtain a steel beam from the wreckage of the twin towers that was shaped like a cross. The beam was placed in the church’s courtyard, and is visible to the public from the sidewalk. The memorial has been a magnet for people who stop to pray or leave personal mementos in honor of lost loved ones.

HOLY NAME OF JESUS CHURCH 245 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn

The three locations where Americans died on 9/11 — New York City, Washington D.C., and Shanksville, Pennsylvania — are commemorated in a plaque donated to Holy Name of Jesus Church by M.J. Smith Funeral Home. The plaque contains images of the field in Pennsylvania where United Flight 93 crashed, the World Trade Center, and the Pentagon.



ST. ATHANASIUS CHURCH 6115 Bay Parkway, Brooklyn

Members of the Joseph B. Cavallaro Council Knights of Columbus obtained a piece of wreckage from the World Trade Center and donated it to St. Athanasius Church, where parishioners commissioned a brick platform to hold it, along with a plaque commemorating those lost in the World Trade Center attack, including two St. Athanasius parishioners. The memorial stands in a garden next to the church’s front entrance.

GOOD SHEPHERD CHURCH 1950 Batchelder St., Brooklyn

The baptismal font at Good Shepherd Church is dedicated to the memory of FDNY Capt. Timothy Stackpole, who was one of 343 firefighters who died at the World Trade Center on 9/11. Stackpole’s courage was evident long before 9/11. In 1998, he suffered serious burns in a deadly Brooklyn fire that killed two of his colleagues. He spent months in rehabilitation. On 9/11, Stackpole was off-duty but raced to the twin towers to offer assistance.



ST. FINBAR CHURCH 138 Bay 20th St., Brooklyn

The Tree of Life was attached to a wall in the church vestibule in memory of Richard Catarelli, a parishioner who died in the twin towers. Catarelli was active in the parish as a trustee, eucharistic minister, and religious education teacher. Eager to pay tribute to him and his many contributions to the church, parish leaders came up with the concept and invited parishioners to purchase leaves on the tree’s branches.

