

The days and months after 9/11

Suzanne Morse | Sep. 14, 2009 NCR Today

The clergy sexual abuse crisis, which broke in January 2002 is tied closely in my mind to September 11, 2001. The crisis of faith I experienced after Sept. 11 was substantial -- it was not so much that I railed against God for allowing such a terrible thing to happen to good people. It was the randomness of it that bothered me.

No one in the World Trade Center, on the planes, in the Pentagon deserved what happened to them that day. They just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time on the wrong day. It could have happened to me or to someone I loved. And the terrible random nature of who lived and who died haunted me then and haunts me to this day. It was hard for me to believe in God when it was clear that this was all so arbitrary.

So in the months afterward, I called the Boston archdiocesan young adult office once or twice, to see if there was a retreat somewhere or some thing that the church could offer to help me through this. Silence. No one ever picked up the phone and no one ever called me back.

I now know, of course, that the archdiocese was facing the biggest crisis of its history. The articles that started appearing Jan. 6, 2002 further shook my sense of faith but at least, then, there was a way for me to do something about it. I couldn't do anything constructive in the months after 9/11 to help heal the nation or save the world, but I could try to do something after 1/06 to heal myself and save the church.

I am always reminded on Sept. 11 of my own history and that hundreds, if not thousands, of people acted courageously and selflessly in both big and small ways on that date. Eight years later, it is that example that inspires me. I do believe that God also enters our lives randomly, though it often can be difficult to see and feel God's presence at those times. I am still asking the questions I posed to myself and to God in the six months between Sept. 11 and Jan. 6 but, in other people and their good actions, I have found some answers.

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