

Today There Are No Tears

September 11, 2011

Ambassador Howard Gutman
Cathedral of St. Michael and St. Gudula

Your Royal Highnesses, Mr. Prime Minister, Ministers, Governors, Mayors, Excellencies, *Mesdames and Messieurs, Dames en Heren*, Dear Friends All:

Today . . . today there are no tears.
Vandaag vloeien er geen tranen.
Aujourd'hui nous ne versons pas de larmes.

Of course we remember them. We shall never forget them.
Nous ne les oublierons jamais.
Wij zullen ze nooit vergeten.

Indeed, in the silence of this glorious cathedral, can you not hear them? Can you not hear them? Can you hear Patrice Braut, a 31-year-old Belgian, whose only fault was that he loved America enough that he chose to work at a firm in the World Trade Center for a few years? Can you not hear the nearly 3000 others who perished that day or those who fell victim in Bali or Belfast, Mumbai or Manila, or wherever terror has struck? If not, it is because you are listening with your ears. But on September 11th, on September 11th, we listen not with our ears, but with our hearts instead.

And with our hearts, we remember them today for their lives . . . not for their tragic deaths.
En in ons hart staan ze ons bij om hun leven, niet om hun tragische dood.
Et dans nos coeurs, nous nous souvenons d'eux pour leur vie, pas pour leur mort tragique.

Today, we remember the lives of parents who used to play ball with their children, whether it was cricket in Mumbai, soccer in London, or baseball in Manhattan. Today we celebrate the lives of children who used to visit for Sunday dinner with their parents, whether for curry in Lahore, Pakistan, or smoked salmon in Norway. And we remember the one hundred and one 10-year-olds who were born that year in the following nine months, but who never got to meet their fathers. We shall indeed always remember victims of terrorism everywhere.

And today we celebrate and pay tribute to the brave men and women who responded that day and to all those who have answered the call every day for the past 10 years -- the call to help keep us safe. The more than two million Americans who have answered the call, the thousands of Belgians, the hundreds of thousands of Europeans, and many more who have answered the call, volunteering to leave loved ones to join military service aimed at keeping all of us safe and free.

And as we remember them all for their lives, our smiles now shine where tears once reigned.

You see, ten years ago, we were many: Belgians or Europeans or Americans. Muslims or Jews or Christians.

But today, following their evil – indeed from their evil – out of many we have become one. The brotherhood of man.

A Crown Prince and Princess who not only spend this Sunday paying homage to our shared loss, but devote much of their time fostering the brotherhood of man.

A Prime Minister and a cabinet of Belgian Ministers who have always answered the call to combat terror in Afghanistan, and indeed helped lead the global call to protect innocents in Libya.

Firemen and policemen. Teachers and students. Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

We are united. Together we have no tears. Together we seek justice, but have no hate, no thirst for revenge. Together we are so much stronger than fear.

We stand with a shared resilience and a passion wedded to the principle that evil can only get smaller as the family of the brotherhood of man grows larger.

We smile today because we can focus in freedom and with optimism on tomorrow. We will indeed leave our children – the children of the brotherhood of man – with a better planet than the one we found. We may need to take off our shoes at airports, but together we will ensure that none go shoeless.

It will never be easy. Freedom and prosperity always take effort and sometimes even sacrifice. Understanding must always battle prejudice. Vigilance can never become commonplace.

But as long as we can fill churches in remembrance in Brussels, as long as we keep their memories in our hearts, as long as we watch for each other as the brethren we have become, we shall never fail.

Thanks so much and all the best.