

September 11, 2022
Middlesex & Dunellen 9/11 Memorial Ceremony
Mayor Jason F. Cilento

We are here today to remember those fallen in the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. We are the friends, the family members, the colleagues, or simply the fellow Americans, of those who died.

We come together today with a purpose: to remember them, to honor them, and to reflect on that day and how it has affected, and changed, all our lives.

I would like to speak with you today about community.

A community is a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. We are the residents of Dunellen and Middlesex and well-wishers from nearby towns who share a geographic link, a bond of location that ties us all together with powerful cords of history and mutual alliances. We are all here today because this is our sanctuary, our home, instilled with our continued sense of communal security

which on that fateful day 21 years ago was threatened. We are here today to declare that such threats did not dishearten us then and shall not daunt us now.

Another meaning of community is a feeling of fellowship with others, because of the sharing of common attitudes, interests, and goals. On occasions such as this September 11th Memorial, our fellowship with those who stand beside us is profound, deep, tragic, and often heart-breakingly sad. Somehow, the memory of that day, for most of us by watching television news footage, is remarkably vivid. I do not know if our collective remembrance makes that day any more remarkable than other shocking and painful memories, but for me the permanent images set in a clear-blue sky enhance the experience and somehow makes that day amazingly singular. And from conversations over the years, this is the exact same impression held by many of us who remember that fateful day. And thus, our fellowship in memory is that much greater, so much so that it removes a September 11th Memorial Day gathering out of the realm of simple honoring and renders

this day an annual commemoration endowed with deep personal and national significance.

I hope we always remember that each day we are given is a cherished gift because for so many individuals, like Dunellen resident Lydia Estelle Bravo, they were unable to return home for another day to spend with their families. Many lost their lives in subsequent years due to illnesses related to the tragedies of that day, and we lost countless soldiers who did not have a chance to live a life with their families, having perished in a foreign land defending our freedoms. It's those lives lost, and those families deprived of memories, who have been so greatly impacted by 9/11, that we gather here today in remembrance, and why we must never forget the tragedies of that day.

I am going to conclude my remarks today by asking each of you to look to your left and then look to your right and to shake hands and greet your neighbor. There are no strangers at a September 11th Memorial Day gathering, only people whom you have not yet met, but who truly share your values, your hopes,

your dreams, and above all, your memories. May we always remember that we are Americans first, and that is a bond no one can ever take from us.

God Bless you, God Bless our emergency service members, God Bless our soldiers, veterans and all those lost on September 11, 2001 and since in our fight against terrorism, and may God continue to Bless the United States of America.

Thank you.