

TWA Flight 800 Memorial, July 17, 1997

Gov. George E. Pataki, "A Mother's Love."

We have gathered here to observe a dark day in history.

To the families of those who were taken from this earth one year ago, I know this solemn homecoming is very difficult because it represents the beginning of the saddest and most painful chapter of your lives.

A year ago, you arrived at this place with an emptiness in your heart that none of us who joined you here could possibly fill.

From this shore, many of you waded into the sea and placed roses on the water, knowing that -- by the grace of God -- these waves would deliver them to the hearts of your loved ones.

Faithfully and courageously, you stayed here for weeks and months, waiting for answers, turning to one another for comfort, searching for hope in a sea of despair.

Sadly, many of the answers you waited for never came. And when it was time, you searched for the courage to leave this place and confront a world that must have seemed cold and empty.

Nothing any of us say can change what happened here, or bring back the ones you love so much and miss so dearly. But I hope this day reminds you that a nation and a world continue to stand beside you in your time of sadness.

For a year now, we have prayed that time's healing touch would somehow guide you to a happier place in time.

And although the passing of one year does little to heal deep scars of the heart, I sincerely hope that our reunion here today finds you a little bit brighter... a little bit stronger... a little bit more secure in the faith that those who live so strongly in our hearts are never truly gone.

Perhaps, if it is God's will, as we pray and remember those we have lost, fond memories of them will permit a smile to shine through your tears.

It will be difficult, I know.

The sea behind me has claimed a piece of your heart and a lifetime of your tears. And yet, something in your heart will always draw you back to this sacred place.

In a wonderful piece of work, the poet Elsie Robinson asks a question that each of us may ask ourselves at some time in our lives, and that you may still ask yourself today.

“Why must I hurt? Why must those who love generously, live honorably, feel deeply--all that is good and beautiful--be so hurt?”

It is a sad irony that those who feel the most, care the most and love the most are -- by virtue of their unselfish caring -- most vulnerable to sorrow.

It is your limitless devotion -- your unending love -- that brings you to this beach today.

You are like the mother who sacrifices all she has -- moving heaven and earth -- to protect her child from the inevitable dangers of life. From birth, she takes every care and caution in the world, pampering her child with the utmost care and tenderest hands.

She's there to guide every step, break every fall, dry every tear.

There is no sadness so great when, despite all her efforts, all her precaution and all her love, there is nothing more a mother can do to protect her child.

To all of the mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters.... To all of you who lost the ones you loved, protected and cared for most... To all of you who still struggle with feelings of helplessness and despair...

....Just as a child has unconditional faith in the loving hands of his mother, have faith that the ones you mourn are safe in the loving hands of God.

We continue to pray for them... we continue to pray for you... and we continue to pray for answers on this, the one year anniversary of their passage to Heaven.

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