

[Opinion](#)

[Guest Voices](#)



Colleen Kelly, right, marches with a banner calling for the closure of the U.S. military prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, during a St. Patrick's Day parade in 2020.

(CNS/Courtesy of Colleen Kelly, September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows)



by John Dear

[View Author Profile](#)

**[Join the Conversation](#)**

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

September 7, 2026

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

This week, on the "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," I'm commemorating the 25th anniversary of 9/11 with two special episodes. On today's episode, I speak with Colleen Kelly, who lost her brother in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center. A few years earlier, I had baptized Colleen's daughter at a very happy family event.

On Sept. 11, Colleen's brother Bill was at a one-day conference at Windows on the World, on the top of the World Trade Center. In the awful days afterward, she met with other family members to seek nonviolent alternatives to the cycles of violence, and to enhance civilian protection. They formed [September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows](#), which has been nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize.

**[Related: Sister of 9/11 victim finds hope in health care work with teens](#)**

She continues to work with the organization in a variety of ways, including the pursuit of justice and accountability for the death of Bill and nearly 3,000 others, by numerous visits to observe the military commissions at Guantánamo Naval Base in Cuba.

Colleen talks about her brother, the founding of "September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows," her trips to Guantánamo, and their work marching for and promoting peace, even in Afghanistan. We also talk about her amazing mother, who told me as we left Ground Zero during a visit that she had "no room for anger, only compassion for the families of the hijackers."

"Bombing Afghanistan will not bring back my son. It will only increase my grief," she said.

Advertisement

For the 25th anniversary, Colleen is organizing a peace walk on Sept. 10 from Union Square to Ground Zero where they will hold an evening vigil.

"Nonviolence is what Jesus taught, and it is hard to believe but until we all truly believe it and make that leap, we are stuck in this inhuman world," she said.

[Listen to the full episode here.](#)

On Thursday, Sept. 10, I'll share the special second episode with my own stories as the Red Cross coordinator of chaplains after 9/11.

This story appears in the [\*\*The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast\*\*](#) and [\*\*Sept. 11: 25 years later\*\*](#) feature series.