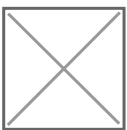




Fr. John Davis celebrates Mass, assisted by a volunteer, at the Pentagon Memorial Chapel in Arlington, Va., during the National Day of Prayer May 5, 2016. The chapel, which opened on the first anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon, was built directly at the impact site where the hijacked plane crashed into the Pentagon. (OSV News/Courtesy of DOD/Dave Vergun)

Ann M. Augherton/Arlington Catholic Herald

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Arlington, Va. — September 6, 2026

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At 9:37 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2001, American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon in Arlington, killing 184 people — 125 people inside the Pentagon and 53 passengers and six crew members aboard the plane.

Twenty-five years later, the repaired facade of the Pentagon still looks a little brighter and the area outside that part of the building is now the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial. There is no central statue. Instead, there are 184 stainless-steel benches, one for each person who lost their life there.

Each bench has the name and age of the victim with a shallow pool of water underneath. There are trees, gravel and dramatic lighting best seen at night.

Interestingly, each bench was placed according to where the victim was — those representing the Pentagon victims are oriented toward the building, while the plane victims are remembered with benches placed in the direction the plane approached the building.

That plane was one of four hijacked commercial airliners that attacked the U.S. that day, killing 2,977 people and injuring thousands more.

In New York, 2,753 people died in the Twin Towers collapse, brought down by two of the planes. Forty people died in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, when passengers and crew fought back against hijackers on the fourth airliner, forcing it to crash in a field near Shanksville.

Officials believe the fourth plane was headed for the U.S. Capitol or the White House.

Inside the Pentagon, a new chapel, built on the impact site of the attack, has a 9/11 etched glass memorial piece and is adjacent to a memorial area with a list of the

Pentagon victims' names etched in stone. Small pieces of paper and pencils are available for visitors to do a rubbing of the names. There is also a reflection room nearby.

Advertisement

Twenty-five years ago, Fr. Daniel Mode, an Arlington diocesan priest, was a U.S. Navy Reserve lieutenant serving reserve duty at the Pentagon as a staff officer for the chief of chaplains in the Navy Annex.

He would have been in that exact area of the Pentagon on 9/11, having frequent meetings there. Instead, he was at his parish, Queen of Apostles in Alexandria.

He heard about the attacks, and he stayed with the parish children waiting for their parents who worked in the Pentagon to pick them up. He celebrated an impromptu Mass. And then he received a phone call. There was a list of people who could've been in that part of the building and calls were being made to account for everyone.

"It quickly came home to me," he told the Arlington Catholic Herald, the diocesan news outlet.

Much has changed in the past quarter-century — barricades around Washington memorials and government buildings; Transportation Security Administration enforcement at airports; and an underlying sense of "could it happen again" for many.

Steven Jarvis, who retired from the U.S. Air Force and now works in support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the Pentagon "now has a chapel and the Eucharist is present 24/7 — a testament to how God can turn bad to good, in many ways."

He said in the 1990s, Catholic Mass was celebrated in a big auditorium with the altar on a stage.

"After the plane hit, they made an indoor memorial and a chapel with a sacristy and the tabernacle," he said. The Pentagon Memorial Chapel opened on the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

"In the morning, I kneel down outside the door because I know the Lord is in there, and at the end of the day," said Jarvis, a parishioner of St. Michael in Annandale.

"The chapel is always open."

Jarvis is volunteer coordinator for the Pentagon Catholic Community, working with "a dedicated and devout team" of Catholic volunteers, both military and civilian.

There are 175 members with an average of 25 to 35 people attending daily Mass. It peaks on first Fridays, and they move back to the auditorium for Ash Wednesday and holy days of obligation, he said.

"The chapel is multi-denomination," Jarvis said, "but we are the big players because we are here every day." Catholic Masses are celebrated at 11:30 a.m. on weekdays and confession is offered before and after Mass.

Two religious orders offer the daily Mass. Dominican priests are responsible for Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception celebrate Mass on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Dominican Fr. Vincent Ferrer Bagan, director of music for both the diocese and the Cathedral of St. Thomas More in Arlington, has been on the rotation for four years.

"It is quite moving," he said. Coming from a rural town in Minnesota and having been in high school on 9/11, he said he never would have imagined he would be at the Pentagon someday. "It's a privilege to interact with Catholics who serve in that building, many who are in parishes in our diocese," he said.

"We always have each Mass offered with a pointed intention but having the chapel in that location is a good reminder for the priest and lay faithful ... to remember to pray for those who lost their lives that day and all of the military personnel who have lost their lives all these years," he said.

In the outside corridor near the chapel, Mode said a spot of black soot is still visible on the wall from the flames on 9/11. Perhaps it is a reminder of what was lost and what remains.

[Ann M. Augherton is managing editor of the Arlington Catholic Herald, news outlet of the Diocese of Arlington. This story was originally published by the Arlington Catholic Herald and distributed through a partnership with OSV News.]

This story appears in the **Sept. 11: 25 years later** feature series. [View the full series.](#)