

Dear saints of Mt Olive Lutheran Church,

Our congregation, as you may be aware, is a member of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS). This October, we will celebrate the 200th birthday of a key figure in the life of our Synod, the Reverend Doctor Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, or as he is more commonly called, C.F.W. Walther.

Born in Saxony (Germany) in 1811, Walther studied theology at the University of Leipzig to prepare for the Ministry. But at that time there were more pastors than parishes, so after graduating he became a private tutor. In 1837 he was ordained and became a parish pastor in Saxony. To leave out a lot of detail and story, Walther joined a group of Saxon Lutherans who set sail for the United States in November of 1838. They arrived in New Orleans in January and went up the Mississippi River to the Saint Louis area. Almost fifty years later, Walther died in Saint Louis in 1887.

Walther wore many hats during his life, including:

- first president of the LCMS (1847-1850, and elected again after the death of President Wyneken, serving from 1864-1878)
- professor and first president of Concordia Seminary
- founder and publisher of (now known as Concordia Publishing House or CPH)
- founder and editor of important publications such as the newspaper *Der Lutheraner* and the theological journal *Lehre und Wehre*
- first president of the Synodical Conference, which consisted of the LCMS, the Wisconsin

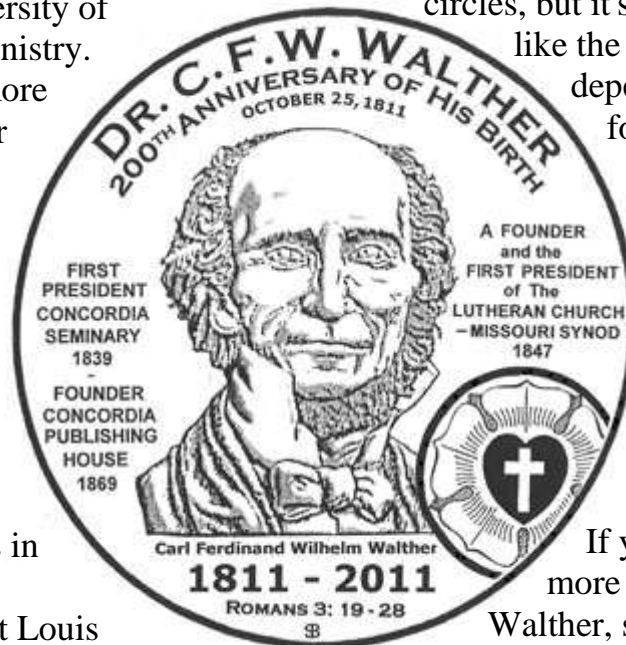


Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), and the Norwegian Synod (later known as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod or ELS)

Despite these numerous vocations,

it's worth noting that Walther was also a parish pastor, serving Trinity Lutheran Church in Saint Louis for 46 years. And during his tenure at Trinity, he served other congregations as well.

Walther receives overwhelmingly good press in our circles, but it's also good to remember that he, like the rest of us, was a sinner who depended on Christ and His forgiveness and mercy.



He wrote extensively, but his two best known works are *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* and *Church and Ministry*. Both are required reading for all LCMS students studying for the Ministry.

If you are interested in learning more about the life and work of C.F.W. Walther, some of the following resources may interest you. Concordia Historical Institute short biography of Walther

at [www.lutheranhistory.org/presidents/pres\\_walther.htm](http://www.lutheranhistory.org/presidents/pres_walther.htm) which also mentions a number of books. CPH has these books and others: *Law & Gospel*, *How to Read and Apply the Bible* and *At Home in the House of My Fathers*. The LCMS has a website for the Walther:

Bicentennial [www.lcms.org/walther200](http://www.lcms.org/walther200) and also keep your eyes peeled for a movie coming out next month produced by Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis. The movie's website is [www.waltherfilm.com/](http://www.waltherfilm.com/)

And if you thought the name "Walther" sounded familiar because you used to belong to the Walther League, now you know where it got its name.

# Mt Olive's Tapenade

**Game Night** hosted at Tim Meiburg's home. The Sep 24<sup>th</sup> Game Night is now Oct 15<sup>th</sup>, at 5-7pm.

Stay tuned for update on Pastor's Bible Class.

## No Clergy at Ground Zero – Rev. William M. Cwirla

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg has [banned clergy](#) from participating in this year's 9/11 memorial events at Ground Zero. Good for him! He'll save us all a bunch of post-9/11 ecumenical handover headaches on Monday. As far as I'm concerned, clergy are best neither seen nor heard in the public square. And I'm one of them.

What makes clergy "clergy" is their appointment to serve their "faith communities" as we like to call them. Pastors, priests, rabbis, and imams and the like represent their various religious bodies and teach their various religions to their respective groups. They are public figures within their congregations and circles of influence, not within society at large. At least in this society.

The events of September 11, 2001 were not inherently religious in nature. I know Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, Bill Maher and their ilk like to say they were, but they'd find any excuse to bash religion. Yes, the perpetrators were radical fundamentalist Muslims. Yes, they did what they did in part believing they were doing the will of Allah and would be rewarded eternally for their actions. But 9/11 was an attack against the United States of America for its policies and presence in the Middle East. It was not an attack on Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism or any other religion. In case we've forgotten, the targeted buildings were the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and presumably, the White House. No cathedrals were harmed in the atrocity.

The reason we get all religious about 9/11 is two-fold. I think. First, it was an enormous, sudden and violent loss of life, property and personal security. The enormity of what happened that day is hard to fathom let alone put into words. I remember that Tuesday vividly and still don't quite believe it. We were supposed to have our monthly pastors' meeting. Instead, we planned our services for later that evening. I remember the silence of the skies overhead as planes were grounded. Events of such enormous loss seek enormous answers in a God who is bigger than the enormity of what

happened. When really bad things happen, most people get religious. I do. I get that.

Second, we believe in our patriotic heart of hearts that our being American somehow transcends our being Catholic, Lutheran, Evangelical, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, etc. That's not true, though we like to believe it, at least on days other than Sunday. Hence the parade of religions around 9/11. We did it at the first 9/11 event at Yankee Stadium to show the world how we all get along and play nice in this country. It hasn't always worked out that way since, but we like to pretend, at least when the cameras are rolling.

America's civil religion has grown increasingly complex and diverse since our formative years when our largely Deist and Christian founding fathers carved out a place for Divine Providence in the public psyche. Ironically, a few of the founding fathers were skeptical atheists too, including notably Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin. But they, like the Deist Thomas Jefferson, saw the value of a little religion in public life, so long as it was neutered and kept on a short leash. We like our civic religions tame and domesticated in the public square. But as we who worship the Lion of Judah know, God is never tame or domesticated.

We also stand in for others with Christ by our intercessions on their behalf when they have sinned. If they have done something wrong, we don't damn them, but we act as if their sins are ours. We ask God to have mercy on them and give them the opportunity to come to repentance. -- Dr. John Kleinig, \*Grace upon Grace\* p. 210.

So as a Lutheran clergyman with a firm hold on the proper distinction of the two kingdoms, I say, "Good for you, Mayor Bloomberg." And thank you for giving all of us clergy a day off from the public square. I'll be sure to get together with my faith community on Sunday, September 11, as is our custom every Sunday, to hear of Jesus' victory over Sin and Death and receive the gifts of His Sacrifice for the sin of the world.

And we'll say a prayer for our country, for the government and those who protect us, including you, Mr. Mayor, as well as for all the nations of the world, for our fellow Christians scattered throughout all the world, for our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and for that peace that the world cannot give.

Kyrie eleison.

# 9/11: Are We All Moral Monsters?

**9/11 soberly reveals again what is often hidden to us about our own anthropology: we are 9/11-enabled human beings and we are scared of our own mortality.**

Sep. 2, 2011 By **Clay Jones**

9/11 soberly reveals again what is often hidden to us about our own anthropology: we are 9/11-enabled human beings and we are scared of our own mortality.

We tend to call the 9/11 perpetrators “monsters” and their acts “inhuman.” We find that comforting because if they really were inhuman monsters, it lets the rest of us off the hook.

But for fifteen years now in my study of why God allows evil, I’ve been examining atrocities like the Holocaust and other genocides, and I’ve learned that these horrors are precisely human. They indict all of humankind in a particular way.

And I’m not alone in thinking this, nor is it simply my “religious beliefs” that suggest it. Consider the sobering conclusion of historian George Kren and psychologist Leon Rappoport:

What remains is a central, deadening sense of despair over the human species. Where can one find an affirmative meaning in life if human beings can do such things? Along with this despair there may also come a desperate new feeling of vulnerability attached to the fact that one is human. If one keeps at the Holocaust long enough, then sooner or later the ultimate truth begins to reveal itself: one knows, finally, that one might either do it, or be done to. If it could happen on such a massive scale elsewhere, then it can happen anywhere....

So also Holocaust historian Christopher Browning concluded: “I could have been the killer or the evader—both were humans.” Consider too the words of sociologist Harald Welzer, “We are left then with the most discomfiting of all realities—ordinary, ‘normal’ people committing acts of extraordinary evil. This reality is difficult to admit, to understand, to absorb.... As we look at the perpetrators of genocide and mass killing, we need no longer ask who these people are. We know who they are. They are you and I.”

Even the victims of atrocity recognize this. Auschwitz survivor Elie Wiesel wrote, “Deep down... man is not only an executioner, not only a victim, not only a spectator: he is all three at once.” Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi agrees, “We must remember that these faithful followers, among them the diligent executors of human orders, were not born torturers, were not (with few exceptions) monsters: they were ordinary men.”

Likewise, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who suffered eight years in a Soviet gulag, asked:

Where did this wolf-tribe appear from among our people? Does it really stem from our own roots? Our own blood?

It is our own.

And just so we don’t go around flaunting too proudly the white mantle of the just, let everyone ask himself: “If my life had turned out differently, might I myself not have become just such an executioner?”

It is a dreadful question if one answers it honestly.

So we humans will do well to shed the us v. them rhetoric and look honestly within ourselves.

Here, theology and philosophy help us avoid an “us” v. “them” mentality which blinds appropriate self-reflection by preoccupying us with naming the “other monster” in the room. This is not to say that the men who committed these heinous acts are not morally culpable. They are—and they deserve to pay for it! That is justice, not vindication. But we must ask, do we have the courage to examine our own sinful inclinations?

Not only are we often blind to our own 9/11-enablement, we fear facing our mortality, which is exactly what 9/11 and other man-made and natural disasters force us to acknowledge.

You see, as C.S. Lewis has pointed out, the real horror of war isn’t that people die. War doesn’t increase the mortality rate even one percent—everyone dies. The real horror of war is that death stares us in the face and reminds us of our ultimate destination. After all, only one thing is going to prevent absolutely every one of us from watching everyone we know die from murder, accident, or disease and that will be our own death from murder, accident, or disease.

For the sake of ourselves and for the good of our neighbor, it is humane to face our own mortality and confront how we are 9/11-enabled.

Endless entertainment, whether of sports, sitcoms, or surfing the net, may amuse and distract us. Drugs and alcohol might blur the horror. But ultimately, the ugly truth keeps coming back—we are all going to die. And we are all going to die as beings 9/11-enabled!

These are just raw facts about humankind—true for atheist and Christian alike. But if we only stare into the face of our own corruptibility and mortality, despair is inevitable. Who could ever hope again? Thus the liturgy-like rituals of patriotic bereavement seem incomplete. We needed someone from outside this world to rescue us, and that’s why many of us look to Calvary.

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