

Post-9/11 world needs religion to be weapon of peace, Vatican spokesman says

VATICAN CITY - If humanity wants to build peace out of the ruins of Sept. 11, 2001, religion has to play a major role in dialogue, said the Vatican spokesman, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi.

The day of the attacks 10 years ago was "a monstrous day," he said during a presentation at Vatican Radio Sept. 6 of a new book on the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy.

Dialogue is the key to overcoming hatred and the risk of religious fanaticism, he said.

"If we want to build peace for humanity, we have to be able to develop a discourse in which the religious dimension becomes an active force for peace," he said.

Father Lombardi was one of a number of speakers presenting a new book written by a Vatican Radio journalist.

"11 Settembre: Una Storia che Continua" ("September 11: A Continuing Story"), by Alessandro Gisotti, is a series of vignettes examining the tragedy from the point of view of people whose lives were directly affected by the disaster: a television journalist in New York; a firefighter; a Pentagon employee; the family of a young student who was killed in the plane crash near Shanksville, Pa.; a Catholic priest whose church is one block from ground zero; and others.

Miguel Diaz, U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, said in a statement that in spite of the grief and losses endured on 9/11, "the human spirit has triumphed in the face of fear, violence and tragedy: the world's nations have united - including the more than 90 nationalities of people who lost their lives on that day - to stand together in a show of unity and defiance in confronting those who feed upon and want to spread fear. Nations and peoples have joined together to say, 'Never again.'"

The 90-page book is published only in Italian. Its foreword was written by U.S. Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago.

“Mr. Gisotti has done a great service to the memory of all those who died in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2011, and an even greater service to all those who survived,” wrote the cardinal.

By telling the stories of those affected by the tragedy, the author “helps keep in mind what none of us should forget and leaves us with a sense of hope because, in the end, history is what God remembers,” Cardinal George wrote.