

Jerusalem today reeks of terrorism. The place we call the Holy Land staggers beneath unimaginable crime. Suicide bombers seem to attack almost every day. Perpetrators attack civilians as if they were combatants. It all seems out of control. Leaders prefer war to truce. Terrorists of the world got the attention of Americans last September 11, but our foreign policy has failed to advance peace in the Middle East.

Americans show no mercy against our terrorists. The alleged “20th hijacker,” Zacarias Moussaoui, will soon stand trial and prosecutors will seek the death penalty. After all, this man allegedly helped plan the killing of over 3000 Americans in the greatest single act of terrorism on our soil. If he is proven guilty, the American people will argue that the death penalty has to apply. Our church leaders, including the pope, have denounced the death penalty in general. Even in this case, Mr. Moussaoui is a human being, created by God and loved by God, and he deserves the respect due to every human life. Most Americans will not accept that logic. They will prefer to repay violence with violence.

Jerusalem reeked with terror at the end of Jesus’ life. Jesus underwent inhumane torture: He was bound, whipped, crowned with thorns and crucified. The government did nothing to stop these crimes. His enemies claimed victory. His friends deserted and betrayed him. The death of Jesus was an act of terror.

Terrorism is not new. It feels new to us, because we suffered it so recently. Terrorism is deep. Enemies are plotting even more devastating attacks against Americans. We may witness atrocities of unimaginable scale through nuclear weapons and biological warfare. No one wants to fathom the thought of losing hundreds of thousands of innocent American lives, yet it could happen.

We live with this fear now. But the people in the Holy Land live with more than fear. They live with the reality of terror every day. More than ever we need a savior, someone to show us the way.

Jesus accepted torture, embarrassment and death for his cause; he accepted the weight of the sin of the world. Jesus did

not blink. He accepted the cross in love for the sinner, even for those who sinned against him.