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## **Tutu addresses issue of forgiveness and reconciliation in wake of terrorist attacks**

(ENS) In an interview with beliefnet, the on-line religion web site, Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu of Cape Town was asked about reconciliation and forgiveness in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon. He said that “forgiveness and reconciliation are not cheap, they are costly.” He added that “forgiveness is not to condone or minimize the awfulness of an atrocity or wrong. It is to recognize its ghastliness but to choose to acknowledge the essential humanity of the perpetrator and to give that perpetrator the possibility of making a new beginning.”

Tutu added that forgiveness is “an act of much hope and not despair. It is to hope in the essential goodness of people and to have faith in their potential to change. It is to bet on that possibility. Forgiveness,” he argued, “is not opposed to justice, especially if it is not punitive justice, but restorative justice, justice that does not seek primarily to punish the perpetrator, to hit out, but looks to heal a breach, to restore a social equilibrium that the atrocity or misdeed has disturbed.”

Tutu chaired South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission which sorted through the atrocities of the apartheid regime and extended official forgiveness to many who admitted their guilt, in the realization that “revenge and retribution merely unleash an inexorable cycle of reprisal provoking counter reprisal.”

“What are you in the U.S. willing to do?” Tutu asked. “Are you willing to believe that even though they are guilty of a diabolical act, they still continue to be children of God, not monsters, not demons, but those with the capacity to change?”

“We are in the forgiving business, whether we like it or not. And we can do this only through God’s grace,” Tutu said. It is ultimately God at work in us to make us to be like God. Yes, it is a tall order, but that is the love that changes the world, that believes an enemy is a friend waiting to be made.” He ended by reminding people that “ultimately there is no future without forgiveness.”