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Tearful tributes for WTC fire marshal

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Hundreds of mourners bid a tearful goodbye yesterday to "a hero to us all" — James Corrigan, the World Trade Center's head fire marshal and a retired FDNY captain.

Corrigan's grief-stricken widow, Marie, wiped away tears as their son, Brendan, eulogized his "best friend" as a dedicated dad, husband and firefighter during a somber memorial Mass at St. Anastasia Church in Douglaston, Queens.

"My father had a tremendous heart and he loved his family," said Brendan, his voice choked with emotion.

"We are better people for having known and loved him. [Countless] lives were saved because of the efforts of my father over his career. And on Sept. 11, my father became a hero to us all."

Brendan fondly recalled how his 60-year-old father "met the love of his life, my mother, on a routine call," when he was an NYPD cop before joining New York's Bravest in 1969.

Corrigan led scores of frightened children

and adults to safety before perishing in the Twin Towers tragedy — just three days after the wedding of the couple's other child, Sean.

The hero fire marshal's bereaved brother, John Corrigan, said James "loved his profession and loved his family."

Monsignor John P. McCullagh told mourners Corrigan "was a true family man, and we should all walk in the footsteps of his example."

Thanking him for the "gift of friendship," retired FDNY Capt. Tom Brennan said Corrigan was always a joy to be around.

"Jimmy had a pleasant manner and a great demeanor," said Brennan.

"He had a lot of personal charm. I never once saw him have a bad word with anyone. He had a serious commitment to the things that are truly important in life."

In a statement read at the Mass, Mayor Giuliani said Corrigan "died after saving hundreds of lives through dedication and service."

Engine Co. 281 Fire Capt. George Murphy said Corrigan was "extremely devoted to his family."

Meanwhile, in Valley Stream, L.I., more than 1,500 mourners bid a heartbreaking

farewell to FDNY Battalion 8 Chief Orio Palmer, 45, a married father of three.

Palmer's 13-year-old daughter Dana, flanked by her sister, Alyssa, 9, reduced the entire church to tears when she read a letter promising their dad that she'll "get good grades" and "always be there for him."

"Orio was a man of passion," Father Thomas Harold told mourners at Holy Name of Mary Church.

"His last breath may have been one of his last acts of love."

At St. Francis Church in Wantagh, L.I., thousands of cops, family and friends gathered to say goodbye to Emergency Service Unit officer Paul Talty, a 40-year-old married father of three.

Talty, "a great guy and a great cop," had spent his last days overjoyed with the birth of his daughter Kelly in August, said Lt. Nick Bavaro.

"He was very proud of his family. He was very proud of all his kids, but especially the baby," Bavaro said. "He was well-loved and respected by everyone who worked with him."

Patrolmen's Benevolent Association President Patrick Lynch said Talty was a "hero cop" and "we'll never forget him."

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