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ST. PATRICK'S

City Celebrates Its Heroes, and Grieves Over Their Loss

By RANDAL C. ARCHIBOLD

They were in dress blues and full gear. Brothers, sons, sisters, daughters, fathers, mothers, friends, strangers to the more than 300 firefighters, police officers and other emergency workers the city said were lost in the wreckage of the World Trade Center.

In the buttery light of St. Patrick's Cathedral last night, filled to its capacity of 2,500 people and surrounded outside by a throng of hundreds, men and women embraced and cried and sat with heads in hands, reflecting on the unimaginable.

A Mass said by Cardinal Edward M. Egan drew them there, one in which he acknowledged their sorrow and asked them to see the "triumph that defines our heroes."

But it was also a time for workers numbed by the loss of so many colleagues to vent emotions, to hug spouses and accept condolences.

"Sorry about your brother," a firefighter said as he embraced Robert Carlo of Ladder 23 in Manhattan whose brother Michael, also a firefighter, was missing.

In the pew behind Mr. Carlo, a police officer in dress blues bit his lip, wiped his reddened eyes and bowed his head in silent prayer, his shoulders occasionally shuddering.

Gene Lynch, a firefighter with Engine 38 in the Bronx, arrived fresh from the search-and-rescue scene. He squeezed into a pew with his fire coat still dusty, and afterward, with the church organ blaring "America the Beautiful," he headed right out to be driven back to work.

"They are all my family," he said as he waited for his ride. "I just had to be here for my brothers."

Out on the sidewalk, Greg Dennehy, clutched his wife, Judith, and wept as he spoke of losing colleagues at Ladder 2 and Engine 8, both in a Midtown firehouse, which lost 10 members. "I asked God to care of them, to watch over them," he said. "Physically they may have taken their last ride, but their spirit rides on forever."

With officials like Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and Gov. George E. Pataki looking on, the cardinal said his second Mass on the terrorist attack, one, he said, for those caught "in the hurricane of dust and debris."

Cardinal Egan spoke of a crucifix on the road to the St. Francis chapel in Italy, with two faces: on one side Jesus Christ is shown contorted and on the other he appears serene.

"Death, it proclaims, has and must have two faces," Cardinal Egan said. "One of sadness and pain, and the other of peace and triumph."

The emergency workers, he said, "guided and protected, and in doing this they handed over their lives for the health and safety of others. If this is not triumph, I don't know what triumph might be."

Some families held out hope that their loved ones would be rescued.

"I'm not giving up," Margaret Ryan said through tears about her son, Matthew Ryan, a battalion chief from Manhattan who is missing.

Nearby, Mr. Dennehy and his wife broke their embrace and began walking away.

"I'm still on duty," he said. "I have to go back to the firehouse."

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