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Letters



Firefighters honor FDNY brothers

BY TRACY SEELYE
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2011 02:58 PM



As the nation began tuning its televisions to coverage of Sept. 11 observances in New York, Washington, D.C. and Shanksville, Pa., on Sunday, Whitman's Fire Department was also honoring the first responders lost that day 10 years ago.

The example of one man, New York Fire Department Chaplain Mychal Judge — the first recorded death that day at the World Trade Center — that set the tone for Whitman's event.

"Sept. 11, 2001 was a horrific day for this country and for its fire service," said Fire Chief Timothy Grenno. "When speaking of Sept. 11, deciding [on] a specific emotion to speak about is difficult."

Fear, anger and sadness were all among the range of emotions that followed the terrorist attacks, he noted.

A Franciscan priest, Judge was killed when debris from the towers fell on him, striking him in the head.

He is recorded as the first certified fatality of 9/11 because his was the first body to be recovered and taken to the coroner where his death certificate was numbered "Victim 0001."

But it was the example of how he lived his life and upheld his firefighting oath that was the focus on this day.

"As firefighters, we have taken an oath to help our fellow man, we promise the wisdom to lead, the compassion to comfort and the love to serve unselfishly whenever we are called," Grenno said. "The acts of Sept. 11 have made us stronger in that oath."

He related how Judge had given a homily on that topic at a station dedication on Sept. 10, 2001.

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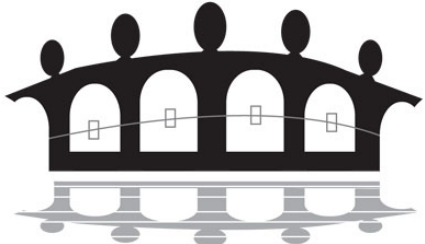


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“No matter how big the call, or how small, you have no idea of what God is calling you to do. But God needs you, which means he needs all of us,” Grenno said, quoting Judge’s remarks. “Those words he spoke are the foundation for what we work.”

Judge died following his oath, Grenno said.

“He was assisting FDNY members as he was openly praying for them in the mezzanine of the North Tower.” he said. “He had just finished anointing one of the fallen FDNY brothers. Father Mike lived by his oath on that day. Father Mike, without doubt is proud to see the fire service was not conquered, but invigorated since that fateful day.

“And today is a new day,” Grenno said.

The event featured firefighter Luke McFadden playing bagpipes and firefighter union President Richard MacKinnon laying the memorial flowers at the FDNY plaque, The Rev. Janson Makos, pastor of Holy Ghost Church, offered a prayer and the American Legion Color Guard and selectmen Carl Kowalski, Daniel Salvucci and Brendan Mezanson attended as did state Rep. Geoffrey Diehl, R-Whitman.

Diehl, wearing a lapel pin depicting the firefighters’ raising of the flag at Ground Zero recalled his experience on Sept. 11, 2001. After a delayed flight to New York from Los Angeles during the week after the attacks, he recalled happening by the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in Manhattan.

“The Javits Center was the staging area for all the guys working at Ground Zero,” he said. “There were lines out the doors and around the blocks for guys volunteering to go down there and work — whether you were a firefighter, a union worker, anything to do with trades. It’s something I hadn’t thought about in 10 years.”

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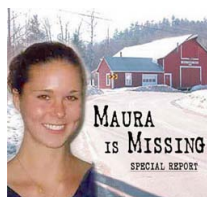
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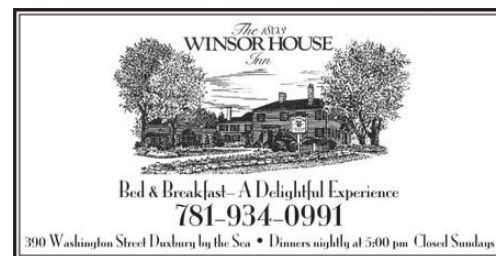
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