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Mass

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gregation, "Don't sweat the small stuff," saying Sept. 11 should teach us to instead strive to "Love your children, your families, your neighbors. And love your God and church more than you ever did before."

The Mass was marked by elaborate music including vocals, organ, brass and bagpipes. Church hymns were blended with such patriotic songs as "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "America the Beautiful." Finally, emergency personnel filed out of the church amid prolonged applause.

This recognition of the fallen rescue workers proved touching for Mr. Boyle's two sisters who attended the Mass.

"I think this was important because they're all heroes, and they should be remembered as heroes," said Mary Lynch, who attends Church of the Assumption in Fairport.

"If Michael were here, he'd be thrilled

he was recognized," said Jeanne Boyle, a parishioner at Blessed Sacrament in Rochester. However, she stressed that it's also important to pay homage to the surviving emergency personnel. "People tend to forget they do this every day," she said.

Sept. 8 indeed proved to be a special night for the Rochester-area emergency workers, who occupied several center aisles of St. Michael's.

"It was electric," said Daniel McBride, captain and director of public information for the Rochester Fire Department. McBride noted that it's rare for so many departments from the city and suburbs to gather for a common cause. He added that many non-Catholics attended as well.

"We felt like there was this tremendous underlying need to connect," explained McBride, a parishioner of St. Louis in Pittsford, who served as a lector for the Sept. 8 liturgy. Deacon Edward Giblin of Rochester's Holy Cross Parish, a captain in the Rochester Police Department, was the other lector.



Karin von Voigtlander/Staff photographer

Bishop Matthew H. Clark and St. Michael's pastor Father Peter Deckman greet those who attended the memorial Mass at St. Michael's Sept. 8.

Emergency

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even though they weren't bound by the mandate.

"We want to assure our parents we do provide and administrate a safe school program," Sister Carroll said.

Using state suggestions and local public school emergency-management plans as guidelines, each diocesan school created its own emergency-management plan. The plans are unique to each school's buildings, staff, location, student ages, and take into account the level of municipal emergency planning enacted by the county in which the schools are located.

Every school is required to have a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather station device, which relays information on natural disasters, Sister Carroll said. They also are required to work with local and state agencies in times of disaster, and must have an emergency cellular phone. Also, only one door to the building — which can be easily monitored by the school office — is left unlocked and used as an entrance, and visitors must sign in at the office and be issued identification such as a badge. Principals are also required to be trained by state police officials in emergency management.

Each school also maintains an emergency management box, which contains such items as phone lists, student data, pens, paper, a student and teacher roster, building floor plans, the locations of emergency shutoffs for gas, electric and water, and an extra set of building keys. This box would be carried out of the building upon

an emergency evacuation, Sister Carroll said, and information contained in it would be used not only by school officials, but by local police and fire personnel as well.

School plans outline in detail how school administrators and teachers should respond to emergencies such as bomb threats, terrorist activities, hostage situations, child abductions, mass illnesses and such natural disasters as storms, tornadoes and fires. There are procedures in place for building evacuations, as well as for parent and media notification.

In response to nationwide school-shooting incidents, such as the one at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., in 1999, Gov. George Pataki signed into law in 2000 Project SAVE (Safe Schools Against Violence in Education), which mandated public, charter and BOCES schools to implement procedures to respond to incidents of violence. Again, Catholic schools were not required to follow the law's requirements, but decided to do so anyway.

"As a Catholic school, we are following every aspect of this that we can even though we are not mandated," Sister Carroll said.

Diocesan schools' safety plans include procedures for handling such incidents as fights, suicide and bomb threats, and people with weapons, and how to inform parents about occurrences of such incidents. The schools also fingerprint and do background checks on potential employees, and have established disciplinary measures for students who have committed acts of violence. Many of the procedures were developed from information contained in the New York State Police Effective Response

Program.

Sister Carroll said the diocese has done two things in regard to emergency planning since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. It decided it was important to share information in the schools' emergency-management plans with diocesan parishes, and a committee worked on condensing the information into flip charts that were distributed to the parishes. Sept. 11 also made the diocesan schools aware that coordination and communication with local law enforcement, emergency personnel and county emergency management officials is important. Sister Carroll said cooperation among many agencies that respond to emergencies makes the response more effective than if agencies enact individual responses.

Sister Carroll said tests of the emergency-preparedness plans have been conducted at each diocesan school, but the real thing has not yet needed to be put into effect.

"If it takes place," Sister Carroll said of a disaster, "we're ready for it."

Benefits of preparing

Deacon Gerald A. Collins, director of disaster response for Catholic Charities USA, called on his previous experience with the American Red Cross to develop three "Prepared for Disaster" brochures offering preparedness tips for families, parishes and businesses.

"The continuation or quick resumption of worship following a disaster is the highest priority, along with routine and special parish activities," says the brochure for parishes. "Doing so helps in several ways: It maintains that feeling of community and communal support, sustains continuity in parishioners' lives in a world that has seemingly been turned upside down and enables the parish to preserve its identity."

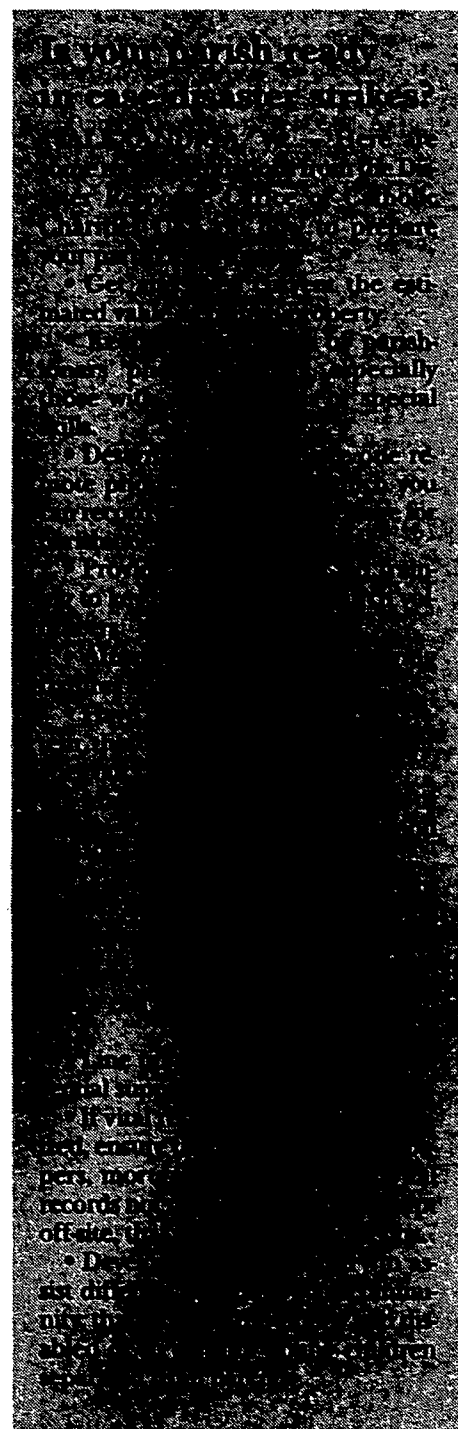
For families, "preparedness will bring peace of mind," another brochure says. After Sept. 11, "we can never again say it won't happen to us. Knowing what to do in the face of an emergency is the best protection for your family."

As he has traveled across the country for disaster-preparedness training sessions, the brochures are "the items that disappear from the table first," Deacon Collins said. "They are getting very popular."

Information from the brochures will eventually be posted on the organization's Web site at www.catholiccharitiesusa.org; in the meantime, individual copies may be obtained by calling Deacon Collins at 703/549-1390, ext. 118.

An interfaith seminar on disaster response and preparedness held this summer by Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Paterson, N.J., attracted 115 participants from local community-based organizations and schools, as well as parish nurses and clergy of various denominations.

Diane Silbernagel, liaison for congregational health ministry at Catholic Charities in Paterson, said the seminar featured talks on sources of disaster assistance, the psy-



chological impact to victims and volunteers, how to prepare children for the Sept. 11 anniversary and a variety of other topics.

In Paterson, a three-county diocese in which more than 100 children lost a parent on Sept. 11, the response of some Catholic parishes and congregations of other denominations to the disaster made such an impact that they were role models for the others, Silbernagel said.

Charleston's Grillo recommends that parishes set up a formal referral system with other local organizations, identifying alternate work sites, establishing accounting procedures for handling large disaster grants or special accounts, and reviewing and revising plans as needed.

And then, she said, "pray that you never have to use any of this."

Contains reporting by Jennifer Ficaglia in Rochester.

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