

St. Paul / TRAGEDY, THEN THANKS

Archdiocese's 'blue Mass' draws several hundred

BY DOUG BELDEN
Pioneer Press
TwinCities.com-Pioneer Press

Article Last Updated: 09/08/2007 09:22:32 PM CDT

"Today, it almost seems that people thank one another less and less," Archbishop Harry Flynn told a crowd of several hundred police, fire and rescue personnel and their families and friends Saturday at the Cathedral of St. Paul.

Referring to last month's Interstate 35W bridge collapse, he said: "Who were the first ones there? You were. You were. And we give you thanks."

This was the third "blue Mass" put on by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis to honor the state's public safety workers. This year's event took on some extra poignancy in the wake of the bridge tragedy.

St. Paul Police Chief John Harrington and Minneapolis Police Chief Tim Dolan attended, as did several other departments' chiefs from the area. Officers wore dress uniforms, a flag was hung between fire ladder trucks from St. Paul and Minneapolis, and the names of men and women killed in the line of duty throughout Minnesota history were read between tolls of a bell.

"(It's) a wonderful opportunity to show them our gratitude," said Monica Kocourek, who has cousins in the Minneapolis fire and police departments and is a member of the Galtier Society, a group of lay Catholics that helped sponsor the service.

"I liked the people with the swords," said 11-year-old Daniel Sheaffer, referring to the Knights of Columbus who participated in the service in full regalia.

"Blue Masses" - named for the color of many public safety uniforms - take place annually in several cities in the Northeast, and Flynn, who grew up in upstate New York and had two brothers in the police force, wanted to start one in the Twin Cities, said archdiocese spokesman Dennis McGrath.

The service is scheduled each year around Sept. 11. Organizers said the crowd has grown slightly each year, but they are looking to spread the word.

"Tell your friends, tell your neighbors," Flynn told the congregation at the end of Saturday's Mass.

Rajah Kolb, of Mendota Heights, has been to the service all three years. Her son is police chief in Minnetrista, and she appreciates the church's formal show of thanks for what her son and others do.

"It means so much to me to know they have a celebration at the cathedral, a beautiful holy Mass, that recognizes all the sacrifices present and past that have contributed to make our city safe," she said. "(It's) also a celebration that highlights the love of our Lord for all of these men and women."

Doug Belden can be reached at dbelden@pioneerpress.com or 651-228-5136.

Close Window

Send To Printer