



*Frank P. Cruthers*  
*Chief of Department, NYC Fire Department*

The most important and most solemn event on the FDNY calendar is our Annual Memorial Day Service conducted each October, traditionally at the Firemen's Monument in Riverside Park. Members of the Department gather to honor their departed Brothers and to convey their feelings of love, respect, fraternity and loyalty to the families of our heroes.

This year, everything has changed and nothing has changed. We are at a vastly different venue; the scale of the service has increased geometrically and there is national and international attention, the likes of which we have never seen.

Today, we pay tribute to 352 FDNY heroes who made the Supreme Sacrifice, 343 on one infamous day, September 11, 2001. The spirit, commitment and dedication of Firefighters remain unchanged. They gave their lives, not for family, friends or neighbors, but for complete strangers. Whether one or two or three at a time--or as 343--they courageously met the danger before them as others fled. To a man, they would say, "I was just doing my job." We are inspired by their selfless dedication to duty and to one another.

As we move forward, training, responding, adapting to the post-9/11 environment, we do so in their memory, in their honor. They have raised the bar, set new standards for us to live up to. We owe them that and we owe their families a continuing debt for sharing their loved ones, their Firefighters with us.

*Frank P. Cruthers*