

Each year, thousands of New York City firefighters gather at the Firefighters Monument to honor their fallen comrades. The monument, located at one hundredth Street and Riverside Drive, Manhattan, has two statues carved in stone at each end by Attilio Piccirilli. The figure facing south is a seated woman holding a firefighter's helmet; a young boy stands by her side. It symbolizes "Duty." The figure facing north is a seated woman holding a fallen firefighter in her arms. This figure symbolizes "Sacrifice." Duty and Sacrifice –this is the legacy of the New York City Fire service. Firefighters pass this legacy of duty and sacrifice down from firefighter to firefighter from generation to generation.

Several years ago Don Reynolds asked me to speak on the principles of "duty" and "sacrifice" - the legacy represented by these sculptures. He also asked if I could try to explain how these principles of duty and sacrifice rest on a spiritual and ethical foundation of love and morality. First, let me say firefighters do not sit around the fire station talking about duty, sacrifice, love or morality.

Perhaps they should, but they don't. So when asked to give this talk, I went to a friend of mine who knows more about duty, sacrifice, love and morality than anyone I know - my wife, Patricia. I asked her, "Pat, how would you define duty?" Without hesitation she replied, "That's easy. Duty is taking care of yourself so that you can care for someone else." When I thought about it, I realized this is true, and it is true for firefighters also. When a young man or woman joins the fire service, they take an oath. We swear to protect lives and property from fire.

This is a firefighter's duty and to accomplish this, as my wife Patricia said, we must take care of ourselves so we can care for others. Firefighters must continually train and learn about life saving. We must learn to operate giant firefighting machines –100 foot aerial ladders to rescue people from windows and high-pressure pumping engines to supply thousands of gallons of water to quench conflagrations. Firefighters must also stay in good physical and emotional condition to perform physically demanding tasks. Yes, Patricia was right; firefighters must take care of themselves so they can care for others.

The other legacy of the firefighter- Sacrifice carved in stone on the Memorial is well understood by firefighters. Over the one hundred and forty six year history of the New York City fire service one thousand one hundred and thirty firefighters have died in the line of duty; they gave their lives for the people of this City. Three hundred and forty three firefighters made the supreme sacrifice on 9-11. Since then, there have been 9 more. Firefighters: Thomas Brick, Curtis Meyran, John Bellew, Richard Scalafani, Howard Carpluk, Michael Reilly, Robert Beddia, Joseph Graffagnino, and John Martinson all made the supreme sacrifice.

No firefighter believes they are making a sacrifice; it is an honor to be a firefighter. Sacrifice- the giving up, the offering, the forgoing of a value for something of greater value - is really made by the families. The children, the wives, husbands, and parents of the firefighters who die in the line of duty; they make the real sacrifice. So the question is, "How do we pass this legacy of duty and sacrifice onto new firefighters?" At first a rookie receives these values by watching actions performed by veterans.

When you see others perform brave acts, and sometimes sacrifice lives and limbs, at first you wonder why. Why do they do that? Then as time goes by you want to do the same. You follow them into danger and try to live up to their standard of service, to see if you can do what they do. Can you measure up becomes the question? Over years you experience threats and risks of fire with your fellow firefighters. Over years, by working together, you develop, first respect, then admiration and a after that, a love for each other and a love for the fire service. We call it camaraderie, esprit de corps but it is really love. Love for your fellow firefighter and a love of the fire service and what it teaches us to do for our fellow man. This is the spiritual and ethical foundation of the firefighter's legacy- it is love.

The other foundation of the firefighter's legacy is morality. The rightness of our life saving actions, the rightness of our mission, - protecting lives and property - are the secrets to our success as an emergency service. Our actions, saving lives and property, are morally right.

There are other dangerous professions where workers face

threat and risk and make the supreme sacrifice-the military and the police. However, to be a good soldier you may have to kill; to be a good police officer you may have to arrest someone; but to be a good firefighter all you have to do is help people in times of need. When you apply the values of love and morality to these three dangerous professions, they fit better with the fire service.

The poet Horace once said, "There is no greater honor than to give one's life for your country," A country is its people. Firefighters give their lives for the people of this city, New York.

Vincent Dunn

Deputy Chief FDNY (Ret)