



OFFICE OF THE CARDINAL

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

November 30, 2008

Our Lady of the Angels
50th Anniversary Mass Committee
c/o Ms. Mary Ellen Reeves
1263 Rose Avenue
Carol Stream, IL 60188

My dear sisters and brothers in faith,

As you gather for this milestone anniversary to honor the memory of the ninety-two children and three Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary -- your classmates, your teachers and your loved ones -- who lost their lives so tragically fifty years ago in the fire at Our Lady of the Angels School, you are in my thoughts and prayers in a special way. I regret that a commitment in Rome prevents me from joining you today in person, as I know that you who are survivors of the fire gather also to recall and offer to God the physical and emotional sufferings -- and, even, the triumphs -- you yourselves have experienced amidst the incomprehensible loss that has so changed and shaped your lives.

That you come together today, as so many of you have gathered countless times, for the celebration of Mass seems to me to be the ultimate tribute to yourselves, your classmates and, especially, to the Lord who has walked with you over the fifty long years that have elapsed since the fire. I suspect that most of you have identified in a way few of us ever do with the suffering and crucified Christ, and I pray that you have felt the embrace of Jesus in particular moments of trial.

I cannot imagine that your lives have been free of doubt anymore than they have been free of great pain; neither do I imagine that all of you have realized peace in exactly the way you might wish it. Yet I do know that the magnificent faith you demonstrate by your presence at Mass today testifies not only to all of Chicago but to a world that has only read of your suffering that you believe that the Lord God does not abandon those whom he loves and who love him.

On behalf of the people of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I express again my sympathy and sorrow at the immense losses you have endured and my affection and prayers for all whose lives were lost, harmed or affected by the fire fifty years ago. May the deep love of Our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of the Angels, enfold you and comfort you, even as she seeks to lead you to the peace and joy her Son offers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago