

Tears at requiem mass for Enugu 'angels'

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Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi with the Catholic Bishop of Awgu Diocese, Most Rev. John Okoye looking at pictures of the deceased pupils.



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It was a grim and solemn event laced with tears that flowed in torrents from every corner on Monday evening at a requiem mass conducted for eight pupils, their driver and a teacher of Presentation Nursery and Primary School, who lost their lives recently in an auto crash at Nkwo, Awgu junction, Enugu.

The accident occurred two weeks ago when a construction firm's truck developed brake problems and rammed into a school bus conveying pupils and their teachers' homes.

Last Monday, parents, relations, and friends took turns to mourn victims of the unfortunate incident at the requiem mass held for the deceased by the Catholic Diocese of Awgu.

As the moderator of the service reads the 'Collect' for the requiem mass containing names of the eight pupils, their teacher, and driver, tears flowed freely. The eight children are Chisom Ogbonna (10); Okolie Immaculate (6); Kama Chisom (10); Okolie Ujunwa (7); Okolie Chisom (2) Victor Chinaedu Chukwubuike (7) Oguejiofor Chiamaka (7); and Eze Jude Chidubem (3). Others are the school driver, Chukwu Basil (37), and teacher, Chukwugbo Emmanuela (27).

Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, who almost broke down in tears while reading his tributes, described the eight pupils as "angels" and bade farewell to them, their late teacher, the school driver, as well as two other victims not connected with the school.

The governor said his administration was saddened and overwhelmed with grief by “the eventual realisation that we had lost eight innocent school children, a teacher and the bus driver to this tragedy.



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“Our children, our angels, had gone too soon and too suddenly, for no fault of theirs. They were too innocent to have offended anyone; too young to have known sin; they only attended the day’s school, to acquire knowledge and high moral values. They were on their way home to unite, as usual, with their beloved parents and siblings; a journey home that was never completed. What a tragedy!

“As Christians, we submit to the will of the highest God, who alone knows why it happened. We accept our fate and find consolation in the conviction that our deceased angels are early arrivals in heaven; already seated in the midst of the heavenly host, praising God and glorifying his name”.

The governor extended condolences to the families of the deceased and to the Catholic Diocese of Awgu while praying for divine healing and quick recovery of the injured.

While sympathising with the management of the school, Governor Ugwuanyi donated a brand new 18-seater bus to the school and promised to erect a monument at the scene of the accident to immortalise the pupils.

The governor thanked all those who toiled to save the victims and reduce casualty and thereafter shared a touching story of Horatio Spafford, composer of the famous hymn: ‘It is well with my soul’ to console the bereaved families.

Earlier in his sermon, the Catholic Bishop of Awgu Diocese, Most Rev. John Okoye, consoled the families of the victims and urged them to take solace in the scriptures.

He appreciated the governor for his empathy, support, and solidarity since the tragedy, adding that “the governor did not only call to console us that fateful day, he sent his deputy to us the next day and as soon as he concluded his meeting with other southeast leaders on Friday, he visited the teaching hospital to empathise with the survivors and paid their medical bills.



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In a tribute titled: ‘You will never die in our hearts’, Head Teacher of the school, Rev. Ebubechukwu Chifomma, said the deaths of the children came to the school like a bomb blast.

She said: “When you were dressed for school and bade farewell to your parents and families on October 28, they never knew that was your last farewell. When after school, you bade farewell to your teachers, friends, and colleagues, we never knew that was your last.

“We have cried, we have wailed, we have mourned your death with uncontrollable tears; yet, the more we mourn, the more we realise that we can never mourn you enough. Your separation from us is devastating. More still, the manner in which it happened added to our pains. We shall relieve with so much joy, the memories we have shared, the incident has taught us a big lesson – resignation to the will of God. This is the only way we can accept the reality of your separation from us.”

