

This book is dedicated to the memory of
Rev. James A. Reilly
1917 - 1982

THANK YOU, FATHER REILLY

Thank you, Father Reilly,
For your truthful, fearless way
For your motto "Tell it like it is"
And you told it come what may.

As a shepherd truly knows his sheep
For you it was the same
You knew your own parishioners
And could call each one by name.

You loved your parish church and school
The children your prime concern
For them you chose the nuns with care
So, of God, they would learn.

You followed after Jesus
And with Him bore your cross
For you — death was your victory
For us — it was our loss.

We miss you, Father Reilly,
No one can take your place
But we are confident your spirit
Rests in God's embrace.

—Jane Saro

"Blessed Be His Holy Name"



HOLY NAME SOCIETY



Holy Innocents

NEPTUNE, NEW JERSEY

This Limited Edition Was Produced Especially For Holy Innocents Church,
Neptune, NJ, by Custombook, Inc., P.O. Box 250, Northvale, NJ 07647.
ISBN 0-87450 1984 CB 1041



*His Holiness
Pope John Paul II*



Office of the Bishop

DIOCESE OF TRENTON
PO BOX 10000
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08646-0000

September 16, 1984

Dear Beloved in Christ:

I am delighted to offer congratulations to you, the parishioners, as you commemorate the Silver Jubilee of your foundation. This observance is the first notable milestone with its own special characteristic. Despite the fact that twenty-five years is a goodly number, nevertheless, the span is within the memory of most. Thus, you will easily recall the announcement, the building program, dedication ceremony, and growth. You will remember fondly the priests who served Holy Innocents, and in particular, Father James Reilly, of happy memory.

I wish to comment on the growth. This word includes the increase of the physical plant and the numerical expansion of parishioners. More importantly, the growth has been from an individual status to that of a worshipping family. Indeed, this goal is the objective of all parish activity, and you have certainly been outstanding in this regard.

Finally, as you celebrate you note both progress and also future aims. The past performance is an indication that the years to come will see even greater strides as a family toward the Heavenly Father.

May God, through the intercession of the Holy Innocents, shower His blessings upon you!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

John C. Reiss
John C. Reiss
Bishop of Trenton

Holy Innocents Parish
Neptune, New Jersey



**Most Reverend
John C. Reiss
Bishop of Trenton**

CHURCH OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS
POST OFFICE BOX 806
NEPTUNE, NEW JERSEY 07753

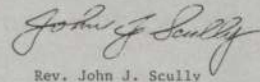
Dear Friends of Holy Innocents:

As we commemorate our 25th Anniversary as a Parish Family, it is good for us to look back over the past with pride and gratitude for all "giants" who preceded us. We are indeed blessed to be living and worshipping in the local Christian community of Neptune known as Holy Innocents! While the names of all the people who built and sustained this Parish over the past 25 years are too numerous to mention, we can single out one individual Christian who dedicated himself totally to God, to his Church, and to all the people of Holy Innocents Parish, and that is our Founding Pastor, Father James A. Reilly. As you read the history of Holy Innocents in this book, you will also be reading about Father Reilly. We are indeed indebted to his memory for his priestly dedication and love for Holy Innocents. It is a privilege and honor for all of us to dedicate this book to Father Reilly, who "always told it like it was!"

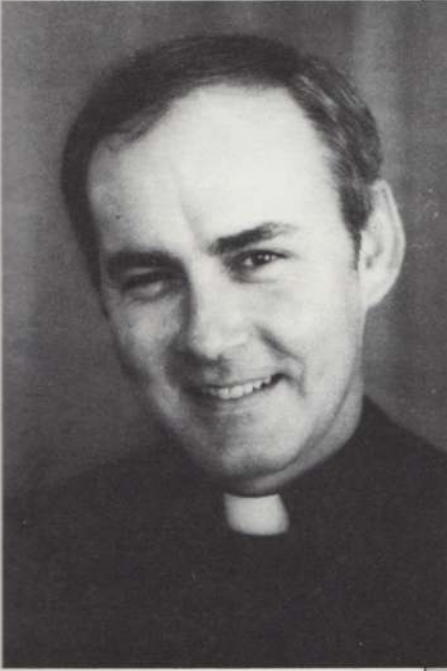
Also, in recalling our past, we honor our Sisters, the Religious Teachers Filippini, who have served our Parish Community over these past 25 years. We are indeed richer and nobler for having our Sisters in our Parish Family. May the Spirit of St. Lucy Filippini be manifest always in our hearts and our homes.

Finally, we now look forward to our future growth as a Christian Community. Let us all strive to continue to build up our local Church in gratitude to Almighty God for those who preceded us; and, may we all be known as Christians by our love for one another!

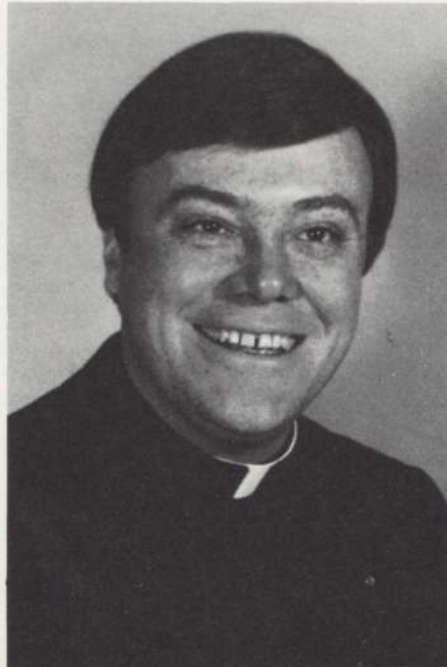
Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. John J. Scully



Reverend John J. Scully
Pastor



Reverend Eugene Roberts
Associate Pastor



(above) James Elmer farm, site on which church now stands. (right) Exterior view of Holy Innocents



HOLY INNOCENTS PARISH

A Twenty-Fifth Year History

by Mark Edward Lender

The Birth of a Parish

Neptune is a seashore community, a pleasant and popular beach area in the summer, with a mostly commercial economy. In the late 1950s it was growing, and like many other towns in the state, widening its civic concerns, coping with the need for new schools and municipal services for an ever more diverse population. The churches of Neptune reflected both the diversity and growth of the era. Catholics living in Neptune attended up to six parishes during these years, most of them being members of Holy Spirit Church in Asbury Park. But as the 1950s drew to a close, Neptune Catholics gave serious thought to a church of their own.

The first concrete step in this direction came in April of 1957. Bishop George W. Ahr, S.T.D., of the Diocese of Trenton, aware of the growing needs of the Neptune community, asked the pastor of Holy Spirit Church, Father Francis Nolan, to ascertain the number of Catholic families in the area. Holy Spirit parishioners

from Neptune went from door to door compiling the census, reporting a total of 343 Catholic families living between Asbury and Corlies Avenues. The figure was high enough to convince Bishop Ahr that a new parish was justified, and on June 3, 1959 he asked the curate of Holy Spirit, Father James A. Reilly, to undertake the necessary organizational work. At the end of the month, the Bishop named Father Reilly as the first pastor of the new parish, to be called "Holy Innocents."

Its boundaries, as the *Monitor* noted, ran along Asbury Park Circle, Springdale Avenue (now Neptune Boulevard) and Tucker Drive to Shark River in the East; Shark River, Brighton Avenue, the Hamilton-Glendola Road and Belmar Boulevard to Route 34 in the South; Route 34 to Collingswood Circle, and then along Route 33, Shafto Road and Asbury Avenue in the West; and North following Asbury Avenue back again to Asbury Park Circle. The new parish thus included parts of Wall Township, Tinton Falls, and Neptune City as

well as Neptune itself.

In selecting Father Reilly for the pastorate, Bishop Ahr had chosen well. Leadership is a critical ingredient in launching any new enterprise; it can be the difference between success and failure. The Bishop was fully aware of this, but he was equally aware of the talents and training of James Reilly. The new pastor, a native of Holyoke, Massachusetts, was named for his father. After graduating from high school in his hometown, he went on to Holy Cross College where he received his bachelor's degree in 1939. Educated to the priesthood at Grand Seminary in Montreal, Canada, he was ordained March 17, 1945, in St. Mary's Cathedral, Trenton, by the Most Reverend William A. Griffin. He said his first Solemn High Mass in Holy Cross Church in Holyoke the next day.

Father's first assignments were in Pennington at St. James Church, and in Trenton at Incarnation Church and St. Mary's Cathedral. It was during this period that his fame as a homilist spread, and his sermons were a regular feature on Trenton radio. Later he moved to St. Peter's Church in New Brunswick where he was also athletic director. After distinguished service as a curate at nearby Holy Spirit Church, Father Reilly came to Holy Innocents fully prepared for his new assignment.

Father Reilly moved immediately to make Holy Innocents an operational parish. He chose two lay trustees, Augusto Silva and John Carluccio, and with the aid of donated legal work by attorney Donald Pappa, the pastor and the trustees formally incorporated the parish on July 9, 1959. Less than a week later, on July 15, the energetic priest asked the Neptune Township Board of Education for permission to hold Sunday Mass in the Summerfield School auditorium until the congregation could find a permanent home. He made it clear that the parish would assume all costs involved. To the dismay of parishioners, the Board rejected the application, citing regulations forbidding weekend use of school property to non-school groups. Disappointed at the decision, Father Reilly wasted no time on recriminations. Rather, he made a similar request of the Neptune City Board of Education, and this time he was not disappointed. On August 17, 1959, the Neptune City Board voted unanimously to allow the parish the use of the gymnasium of Woodrow Wilson School for Sunday Masses. The agreement stated that Holy Innocents would pay for all expenses involved with such use, but the Board would accept no further rent. It was a generous offer, and on Sunday, August 18, at 7:30 a.m., Father Reilly celebrated the parish's first Mass. He said another at 9:00 a.m., and Father Paul J. Kane, chaplain at Mt.

St. Joseph, Glendola, New Jersey, offered a third at 10:30. It was a banner day in the history of the young parish.

The first Masses also showed something of the spirit of the new parishioners. They had no church building of their own (nor even chairs: the Borough of Bradley Beach loaned the parish chairs for the initial Sundays), but on Sundays they made the Wilson School gymnasium as much a place of worship as any cathedral. Father Reilly was gratified at the number who attended. In an expression of devotion to the faith, some men of the parish had built a portable altar for the services. Holy Innocents used that altar until the congregation moved into its new sanctuary a year later. Temporary as the quarters were, there was no want of faith.

Not only had the congregation found a home, but so had the pastor. Until August 11, Father Reilly had lived in quarters generously provided by his former pastor, Father Nolan, at Holy Spirit. In looking for a suitable rectory, he happened on a remarkable gesture of friendship. Hearing from Gus Silva of the pastor's search, two Jewish friends, Mr. Isadore A. Fight and his son Manfred, offered the use of a house they owned on Corlies Avenue. They never accepted any rent. Over late July and early August, parish men worked nightly to renovate the rectory, and on July 31 the women of the congregation held a shower, with guests bringing gifts to help equip the pastor's new home. Father Reilly moved in on August 12 and remained in the Fight's house until he moved to temporary quarters in the new church.

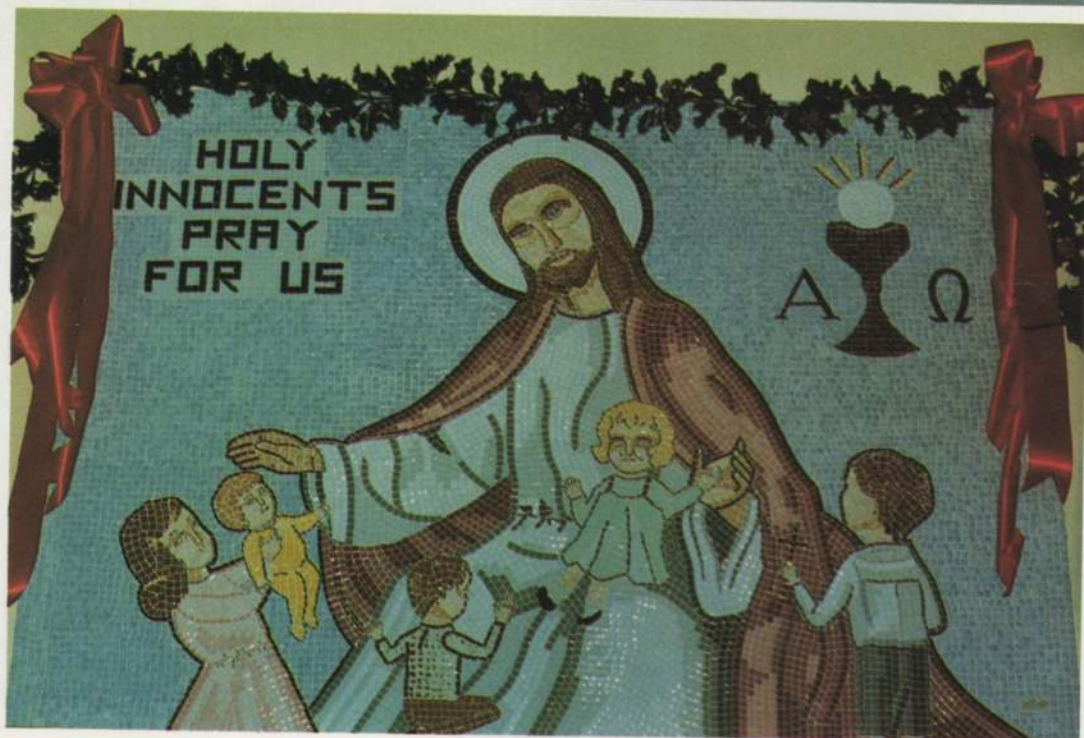
The rectory quickly became the center of parish activities. Monday, August 24, saw the first of many daily Masses (John Campion, Nicholas D'Onofrio, Jr., and Peter Loffredo were the first altar boys) said in the rectory. The pastor's home was also the site of the first parish baptism: James Henry Higginbotham, son of Gerald and Betty.

The New Church

By the summer of 1959, Holy Innocents was firmly established, even if only beginning to grow. Yet it was time to think beyond the immediate issues of founding the parish, and on August 15, Father Reilly sat down with Bishop Ahr in Trenton to discuss plans for the construction of a new church. Fortunately, the diocese had, some years before, acquired a well-situated tract of eight acres on the corner of Corlies and West Bangs Avenues. Both agreed that the site was excellent, and, going a step further, they also chose an already existing set of plans for the structure. Holy Innocents would be of the same design as the church of St. Leo the Great Parish in Lincroft, New Jersey. The only difference lay in the fact that

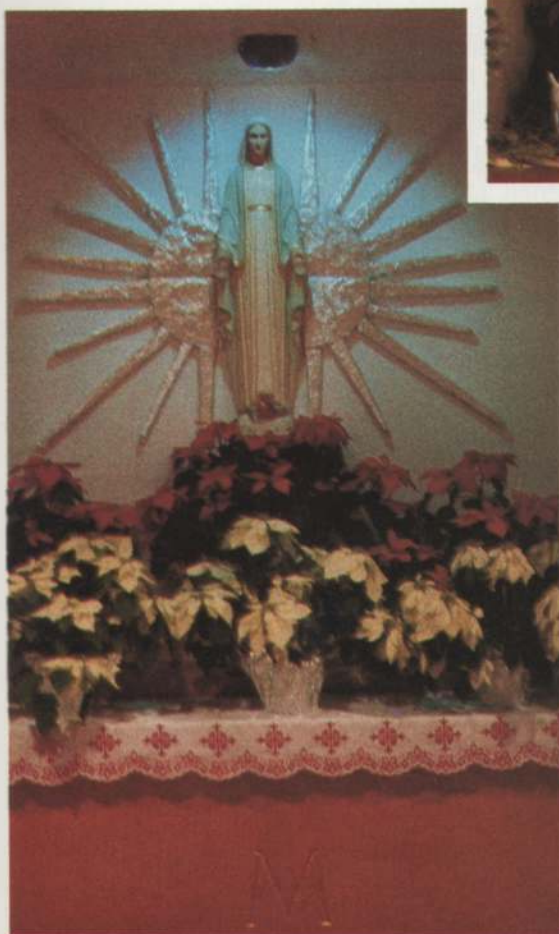
"Let the little children come to me..."

(Mark 10:14)





***"Blessed are all they that
wait for Him"
(Isaiah 30:18)***





*Holy Innocents Church under construction,
November 1959*

Holy Innocents would not build a school at the same time, just its church. The building plans, however, designed by architect Thomas Henry Moran, would allow the conversion of the church into a school auditorium in the future. After the signing of construction contracts in the Chancery Office in Trenton on August 27, the first bull-dozers began excavations on September 19. The biggest project in the early history of the parish was now underway.

While planning and construction went forward, the parishioners of Holy Innocents were anything but idle. Indeed, they were vitally involved in the building process. In mid-September, for example, seventy-five women and men of the congregation launched yet another area census. Going door to door over the course of a week, they recorded 686 Catholic families as members of Holy Innocents, and fifty new families moved into the parish by the beginning of December. These families were the heart of a major capital campaign initiated in October in order to finance the new church. Father Reilly had already selected Mr. Joseph Kooperman as professional organizer of fundraising activities, and for eight weeks ninety parish men worked under his direction on the Building Fund Campaign, hoping to raise \$150,000. They spoke with literally every family in the parish, and before the campaign closed on December 1, they had gathered pledges (payable over thirty months) totaling an extraordinary \$166,315. It was, to say the least, quite an achievement.

Meanwhile, the residents of Neptune watched as the construction crews steadily transformed the landscape along West Bangs Avenue. The site had originally been part of the historic James Elmer farm, which dated back to the early eighteenth century. The property had been sold by the last descendants of the original owners to Mayor Kirms of Bradley Beach in

1950; the diocese had then purchased it from him. Where once there was a farm house, a barn, and fields, the new church was now taking shape. The pouring of concrete began on November 5, and over the following months the structure moved toward completion.

The late spring of 1960 found the church substantially finished. Modern in architecture, and faced with red brick, the structure was large enough to seat 750 people and a choir of 100. There were also offices and dining facilities. Father Reilly was able to schedule a ceremonial blessing of the cornerstone for June 5. While a crowd of parishioners and a number of visiting clergy looked on, the Most Reverend James J. Hogan, Auxiliary Bishop of Trenton, laid and blessed the stone. Assisting him were Father Reilly, the Reverend John R. MacDonald of St. Catherine's Church in Spring Lake, and the Reverend Arthur J. St. Laurent of St. Leo the Great in Lincroft.

Finally, on August 21, 1960, the completed church was officially blessed. A throng of parishioners and clergy turned out, and the parish issued a souvenir booklet in which close to 500 individuals and businesses recorded their names. From beyond the parish, His Holiness Pope John XXIII sent a Special Apostolic Blessing to mark the occasion. Bishop Ahr offered the actual blessing and further expressed his feelings in a congratulatory letter to Father Reilly. "I felicitate you and your good people," he wrote, "for your zealous efforts in providing a suitable dwelling for our Eucharistic Lord in the recently established parish at Neptune." It was one of the new pastor's proudest moments. In a special letter to the congregation, he declared that

Our hearts are filled with gratitude this morning, as we participate in the Blessing of our new Church. We sincerely thank our Divine Master for his countless blessings and favors. . . . our beloved Bishop, for his invaluable assistance, and his sincere interest in our spiritual welfare. . . . and, each friend and parishioner, who has played a role in the building of our beautiful Church.

He continued that much lay ahead for Holy Innocents, and prayed that in the work, sacrifice, and effort before them all would do their share. "Yet," he assured his flock, "we know that Almighty God will bless every effort in His behalf." Thus was the new church dedicated.

The First Year

The opening of the new church provided for a more orderly flow of parish affairs, and the building quickly became the center of the con-