



# DIOCESE OF TRENTON

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Revised statement by Bishop David M. O'Connell, C.M., on the death of Bishop John C. Reiss, Eighth Bishop of Trenton

It is with sadness that I learned of the death of Bishop John C. Reiss, Eighth Bishop of the Diocese of Trenton. Although Bishop Reiss was unable to communicate easily in recent years, I had several occasions to visit with him and pray at his bedside in Morris Hall in Lawrenceville since arriving in the Diocese almost two years ago.

I have heard over and over again from our priests who knew him well that Bishop Reiss was a kind and humble man, known for his simplicity and gentle manner. He was a native son, born and educated in Red Bank and very proud of his roots in the Diocese. Bishop Reiss, Bishop John M. Smith and I shared an academic background – all three of us received doctorates in canon law from The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

Ordained a priest in 1947, Bishop Reiss exercised most of his pastoral service in roles of diocesan administration. Twenty years later, Bishop Reiss was consecrated an auxiliary bishop to Bishop George W. Ahr and then assumed responsibility as Diocesan Bishop in 1980. He held that last post until his retirement in 1997.

Despite his unassuming style of leadership, Bishop Reiss' tenure as bishop was marked with great accomplishments for the local Church: he convoked the first diocesan synod in sixty years in 1991, creating meaningful policies to support renewed ecclesial life in the diocese; he introduced programs to enhance the spiritual life of both the laity and clergy; he dedicated Morris Hall Nursing Home and Villa Vianney Retirement Home for diocesan priests; he completed the construction of a new Chancery and Pastoral Center and raised an unprecedented \$38 million to support the works of the Diocese.

Bishop Reiss was well known for his compassion and personal acts of kindness to so many people in the Diocese. He was much beloved by the priests. He had a great sense of humor and loved good jokes. He enjoyed bowling and was a regular participant in local bowling tournaments.

All of this gives a glimpse – but only a glimpse – of a much bigger person: a good and holy priest; a kind and effective bishop; a wonderful shepherd who lived the Gospel after the pattern of the Lord Jesus. May he find a rich reward for his life and ministry.