



# DIOCESE OF TRENTON

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## **Death of Bishop John C. Reiss, Eighth Bishop of Trenton**

Retired Bishop John C. Reiss, who served as the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Trenton, died Sunday, March 4, 2012, at Morris Hall in Lawrenceville, N.J., at age 89. Bishop Reiss held the distinct honor of being the only priest born in the Trenton Diocese to serve as both an auxiliary bishop and then bishop in his home diocese.

All funeral ceremonies will be held at St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral, 151 N. Warren Street, Trenton, N.J. The Rite of Reception of the Body will be celebrated at 3 p.m., Thursday, March 8, followed by a public viewing. The Mass in Honor of Our Lord Jesus Christ the High Priest will be celebrated by Bishop Emeritus John M. Smith that same evening at 7:30 p.m. Monsignor Leonard Troiano will be the homilist.

The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated by Bishop David M. O'Connell, C.M., current bishop of Trenton, at 11 a.m., Friday, March 9, with Bishop Edward Kmiec, Bishop of Buffalo and former auxiliary bishop of Trenton, as homilist. The interment will take place in early afternoon at St. Mary's Cemetery in Trenton, N.J.

John Charles Reiss was born May 13, 1922, in Red Bank, one of 11 children of Alfred and Sophia Telljohann Reiss. Of his five brothers and five sisters, one sister also pursued a vocation to religious life as a Sister of Mercy.

The future bishop studied two years for the priesthood in The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., entering Immaculate Conception Seminary, Darlington, in 1941. His teacher in dogmatic theology at the university was Msgr. George W. Ahr who, several years later, became the seventh Bishop of Trenton.

Bishop Reiss was ordained a priest May 31, 1947, in old St. Mary's Cathedral, Trenton, by Bishop William A. Griffin. The newly ordained Father Reiss' first assignment was as curate (assistant pastor) in Sacred Heart Parish, Trenton, where one of his duties was ministering to inmates in Trenton State Prison. In April 1949, he was transferred to Holy Spirit Parish, Perth Amboy, and, later, to St. Anthony Parish, Trenton.

Father Reiss returned to Catholic University in 1950 to earn a doctoral degree in canon law. Three years later, in 1953, he was appointed secretary to Bishop George W. Ahr and master of ceremonies, a position he held for the next 10 years.

In 1962, Father Reiss was named administrator of St. Francis of Assisium Parish, Trenton, before being named pastor in 1965.

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In 1963, Father Reiss was named Officialis of the Diocesan Tribunal. In October of that year, Pope Paul VI named him a Domestic Prelate, with the title "Monsignor."

On Oct. 25, 1967, Msgr. Reiss was appointed auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Trenton by Pope Paul VI. He was consecrated a bishop Dec. 12, 1967, in St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral by Bishop Ahr.

On Feb. 5, 1969, Bishop Reiss was transferred from pastor of St. Francis Parish, Trenton, to pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, South Plainfield. At the same time he was named episcopal vicar for Middlesex County and vicar general of the diocese in charge of spiritual matters and continued as Officialis of the diocese. For the next 11 years, Bishop Reiss assisted Bishop Ahr in Episcopal ceremonies and by administering with Confirmation in ceremonies throughout the eight-county diocese.

In 1980, Pope John Paul II appointed Bishop Reiss the eighth Bishop of Trenton, succeeding Bishop Ahr, who headed the diocese for 30 years. Bishop Reiss was installed as April 22, taking as his motto the words of his patron, St. John the Evangelist, found in the apostle's first epistle, "Let Us Love One Another" (Jn 4:7).

In 1982, Bishop Reiss ordained Bishop Edward U. Kmiec as auxiliary bishop of Trenton. Ten years later, he congratulated Bishop Kmiec on his appointment as the bishop of Nashville, Tenn.

One of the first major events for Bishop Reiss came a year after his installation when he led the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Trenton, followed soon after, on Nov. 24, 1981, by the division of the diocese upon the establishment of the Diocese of the Metuchen by Pope John Paul II. The new diocese would be comprised of Middlesex, Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren counties. The Diocese of Trenton was then comprised of the counties of Burlington, Monmouth, Mercer and Ocean.

For Bishop Reiss, one of the personal highlights during his 17 years as Bishop of Trenton occurred on Pentecost Sunday in 1989 when he solemnly opened the Fourth Diocesan Synod with a Mass in St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral Jan. 13, 1991.

As a result of the Synod's highlighting of the needs of the diocese, Bishop Reiss announced the first diocesan fund-raising campaign in 25 years – Faith in Service. Funds from the campaign allowed for the construction of a new Morris Hall, and for Villa Vianney Retirement Home for diocesan priests. In addition, Faith in Service provided for the 37,000 square-foot addition to the Chancery building in Lawrenceville.

Perhaps the most lasting spiritual legacy of Bishop Reiss' 17 years as diocesan bishop was the establishment of eight parishes: Holy Eucharist, Tabernacle, 1982; St. Luke, Toms River, 1982; Immaculate Conception Korean Parish, Eatontown, 1984; St. John the Baptist, Long Branch, 1984; St. William the Abbot, Howell, 1985; St. Maximilian Kolbe, Berkeley Township, 1985; St. David the King, West Windsor, 1994, and St. Isaac Jogues, Marlton, 1996.

After reaching the mandatory retirement age of 75, Bishop Reiss resigned as bishop of Trenton on June 30, 1997, and was succeeded by Bishop John M. Smith, who was bishop of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee.

Bishop Reiss is survived by a number of nieces and nephews, grandnieces and grand-nephews, including Bishop Reiss' niece Peggy Ferraina, her husband Joseph and their children.

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