



Helpers of God's Precious Infants

Msgr. Philip Reilly
% Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Moore
5720 63rd Street
Maspeth, NY 11378

<http://wwwhelpersny.org>
Email: hogpi303@gmail.com



Greetings to all Helpers of God's Precious Infants Throughout the World,

Msgr. Philip J. Reilly 1934 – 2024

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Msgr. Philip Reilly on November 30, 2024. Msgr. died on the feast of St. Andrew, who was martyred by crucifixion on an X shaped cross around 60 AD. Msgr. Reilly endured a great deal of suffering as well, mostly from medical treatments for his skin cancer which began in the early 1960s. He also suffered from taunts and spitting from people he was trying to help while sidewalk counselling on the streets of New York or wherever he happened to be. He accepted all the suffering he endured with equanimity and a smile, knowing that he was serving his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He knew that any suffering he might encounter was a gift from God, and he was mystically sharing in the sufferings of Christ. He firmly believed in the redemptive value of suffering, even suffering brought to him by those who should have been his closest allies. His witness for Christ on the sidewalks of the world drew many to abandon their previous desire to abort their children and brought healing to many who chose abortion and found that it was the worst decision they had ever made. Msgr. never stopped trying to bring Christ to those who needed Him most. He always told us that Christ was needed most at the “modern day Calvary”, the local abortion facility. He would go anywhere, speak to any group, testify in any court or legislature to promote the Gospel of Life, a position he was uniquely qualified to deliver. He traveled all over the world, spreading his message. He often told us that “a tree grew in Brooklyn and spread all over the world.”

Msgr. Philip J. Reilly was born on June 21, 1934, to Philip and Susan Reilly, both immigrants from Ireland. He attended elementary school at Stanislaus Kosta Catholic Academy in Maspeth, New York and received his first Sacraments at St. Stanislaus Kosta Church. He knew from the age of 7 that he wanted to become a priest. He would often pester his father to help him understand and recite the prayers of the Mass in Latin as Latin was used in the Masses at that time. When he finally learned the prayers, he became an altar boy. He was so young, however, that he had a very difficult time carrying the heavy Lectionary of the Mass prayers, at times dropping it and making a very loud sound. The priests he served encouraged him and he persevered. He then attended Cathedral Prep and College, which was then located in Brooklyn for high school and college. Following college he was accepted to the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington, New York where he often won the desserts of his fellow seminarians by defeating them continuously at the pool table. Msgr. continued his studies at the Catholic University of America, earning a degree in Theology, followed by a Masters in Classics from Fordham University. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 28, 1960, by Bishop Bryan McEntegart. Early on in his priesthood, Msgr. Reilly one day was sitting in his mother's house, watching television. His mother heard a siren outside and said to him “You are a priest. Do something!” Msgr. got up off the couch he was sitting on, ran outside and saw an ambulance driving by. He waved to stop the ambulance, got in and was able to give the poor person in the ambulance absolution. It was a lesson he would never forget. He would go on to give his all for Christ for the rest of his life. “We keep going” was one of his favorite expressions. His first assignment was as an assistant at St. Thomas More – St. Edmund in Breezy Point, New York. There he was able to connect with the young people of the parish, with the girls by virtue of his good looks and winning smile, and the boys by his ability to beat them at basketball. Msgr. was quite the basketball player in high school and college, but always knew that serving the Lord as a priest was his

true calling. He was then assigned to St. Teresa of Avila Parish in Richmond Hill, New York developing lasting friendships with a core of parishioners who affectionately dubbed him “Father PJ”. During this time, early in his priesthood Msgr. became involved with groups promoting civil rights, and Bread for the World, an organization fighting world hunger. In 1965 he was assigned to the faculty of Cathedral Preparatory Seminary where he would serve as Professor of Latin, Prefect of Discipline, and Academic Dean for 19 years. He was named Rector/Principal in 1984. It was while he was Professor of Latin that one of his students recalled that they would try to talk with him about the Yankees or the New York Giants as class began so that they would not have to study Latin. He loved talking sports with his students, but he always covered the material in the classroom. He always wanted his pupils to score 100 on the Latin Regents exam. It was during this time at Cathedral Prep that Msgr. saw that the movement to legalize abortion was gaining headway in this country. The Griswald vs. Connecticut Supreme Court decision in 1965 legalizing contraception for married couples based on the “right to privacy” found nowhere in the Constitution greatly boosted the cause for abortion as well. As the church has always taught, the unitive and procreative aspects of marriage cannot be separated. If they are, the door opens for a multitude of evils. If a couple engages in contraception, and it fails, there is no reason to prohibit them from killing their child outright. They have in a sense already denied their child’s right to live by seeking contraception. In fact, most contraception is abortifacient. Whatever does not allow the child to implant in the mother’s womb is an abortifacient, and most contraception prevents implantation. Msgr. Reilly began to speak out in the mid-1960s even before Colorado passed a liberalized abortion law in 1967. New York State was next to pass a law legalizing abortion up to 24 weeks gestation in 1970. Msgr. and many others lobbied in Albany, New York for many months to prevent this law from being enacted, but unfortunately failed. He even led a lobbying effort to repeal the law in 1972, which was successful, but failed when Governor Nelson Rockefeller vetoed it.

Roe vs. Wade and Its Aftermath

After the tragic Supreme Court decision Roe vs. Wade legalizing abortion through all 9 months of pregnancy was handed down in January of 1973, Msgr. Reilly swung into action. In 1973 he began to withhold payment of a certain portion of his taxes which he held were being used to pay for abortions. This led to Congress passing the Hyde Amendment which prohibits the federal government from paying for abortions which is still with us to this day. In January 1974 he helped organize the first March for Life in Washington DC. It was modeled on his earlier lobbying efforts in New York State, where he would organize bus trips to Albany to lobby legislators. In 1975, with the blessing of Terrance Cardinal Cooke, he began to conduct all night prayer vigils in the Archdiocese of New York. He started “recuses”, blocking abortion businesses doors and getting arrested for his efforts before Operation Rescue came into existence. In 1978 he participated in the first 100 mile Walk for Life through the desert in Death Valley California. After being arrested several times for blocking entrances to abortion facilities, Msgr. Reilly began to note the limited effectiveness of such tactics. He took to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. He spoke to God and told Him of all that he had done for life, yet the killing was ongoing. No matter what he had tried the wholesale slaughter of innocent babies continued. Blocking doors only delayed the killing, it did not end it. God spoke to Msgr. and told him that he was making one mistake. He failed to bring God to the streets with him. God wanted to be at the darkest, most desolate places where He could shed His light. He told Msgr. that he was a stubborn Irishman. Msgr. replied that if he was to take on the culture of death and restore a culture of life, he would need an army. God would provide him with one, made up of three grandmothers, a grandfather, and a young working woman. This way Msgr. would know that the work was God’s and was not due to Msgr.’s own efforts. These five people would become the founding members of the Helpers of God’s Precious Infants, the organization to which we all belong. The Helpers would become a peaceful, prayerful presence in front of abortion businesses. They would not be confrontational, rather they would pray and sidewalk counsel peacefully. They would bring Christ to the

modern day Calvary. There would be no blocking of doors or disputes with the police or others. In fact, Msgr. would ask the police to escort himself and other participants in large prayer vigils to the site. Msgr. Reilly's fresh approach to the continuing wanton destruction of unborn children soon struck a chord with others in the pro-life movement. Especially after Congress passed the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act in the early 1990s, Msgr. began to be asked to speak in various cities in the United States. He invited several Bishops and Cardinals to join him in large prayer vigils in major American cities. In June of 1992, Msgr. invited John Cardinal O'Connor of New York to come with him in a large prayer vigil. O'Connor agreed but was reluctant due to the fear of violence from the opposition. Over 2,500 people joined the Cardinal, Msgr. Reilly, and several players from the New York Giants football team in a vigil in Midtown Manhattan. There were also numerous pro-abortion protestors, some of whom attempted to stop the rosary procession. Several policemen escorted Cardinal O'Connor and Msgr. and arrested all those who had attempted to disrupt the proceedings. This vigil was covered by three major television networks and every newspaper in New York. We were both there on this auspicious occasion. Both Cardinal O'Connor and Msgr. Reilly had to wear bullet proof vests underneath their black shirts as death threats were received by both when the vigil was announced. It was a beautiful day for life, and the clinic that we went to subsequently closed a few years later. After this monumental witness for life, Msgr. began to receive inquiries around the world to form Helpers chapters. Eventually there would be Helpers in over 40 states in the US and over 50 countries throughout the world. Msgr. Reilly, whenever he was not travelling, would pray and sidewalk counsel at the Ambulatory Surgery Center in Brooklyn, located near the Monastery he served as Chaplain. The owner of this business was not pleased with Msgr. and sent a story to a local television station that his clinic had been bombed, and he was charging one Msgr. Philip Reilly with perpetrating the act. The footage he sent to the station was stock footage, his clinic had never suffered any damage. The TV station was more than ready to play up the "bombing" and put the story on the air. Unfortunately for the owner and the station, Msgr. Reilly, was out of the country at the time of the supposed incident. Later this same owner would sue Msgr. over 20 million dollars for obstructing his business. Msgr. replied that that amount was only half of his retirement fund. After several years and many court cases, Msgr.'s case was dismissed. When the case came to the Supreme Court of New York State, one of the judges on the court had to recuse himself. He explained to his colleagues that he could not in good conscience rule on this case because he and his wife often joined Msgr. Reilly on his large prayer vigils. The case was dismissed soon afterwards. If all this activity was not enough, when Cardinal O'Connor founded the Sisters of Life in 1991, he asked Msgr. to help train and counsel the women who had joined the order. This began a very fruitful relationship between the Helpers and the Sisters, who often help young women who have decided to choose life after the Helpers have talked to them.

Later Years

Throughout the 2000s and later, Msgr. continued his travels promoting the Culture of Life. He often appeared at Eucharistic Conferences in Europe, speaking on the Helpers approach, and how to sidewalk counsel. In 2010 he was invited by Pope Benedict XVI to a conference on Life in Rome where he was presented with an award and a rosary personally blessed by the Pope. He received an award from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops a year later. In the late 2000s Ambulatory Surgery was bought out by a pro-life medical group, Msgr. led a vigil of Thanksgiving soon afterwards. He then went to the next closest abortion business. Before going there, he called the local police precinct to tell them he would be there the next day. He went on to tell them that they would be receiving a call from the abortion facility telling them that there was someone in front of their building disrupting their business. He also told them that he would only have one weapon on his person, a rosary. Sure enough, the next day, the police were called. When they arrived, they asked Msgr. to leave the premises and to get off the sidewalk. Msgr. asked the police to leave the sidewalk as he was a taxpayer, and the sidewalk belonged to him. The police

could only walk away, Msgr. had a right to be there. Msgr. during this time also was called to testify in court cases and legislative hearings concerning he and the Helpers right to free speech and lawful assembly. One might think that with all this activity, Msgr. might have to cut back a little on his spiritual life. Nothing could be further from the truth. He offered Mass everyday whether home or away, and if he had not offered Mass that day while travelling home, he would ask one of the nuns for which he was Chaplain to help him set up for Mass, even if it was 3:00AM. In the late 2010s, his medical condition worsened, and he could no longer be out on the streets. He was still able to offer Mass and did so at the Monastery. Just before Covid 19 hit he was asked to move to the Brooklyn Diocese priests retirement community in Douglaston, NY. While living in Douglaston, with the help of his nephew Philip Moore, he was to stay in touch with his Helpers via Zoom meetings. These meetings brought joy to his heart as he was able to hear about what was going on with the Helpers in different parts of the country. In 2021 he fell and broke his hip and had to be moved to Ozanam Hall Nursing Home in Bayside, NY. For the last three years of his life, he was regularly visited by his nieces and nephew, and enjoyed many fruitful discussions on the direction the Helpers should take. On November 30, 2024, God called him home. His wake and funeral were attended by many people who came from all over the United States and Europe. His vigil Mass was celebrated by the Bishop Kevin Sweeney, a former student of his at Cathedral Prep and Bishop Emeritus of Brooklyn Nicholas DiMarzio. His Funeral Mass was celebrated by Bishop Robert Brennan, Bishop of Brooklyn, and three Auxiliary Bishops. There were over 30 priests in attendance.

We are not sure at this time what exactly will happen with the Helpers without Msgr. Reilly to guide us. There have been discussions about a new Executive Director, but nothing final has been set. We are sure there will be a board meeting soon, but all of us here in the New York area are still processing this tremendous loss. We ask that you continue to do whatever you were doing for life before Msgr.'s death, in the way that he taught. His methods have resulted in tens of thousands of lives being spared from abortion throughout the world. We apologize for the lateness of this newsletter, but we were very involved with the planning and the carrying out of Msgr.'s wishes. We wish you all a blessed Christmas season

Yours for Life,

Kevin and Susan Moore

Schedule of Vigil Masses from Jan 2025 to June 2025

<i>Date</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>Abortion Site</i>
Jan 25, 2025 8:00 AM Mass	Our Lady of Sorrows 104-11 37 th Avenue, Queens	Women's Health Care 8922 Roosevelt Ave, Queens
February 15, 2025 7:30 AM Mass	Saint Catherine of Genoa 520 Linden Blvd, Brooklyn	Kings County Hospital 451 Clarkson Ave
March 15, 2025 7:30 AM Mass	Our Lady of Cenacle 136-06 87 th Avenue, Queens	Jamaica Hospital
April 12, 2025 8:00 AM Mass	Saint Charles Borromeo 31 Sidney Place, Brooklyn	Planned Parenthood 44 Court Street, Brooklyn
May 31, 2025 8:00 AM Mass	Our Lady of Sorrows 104-11 37 th Avenue, Queens	Women's Health Care 8922 Roosevelt Ave, Queens
June 28, 2025 7:30 AM Mass	Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary 88-19 Parsons Boulevard, Queens	Choices 147-32 Jamaica Avenue