

Guide to the Holy Name Centre for Homeless Men Collection
Collection Number 015.001



**Guide to the Holy Name Centre for Homeless Men Collection
Archives of the Archdiocese of New York
Collection 015.001**

Finding Aid Prepared by Kate Feighery

**Archives of the Archdiocese of New York
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Summary Information

Creator: Holy Name Centre for Homeless Men

Title: Holy Name Centre for Homeless Men Collection

Date: 1906 – 2014

Extent: .834 linear feet (in 2 Hollinger boxes)

Language: English

Access Restrictions: Collection is open to researchers at the Archives of the Archdiocese of New York. Advance appointments are required for the use of archival materials.

Preferred Citation: Published citations should take the following form: Identification of item, date (if known); Holy Name Centre for Homeless Men Collection, Collection Number 015.001; box number, folder number. Archives of the Archdiocese of New York, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie.

Location of Related Materials: Related materials can be found in Collection 015, Catholic Charities Collection, as well as in the parish history materials of Our Lady of Loreto Church.

Historical Note

In 1906, then-Archbishop Farley appointed Rev. Daniel Cunnion to establish a mission to serve the homeless men that spent their days on the Bowery (a major north-south street in Manhattan). In addition to Protestant-run missions to care for homeless men, there was also a mission run from nearby St. Andrew's Church, that had been in operation since about 1903. The Holy Name Mission would be the first independent Catholic organization. It was estimated, at the time of the Holy Name Mission's founding, that there were over 20,000 men living on the Bowery, of which half were Catholic. Many of the men were seasonal workers, who served as cooks or handymen at upstate summer camps and resorts, or worked as "gandy dancers," a name for railroad workers derived from the small carts pushed by hand. Although parishes in the area attempted to serve these men, it was thought that they needed the full-time dedication of an institution and priest. The first location of the Holy Name Mission was at 157½ Bowery. In 1913, the Mission, which was now headed by Fr. William Rafter, moved to 319 Bowery (later the home of the Amato Opera House), to be able to serve a larger number of men. The new building included reading and amusement rooms, as well as a chapel. The Mission provided men with a space to eat and pray. It attempted to help them find jobs, and outfitted the men with a new set of clothing.

In 1938, the Centre moved into the school and rectory buildings of Our Lady of Loreto Church. The Church, which was founded in 1891 to serve Sicilian immigrants. In 1929, a few days before Black Friday, the parish took out a large mortgage to renovate the church and school. Unable to pay back the mortgage, the bank foreclosed on the property in 1938. Catholic Charities purchased the property, and converted the school to a new home for the ever-expanding Holy Name Centre. The parish church remained, with the director of the Holy Name Centre serving as parish administrator, although it experienced a significant decline after World War II.

The new Holy Name Centre, in addition to cafeteria and pool hall on the third floor, and a library and chapel on the second floor, also had a full theater. In the 1950s and 60s, Golden Gloves tournaments were held in the theater. The basement had a swimming pool and a gym, and there was also outdoor space on the roof. During the weekdays, mass was held in the chapel, and on the weekends mass took place in the auditorium. Older men had access to the amenities all day. Younger men, who were expected to be working or at least looking for jobs, had access to the shower and waiting room during the day, and the other facilities at night. The Centre offered a coffee and rolls in the morning, a cold meal at lunch, and a hot meal at dinnertime. On holidays, both meals were hot. At its height, the Centre served over 1800 men on Christmas.

In addition to the services offered to the living, the Holy Name Centre also buried the dead of the Bowery. The Centre had a large plot at Calvary Cemetery. If a body was found in the neighborhood, the police would call the priests of the Centre, who were often able to identify the man. During the 1950s and 60s, the Centre could bury up to 40 men a month. Around

1950, the demographics of the men served by the Holy Name Centre changed from a majority Irish, to an influx of African American men. Many of these were ex-service men, or men who had lost wartime jobs to returning service men. The Holy Name Centre offered men a mailing address, which could be used for Social Security or VA pension checks.¹

The Holy Name Centre and the Church of Our Lady of Loreto closed in 2011. The building is now the home of the Fulton Sheen Center for Thought and Culture.

Scope & Content Note

The bulk of this collection is made up of published journals and yearbooks from the annual entertainment fundraisers hosted by the Holy Name Centre, from its foundation until the mid-1960s. Also included are letters from the early days of the Centre, newspaper clippings from throughout the Centre's life span, and photographs documenting the activities of the Centre, most of these from the mid-twentieth century.

Arrangement

This material was arranged in two series. Series I: Journals & Yearbooks consists of annual publications produced by the Holy Name Centre for their annual entertainment fundraiser. Series II: Correspondence, Clippings, and Photographs consists of small file of correspondence related to the foundations of the Holy Name Centre, newspaper clippings from the Centre's 100+ year history, and photographs of Centre activities.

Access Points

Genre(s)

- Publications
- Photographs
- Newspapers

¹ While some of the information in this history comes from newspapers and other published sources, the majority comes from a July 16, 2014 interview with Msgr. John Ahern, director of the Holy Name Centre from 1983 until its closing in 2011.

- Letter

Geographic Name(s)

- Manhattan (New York)

Administrative Information

Access and Use: Collection is open to researchers at the Archives of the Archdiocese of New York. Advance appointments are required for the use of archival materials.

Reproduction and Use: Permission to reproduce any material in this collection not in the public domain must be obtained from the Archives and the copyright holder.

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Processing Note: The material was received in no particular order. Chronological order was imposed on the collection, and the material was rehoused in acid-free boxes and folders.

Related Materials: Related materials can be found in Collection 015, Catholic Charities Collection, as well as in the parish history materials of Our Lady of Loreto Church.

Separated Materials: Materials related to Our Lady of Loreto were moved to the Parish History Collection.

Collection

Box Number	Folder Number	Description	Date
Series I: Journals & Yearbooks			
1	1	Annual Entertainment and Reception	1912
1	2	Annual Entertainment and Reception	1913
1	3	Annual Journal	1919
1	4	Reunion of the Former Members of the St. James Working Boys Club	1936
1	5	Annual Journal	1939
1	6	Annual Journal	1940
1	7	Annual Journal	1941
1	8	Annual Journal	1942
1	9	Annual Journal	1943
1	10	Annual Dinner Journal	1944
1	11	Yearbook	1945
1	12	Yearbook	1946
1	13	Yearbook	1947
1	14	Yearbook	1948
1	15	Yearbook	1949
1	16	Yearbook	1950
1	17	Annual Journal	1951
2	1	Yearbook	1952
2	2	Yearbook	1953
2	3	Yearbook	1954
2	4	Yearbook	1955
2	5	Yearbook	1956
2	6	Yearbook	1957
2	7	Yearbook	1958
2	8	Yearbook	1959
2	9	Yearbook	1960
2	10	Yearbook	1961
2	11	Yearbook	1962
2	12	Yearbook	1963
2	13	Yearbook	1964
2	14	Yearbook	1966

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Series II: Correspondence, Clippings, and Photographs			
	15	Correspondence	1907
	16	Newspaper Clippings	1906-2014
	17	Photographs	