

Care facility dedicated at Mt. Loretto

By ANN MARIE BRESLIN
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

It wasn't easy for some of the 16 young people who met the bishop yesterday in front of a large congregation at the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, Mount Loretto.

Yet, proudly and cautiously, each of the young adults, who are severely mentally retarded, marched straight to Bishop Patrick V. Ahern, handed him a large, carefully decorated wooden key and, with a sigh of relief, turned away from the altar.

Yesterday's was the first in a long line of challenges they will face.

The mass was part a ceremony held to dedicate the Monsignor Kenny Memorial Intermediate Care Facility, a newly restored cottage for clients with a dual diagnosis of physical and mental disabilities, and the keys represent their entry into a greater level of responsibility.

Mount Loretto recently became part of a state-funded program that requires a less-restrictive setting that fosters independence.

Also celebrating the mass were the Rev. Joseph Ansaldi, principal of St. Joseph by the Sea High School, Huguenot, the Rev. Maurice Burke of Our Lady Help of Christians R.C. Church, Totten-

ville and the Rev. Eugene Mangano, pastor of St. Sylvester's R.C. Church, Concord.

Though Sister Marie Bernadette, executive director of Mount Loretto, said the new building "is pointing to the Mount Loretto of the future," its dedication brought back sweet memories of the past.

The cottage is named for the late Monsignor James J. Kenny, who served from 1937 to 1964 as the sports director at the mission. It provides the structure for a home-like setting he strived for while there.

"It is beautiful that we are dedicating this cottage in the name of Jim Kenny. No other person deserves it more, except perhaps Father (John) Drumgoole, and he is (already) remembered here," Bishop Ahern told the assembly.

"He was a father, a mother, a grandfather — everything to those kids," he later recalled in a quite moment after the mass.

A large procession led by bagpiper Herb Goldberger of the Richmond County Pipers wound its way to the cottage for a blessing after the mass.

More than 100 people were present for the mass, many of whom stayed around to squeeze into the new facility for a tour and the blessing.

"God, we ask you to pour down

upon us your blessings. Pour down upon this cottage in the memory of James Kenny," Bishop Ahern said during the blessing in one of the cottage's family rooms.

Members of the group admired the room, cheerfully painted in pastels. Even the bishop also ap-

preciated the decor. "This would make a swell rectory," he mused. "This could house three priests."

He commented that the family room resembled a church, while pointing out its high, beamed ceilings. "Especially with a bishop in it," someone in the crowd chimed in.

Monsignor Kenny had a way with the children of Mount Loretto that could not be matched, as many who remember him confirmed.

"He was a very down-to-earth person, had a profound influence on youngster. He was like their idol," recalled Sister Bernadette.

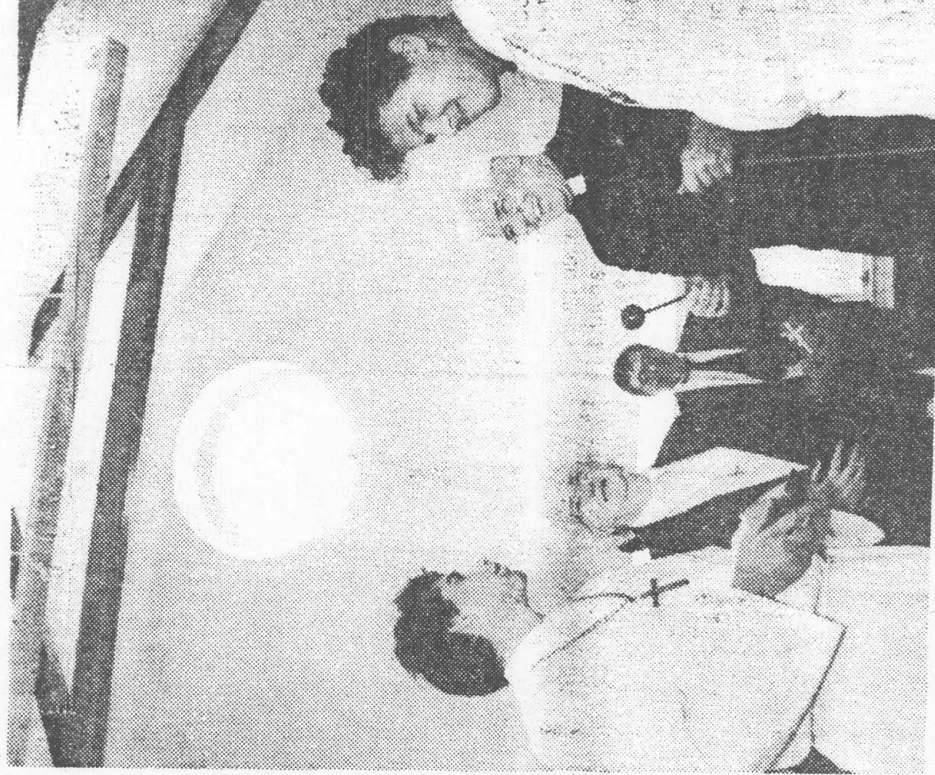
Jack Kenny of Dongan Hills, Monsignor Kenny's youngest brother, attended yesterday's dedication, which he said was very appropriate.

"I'm sure if he were alive he certainly would love the honor bestowed him," he said, glancing down at a 1941 photograph of Monsignor Kenny in his hand.

Though the future residents didn't take yesterday's tour, they were given a private one last week.

"They were stunned. It's really exciting," said Terry Richardson, the manager of the facility. "They were calling to each other: 'you've got to see this ... and this.'"

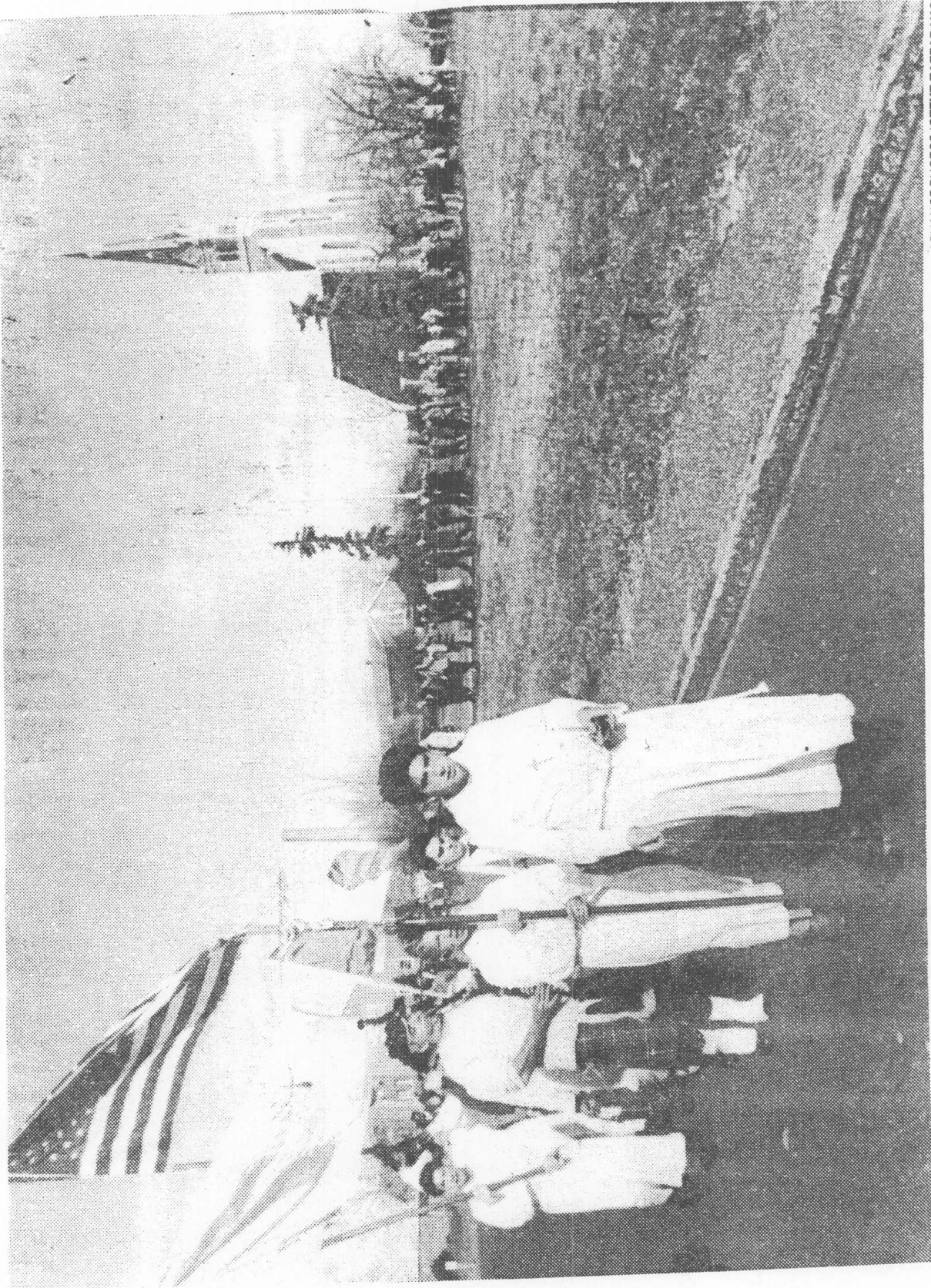
They've got something to be excited about, according to Michael Green, the director of the



Bishop Patrick V. Ahern, second from right, blesses the cottage as altar boy John Ruffino, Sister Marie Bernadette and altar boy Juan Carrasio look on.

critical-level program. "Many of them, at some point in the past, have been involved in locked unit institutions. It's an opportunity for them to be livin' as you and I would," he said.

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE ■ FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1988



The large procession wends its way to the cottage, named for the late Monsignor James J. Kenny.

ADVANCE PHOTOS / STEVE ZAFFARANO

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