

**78th ANNIVERSARY MASS OF MONSIGNOR BERNARD J. QUINN'S DEATH**  
**HOMILY**  
**Most Reverend John O. Barres**  
**Diocese of Rockville Centre (NY)**  
**St. Brigid Parish (Westbury, NY)**  
**April 7, 2018**

We celebrate this 78 th Anniversary Mass of Monsignor Bernard J. Quinn's death having celebrated on Tuesday, April 4 th the 50 th Anniversary of the Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis. Msgr. Quinn lived from 1888 to 1940 so he never would have been aware of Dr. King's dream. He was simply living it and prophetically anticipating it. As he said to the holy people he served: "...I would willingly shed to the last drop my life's blood for the least among you."

Let me begin by paying tribute to Fr. Paul W. Jervis and his exceptional biography Quintessential Priest: The Life of Father Bernard J. Quinn. I have read a lot of biographies of priests. I have read a lot of books on the theology and spirituality of the priesthood. This is an exceptional book, an exceptional living commitment on the part of Fr. Jervis. It is the blending of two priesthoods – the priesthood of Msgr. Bernard Quinn and the priesthood of Fr. Paul Jervis, the postulator for Fr. Quinn's cause of canonization.

Fr. Jervis traces Fr. Quinn's call to the priesthood. He traces Fr. Quinn's World War I chaplain experience and the mustard gas that caused him health problems for the rest of his life. Those health problems must have given him a certain urgency in his apostolic works. Fr. Jervis traces Fr. Quinn's extraordinary contact with St. Terese of Lisieux's The Story of a Soul and the people who had direct contact with her. He traces the real life experiences of racism within the Catholic Church that Fr. Quinn addressed with charity, courage, tenacity and a priestly heart on Fire with the Word of God and the Eucharist and inspired by St. Terese.

Fr. Jervis traces the Corporal Works of Mercy of a daring and entrepreneurial missionary. We know the story of Fr. Quinn's pioneering spirit from the founding of St. Peter Claver Church and St. Benedict the Moor Church to the founding of Little Flower House of Providence Orphanage in Wading River, New York, the precursor of Little Flower Children's Services.

Please join me in thanking Fr. Paul Jervis for this exceptional contribution to the Spirituality of the Catholic priest, to the history of mission of our beloved African American community in the history of the Catholic Church in New York and in the United States. In his Address to the Joint Session of the United States Congress

on September 24, 2015, Pope Francis recognized the pivotal role of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in addressing the scourge of racism: “Here too I think of the march with Martin Luther King led from Selma to Montgomery fifty years ago as part of the campaign to fulfill his ‘dream’ of full civil and political rights for African Americans.

That dream continues to inspire us all. I am happy that America continues to be, for many, a land of ‘dreams’. Dreams which lead to action, to participation, to commitment. Dreams which awaken what is deepest and truest in the life of a people.” As the Catholic Church in Brooklyn and on Long Island, we awaken to “what is deepest and truest” in ourselves in the signs and symbols of the Easter Octave Catholic liturgy and our sacramental theology, and the power of the Risen Christ working at every moment in history.

Memories of the Easter Vigil Fire, the Paschal Candle, the Gospel Resurrection Appearances, the Light that streams from the glorified wounds of the Risen Christ – these all speak to us of our Catholic baptismal responsibility to stand up against all expressions of racism and to be instruments of the Divine Mercy who actively cultivate racial harmony and the spirit of beatitudinal peace in the World. Let the power of the Risen Christ reach into every moment in every place in this country in which someone was treated unjustly -- whether it was on a bus or in a restaurant during the Jim Crow era, whether it was the destructive work of the Klu Klux Klan that burned down the orphanages that Fr. Quinn kept rebuilding in Wading River, whether it was a lynching or the bombing or burning of a Church or whether it was a subtler but still devastating expression of racism. During the Easter Vigil last Saturday night, we chanted the Litany of Saints in which we asked the intercession of the great saints of every century to intercede for us. They, in turn, beckon to us to be faithful to that “deepest and truest” dimension in ourselves, our baptismal call to holiness and mission. Think of what Fr. Quinn went through on Eastern Long Island. He kept building and the KKK kept destroying. Fr. Quinn’s holy perseverance won out in the end. Fr. Quinn teaches us that when anyone tries to destroy the dream, we keep rebuilding and moving forward – immediately, with tenacity, with holy boldness and courage, the holy boldness and courage that come to us from the presence of the Risen Christ in our souls, in our Church and in the World.

The Saints of the Centuries want a rich new harvest of Catholic Saints in Brooklyn and on Long Island -- Saints who understand that dramatic missionary growth grounded in the spirit of the Beatitudes is the most effective way for us to live Dr. King’s dream and Fr. Quinn’s dream in our time. They were both men of Social Justice and they connected that Fire for Social Justice with a Fire for Evangelization. And it is through our own Fire for Evangelization and

dramatic missionary growth that we will help promote the justice for which Dr. King and Fr. Quinn gave their lives.

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