

# 2,000,000 Have Sought Aid of Little Flower At Brooklyn Shrine in Less Than Five Years

SHRINE CHURCH OF LITTLE FLOWER A HAVEN FOR SICK

**Sensationalism Absent  
From Any Reports of  
Cures, States Pastor,  
Who Lays Stress on  
'Spiritual Miracles'**

By WILLIAM WEER

There was a priest of the Catholic Church named Peter Claver. He lived and labored in Cartagena, Colombia in the days of Negro slavery. He met the slave ships there when they arrived from Africa. He went among the chained black men on ships and ashore. He ministered to their needs, physical and spiritual, as much as he could, as much as he was permitted. He used to sign his name "Peter, Slave of the Slaves Forever."

After his death the Church declared him a saint, proclaimed St. Peter Claver patron of all colored missions, apostle of the Negro race.

**Sole English-Speaking Priest**

There was an American priest, Father Bernard J. Quinn. During the World War he was a chaplain in France, and after the armistice he was assigned to a mobile hospital of American soldiers near Alencon. There were also, in that territory, British, Canadian and Australian soldiers, but no other English-speaking priest.

He sought them all out, doing a chaplain's duties among soldiers far from their homes. And before he came to Alencon he had heard of a devoted Carmelite nun, Therese Martin, who had done pious and helpful things, and that she was born in a certain house in Alencon. He sought out the house, too, knocked at the door. A woman responded. He said to her, in French: "Do you speak English?" She answered, in English: "Why, I am English."

**Said First Mass in House**

So there, in the birthplace of the nun, Therese, he took up his residence with the English couple, Mr. and Mrs. Grant. There he celebrated the first mass that the house knew. There he lived for the six months of his stay in Alencon.

And when the war and post-war activities were over, Father Quinn came back from the other side, came to Brooklyn, and in a poorish neighborhood, on Jefferson Ave., at the corner of what has since become Claver Place, at the direction of the Bishop of Brooklyn, he obtained an old express company building and started a church.

**Dedicated to Negroes**

A church for all Catholics, but because a large number of Negroes lived nearby many Negroes came, and it was called the Church of St. Peter Claver, and was dedicated to the Negroes. The first Catholic Church for the race in Brooklyn.

Now, on May 17, 1925, the Carmelite nun Therese was canonized as St. Therese of the Little Flower and because Father Quinn had lived in the house where she was born,



The Roman Catholic Church of St. Peter Claver, Jefferson Ave. and Claver Place, where more than 2,000,000 have flocked to the novena of St. Therese of the Little Flower, reporting numerous miraculous cures. In the insert Father Bernard J. Quinn, pastor of the church.

because he knew something of her story and her works, he inducted a novena which was the first feast in celebration of the canonization.

**10,000 Came Each Day**

That began on Sept. 30, 1925. A relic of the newest saint which had been received from France, and a lifelike statuette of her, were set up in a shrine. And there the services were held, for nine consecutive days. And somewhat to Father Quinn's own surprise, with every passing day the crowd of the worshippers grew and grew. Until some 10,000 or more came to worship and pray each day.

And among the worshippers the word spread that there was miraculous power in this shrine of St. Therese of the Little Flower. That prayers made devoutly before it were strangely answered. That those who had been sick and lame and halt were miraculously cured. More and

more came to the shrine. A perpetual novena was established.

**Perpetual Novena Started**

And ever since, every Monday, the novena is held, in continuing services from early morning to late at night. For four and a half years this has continued, crowds flocking to the church, perhaps 10,000 each Monday, perhaps 15,000. Estimating conservatively, Father Quinn said there was an average of 10,000 each week, or 2,250,000 since the perpetual novena began.

Thus the shrine of St. Therese of the Little Flower in the Church of St. Peter Claver has become one of the greatest Catholic shrines in the world. Lourdes in France has more worshippers. And St. Anne de Beaupre in Quebec. And perhaps one or two others, but no more.

And all this has happened quietly, without the tomtom of publicity of any sort. In Malden, Mass., last

fall, at the grave of Father Patrick Power, there was a tremendous outpouring of believers, some of whom told of miraculous cures. At the shrine of St. Therese, though this has continued for nearly half a decade, there has been nothing of that sort. Before today, there was never a line in any public print about the miracles or about the shrine.

I said to Father Quinn over the telephone:

"I want to come to your church on Monday, the day of the novena, and then I want to talk to you about this."

"On Monday?" he asked. "You can, of course, come and see what you see, but I could not talk to my own mother on Monday."

It was a bitter cold day, Monday last, but the church was filled to capacity when, at 9 o'clock in the



ing, the services began. A large number of women were there, some men, a good many Negro worshippers, but perhaps a larger number who were Caucasian.

**Regardless of Color**

Whatever the color, they knelt and rose in unison, spoke words of prayer, passed one after another before the priest—passed out of the church, which has now become a substantial structure, to give place to others.

The mild-faced priest announced that, since the novena of the Monday before, he had received a certain number of letters from those who had been helped by their worship at the shrine. Seventeen from persons whose prayers were completely answered, 13 others whose prayers were partially answered. He had from one or two. One writer had been out of work for months; he made his novena, and very quickly a job came to him. One of cancer that had been cured. Father Quinn read no names of writers. He made no comment what they wrote.

A day later we sat in his tiny office, in the church rectory. He said:

**Stresses Spiritual Wonders**

Yes, many, many cures have actually happened. Many wonders, physical and spiritual are occurring. Think, if you can lay stress on the spiritual wonders, those are as important as the others. If a man has lost his faith regains it—well, that's a true miracle too. I remember there was a letter came from a young man. It began with that quotation about the man who comes to scoff and returns to pray. Then his letter said, 'My Father, I am that fool.' He came to the church one Monday night with a friend who was making the novena. He was invited in the service, he wrote, but was also amused at what he called 'such a lot of bunk.' But a strange part was, he was back Monday, and presently he was making his perpetual novena and went into a weekend retreat and once again reconciled to Almighty God.

There are also physical wonders which can only call them miracles. I've noticed about this little church that often the miracles are direct. Often they are performed by natural means. There was another who came here after

hearing of the devotion, and she came to me and told me about her son who had been sickly.

"They were well to do. They had tried all kinds of doctors and cures. Once he was on the operating table, and for some reason the father changed his mind, would not let the operation go on. The mother made her novena. Then, shortly after, she heard of a doctor, in California.

**Meet Half Way Across Continent**

"It seemed so far away. But she wrote him, and he became interested. He agreed to meet the boy half way across the continent. There he looked at the boy and said to the mother: 'You let me have him for five or six months.' She did, and the boy is completely cured.

"These are wonders that I know. And many, many others. I could not give you names and addresses, for these letters that come to me are in confidence. When I read part of them in church it is only to give courage to others, to act as a source of consolation to them. And the reading is an act of public thanksgiving.

"But it is not anything sensational. There are no sensational scenes of heaping crutches on the shrine. I would not have it that way. That and sensational newspaper accounts. For one thing,

there would be no room for any more worshippers to come.

"But the wonders are occurring, and have occurred. I know."

And he spoke in the simple tone of a man who speaks a truth which he knows no reason why one should doubt.



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