

*Excerpts from*

*The First Pastoral Letter to the Parishioners of*  
**ST. PETER CLAVER CHURCH**  
Brooklyn, New York

June 1, 1922



Dear Child of St. Peter Claver's:

Today, the first day of June, I am ten years a priest. In those ten years of priestly life and priestly ministry by the grace of God, a large family of spiritual children has grown up around me. You, my child, are a member of that great household, and I am your spiritual Father in Christ Jesus, the Lord. I love you, I am proud of every one of you, and I would willingly shed to the last drop my life's blood for the least among you. And so, on this blessed occasion, I feel impelled to address this pastoral letter to you. In it I am going to speak to you heart to heart, as a fond father to his loving child, as a watchful shepherd to his faithful sheep, as a solicitous pastor to his devoted people. Listen, then, my child, and long years from now, hand down to your children this message from a heart that is on fire with love for you.

I was ordained a priest on the first day of the month of the Sacred Heart. It was the same month, in the year 1912, that I offered myself to our late good Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Charles E. McDonnell, to be your Father and Friend. It was in the same month, in the year 1920, that I greeted you for the first time in the little chapel, the Bishop's Chapel, on Clermont Avenue. And now it is in the same month of June that I write to you my first real pastoral letter. Evidently the Sacred Heart of our dear Lord has for you, and for me, and for this little Mission Parish of St. Peter Claver a very special place in His plan of Divine Providence. Evidently, too, He wishes to attract our souls to Him through the medium of His Sacred Heart in the Sacrament of His Love.

Only three months ago, my child, you and I knelt together for the first time in our beautiful new Parish Church. We witnessed the inspiring ceremony of its solemn dedication by our beloved Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Thomas E. Molloy. Together we sat and listened to the fatherly words of our Chief Shepherd, the Bishop. We heard, with eager hearts, the all consoling message contained in the Sermon of our dear friend Monsignor Burke.

We fell down in silent adoration before Our God, as He descended the moment of consecration for the first time upon our Altar. All silently, too, we offered to Him our childlike, simple act of thanksgiving. And we went always from this House of God glorying in the name of Catholic, and proud to have lived to see the day when Brooklyn could boast of a Church for the Negro Catholics of her great city. Your support, my child, of that Church has been most loyal and most generous. Words fail me to describe my true feelings as I look out upon your loving souls Sunday after Sunday, and day after day. And at night, as I commend myself to God, my last thought is for you, and I raise my hand in priestly blessing over you, and your homes, and your loved ones. I know your love and your loyalty, and I thank God every day of my life for it. The eyes of the whole city are upon our Mission Church, my child, and the hearts of kind friends among priests and people beat for us. We will not be unmindful of this, but rather we will prove the world that there are in this great Diocese no Catholics more proud of their faith, no Christians more truly Christlike than this noble little family of St. Peter Claver.

Our property now consists of the Church, the Auditorium, the Rectory, the Convent, and the building for a Day Nursery and future School. There is no more complete plant in Brooklyn. Its value today is two hundred thousand dollars, and our present debt is eighty thousand dollars. We hope to have three Nuns in their new Convent Nos. 1 and 1 Jefferson Ave., by next September or October.

And now a final word from your pastor's heart, we will celebrate the tenth anniversary of my ordination to the Holy Priesthood on Sunday morning, June 4. We will have a Solemn High Mass at half past ten, at which I will ask every member of the Parish to receive Holy Communion. That will be the best gift you can give me, your Communion and your prayers. After Mass we will all go to the Auditorium to enjoy together as one big family a Communion Breakfast. Our dear little ones and our good converts will receive their First Holy Communion at the 8 o'clock Mass, and they, too, will partake of a Communion-Breakfast at 9 o'clock in time to return upstairs for the Solemn Mass at ten-thirty.

In conclusion I give you my blessing and I ask that the blessings of God Almighty, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, descend upon you and yours, and remain forever.

I am devotedly yours in Christ,  
REV. BERNARD J. QUINN

St. Peter Claver's Church  
Ormond Place & Jefferson Avenue,  
Brooklyn, N.Y.