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OBITUARIES

Father Byrnes Had Special Gift for Listening to People

May 3, 2014

A Mass of Christian burial for **Father John W. Byrnes**, a senior priest, was celebrated April 30 at SS. Joachim and Anne Church, Queens Village.

Father Byrnes, a priest for 67 years, died April 26 at Mercy Hospital, Rockville Centre, L.I. He was 91.

Born in Brooklyn, he was baptized at SS. Simon and Jude Church, Gravesend. He attended St. John's University, Brooklyn; and Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington, L.I. He was ordained May 31, 1947 by Bishop Thomas E. Molloy at St. James Pro-Cathedral, Downtown Brooklyn.

He served as an assistant at Our Lady of Victory, Bedford-Stuyvesant, 1947-62; and St. Peter Claver, Bedford-Stuyvesant, 1962-69.

He was administrator at St. Gregory the Great, Crown Heights, 1969-72.

He then was an assistant at St. Pascal Baylon, St. Albans, 1972-74; Our Lady of Good Counsel, Bedford-Stuyvesant, 1974-77; Nativity-St. Peter Claver, 1977-79; St. Gregory the Great, Bellerose, 1979-83; and was assigned to SS. Joachim and Anne, Queens Village, in 1983.

He served on the Queens County D.A.'s Office's Second Chance Program from 1982 to 1987.

In 2007, he moved into Bishop Mugavero Residence for retired priests in Douglaston and two years later went to Queen of Peace Residence in Queens Village.

Auxiliary Bishop Paul Sanchez was the main celebrant of the funeral Mass. Special concelebrants included Msgrs. Alfred LoPinto and Joseph P. Malagrecia, who preached the homily.

Msgr. Malagrecia, pastor of Holy Cross parish, Flatbush, spent 16 years with Father Byrnes at SS. Joachim and Anne while the former served as pastor.

"He (Father Byrnes) had a very special gift of listening to people," Msgr. Malagrecia said. "He spent hours per day in one-on-one talk. He had infinite patience and was everyone's friend."

During his years as priest, Father Byrnes served entirely in African-American communities and took a special interest in the ministry of helping recovering alcoholics.

Even after he retired, he was part of an Alcoholics Anonymous group that met every Saturday at SS. Joachim and Anne right up until a month before he died.

"From the early morning until late at night, he was talking to people," Msgr. Malagrecia said. "He was very insightful into how people recover. He'll be remembered by all sorts of people with great love and fondness."

Burial was in Holy Cross Cemetery, Flatbush.



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3 thoughts on "Father Byrnes Had Special Gift for Listening to People"

1. **Gloria Henderson** says:

February 19, 2016 at 11:05 am02

He was the priest that married me at Our Lady of Victory. He was my priest before and after that. He will always be my priest. His voice reeked of care and understanding. His was truly living his vocation. When I meet a priest, I hold them to the bar that Father Byrnes established. I knew he had a twin. However, he never focused on his self and his life, he gave all his attention to whatever my need was at the time.

I miss him and I recently found out about his passing. God Loves Him Best!

[Reply](#)

2. **Gloria Henderson** says:

February 19, 2016 at 11:05 am02

Some typos forgive me Father.

[Reply](#)

3. **Erica Jagdeo** says:

January 2, 2020 at 11:05 am01

I had been trying to find out how he was doing for quite some time and couldn't since I moved out of state. He baptize me and was my sponsor when I made my confirmation. He was always my strength and inspiration and I'm sad that I'm just now finding out about his passing. I miss him deeply.

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