



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 29, 2020
Fifth Sunday of Lent

To the Faithful of the Diocese of Rockville Centre

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we carry the cross together, facing the devastating effects of COVID-19, please join me in thanking and praying for our first responders, dedicated doctors, nurses, staff and volunteers at Catholic Health Services and all of our wonderful hospitals across Long Island. Their sacrificial and heroic dedication during this unprecedented time is an inspiration and a sign of hope. Please join me in also praying for the incredible team at Catholic Charities who is on the front line of our response to the surge in need from the people of Nassau and Suffolk Counties. All of these brave men and women carrying out the Corporal Works of Mercy are a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives.

We must remember that, although we are being asked to distance ourselves physically, from each other, we remain joined, deeply in faith, to our brothers and sisters in Christ and in the mission of mercy of the Church we love.

I received an email from Auxiliary Bishop Richard Henning that I would like to share with you: "I am speaking with pastors and seeing an explosion of efforts to share, communicate and practice the Faith. God does indeed work in strange ways, and this terrible, grievous moment appears to be shaking many of us out of complacency. There is an energy and urgency that lifts my spirit."

Seeing the number of faithful who are now virtually participating in Mass, Holy Hours and Lenten retreats through their local parish and via the Catholic Faith Network is inspiring and I encourage you to continue to do so. I am also inspired by the rapid response of our pastors and parish leadership to care for the needs of their parish and to make this a reality. Our dedicated pastors and priests are serving in countless ways, never imagined in their seminary training.

We hear of so many special acts of kindness: people collecting food for outreach programs and needed medical equipment for our hospitals; stories of parishioners shopping and checking in on their elderly neighbors, and reaching out to Catholic Charities to help financially or by volunteering their time.

Pope Francis tells us to "remain united - to make our closeness felt to those who are alone and to those who are most stricken". So many of you are exemplifying that call and I thank you.

From the beginning of the outbreak, our Diocese has monitored our procedures for our parishes, schools and ministries. We have adhered to all directives by the authorities and our health organizations. The spiritual wellbeing and safety of our community is our main priority.

Just as you and your family are now struggling with new challenges, our parishes are as well. Now, perhaps more than ever, your parish needs your help. It cannot survive without you.

Appreciating the anxieties you are facing, we urge you to please continue supporting your parish with weekly offertory donations. These funds are critical for the continued operation of your parish. Every day, your parish provides for the pastoral and spiritual care of its parishioners. It is there in the happiest moments in your life - weddings, baptisms, first Communions - and is a source of comfort during the most challenging times such as our current crisis or the death of a loved one. There are senior services, food pantries, youth ministries, schools, and on-going religious education. All of this depends on you! We ask that you please consider making the sacrifice, at a minimum, to continue your current weekly level of support.

One easy way to do so is through your parish's online giving provider. Your parish may have an online giving account that can be accessed through the parish website. We have also developed a "Text to Give" option for each of our parishes enabling you to make a weekly donation on your smart phone. To access information regarding this innovative form of giving, please go to the following website <https://www.drvcmissionarygrowth.org/text2give>.

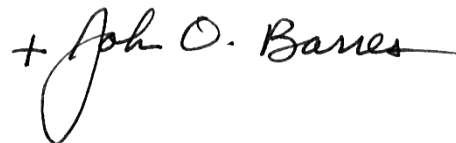
At the same time, I ask our loyal supporters of the Catholic Ministries Appeal, who aid our ministries including Catholic Charities, to continue to support us if you are able. We are so grateful to those of you who continue to send in your pledge payments. We are seeing many of our ministries pivot to support those most impacted by COVID-19 and we rely on your support both in the short-term and long-term. All gifts – no matter the size – make a difference to those in need.

I truly hesitated in sending a request for support at this time, knowing the anxieties we are all facing. But as the needs of our community grow, we must ensure that our Church can continue to meet the needs of our people throughout this crisis. We must also prepare to fully reemerge when the crisis is over and we are able to join together again as the Body of Christ. I know that the faithful on Long Island understand this and will and respond as you always do in times of crisis.

If you or a family member is in need of assistance, please contact Catholic Charities at (516) 733-7045.

Thank you for embracing the mission of the Church. May the Holy Spirit lift our spirits so that we may see with supernatural vision the opportunities to share our Catholic Faith in these challenging times. You and your family are remembered in my daily prayers.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ John O. Barres". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'J'.

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre