



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Christmas 2022

To the People of God of the Diocese of Rockville Centre:

Merry Christmas to you and your families!

In union with our Holy Father Pope Francis, and in a non-judgmental spirit of mercy, humility and charity, I invite everyone who will be present at our Christmas Masses, or watching our Christmas Masses via the Catholic Faith Network or CBS, or not present at all: If your life has been far from the Catholic Mass and the Eucharist, I invite you with Pope Francis to return.

I invite you to experience the power and liberation of Christ's mercy and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and to cross the bridge into the full practice of your Catholic Faith through a radical fidelity to the Sunday Mass and an ever-deepening love for the Holy Eucharist.

Perhaps you are not a Catholic and yet have some mysterious attraction to the Catholic Mass and the Eucharist.

You are not alone! Many saints – I think of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the pioneering American Catholic educator and convert – had the same experience and were drawn to enter the Church through their intuitive experience of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist in our parish churches! Be open to the Eucharistic movement of the Holy Spirit in your life!

Our celebration of Christmas 2022 occurs this year as every Catholic diocese, every Catholic parish, every Catholic hospital, university, and institution in the United States is engaged in an evangelizing ***Eucharistic Revival***.

What do we mean by the phrase “Eucharistic Revival” and why is it so important for our celebration of Christmas?

What does a love for the Eucharist and an openness to being a 21st Century Eucharistic missionary have to do with our celebration of Christmas 2022?

Pope Francis points out the relationship between the Birth of Christ and the Holy Eucharist and the Mass. The very word Bethlehem means “house of Bread.”

Pope Francis states: “Bethlehem is the turning point that alters the course of history. There God, in the *house of bread*, is born in a *manger*. It is as if he wanted to say: ‘Here I am, as your food.’ He does not take, but gives us to eat; he does not give us a mere thing, but his very self. In Bethlehem, we discover that God does not take life, but gives it. To us, who from birth are used to taking and eating, Jesus begins to say: ‘Take and eat. This is my body.’ (Matthew 26:26) The tiny body of the Child of Bethlehem speaks to us of a new way to live our lives: not by devouring and hoarding, but by sharing and giving. God makes himself small so that he can be our food. By feeding on him, the bread of life,

we can be *reborn in love*, and break the spiral of grasping and greed. From the ‘house of bread,’ Jesus brings us back home, so that we can become God’s family, brothers and sisters to our neighbors. Standing before the manger, we understand that the food of life is not material riches but love, not gluttony but charity, not ostentation but simplicity. The Lord knows that we need to be fed daily. That is why he offered himself to us every day of his life: from the manger in Bethlehem to the Upper Room in Jerusalem. Today too, on the altar, he becomes bread broken for us; he knocks at our door, to enter and eat with us (cf. Revelation 3:20). At Christmas, we on earth receive Jesus, the bread from heaven. It is a bread that never grows stale, but enables us even now to have a foretaste of eternal life.”¹

Eucharistic Revival, in the words of Pope St. John Paul II, is a rediscovery of “Eucharistic Amazement” and Eucharistic Devotion.

Eucharistic Revival means that we understand deeply that every Mass has a cosmic significance, and every Mass is celebrated on the Altar of the world – the Altar of Ukraine and every war torn and injustice-ridden area of our world.

Eucharistic Revival is an effective catechesis of the theology and spirituality of the Catholic Mass that moves the hearts, minds, souls and imaginations of the People of God.

Eucharistic Revival in our Catholic schools means the cultivation of a radical fidelity to the Sunday Catholic Mass on the part of our teachers, our staff and our families.

Eucharistic Revival is a rekindling of Pope Benedict XVI’s insight that every period of Church reform and effective Catholic evangelization and mission throughout history can be traced to a rediscovery of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist.²

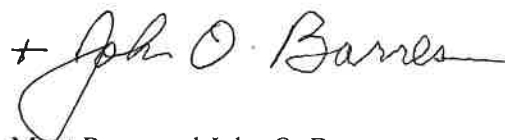
As we celebrate the birth of Christ and his rebirth in our hearts and families at Christmas, we pray for a renewal of our faith in Christ’s Eucharistic presence.

We pray that each of us could be Divine Mercy instruments of bringing many, many people back to a full fidelity to the Eucharist and the Catholic Mass.

As we celebrate Christmas, we are being called to be intentional, compassionate, understanding and listening Eucharistic missionaries.

Merry Christmas to you and your families! May the love of the Christ child and the love of the Holy Family light your remaining steps on earth and light your path to Heaven and Eternal Life.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John O. Barres". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning of the first name.

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre

¹ Pope Francis Homily for Midnight Mass, Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, December 25, 2018.

² See Pope Benedict XVI’s 2017 Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* 6: “Every great reform has in some way been linked to the rediscovery of belief in the Lord’s eucharistic presence among his people.”