

**PASSION SUNDAY 2020**  
**BISHOP JOHN O. BARRES**  
**DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE**  
**ST. AGNES CATHEDRAL**  
**APRIL 5, 2020**

**The Passion Narrative according to the Gospel of Matthew shows us powerfully and poignantly the range of Our Lord's experience of suffering in his Passion: groundless arrest, betrayal by one of his closest disciples, the flight of his best friends, inhuman interrogation and tortures, false accusations, perjuries, the political shifting of blame onto the shoulders of an innocent and defenseless man, derision, condemnation as a lawbreaker and criminal, condemnation to death, physical collapse under the cross, defamation, sensation-mongering, the ultimate experience of scapegoating in all of world history, and the experience of abandonment by God.<sup>1</sup>**

**The Cross of Jesus Christ is the central point in the history of the world and it is the central point of the life history of every human being and every soul.<sup>2</sup>**

**The Cross stays still while the World turns.<sup>3</sup>**

**What we believe about the Cross of Jesus Christ determines what we believe about life itself.<sup>4</sup>**

**Each one of us has carried a wide range of Crosses in the course of our lives. Each Cross has a unique shape and contour. Each Cross has a mysterious and providential purpose.**

<sup>1</sup> Cf. German Bishops' Conference, *A Catholic Catechism for Adults: The Church's Confession of Faith*, (San Francisco: Communio Books, 1987), 155 .

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, OCD, *Divine Intimacy*, (New York, Desclee Company, 1964), 580.

<sup>3</sup> This is the motto of the Carthusian Order: *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis*, Latin for "The cross stays still while the world turns.."

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Attributed to the Anglican Spiritual Theologian Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941).

**And now each one of us is carrying in our own unique way and in our own unique life and family context, the Cross of this COVID-19 experience with its traumas, its tragedies, its fears and its financial, economic and employment upheavals.**

**As Holy Week begins, and we unite this Cross to the Lord's, may we see and feel in this trial the Lord awakening us.**

**As our Holy Father, Pope Francis, recently reminded us: "The Lord awakens us so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his Cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love."<sup>5</sup>**

**May this virtual Holy Week of 2020 be a time of great evangelizing grace for the Church and the World and may the Holy Spirit ignite in each one of us a spirit of heroic and courageous holiness and mission.**

**May there be a massive return of Catholics to the full practice of their Catholic faith as the Crucified Christ lifts high his Cross and raises his wounded hands to the World.**

<sup>5</sup> Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, *Extraordinary Moment of Prayer and Blessing of the City and the World*, Saint Peter's Square, March 27, 2020.