



June 23, 2017  
Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE  
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Brother Priests:

On this Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I want to thank you for your priesthood, your devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and for the pastoral charity that flows from your priestly heart.

I thank God for the priestly heart of Bishop William Murphy which we celebrated together on Tuesday night and for all he continues to model for us and teach to us.

Fr. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis writes: “The Christian must daily put his hand into the glorious wound in the side of Christ. In that momentous contact of my hand with the throbbing Heart of God, my mind will recognize and my mouth will proclaim the one Jesus to be both Lord and God, and I will then turn to offer my own side to the probing of all who are reaching out in the dark to find refuge in some accessible heart.”<sup>1</sup>

As priests, you place your anointed hand on that Glorious Wound. You place your hand there courageously, consistently and creatively.

That Glorious Wound transforms your wounds -- the wounds you have experienced in every dimension of your lives and your priesthood. Your openness to allowing the Holy Spirit to touch your own wounds makes them birthplaces of priestly mercy, compassion and pastoral insight.

In the words of Fr. Erasmo, you offer your “own side to the probing of all who are reaching out in the dark to find refuge in some accessible heart.”

That accessible priestly heart is a humble heart: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

That steadfast and gentle priestly humility that keeps us centered on God’s will, faithful to a disciplined daily spiritual life and generous and magnanimous in pastoral charity and the New Evangelization is what inspires our people and attracts young men, like the five deacons who will be ordained to the priesthood tomorrow at St. Agnes Cathedral, to follow in our footsteps.

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, *Fire of Mercy, Heart of the World: Meditations on the Gospel according to Matthew* (Volume 1) (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 46.

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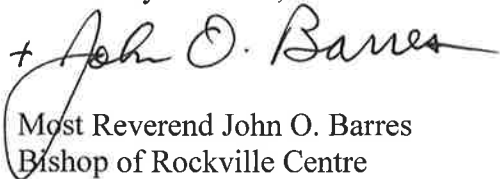
Please pray on this Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for Deacons Michael Bissex, Liam McDonald, Michael Plona, Christopher Sullivan and John Wachowicz as they approach the Throne of Grace with bold confidence and humility. Please pray for their families.

Thank you for your daily growth and struggle to grow in humility. Our growth in priestly humility and interior life is so deeply connected to our living intimacy with Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the *dramatic missionary growth* of the Catholic Church on Long Island.

Thank you for the way you touch the Glorious Wound of Christ and the wounds of your parishioners.

May the beating of our priestly hearts be an echo of the cosmic beating of the Sacred Heart of Jesus throughout the universe.

Fraternally in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John O. Barres". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a cross at the end of the line.

Most Reverend John O. Barres  
Bishop of Rockville Centre