



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

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**DATE:**                   **July 10, 2020**

**RE:**                       **Appointment of Bishop James Massa as new rector of  
St. Joseph's Seminary**

**FROM:**               **Most Reverend John O. Barres, Bishop, Diocese of Rockville Centre**

We are all so grateful for the appointment of Bishop James Massa as the new rector of St. Joseph's Seminary (Dunwoodie). Bishop Massa is a pastoral, formational and evangelizing Catholic Bishop leader. His contributions to ecumenical and interfaith progress in our country and around the world are significant and guided by warm charity and compassionate sensitivity. He is a pastor, an evangelizer and a theologian. He will model the Catholic priesthood in an inspirational way to so many.

Perhaps these words of Pope Francis describe Bishop Massa's gifts and charisms best: 'Not infrequently a kind of opposition is constructed between theology and pastoral care, as if they were two opposite, separate realities that have nothing to do with one another. Not infrequently, we identify doctrine with the conservative, the retrograde; and, on the other side, we think that pastoral care is an adaptation, a reduction, and an accommodation, as if they had nothing to do with each other. Thus, we create a false opposition between theology and pastoral care; between the believer's reflection and the believer's life; life, then has no space for reflection and reflection finds no space in life. The great fathers of the church, Irenaeus, Augustine, Basil, and Ambrose, to name a few, were great theologians because they were great pastors. One of the contributions of the Second Vatican Council was seeking a way to overcome this divorce of theology and pastoral care, between faith and life. I dare to say that it revolutionized, to some extent, the status of theology – the believer's way of doing and thinking.'

Bishop Massa follows in the footsteps of these great fathers of the Church that Pope Francis mentions – Irenaeus, Augustine, Basil, and Ambrose – in that the Holy Spirit has integrated so powerfully within him the pastoral and theological dimensions of our Catholic Faith and Mission.

As we celebrate this important moment, I also want to thank Fr. William Cleary, STD, the interim Rector, and Msgr. Peter Vaccari, our former rector and current Director of CNEWA, for all their dedication, counsel and fine work.