



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

April 9, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Every Easter, you and I are reminded of the power of the Paschal Mystery. Commemorating the celebration of the first Eucharist at the Mass of the Lord's Supper, walking with Jesus on the road to Calvary on Good Friday in the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, and celebrating Christ's triumphant conquering of sin and death in the Mass of the Resurrection on Easter is a potent reminder of God's love for us.

During this season of Easter and this time of National Eucharistic Revival, it becomes even clearer to us that the Paschal Mystery is not a mere historical event, but a mystery in which we are privileged to participate every time we celebrate the Mass. In the Easter sequence, we sing: "Christians, to the Paschal Victim, offer your thankful praises!" The word, *Eucharist*, which means, *thanksgiving*, implies that every time the Church gathers for the celebration of the Mass, she offers an act of "thankful praise" to the Lord. In this act of offering thanksgiving to God in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we as a priestly people offer the sacrifices of our lives with the offering of the Body and Blood of the Lord, by which our sacrifices take on new value and meaning (see, CCC, §1368).

Love is central to the mission of the Church. The sacrifices that we offer to God each day and in the celebration of the Eucharist are an expression of our love for him and for his people. When Christ appeared to Peter and the apostles on the Sea of Galilee after his Resurrection, he asked Peter: "Do you love me?" As he responds, "yes, Lord" to that three-fold questioning, Christ calls him to mission: "feed my lambs...tend my sheep...feed my sheep" (see John 21:15-19) Like Peter, you and I are faced with that same question from the Lord: "do you love me?" In other words, do we take the contemplative time that our hearts yearn for to renew our love for the Lord? In the offering of our time in prayer we are reminded of the very nature of God's love. Through that experience of true love, we realize that as disciples of Christ, you and I are called to mission: to bring the love of Christ to world; to glorify the Lord by our lives; to extend the Divine Mercy to those who suffer; to let the earth shake with the joy of the Resurrection!

Every human heart is created to love. As we grow deeper in our devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus as a Diocese this June, we ask the Lord to strengthen our hearts to love as Jesus loves and for the zeal to proclaim to those we encounter that "God is Love" (1 John 4:8,16).

I wish you and your families a blessed Easter Season!

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre