



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

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STATEMENT

DATE: February 26, 2020

RE: Ash Wednesday 2020

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

Today, as ashes are placed reverently on our foreheads, we will hear the phrases:

1) "Repent and believe in the Gospel." or 2) "Remember, you are dust, and to dust you will return."

As we begin the Season of Lent, we dedicate our spirit of repentance and reparation for sin and our prayer, fasting and almsgiving to many spoken and unspoken intentions.

In his January 1, 2020 *World Day of Peace Message*, Pope Francis writes: "Our human community bears, in its memory and its flesh, the scars of ever more devastating wars and conflicts that affect especially the poor and the vulnerable. Entire nations find it difficult to break free of the chains of exploitation and corruption that fuel hatred and violence. Even today, dignity, physical integrity, freedom, including religious freedom, communal solidarity and hope in the future are denied to great numbers of men and women, young and old. Many are the innocent victims of painful humiliation and exclusion, sorrow and injustice, to say nothing of the trauma born of systematic attacks on their people and loved ones. The terrible trials of internal and international conflicts, often aggravated by ruthless acts of violence, have an enduring effect on the body and soul of humanity. Every war is a form of fratricide that destroys the human family's innate vocation to brotherhood."

We pray and offer our union with the Cross of Christ for peace in our families, in our Church and throughout the world.

We pray and offer our union with the Cross of Christ for the recent tragedy of the passage in New York State of the Reproductive Health Act which permits abortion until the moment of birth and even infanticide. We pray that all New York citizens may rediscover the truth of the sanctity of human life and courageously witness to it in every public square.

We pray and offer our union with the Cross of Christ for the survivors of clergy sexual abuse, their families and all who have been impacted by this tragic crime and sin. As the Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, I express my sorrow again to each and every survivor, known and unknown, living or deceased, as we pray for the healing power of the Divine Mercy.

Know how I continue to marvel at the cosmic power of the Catholic Mass that I celebrate for all of you each day. Know that every intention you have, every Cross you carry is at the center of the altar when I celebrate daily Mass.

May the Holy Spirit lead each of us to the conversion and the holiness and mission we are being called to this Lent. God bless you!