Easter 2021

Photo by César Gonzalez

BISHOP JOHN O. BARRES
is the fifth bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Rockville Centre. Follow him on Twitter, @BishopBarres

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Lord is truly risen, Alleluia! Around the world and across Long Island, we proclaim this marvelous truth. Good news is ours. Sin and death have been vanquished. Christ has conquered. God is victorious!

In light of the suffering and death of the past year, how blessed we are to behold again the Mystery of the Resurrection. These months have been dark and bleak. They have been long and challenging.

Yet, as we encounter Easter 2021, we are reminded that God has the final word. Indeed, *Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it* (John I :5). This Light, Jesus Christ, illumines our path. He gives hope. As the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council said:

> *Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from His Gospel, they overwhelm us. Christ has risen, destroying death by His death; He has lavished life upon us so that... we can cry out in the Spirit: Abba, Father.*[1]

With significant challenges facing us still on Long Island and across the globe, with darkness still afoot, perhaps the joy of Easter is difficult to embrace. Our hearts may be like those of the disciples who went on Easter dawn to anoint the Lord's body. At the strange sight of an empty tomb and an apparently absent Jesus, instead of experiencing immediate joy, they were confused and distressed. Only in seeing the Lord face to face did they come to embrace His rising from the dead.

Like Mary Magdalene and the other disciples, we need to see Christ alive among us. We need to see the Resurrection in our midst. So, this Easter, let us ask, "Where is Christ alive?"

Christ is alive in the countless frontline workers, civil servants, and medical professionals who have served so faithfully and so heroically this past year. Their sacrificial love and Good Samaritan-willingness to help neighbors in need radiate the Lord Jesus!

Christ is alive in the catechumens who have received the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation at the Easter Vigil. Their reception of the sacraments reminds us of the power of our own Baptism – where each of us has

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died with Christ and risen with him to new life.

Above all, Christ is alive in His risen and glorified presence in the Eucharist and in the transforming power of His Body and Blood that we receive in the celebration of the Mass. Christ is alive, and therefore the Church is alive.

The Eucharist is the source of this life – and its power has become perhaps more evident than ever, after months of separation from the weekly and daily celebration of the Mass. Together, we recall the disciples' recognition of Jesus following the Resurrection at Emmaus in the opening of the Scriptures and the breaking of the Bread.

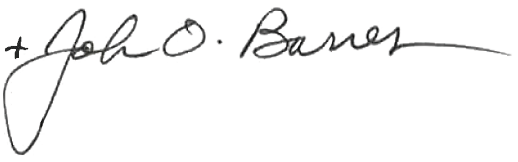
We are grateful for the many ways in which our parishes and schools have continued to foster creatively this Emmaus experience on Long Island, both in-person and virtually. May we continue to recognize the Sunday Eucharist as the source from which the life of the Resurrected Christ bursts forth into the world.

At his Sunday Angelus on January 3, 2021, Pope Francis beautifully reminded us of Christ's continued presence in our midst:

I like to think that when the Lord prays to the Father for us, he does not merely speak: he shows him the wounds of the flesh, he shows him the wounds he suffered for us. This is Jesus: with his flesh he is the intercessor, he wanted to bear even the signs of suffering. Jesus, with his flesh, is before the Father. Indeed, the Gospel says that He came to dwell among us. He did not come to visit us, and then leave; He came to dwell with us, to stay with us.[2]

May we continue to encounter the presence of Jesus Christ who dwells in and through His Church. May we continue to experience signs of His Resurrection even amidst the challenges and crosses we embrace, and may this encounter continue to fill our hearts, so that our voices can confidently cry out: *The Lord is truly risen! Alleluia!* ✝

Faithfully in the Lord,



1 Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes (December 7, 1965), 22, in The Documents of Vatican Council II (St. Paul's Publications, 2009).
2 Francis, Angelus, 3 January, 2021. http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2021/documents/papa francesco_angelus_20210103.html

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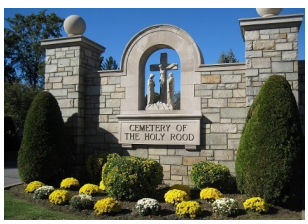

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