



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

May 4, 2020

" . . . a caress, a smile, is full of meaning for one who is sick. It is a simple gesture, but encouraging, he or she feels accompanied, feels closer to being healed, feels like a person, not a number." – Pope Francis

Dear Catholic Health Services Nurses:

As we celebrate National Nurses Week (May 6 to May 12, 2020), I want to thank each and every one of you for your exceptional dedication and spirit of sacrifice as you compassionately serve the sick and suffering, live the Catholic mission expressed in our Catholic Health Services of Long Island, and continue your efforts to defeat COVID-19.

Graciously carrying out your profession in caring for the sick during this crisis is truly heroic.

Capturing your world during time is an article that appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* (3/31/2020) by Dr. Paul Dohrenwend entitled "Nurses Are the Coronavirus Heroes."

Dr. Dohrenwend writes: *"If you wonder who actually sticks the swabs into the noses of worried patients, it's the nurses. They're on the front line, face-to-face in the 6-foot danger zone. They are collecting the data that epidemiologists use to track the outbreak. Moving in and out of negative-pressure rooms, putting protective equipment on and taking it off, nurses are caring for elderly patients who are severely ill and sometimes crashing. The nurses marinate in risk as they spend the greatest amount of time with the patient. They draw blood, obtain samples, provide oxygen, and steadfastly tend to their patients' needs. They are by the doctors' side as we intubate patients struggling to breathe. Once that patient is transferred to the intensive-care unit, it's the nurses who do the mundane and the heroic to make sure the patient survives the illness or dies more comfortably...I thank everyone who's working to help get through this...Everyone is playing a part—but none are more important than the nurses."*

Know how much we all appreciate your dedicated work, your courage and your commitment to the sanctity of human life at every stage of life. It is a powerful and compelling witness for the common good.

Our shared belief in the objective truth of the sanctity of human life is the freedom that propels such heroism and courage among so many, in a special way you our nurses, in these challenging times.

This past March 25th, we celebrated the 25th Anniversary of St. John Paul II's encyclical *The Gospel of Human Life (Evangelium Vitae)*.

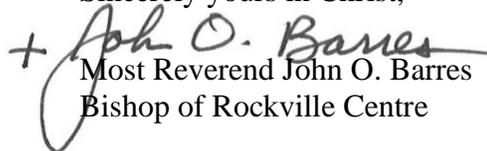
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His words at the beginning of the encyclical are so poignant 25 years later as we experience the tragedies and traumas of the COVID-19 crisis.

He writes: *“The Church knows that this Gospel of life, which she has received from her Lord, has a profound and persuasive echo in the heart of every person – believer and non-believer alike – because it marvelously fulfills all the heart’s expectations while infinitely surpassing them. Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart (cf. Romans 2:14-15) the sacred value of human life from its beginning until its end, and can affirm the right of every human being to have this primary good respected to the highest degree. Upon the recognition of this right, every human community and the political community itself are founded.”*

Our prayers are with you and every nurse in every hospital and nursing home on Long Island at every moment in these challenging times.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John O. Barres". To the left of the signature is a small cross symbol (+). The signature is written in a cursive style.

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre

P. S. I invite you to join me as I celebrate a virtual White Mass in recognition of all health care workers at St. Agnes Cathedral on May 17, 2020. This Mass will air at 11:00 AM on Catholic Faith Network (CFNTV.org) (Optimum channel 29/137, Verizon FiOS TV channel 296, and Spectrum channel 162/471). You can also watch CFN on Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android, or by downloading the CFN iOS mobile app at the app store by searching “Catholic Faith Network” or “CFN”.