



**Letter to the Catholic Faithful of the Diocese of Rockville Centre  
From Bishop John O. Barres  
Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 17, 2020  
Celebration of a Special White Mass for Healthcare Workers**



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

On this Sixth Sunday of Easter, St. Peter proclaims in his first letter (3: 15-18):

*“Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence...”*

This Sunday at St. Agnes Cathedral, we celebrate a special White Mass (named for the white uniforms often worn by doctors and nurses) and we pray for all healthcare workers on Long Island. Every day, they exude hope as they imitate the healing compassion of Jesus Christ.

Over the last few months, Catholic Health Services (CHS) of Long Island has mobilized at every level to respond to this unprecedented health crisis and meet the needs of our community. These are only a few examples of what CHS has been providing:

- Since March 1, 2020, over 13,000 individuals have been seen at CHS hospitals for suspected and confirmed cases of coronavirus. Of those, approximately 9,200 patients were successfully discharged and sent home to recuperate and nearly 4,000 were admitted to be cared for by our frontline healthcare professionals.
- Two of our hospitals – Good Samaritan Medical Center and St. Francis Hospital, The Heart Center – were designated by New York State as COVID-19 hotspots. Together, the two hospitals have cared for nearly 2,000 COVID+ inpatients since the crisis began.
- As patient cases rose, so did the need to increase staffing levels to ensure that all patients –especially the very sickest – would have the best around-the-clock care available.

We could not have met this challenge head-on without the courage and steadfast dedication of our Catholic Health Services frontline healthcare professionals.

There are so many individuals whose physical and emotional efforts have been the deciding factor in our fight against COVID-19. From the housekeeping and environmental safety staff who diligently maintained the highest standards of sanitizing and rigorous protection against the spread of the virus in our facilities; to the nurses and physician assistants who not only provided world-class bedside care but oftentimes were called to act as family intermediaries and proxies for patients in COVID-19 isolation units; to the physicians and clinical researchers who directed the clinical care plans and have begun to launch and lead clinical trials to identify possible therapies for the virus; and the home healthcare professionals, hospice care workers and grief counselors who even now are working tirelessly to ease the pain and suffering of

those affected - all made invaluable contributions toward the health and welfare of our community during this time of crisis.

With enormous pride in the outstanding work of our Catholic Health Services system, I extend my personal thanks – and that of everyone in the Diocese – to the extraordinary women and men who have sacrificed so much to ensure the health and security of so many. We owe them our deepest gratitude and admiration.

Although the initial surge of COVID-19 cases seems to be behind us, there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done to prepare our Catholic Health Services of Long Island system to weather the months ahead. You can play a role in these preparations by making a gift to one of our frontline hospitals or healthcare service providers. For those who may wish to assist the coming effort by making a gift of financial support, please visit [www.chsli.org/ways-to-give](http://www.chsli.org/ways-to-give) where you can choose to allocate your gift to any of our hospitals or patient care units.

The occasion of this year's White Mass has special significance for the entire Catholic community of Long Island, as we have all been touched in many ways by the global pandemic. If you are able, please consider adding your support to aid the remarkable work of our Catholic Health Services staff.

Please know that you and your family are remembered in my daily prayers and Masses.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John O. Barres". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Most Reverend John O. Barres  
Bishop of Rockville Centre