

Statement from Bishop-designate John O. Barres



I am humbled and moved to be with all of you and my friends Bishop William Murphy and our auxiliary Bishops here today.

As your Bishop, I very much look forward to serving each one of you, each one of our ecumenical and interreligious brothers and sisters, and every single person who lives in the Diocese of Rockville Centre. I look forward to experiencing and celebrating with you the rich cultural diversity of the Diocese.

As a native New Yorker, it is nice to return to the Empire State as your Shepherd. While growing up in Larchmont on the other side of the Long Island Sound, I had a clear vision across the Sound of the Diocese of Rockville

Centre never knowing that God's vision and providence would one day bring us together.

One of my greatest family memories is of my parents packing their six children, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and celery sticks into an overcrowded blue Ford Galaxie car to head to Jones Beach (with a preference for either Field 6 or Field 9)!

Another vivid memory of the Diocese of Rockville Centre growing up is of my CYO basketball team making a "pilgrimage" in the early 1970's to the Nassau Coliseum to watch "the Doctor", Julius Erving, perform mid-air surgery on the rim with a red, white and blue ABA basketball. One of my teammates was so enamored with "the Doctor" that he chose "Julian" as his Confirmation name. I chose Francis as my Confirmation name – for St. Francis of Assisi, of course. But the choice of Francis as my Confirmation name has a wider providential arc.

As the Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, I will be dedicated to supporting the global mission of mercy of our Holy Father Pope Francis, a mission that is in harmonious continuity with the mission of all the Holy Fathers I have loved – St. Peter, St. John XXIII, Blessed Paul VI, Pope John Paul I, St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis says: "Jesus can break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world."

Together, we are called to a new and fresh intimacy with Father, Son and Holy Spirit that leads us to the new paths of New Evangelization creativity and innovation in the Diocese of Rockville Centre and the universal Church.

I have a passion for parish life and will always have the heart of a parish priest. I am looking forward to experiencing the vibrant, welcoming, New Evangelization parishes of the Diocese and reaching out together as Eucharistic Bridges of the Divine Mercy to the wonderful inactive Catholics in our midst.

Pope Francis says that “Jesus Christ is the Face of the Father’s Mercy...Mercy is the beating heart of the Gospel and Mercy is the Mission of the Church.”

Our parishes are the living bridges and “oases” of that Mercy, Communion and Mission to the World. In our parishes, our families are enriched by the inspired Word of God, the cosmic power of the Mass and the Eucharistic community of faith.

Vibrant parish life in turn inspires and equips our families to bring their Catholic faith into the neighborhood, the workplace, the public square and every inch of our global society.

At the World Meeting of Families, Pope Francis said that “Families transform the World and History.” Our families need their parish family. The parish family needs each and every family. And so together we open our lives to the tongues of flame of the Holy Spirit to break the chains of global indifference, consumerism, superficial living and to reach out to the families we meet every day.

We live the parable of the Good Samaritan first within our own marriages and families and then to the poor family, the family living in the crucible of war, violence and persecution, the hurting family, the grieving family, the family reeling from tragedy and trauma, the family that has experienced the agony of sexual abuse and all forms of abuse including abuse by clergy, the broken family, the immigrant and refugee family separated by long distances, the family tending to members that deal with serious sickness and health issues, the family of the war veteran suffering with PTSD and the family taking care of an elderly relative with Alzheimer’s/Dementia.

As your Shepherd, as a successor of the Apostles, I am so honored and humbled to be able to lay my life down in your service. I so much look forward to being inspired by the holy and missionary priests, religious, deacons, seminarians and entire People of God of the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

As I look forward to experiencing dramatic missionary growth together, I must also thank the priests and the entire People of God of the Diocese of Allentown, where I have had the great blessing of serving as bishop for the last seven and a half years. You will all always be in my heart, my memories, my prayers and my Masses as I remember our days of holiness and mission” together.

Last August, I had the opportunity to give tribute to my convert Protestant minister parents, Oliver and Marjorie Barres on Marcus Grodi’s EWTN *Journey Home* show, and so I give tribute to them again today.

Oliver and Marjorie met each other at the Yale Divinity School in the late 1940s. They were both ordained Congregational ministers and had a small rural parish in East Windsor, CT. But like Blessed John Cardinal Newman, they discovered that ultimately to be deep into history is to be Roman Catholic. My father wrote a book about their conversion, *One Shepherd, One Flock*, which was published by Sheed and Ward in 1955 and then republished in 2000 by *Catholic Answers*.

One of the unforeseen consequences of my parents’ decision to embrace the Catholic faith and the doctrine of Apostolic Succession is that their fifth child would one day become a successor of the Apostles and part of that line of Apostolic Succession. I am so grateful too today for the love and support of my four sisters, my brother and my many nieces and nephews.

A brief word to the children, youth and young adults of the Diocese: I am ecstatic about your futures in Jesus Christ and the way you, in the words of Pope Francis, “shake up the Church and the World” with your enthusiasm and desire to dedicate your lives to Jesus and the mission of the Catholic Church in the World. I cannot wait to meet you. I cannot wait to serve you.