



Lent 2019

DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Friends:

As we begin our prayer, fasting and almsgiving for the needs of the poor and the suffering of the world in this Lenten season 2019, we recommit ourselves to repentance, conversion and holiness individually and as a Church. We remember in a focused way this Lent the survivors of clergy sexual abuse and all forms of abuse and we pray for the purification, reform and sanctification of the Church.

In *Rejoice and Be Glad*, Pope Francis says: “Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy (32)...The Lord wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence (1)...Holiness is the most attractive face of the Church (9)...The Church needs passionate missionaries, enthusiastic about sharing true life. The saints surprise us, they confound us, because by their lives they urge us to abandon a dull and dreary mediocrity (138).”

One of the ways we commit ourselves to this radiant, natural and humble holiness is by expanding the breadth and depth of our daily engagement with the inspired Sacred Scriptures. We are called to live the words of Psalm 119: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

The saints of every decade and century inspire us since “the most profound interpretation of Scripture comes precisely from those who let themselves be shaped by the word of God through listening, reading, and assiduous meditation”. (Pope Benedict XVI, *The Word of the Lord*) (48) Could each one of us individually and together, united in communion as a Church, take one step with the Holy Spirit this Lent to deepen our love for the inspired Sacred Scriptures?

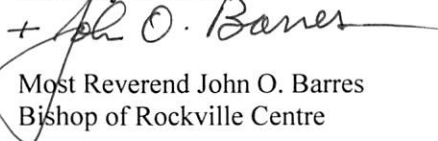
In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Word of the Lord* (2010), Pope Benedict XVI gives us an excellent process of praying individual biblical passages, a process of *lectio divina* or sacred reading of the text that includes reading, meditating, praying, contemplating and living the biblical text. We need to believe with confidence and a spirit of adventure that the Holy Spirit is present in the text and that the Holy Spirit’s tongues of flame are connecting the text to our souls transforming us in mysterious and profound ways.

I would like to analyze and comment on the steps that Pope Benedict XVI proposes to us. (For the complete version of Bishop Barres’ Lenten Letter 2019 which analyzes Pope Benedict’s approach to *lectio divina*, see this link www.bishopbarreslentenletter2019.org.) The Word of God makes us realists who recognize that the Word of God is the foundation of all things. (10)

As your bishop and servant, I invite you during this Lenten Season 2019 and beyond, to discover or rediscover the power of the Word of God by reading, meditating, praying, contemplating and living the inspired Sacred Scriptures. In the end, as Father Gaston Courtois points out: “Contemplatives are the true missionaries and alone can be the true spiritual teachers”.

Thank you all for your passion and daily dedication to the inspired Sacred Scriptures. Thank you for being the contemplatives, the missionaries, the spiritual teachers that are the agents and instruments of *dramatic missionary growth* on Long Island and beyond.

Sincerely in Christ,

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Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre