



Christmas 2018

DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

To the People of God of the Diocese of Rockville Centre:

Merry Christmas to you and your families! Christmas is a powerful time of unity and communion for our families, and every Christmas is a time for our families to open even more deeply to the healing and transforming power of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of the Holy Family.

The Holy Family not only transformed but revolutionized the world and history through humility, poverty, adoration, and trust in the plan of God, and a complete dedication to the Glory of God.

Mary's silent adoration and awe teaches us to see through everyday human events and appearances to the presence of Christ in every situation. Joseph teaches us rock solid trust and bold docility in the shifting terrain and unexpected events of daily life. The shepherds teach us simplicity, humility and reverent adoration. The Infant Prince of Peace teaches us that God's Mercy is the beating heart of the Gospel and the beating heart of the Crèche scene. Mercy is the Foundation of the Church's mission to the world.

We approach the Prince of Peace this Christmas for special gifts of peace in our families, special gifts of peace for our Church and special gifts of peace for the World.

In the Mystery of the Nativity, we marvel and give Glory to God with the Shepherds and the Wise Men. We realize in the image of a poor, homeless family and the image of a poor, vulnerable baby that God's logic in the Incarnation overturns and confounds the narrow logic of human power and calculation. "Families transform the world and history."

The Holy Family continues to transform our marriages and our families – right in our daily experiences of the joys, crosses, crises and the unresolved issues of every marriage and every family in a fallen world. In the midst of the weaknesses and failures of daily family life, we remember the Glory of God that radiates from the manger lifting our families, despite their daily imperfections, to transform the world and history through faith, holiness and a missionary spirit.

When we pray and meditate on the Crèche at Christmas, we experience a spiritual rebirth and fresh insights into our daily family routine and our daily family spiritual, emotional and relational patterns. We allow the ruts of sin and selfishness in our families to be purified with daily patterns of prayer, grace and conversion. We remember that personal conversion sends ripple effects throughout a family.

The Crèche leads us to a deep experience of Mercy and Forgiveness in our families. And we remember that the confessionals in our churches are "Doors of Mercy" and forgiveness for our families. I invite you to take advantage of the gift of reconciliation by participating in the confessions offered at your parish during this holy season.

During this Christmas season, I want to thank you and your families for transforming the world and history with Christ's love.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend John O. Barres  
Bishop of Rockville Centre