

meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at this time in history? Why do I love? Why do I suffer? Why will I die? It was to answer these questions that God became man. His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering (cf. Luke 1:79).”

We can drift through life dodging and repressing these critical existential questions of life. We can live blindly and superficially.

Our Catholic belief in the unity of the Nativity and the Crucifixion, the Creche and the Cross, Bethlehem and Golgotha keeps our lives centered and focused on the things that really count in our short time on earth – the Last Things (Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell) and a belief in the Eternal Joy of Heaven, our true home.

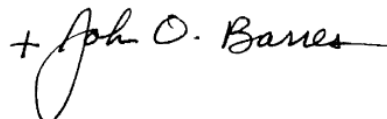
The Holy Father continues to press the existential questions: “The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, ‘gentle and humble in heart’ (Matthew 11:29), was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. We see Herod’s palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy. By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.”

May our prayer, silent contemplation and creative family catechesis of the Nativity scene help us to be instruments of a Gospel revolution of humility, charity, mercy, tenderness, and solidarity with the sick, the poor and the suffering.

May our commitment to “holiness and mission” bless our contemplative Synodal listening and our Eucharistic Revival and Evangelization.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your families!

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