

## **Bishop Luis M. Romero's Remarks**

**Your Eminence, Your Excellencies, dear Monsignors, Fathers, Deacons, Religious Brothers and Sisters, and all of you, my dear brothers and sisters:**

**I would like to thank first and foremost the Divine Persons on this blessed day, and also for the grace that my ordination is happening in the midst of this pandemic, giving me the opportunity to be in communion with so many people suffering here and around the world. I apologize to all of you for the inconveniences, which make your presence here even more meaningful to me. “Seven words of gratitude” come to my mind in this moment, inspired by the “seven words” of Jesus on the Cross.**

**In Huelva, Spain, my homeland, where Columbus — in 1492 — departed for India and arrived in America, there is a huge statue of Columbus embracing a cross and gazing into the sea in the direction of America. It was one of the favorite places of my youth, and a true prophetic sign of what my whole life would become: embracing the cross, dreaming beyond the sea and arriving in America.**

**My first word of gratitude is for my parents, both already in Heaven, and for my whole family. My mother inspired my faith from the deep and simple roots of popular religiosity, and my father, a nonbeliever but a righteous man, showed me the rightness of human dignity and family spirit. My siblings (who could not come because of this pandemic),**

**together with my whole family and friends, were the good earth full of joy, family spirit and dreams where the seed of the Gospel could find its roots.**

**My second word of gratitude is for our Father Founder of the Idente Missionaries: the Servant of God Fernando Rielo. Along with him I am also grateful for the many brothers and sisters of my religious family, among whom I will only mention Fr. Jesus Fernandez Hernandez, the President of the Idente Missionaries, both men and women, who has been a true symbol of spiritual paternity and the living embodiment of our unity in the Idente charism.**

**I met Fernando Rielo in 1972 in Seville, at the beginning of my commitment to the Institution. I was then 18 years old and full of passion and dreams. I learned from him to pursue his idea of an Idente missionary: *“always on the way, sometimes laughing, sometimes crying, always praying and mainly dreaming in the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit”*. My religious formation was guided by the Idente spirit and by the example of so many brothers and sisters, both in the spiritual and the intellectual spheres. This has been for me a leading light along with the many difficulties and circumstances of my religious life, including my ordination to the priesthood in 1981. I have faced challenges, weaknesses and difficulties but, in spite of my sinful condition, I have never had any doubts about my vocation. I think that the spiritual direction in common developed by our Founder has been the key element, along with prayer, a Gospel spirit, the Holy Eucharist and**

**devotion to our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of the Mystical Life.**

**My third word of gratitude is for the people of Latin America. My first mission out of Spain was to Bolivia, then Chile and finally to Ecuador; 25 years in total. That was enough time to perceive why, despite many social and economic difficulties, Pope Saint John Paul II called Latin America “the hope of the Church”. The Hispanic mysticism of the Golden Age — St. Teresa of Jesus, St. John of the Cross, St. Ignatius of Loyola and many others — took root there, alongside deep devotion to our Blessed Mother, blooming with the fruits of joy, humility, closeness, tenderness and innocence. Unlike Columbus, I arrived in India for a short but intense couple of years. How much also I have to thank the people of that country, with their deep spirituality and culture, for giving to me a true perception of the universal mission symbolized by the two-headed eagle of the Idente Coat of Arms, which gazes both to the East and to the West.**

**My fourth word of gratitude is for the world of knowledge and learning, the world of the university and education, and especially for the many friends and incredible men and women I met there. They allowed me to understand how essential, but also how difficult, it is to put Christ — who is the Way the Truth and the Life — in the chair of the university, as the true Master and Teacher, who inspires and drives human knowledge beyond its ordinary limits, yet always in a spirit of dialogue and friendship.**

**Following those years, I arrived on Long Island, and came to a vibrant parish, Our Lady of Loretto in Hempstead, New York. And so, my fifth word of gratitude is for the parishioners of Loretto, whose incredible devotion, simplicity and family spirit, in spite of the difficulties of migration, has shown both me, and all of us, how the words of Pope St. John Paul II about Latin America are becoming true, in the USA and around the world.**

**My sixth word of gratitude is to Bishop William Murphy, who welcomed us so enthusiastically to this diocese, and to Bishop Robert Brennan, the “Angel of Our Lady of Loretto”, who always took care of us and all those in need of some help. I am also grateful to Bishop Nelson Perez — now Archbishop — who taught me by his humility and his friendship what are the keys to the Hispanic Apostolate in the USA. I am grateful for the fraternal support and communion of Bishop Andrzej, Bishop Coyle and Bishop Henning. I am grateful also to Bishop Dunne and Bishop Wcela for their presence to me and their prayers. With the guidance of all of them I began to live the spirit of this blessed Diocese of Rockville Centre, along with all my brother priests, religious and lay people who every day surprise me with their commitment towards the Church in these difficult times and with their deep love for Our Lord. Thank you to all of you; I have felt your continuous support.**

**My deepest gratitude, of course, goes to Bishop Barres with whom I have felt an immediate connection since his arrival in our diocese, mainly because of his spiritual sensitivity and apostolic spirit, and his famous call for “dramatic**

**missionary growth". Bishop Barres, thank you for suggesting my name for the Office of Bishop, and for entrusting to me the Vicariate for Hispanic Ministry and Evangelization, even though this has complicated my life a little bit more!**

**I have also been fortunate that the Rev. Eric Fasano, Vicar General, with his vision, organizational skills and friendship, came to my aid, even in many small details concerning my new ministry. Thank you so much. Since my arrival in the Diocese of Rockville Centre I have been welcomed and embraced with such great delicacy and communion that I simply cannot find the words to fully express my gratitude. I offer special words of thanks to Karol Garcia and all the leaders who work in the area of Hispanic Ministry and Evangelization, both in the office and throughout the whole diocese, whose efforts are blossoming and producing a multitude of fruits, with a spirit of youth and joy.**

**And my last and seventh word of gratitude is for Pope Francis, whose decision to appoint me to be a bishop I keep deeply in my heart, trying first of all to become worthy of the grace that I have received. I promise to him and to all of you to try my best to follow the "Vow of Cathedra" of our Institution, the task of defending, assisting and developing the supreme "Cathedra of Peter". I pray that I will always be able to follow Pope Francis in his revolution of tenderness, with humility, closeness and joy. Thank you so much to His Excellency Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, who has been to me**

**friendly, joyful and close, like our Holy Father, Pope Francis.**

**My thanks, as well, go to His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan, whose trust and help to our Institution, the Identite Missionaries, has been so impressive. Actually, we were given our first parish in the United States in the Archdiocese of New York, through John Cardinal O'Connor, your predecessor. My thanks to Bishop DiMarzio for his presence here today. It was in Queens, New York, in the Diocese of Brooklyn, that our Founder Fernando Rielo spent his last years of suffering and dreams and where he rendered his life to Our Heavenly Father. I thank Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, for being here today. His presence is so meaningful and reminds us that the Church is truly "Catholic" in its meaning of "universal".**

**Thank you so much to all of you here at St. Agnes Cathedral today, and to all those accompanying us through the Catholic Faith Network in the diocese, the country and, through the internet, in other places around the world. Please pray for me.**

**Estaba hablando de "Siete palabras de gratitud":**

**En Huelva, España, mi tierra natal, donde Colón, en 1492, partió hacia la India y llegó a América, hay una enorme estatua de Colón que abraza una cruz y mira hacia el mar en dirección a América. Fue uno de los lugares favoritos de**

**mi juventud, y un verdadero signo profético de lo que sería toda mi vida: abrazar la cruz, soñar más allá del mar y llegar a América. Mi primera palabra de agradecimiento es para mis padres, ambos ya en el cielo, y para toda mi familia. Mi madre inspiró mi fe desde las raíces profundas y simples de la religiosidad popular, y mi padre, un no creyente pero un hombre justo, me mostró la rectitud de la dignidad humana y el espíritu familiar. Mis hermanos, que no pudieron venir a causa de esta pandemia, junto con toda mi familia y amigos, eran la buena tierra llena de alegría, espíritu familiar y sueños donde la semilla del evangelio pudo encontrar sus raíces.**

**La segunda palabra de agradecimiento es para nuestro Padre Fundador - de los Misioneros Identés - Fernando Rielo, y con él los muchos hermanos y hermanas de mi familia religiosa entre los cuales solo mencionaré al Padre Jesús Fernández Hernández, Presidente de los Misioneros Identés, como símbolo de su paternidad y depositario de nuestra unidad en el carisma Idente. Conocí a Fernando Rielo en 1972 en Sevilla, al comienzo de mi compromiso con la institución, tenía 18 años y estaba lleno de pasión y sueños, y aprendí de él a seguir su idea de un misionero idente: *"siempre en el camino, a veces riendo, a veces llorando, orando siempre y desde luego soñando en el Padre, y en el Hijo y el Espíritu Santo"*. Mi formación religiosa fue guiada por el espíritu Idente y muchos hermanos y hermanas, tanto desde el punto de vista espiritual como intelectual y humano, y ha sido para mí una luz que me guiara entre las muchas dificultades y circunstancias de mi vida religiosa, incluida mi ordenación sacerdotal en 1981.**

**Enfrenté desafíos, debilidades y dificultades, pero a pesar de mi condición de pecador, nunca tuve dudas sobre mi vocación. Creo que la dirección espiritual en común desarrollada por nuestro Fundador ha sido el elemento clave, no sin oración, espíritu evangélico, la Sagrada Eucaristía y la devoción a la Santísima Virgen, Nuestra Señora de la Vida Mística.**

**La tercera palabra de agradecimiento es para la gente de América Latina. Mi primera misión fuera de España fue Bolivia, luego Chile y finalmente Ecuador, 25 años en total, tiempo suficiente para percibir, en medio de las dificultades sociales y económicas, por qué San Juan Pablo II llamó a América Latina "*la esperanza de la Iglesia*". El misticismo hispano de la Edad de Oro arraigó allí, junto con la profunda devoción a la Santísima Virgen, floreciendo en frutos de alegría, humildad, cercanía, ternura e inocencia. A diferencia de Colón, sí llegué a la India por un par de años cortos pero intensos. Cuánto tengo que agradecer también a su gente, su profunda espiritualidad y cultura, por darme la verdadera percepción de la misión universal simbolizada en el águila bicéfala del Escudo de Armas Idente, mirando hacia el Este y el Oeste.**

**Mi cuarta palabra de gratitud es por el mundo del conocimiento y las universidades, especialmente a los muchos amigos, hombres y mujeres increíbles que conocí allí, y que me permitieron comprender mejor cuán esencial y difícil es sentar a Cristo - el camino, la verdad y la vida - en la cátedra de las universidades, como el verdadero Maestro que inspira la profunda razón del conocimiento**



**humano más allá de sus límites, siempre en un espíritu de diálogo y amistad.**

**Luego llegué a Long Island, a una parroquia vibrante, Nuestra Señora de Loretto. Y la quinta palabra de agradecimiento es para los feligreses de Loretto, cuya increíble devoción, simplicidad y espíritu familiar, a pesar de las dificultades de la migración, nos muestra cómo las palabras de San Juan Pablo II sobre América Latina se están haciendo realidad, incluso en EE.UU. Un abrazo especialísimo para Loreto y toda la comunidad hispana de nuestra diócesis, con quienes quisiera compartir en entrañable cercanía, que lamentablemente no es posible en medio de las coseciencias del COVID-19.**

**Y ahora mi gratitud, la sexta palabra, para los obispos y para toda la diócesis, en especial al obispo John Barres por su sensibilidad espiritual y espíritu apostólico, el famoso "*intenso crecimiento misionero*". Gracias por confiarme la Vicaría para el Ministerio Hispano y Evangelización, y más allá, complicando mi vida un poco más. Consideración especial para Karol García y todos los líderes del Ministerio Hispano y Evangelización, en la oficina y en toda la diócesis, cuyo espíritu está floreciendo en multitud de frutos, con el signo de la juventud y la alegría. Muchas gracias Arzobispo Perez por acompañarnos.**

**Y mi última "séptima palabra de gratitud" para el Papa Francisco, tratando primero de responder la gracia que he recibido, pero también de poder seguir con el "*Voto de la***

***Cátedra***" de nuestra Institución, la tarea de defender, asistir y desarrollar la suprema "***Cátedra de Pedro***". Me gustaría también seguir siempre al Papa Francisco en su revolución de la ternura, con humildad, cercanía y alegría. Muchas gracias al Nuncio Apostólico de Su Santidad en USA, al Observador Permanente de la Santa Sede ante las Naciones Unidas, cuya presencia aquí es tan significativa, y a Su Eminencia Timothy Cardenal Dolan, cuya confianza y ayuda a nuestra Institución son tan impresionantes. Fue en Nueva York, en Queens donde nuestro Fundador Fernando Rielo pasó sus últimos años de sufrimiento y sueños, y entregó su vida a Nuestro Padre Celestial.

Muchas gracias a todos ustedes aquí en la Catedral de St. Agnes y a los que nos acompañan a través de CFN e Internet, en la diócesis y en otros lugares del mundo. Por favor recen por mi.