

**Solemn Episcopal Consecration and Installation of
The Most Reverend Earl Fernandes
as Thirteenth Bishop of Columbus
Church of St Paul the Apostle
Westerville, Ohio
May 31, 2022**

Your Excellency Metropolitan Archbishop Schnurr, Your Excellency Bishop Brennan, Bishop-Elect Fernandes, my brother Archbishops and Bishops, dear priests, deacons, consecrated religious and lay faithful of the Church in Columbus, and all those joining through live-streaming, television and radio:

I am especially pleased to join you today on this solemn and festive occasion, in the Church of St Paul the Apostle. Firstly, I want to acknowledge the work of the Diocesan Administrator, Msgr Stephan Moloney, who has guided this local church with a steady hand over the last few months. Thank you, Monsignor. We have present also no fewer than three former Bishops of Columbus – Bishops Griffin, Campbell and Brennan. So Msgr Fernandes, you will have no shortage of counsellors!

Bishop-Elect Fernandes, I can't think of it as other than significant that you are being ordained in this church, dedicated to an Apostle. The office of bishop is of course radically defined by its apostolic origins. The Church is "Apostolic" because she teaches what the Apostles taught and because the bishops inherit the office of the Apostles and perpetuate their ministry.

There is something appropriate too about the fact that we gather for this rite during the Easter Season. You may recall that, immediately after Our Lord's resurrection, when the early Church had to choose a new Apostle; when the Church, in other words, was selecting a Bishop for the first time, Peter offered an extraordinarily concise summary of the qualities needed: *"Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become **a witness with us of his resurrection**"* (Acts 1:21-22).

So, the "identikit" for the successor of the apostles is that he is to be *"a witness of the resurrection."* This constitutes almost a definition of what it means to be a Bishop. Msgr Earl, you are to be a witness to the Lord's resurrection. Not only by your words, but by your life. Your life and teaching must be animated by the hope and joy that come from faith in the Lord's resurrection. For that reason, Pope Francis has remarked that *"long faces cannot proclaim Jesus"* (cfr. Homily at Santa Marta, 31 May 2013). You are called to bear witness to Our Lord's resurrection in this local Church of Columbus and to invite others to share His "new life".

Now, it helps that Msgr Earl has a ready and radiant smile! But witnessing to the resurrection requires more than a smile – even if it's not at all a bad start! It means that, first and foremost, we must speak of

Our Lord: of his life, his teachings, his passion, death and resurrection. I'm reminded of that beautiful homily of Pope Paul VI at Manila, when he declared:

"I must bear witness to his name: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (*Matt.* 16: 16). [...] I could never finish speaking about him: he is the light and the truth; indeed, he is «the way, the truth and the life» (*Jo.* 14: 6). [...] Jesus Christ: you have heard him spoken of; indeed, the greater part of you are already his: you are Christians. So, to you Christians I repeat his name; to everyone I proclaim him: Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega; he is the king of the new world; he is the secret of history; he is the key to our destiny" (Homily at Mass in Manila, 29 November 1970).

With these few thoughts, Msgr Fernandes, I commend you to the new responsibility to which the Church calls you. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and St Francis de Sales, intercede for you and strengthen you as you begin your episcopal ministry. And now, with great joy, I will read for you the Apostolic Letter of Appointment.