

**Priesthood Ordination Remarks**  
**Bishop John O. Barres**  
**St. Agnes Cathedral**  
**June 10, 2023**

June is the month of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and today we celebrate Our Lord's gift of three new priests, three new shepherds after his own heart!

As your Bishop and Successor of the Apostles, I am pleased to present to you, the People of God, Fr. Steven McClernon, and our brother Idente priest missionaries, Fr. Michael Nam and Fr. Ditto Subin Wilson.

Brothers, I am grateful to Almighty God for bringing you to this day and for your docility and dedication to the work of formation. Your continued cooperation with God's grace throughout your priesthood will be a gift to those you serve and will be an instrument of promoting and encouraging vocations to the priesthood.

May your priestly hearts always beat in rhythm with the humility, meekness, sacrifice, courage, fortitude and fidelity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus that we celebrate here at St. Agnes Cathedral and in all the parishes of the Diocese in the month of June.

May your priestly identity and your commitment to apostolic celibacy be a Light of Jesus Christ and His Most Sacred Heart to the World!

May your priestly intimacy with the Eucharistic Heart of Christ help you to be courageous witnesses to the Splendor of Truth of the Ten Commandments, Catholic Moral Teaching and Catholic Anthropology.

Brothers, you have been ordained to serve, and I am pleased to announce again your first assignments where you will begin a lifetime of priestly service.

Fr. McClernon, you will serve St. Mary of the Isle, St. Ignatius Martyr and Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in Long Beach with pastor Fr. Brian Barr. You are a St. Joseph's College graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Child Study. You spent time teaching in the Connetquot Central School District and Eastern Suffolk BOCES, primarily working with 4th and 5th graders. Fr. McClernon, your teaching

experience and background in elementary school education will be critical to your role in evangelizing and catechizing the Long Beach Catholic elementary school students and all the parishioners of Long Beach. The people of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Holbrook rejoice with you and your family today as they take humble pride in their newly ordained priest son of the parish. The People of God of Good Shepherd parish in Holbrook shepherded this vocation to the priesthood and they remind us today that every parish in the Diocese of Rockville Centre and every parish in the world has this same mission – to shepherd many, many vocations to the Catholic priesthood. Fr. McClernon, I am also grateful for your dedication, demonstrated in your research and writing at St. Joseph's Seminary, to deepening the bonds between the Catholic and Jewish communities on Long Island. This will be an important and essential part of your priestly ministry and mission on Long Island.

Fr. Nam and Fr. Subin, today we celebrate with you, your families, our inspirational auxiliary Bishop, Bishop Luis Miguel Romero Fernandez, Fr. Fernando Real, the General Superior of the Idente Missionaries. and Fr. Robert Badillo, the Provincial Superior of the Idente Missionaries in the United States. We celebrate the ecclesial mission and charism of Idente missionaries as modelled by the Founder Fernando Rielo. In this year of 2023, we celebrate together the Centennial of his birth.

According to your Founder, the Idente charism consists of following and identifying oneself with Christ, under the action of the Holy Spirit, by living out and bearing witness to a filial consciousness whose model for holiness is the Heavenly Father. The charism is based the baptismal call to holiness and mission, and the promotion of community life and a family spirit. The Idente charism embraces two specific domains: 1)dialogue with intellectuals for the defense and dissemination of revealed truth contained in Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church in the contemporary world; and 2)the apostolate with young people who have lost their Catholic faith or have never come to possess it.

Fr. Nam, you will serve at Our Lady of Loretto with the pastor Fr. Felipe Rufes. Your roots are in the Archdiocese of Seoul, South Korea. You have a Master of Arts in Political Economy from the University of Asia and the Pacific in the Philippines. This is a providentially designed background for an Idente missionary. During your South Korean military service, you developed a close and trusting ecumenical friendship with Brigadier General Ju-Hong Park who is watching this Ordination by live-stream. Our gratitude to you General Park for your Christian witness and your support and friendship with this newly ordained Catholic priest! Fr. Nam, your love for inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue, your interests in international relations,

Chinese philosophy, immigration and cultural diplomacy make you a truly global priest missionary.

Fr. Subin, you will serve at St. Luke's in Brentwood with the pastor Fr. Martin Esguerra. Your roots are in Idinthakarai in Tamil Nadu in South India, where the great Jesuit missionary St. Francis Xavier evangelized and where, according to a deep tradition, St. Thomas the Apostle planted the seed of our Catholic faith in India. You have been a missionary to young people in India and in the United States and participated in the Idente "World Youth Parliament" project. You have a Bachelor of Arts degree as a "Teacher of English for Elementary Schools," and you are especially skilled in computer technology and the use of social media. You have applied those gifts very effectively in your apostolate to young people.

Brothers, today you are surrounded by much love and affection. Allow me to express my deep gratitude to your families, who formed you into the men you have become.

I thank the rectors and the faculties of St. Joseph's Seminary, and the Cathedral Seminary Residence for their fine work of preparing you for the priesthood. I thank those involved in Idente Missionary formation.

Our Vocation Directors, Fr. Sean Magaldi and Fr. Joe Fitzgerald, assisted Fr. McClernon and helped to shepherd him throughout his seminary years.

My gratitude goes to them and to all the bishops, pastors, priests, deacons, religious and parishioners who walked with you in your pastoral assignments. Their holy example, pastoral charity and artistry will remain with you throughout your priesthood.

I thank Bishop William Murphy for the encouragement and model he has given you over the years. Bishop Murphy, you have always taught us that a missionary love for the global universal Catholic Church makes us more effective evangelizers in our local Church here on Long Island. You brought the Idente missionaries to Long Island! What a joy it is to celebrate this day with you!

Fr. McClernon, Fr. Nam and Fr. Subin, today, in your Ordination to the Catholic priesthood, you experienced an ontological change in your very being that connects you with priests throughout history and priests living throughout the world today.

Each of you brings your gifts and talents to this ministry.

As I mentioned at this year's Chrism Mass, one of the Twelve Promises of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690) is the Tenth Promise: "I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts."

As new priests of the Divine Mercy and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as newly ordained priests who are both humble penitents and about to be compassionate confessors, I want to thank you for the gentle, humble and merciful ways that the Holy Spirit will touch and lead you to touch the most hardened hearts.

All of us will be calling on this gift and this promise as we engage ever more deeply in the Eucharistic Revival the Holy Spirit is calling us to in the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

In his 2003 encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Pope St. John Paul II writes: "If the Eucharist is the center and summit of the Church's life, it is likewise the center and summit of priestly ministry. For this reason, with a heart filled with gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ, I repeat that the Eucharist is the principal and central *raison d'être* of the sacrament of priesthood, which effectively came into being at the moment of the institution of the Eucharist." (31)

These words inspire us to plunge deeper into the Paschal Mystery celebrated at every Mass and to plunge deeper into the Paschal Mystery inscribed in us through our baptism and in our priestly sacramental character and identity.

These words inspire us to deepen the Eucharistic reverence expressed in our voice, our gestures, our pace, our moments of liturgical silence and expressed in so many refined and subtly beautiful and contemplative ways in every dimension of our *ars celebrandi*.

In the seminary, you have been men of fraternity. You became leaders, men that others could look to as examples. I encourage you to continue to build bonds of intergenerational priestly fraternity, not just with those close in age but with all the priests of Long Island and beyond. There is much wisdom in their experience and you have many gifts to help enrich us, your older brothers.

Fr. McClernon, Fr. Nam and Fr. Subin, you were ordained today to serve, not to be served. You were ordained to give your lives to Jesus Christ and His Church. Many will come to you with their struggles, their concerns, their fears, and you will

accompany and serve them. Show them always a relentless Good Samaritan charity, kindness, mercy and follow through.

As you prepare to celebrate your first Masses of Thanksgiving on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), may your living of the Catholic priesthood inspire many to realize that the Eucharist is the true way of all our loves upon earth (Tolkien) and the true way to Heaven and Eternal Life.

*Ad Multos Annos!*