

THE NATIONAL MEETING OF THE FEDERATION OF DIOCESAN  
LITURGICAL COMMISSIONS  
THE CHURCH AT PRAYER: FAITH RECEIVED, FOSTERED AND FORMED  
OCTOBER 7, 2015  
WESTIN HOTEL, DALLAS, TEXAS

Opening Address

By

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May the Peace of Jesus Christ be with all of you!

On behalf of the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, I am pleased to greet all of you and wish you a Spirit-filled time together. I will begin my remarks with an information update and conclude them with more theological and pastoral observations.

#### I. Information Update

Since last year's Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions meeting in Lombard, Illinois, the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship has met twice, in November and in June, prior to the meetings of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. During this past year, there have been liturgical developments in several areas.

In November, His Holiness, Pope Francis appointed His Eminence, Robert Cardinal Sarah to be the Prefect of Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, a position that was vacant at this time last year. There also have been changes in staff in this Congregation. I have known the Cardinal since his time as President of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" and I spoke to him last month during the World Meeting of Families. His prayerful spirit and love for the liturgy and his fluent knowledge of English are surely assets in his new position. There should be no language issues regarding communication between our Conference and the Congregation.

The Conference's Secretariat of Divine Worship also has seen some changes in staff. Father Michael Flynn has now been the Executive Director for over a year, and he has become quite familiar with the work of the Secretariat. He provided very good assistance for the Papal visit. Father Andrew Menke, a priest of the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, became the new Assistant Director in May, filling a position vacant for almost six months following the departure of Father Daniel Merz. Father Menke has a licentiate from the Pontifical Liturgical Institute at Sant'Anselmo in Rome. His experience working as a diocesan Master of Ceremonies and as an official in the Congregation for Divine Worship should be an asset to the Secretariat. Recently, Ms. Sylvia Sánchez, the Secretariat's Multi-Cultural Specialist, informed us she will be returning to her Diocese, St. Petersburg, Florida, to assume important liturgical duties. We are grateful for her very helpful service to the Secretariat. A search has begun to find someone to succeed her.

The project of revising the English translation of the Liturgy of the Hours is still years from completion, but steady progress continues to be made. The translators for the International Commission on English in the Liturgy continue to work through its various sections. At the present time, they are concentrating especially on the intercessions and on the antiphons for the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat*.

In recent years, the Holy See has insisted on unified worldwide English translations of liturgical texts, with the exception of the Scriptural texts. The various Bishops' Conferences have some latitude in determining the best Biblical translation to use in their own areas. With that in mind, the Conference has been moving forward in preparing the Scriptural elements of the revised Liturgy of the Hours. Last

November, the Bishops approved a series of further revisions to the Revised Grail Psalms. This was done partly as a “counter offer” to revisions that the Holy See made to the first draft of the translation, and partly in response to experience gained by several religious communities who have been using those Psalms in their regular prayers. Last June, the Bishops approved a new translation of the Old and New Testament Canticles of the breviary, which were prepared by Conception Abbey. So, together with our existing New American Bible, the Biblical elements of our revised Liturgy of the Hours are falling into place. These last two elements will still require the *recognitio* of the Holy See.

Recently, the Holy See has been “gently encouraging” the English-speaking Conferences to try to come to a consensus on Scriptural translations for the liturgy. The growing ease of international travel and communication and the growing worldwide influence of the English language are obviously factors here. The possibility of finding a Psalter that could be adopted in common will be discussed at an upcoming International Commission on English in the Liturgy meeting. We look forward to hearing the observations about this question from the various representatives. This is a project that may or may not come to fruition. Therefore, it is premature to say what impact, if any, it will have on our new breviary.

Unfortunately, even as the importance of Hispanic ministry in our country continues to grow, the situation with our Spanish liturgical texts has not developed very much in this past year. The Conference is still waiting for word from the Holy See on the approval of the *Misal Romano* for the United States, and the progress on our *Leccionario* project for this country has continued to move slowly. Hopefully, this situation will have changed by this time next year. We all know that many parishes are in need of new Spanish Missals. We also know that pastoral concerns arise when different Spanish translations are being used, even in neighboring parishes. It will be very helpful to have some uniformity in Spanish language texts in this country.

I know many of you here have been waiting anxiously for the approval and publication of the revised Marriage rites. Although approval by the Holy See for the English text has finally arrived, some serious discrepancies between the approved Spanish text for the United States and this new English translation were immediately apparent. In their presentation later in this meeting, the Secretariat staff will provide you with more information about this.

I will now turn to more theological and pastoral observations.

## II. Liturgy as Drama

In 1980, while serving as Chancellor for Theological Affairs to James Cardinal Hickey when he was Bishop of Cleveland, I assisted him in preparing a pastoral letter on the liturgy, “Let Us Give Thanks to the Lord Our God.” In that letter (published in ORIGINS), you will find the analogy between liturgy and drama fully developed.

Your focus this week is the Church at Prayer: Faith Received, Fostered and Formed. Every faithful bishop, priest, and deacon, like every faithful liturgical minister, know that his spiritual life and ministry are nourished by the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation in the Eucharist, since the Mass is the source and summit of authentic Catholic spirituality. But this may not mean that everyone who is ordained and every lay minister has the interest, time, expertise, or disposition that is necessary for thinking about, studying, and actually attending to the many and sometimes minute details involved in the effective celebration of the sacred rites of the Church, which help to form and foster the faith that has been received. While it is imperative for every ordained minister to attend to his interior preparation for public worship (including personal prayer, [especially *lectio divina*] spiritual direction, devotion to the

Blessed Sacrament, frequent confession), it is understandable that ordained ministers, pressed by other matters, may not always be able to give as much attention to the details of remote and proximate preparation for liturgical celebrations as they would like.

Nevertheless, these details are important for meaningful and effective liturgical celebrations. The Sacred Liturgy, celebrated according to the mind of the Church with prayerfulness and beauty, is one of the fundamental ways by which we hold and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the Apostles. This is why there are many situations in which a parish liturgy committee or a liturgical commission are not simply a very helpful resource for the appropriate preparation of the public prayer of the Church, they are, in fact, a *necessary* resource for bishops and priests who have the four-fold role during the liturgy of celebrating the Sacrament, praying in public, presiding over public prayer, and assisting those gathered for the liturgy to engage in public and communal prayer as well. The Diocese of Belleville is certainly fortunate to have the dedicated services of Mrs. Sue Huett and Monsignor David M. Darin, who are present here.

Good liturgy is, in many ways, like good theater. Recently, I had the opportunity to see Lin-Manuel Miranda's brilliant, ground-breaking Broadway play, "Hamilton", which masterfully dramatizes the relationship between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr with Hip-Hop and Rap music and lyrics. Watching this remarkable production, I was amazed by the extraordinary attention that had been paid to the many details which contributed to the overall powerful impact of the production. Clearly there was exceptional remote and proximate preparation as well as profound interior preparation on the part of the performers. Prayerful liturgy is not entertainment. However, good liturgy is *like* good theater, though it is not the same as theater. Parish and Diocesan *Liturgical Commissions*, as well as bishops, priests, deacons, lectors, music ministers, sacristans, and altar servers, would all well benefit from considering this analogy. Good liturgies do not just happen. Whether it is the 6:30 AM weekday Mass in a parish, with few in attendance, or the ordination of priests in the Cathedral Church with standing room only, attention to detail is important.

Sadly, the People of God often participate in liturgies which would not move a theater audience to applause. I am sure you know what I mean. As the people are gathering for Sunday Mass, they do not see a sanctuary in readiness or hear prayerful music. Instead, there is a flurry of activity in the sanctuary. It sometimes happens that ministers of the liturgy (including we who are priests) arrive at the last minute in a cluttered sacristy without sufficient time to attend to practical details and recollect ourselves in silence before the rite begins. Lectors have not prayerfully familiarized themselves with the sacred text. People are laughing and talking about superficial matters that have no relationship to the sacred drama about to unfold. Liturgical vestures may lack beauty and vibrant color. They may not fit the priest-celebrant. The sanctuary may be cluttered. The more complex prayers of the new *missale romanum* and the readings may be mumbled inaudibly, or rushed beyond comprehension. The microphones do not work properly. Appropriate times for pauses and silence are neglected. Liturgical gestures are not entered into as embodiment of personal prayer. In some cases the celebrants, lectors, cantors and musicians seem to be competing with each other for the attention of the faithful. The end of the Mass is marred by an interminable list of announcements. A drama thus performed would surely win no ovation. A competent parish liturgy committee and diocesan liturgy commission can make all of the difference.

### III. The Church at Prayer

During your annual meeting, you will turn your attention to "the Church at Prayer." Many events in our world and our country call you to be the Church at prayer even during these days together. Let me call your attention to three of them.

a.) Since your meeting a year ago, there have been numerous instances of Men of Color dying in controversial encounters with representatives of law enforcement, many of them documented for the

world to see. This has led to the cry “Black Lives Matter” and the counter cry “All Lives Matter”, exacerbating the Racial Divide in the United States. (My Pastoral Letter on The Racial Divide in the United States is published in ORIGINS, January 15, 2015, Volume 44, Number 32.)

b.) The second is the recent historic Pastoral Visit of His Holiness, Pope Francis to the United States. In his magisterial address to the members of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Pontiff obliquely acknowledged the racial divide when he spoke of Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., African-American people and their “dream deferred.” He seemed aware of the “original sin” that still overshadows our country – the capturing, selling and buying of human beings from West Africa---in which Catholics participated. He then raised up the Servant of God, Dorothy Day and Trappist mystic, Father Thomas Merton (names unknown to many members of Congress and many American Catholics) as heroic examples of the Church engaged in prayer that led to action.

c.) The third and most recent event unfolded on that terrible day, last Thursday, when yet another slaughter of the innocents took place as ten people lost their lives and many others injured in the massacre on the campus of Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon. President Barack Obama rightly said that we have become immune to such terrors because they have become commonplace. As you pray for those whose lives were so violently interrupted and for the man who slew them, you must pray urgently for the American people and our legislators that reasonable laws will be enacted that will help diminish the endless succession of senseless slaughter. We should be the Church at Prayer even at a meeting about prayer!

If you are individually and collectively prayerful during your time together, you will not only think about what it means to be a “Church at Prayer,” but also you will experience yourselves as the praying Church. This experience will help you in your liturgical ministry as you help foster and form the faith of the People of God into full maturity. During this assembly, your attention is focused on the essentials, renewing in us our awareness that the mystery of God dwelling in unapproachable light and disclosed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the reason for everything you do. At the same time, you have the opportunity to deepen the practical skills you need in order to support communities of faith in their acts of prayer and worship. The time you spend together listening, learning and sharing experiences and ideas has the power to reawaken your personal life of faith and provide you with the resources needed in your daily service to the Christian Faithful assisting them in truly experiencing in the Sacred Liturgy an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

In the name of Bishop Serratelli, our Chairman, and all of my brother Bishops, I thank each of you for all of the good you do for God’s holy people. I regret that pressing matters in my Diocese prevent me from remaining with you. I must return this evening. I especially want to be in the Diocese tomorrow because the housekeeper at my residence, Mrs. Karen Siddall, is having major surgery for cancer in the morning. When you pray, pray for her. Be assured of my prayers for the fruitfulness of your meeting. Please pray for me as well! It is not easy to be a Bishop today.

A final thought for your reflection: “God is not God the way you would be God, if you were God!”

Thank You!