
**SPEECH TO THE FEDERATION
OPENING CEREMONY
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2013**

Thank you very much. First, let me say what an honor it is to have been named your new Executive Director. I pray that God will give me the grace to serve you well. I have many emotions as I stand before you today. The first is an overwhelming sense of gratitude.

A SENSE OF GRATITUDE

First, let me express my thanks to your FDLC Board of Directors, who have done an amazing amount of work this year on top of their already-overburdened schedules. Analyzing the consultant report and all your comments, they have acted creatively and courageously to adopt a new path for this Federation. I want to particularly thank Msgr. John Burton who has led the Board so well and has acted with great pastoral care and utmost professionalism during this period of transition.

I'd like to thank Matt Clark and the good folks of Region III who have worked so hard on all the details for this national meeting. I am only three weeks on the job, so all credit is due to Matt and the local committee.

I'd like to thank my bishop, Bishop Earl Boyea of the Diocese of Lansing. In early June, he walked down to my office, holding the BCDW Newsletter in his hand, saying "Have you seen this job posting? I think you'd be terrific at this." He was nothing but kind, complimentary, and supportive during the entire search process. When it became apparent that I was selected, he quipped, "Well, okay...but tell Monsignor Burton that he owes me a first round draft pick."

I'd like to thank my husband, Mark, who has agreed to take this journey with me. Together, we are selling a home in which we have lived for thirty years, giving away furniture, and packing up family memories. He leaves behind friends, neighbors, and his favorite sports teams.

A SENSE OF HISTORY

I also stand before with a great sense of history. I know that I stand here on the shoulders of six other servants who have lead this organization.

1974-1978	Rev. Mauer Burbach, OSB
1978-1981	Rev. Carl A. Last
1981-1983	Rev. Thomas Richstatter, OFM
1983-1986	Mr. Lawrence J. Johnson
1986-1992	Father Michael Spillane
1993-2013	Mrs. Lisa Tarker

I would like to thank Lisa Tarker for her service to the FDLC. Lisa had served us with dedication since 1992 and can count the Roman Missal workshops, eleven national meetings, several large grants, and the increased use of social media among her accomplishments.

Thanks, too, to Joseph Skeffington. Joe came on board in 1990 and brought his considerable linguistic skills to bear on most of our publications.

Thanks, too, to Dianne Jimmink our part-time bookkeeper who has helped at the office these past several months and whose knowledge of office practices and budgets has been invaluable to me and to the Board.

This sense of history, of course extends to all that this Federation has accomplished in its forty-four years. Many of our founding members are now celebrating the heavenly liturgy. Our members, past and present, have influenced liturgical practice and contributed to liturgical scholarship. We have formed, and have been formed by, the greatest liturgical minds of our generation. And as we gather to celebrate the “enduring value of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,” I can’t help but be grateful for all the many ways each of you and all of you have contributed to its effective implementation in these past fifty years.

A SENSE OF FELLOWSHIP

I stand before you, too, with a profound sense of fellowship. As I look out into this room, I see not only friends, but a sea of some of the best liturgical minds in this country and I am honored to be in this Federation with you.

My greatest “qualification” for this position cannot be found on a diploma or in a resume. I dare to attempt to lead this organization simply because I am one of you. I have spent the last twenty years of my life serving three bishops in an Office of Worship. With you, I have prepared funerals, Scrutinies, Chrism Masses, Ordinations, Rites of Election, Confirmations, the dedication of churches, and the Sacred Triduum. Like you, I have prepared all manner of formation from classrooms to conferences, from articles to advisories, from bulletin inserts to books. Like you, I have trained countless liturgical ministers. Like you, I have served bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, lay leaders, and “200,000 people who pray.” I, too, have fielded angry phone calls and provided pastoral answers. I know what you do and how well you do it. I know how enjoyable, how exciting, and how utterly exhausting it can be.

I also know that we have the *best* jobs in the world because each day we get to work with the texts and music of the Sacred Liturgy which are rich in tradition and profound in how they express our faith. Each day, we get to dwell on the revealed word of God and reflect on its

meaning in our own lives as well as the lives of others. Each day we prepare rituals and rites that have the power to transform countless lives and to enable many to encounter the living God. It is this shared “expertise” that I pledge to place at your service – so that I might anticipate your needs and support your ministries.

A SENSE OF HOPE

Finally, I stand before you with a sense of hope. And it is a hope that does not disappoint “because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:5).

We were founded forty-four years ago for the purpose of carrying out the liturgical renewal as envisioned by the Council. The same Spirit who led the Council leads us still. We are and will be docile to that Spirit.

I have reviewed many of the comments you have been making in regional meetings, to the SSA consultant, and on evaluation forms. With the Board, I have a vision of some of the near-term and long-term goals for our Federation. They include increased formation, more frequent communication, stronger engagement, and sustainable growth. I will provide details of some of those goals at Thursday’s first business session. I will work hard to accomplish them, but I will not do it alone. I will draw on your considerable gifts and talents as well.

I have respect for our past, faith in our present, and great hope for our future. May God continue to guide our efforts so that we might continue to offer him due praise.

Thank you.

R.Thiron /October 8, 2013