

**Liturgical  
Commissions  
and  
Offices  
A Resource Book**

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**The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions**

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## Foreword

In some of the local churches of the United States the diocesan liturgical commissions and offices of worship are successful, committed, and invaluable for the living and lively worship of the Christian people. These bodies engage in efforts of promotion and coordination, they offer guidance and impetus to parishes and other communities of prayer, they publish newsletters and booklets and even books.

In some dioceses the liturgical and related commissions are largely nominal bodies, barely existing on paper. And in still other places financial considerations have recently weakened or undermined the potential of commissions and offices. Over and above its own high quality, this *Resource Book* published by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions is opportune—it meets one challenge of Christian worship in the twenty-first century: how to strengthen and where needed revive the critical diocesan instruments or structures for supporting the Christian liturgy.

For this the splendid work of Father John J. M. Foster is ideally suited. On the one hand, it is a thorough and exacting account, historical and canonical, of what commissions are and can be; on the other hand, it offers from experience and research concrete and practical approaches to organizations and structures in their diverse forms. The account, derived from a thesis of great quality, is a careful response to conciliar (and earlier) papal decisions. The reflection on structures, organizations, and relationships spells out the variety of offices and commissions, with well chosen American diocesan examples.

Inevitably there is a gap in church order between what is demanded by rule and regulation and what may be pragmatically achieved. Fortunately, though required by church law, the commissions for liturgy, along with those for music and art, are determined broadly and flexibly in the Vatican II constitution on the liturgy. The commissions' potential has to be spelled out again, with or without the office, department, or other structure for liturgical planning, direction, and catechesis.

Spelling out that potential is capably and indeed admirably carried out in these pages by Father Foster and, as already suggested, should facilitate and stimulate what is needed today, diocese by diocese. Special attention should be called to his thoughtful treatment of the possible relationships of commissions and the offices that have developed beside them, as well as to the usefulness of his survey of successful organizational details in these bodies.

It is nearly a century since Pius X proposed the commission pattern to carry out the official side of the liturgical reform he initiated. Less well known are some of the efforts made in the United States to move in the direction of liturgical commissions or offices or both. In 1958, just before the Second Vatican Council, the American conferences of bishops set up, with the great archbishop of St. Louis, Joseph E. Ritter, as first chair, its own national liturgical commission—known first as the Bishops' Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate, renamed later the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy. Its first secretary was Bishop James H. Griffiths, auxiliary to the archbishop of New York in the latter's capacity as military vicar.

Bishop Griffiths pursued his responsibilities faithfully: to assist the full conference of bishops, to serve as friendly liaison with The Liturgical Conference, to prepare the new edition of the bi-lingual ritual, later to serve on the first episcopal committee of the