

WELCOME SPEECH TO THE FEDERATION
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Thank you, Tom, not only for those inspiring words, but for your fifteen years of service to the Board of Directors...

Welcome to the forty-ninth national meeting of diocesan liturgical commissions.

Even after forty-eight others, it seems this annual gathering never gets any easier! As many of you can attest, it takes an entire region to handle all the countless details of these three days. Many thanks to the good folks of Region XIV for all their work, especially Dr. Patricia DeJarnett, our local chair and for the generous assistance of many archdiocesan staff members who have given all new meaning to Southern hospitality. Thanks, too, to Bruce Croteau, Aaron Kohl, Chris Ferraro, and their committee who have prepared beautiful liturgies. From environment to exhibits, from registration to receptions, from the opening rite to the final banquet, this region has been hard at work for over a year and we are most grateful.

We are delighted to be here in the exciting city of Atlanta at the gracious invitation of Archbishop Wilton Gregory. He has not only been a gracious host and a generous benefactor, but as chair of the Bishop's Committee on Divine Worship, he is our official co-sponsor.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

It has been an exciting year since we last saw each other in Bloomington, Minnesota. As always, our priority has been on formation and this past year has been dominated by formation for the third edition of the *Misal Romano*. Many thanks to Fr. James Burkart and all our members who served on the Task Force. From May to July, we conducted forty nationwide workshops; we could not have done this without the wonderful collaboration of our bi-lingual presenters and our members who served as local hosts. Formation continues in dioceses and seminaries across the country with the help of the FDLC's "workshop kits." An outgrowth of this work has been a brand new bi-lingual, full color publication – "Our Sacrifice of Praise/*Nuestro sacrificio de alabanza*. It is a collection of over thirty brief articles, in English and in Spanish, which offer the faithful basic formation on liturgy and the parts of the Mass.

Best of all, the formation for the *Misal Romano* broadened the reach of the FDLC and allowed us to engage with so many clergy, musicians, and new friends!

MORE

True to its mission, this year the FDLC has provided free resources which have been gratefully received by many across the country – preparation aids for Advent and Christmas and for The Great Ninety Days; guides for commissions; and most recently, prayer resources in response to the current Church crisis.

We have collaborated with LTP, NPM, OCP, and other national organizations to produce workshops (both live and virtual) on Christian Initiation, Music, Catechesis, and Pastoral Liturgy.

You have gathered with colleagues in spring meetings and the Board has kept up with multiple projects, including a new financial policy handbook, a greatly-expanded personnel policy handbook, and key projects in member services, publications, and pastoral liturgy.

THIS NATIONAL MEETING

This busy year now happily culminates here in Atlanta. We have gathered with over 128 colleagues. We have sixteen members here who are attending their FIRST FDLC National Meeting—what a wonderful sign of growth! *(Please stand.)* They are sporting yellow ribbons on their nametags – please make them feel welcome, offer direction, and invite them to dine with you or your region.

We have seen a sharp increase in assoc. members, many taking advantage of two year discount

Thanks to our faithful exhibitors – be sure to stop by and thank them. While you are in Exhibit hall E (next door), don't miss the flash sale at the FDLC booth! Order in bulk for your diocese or your classroom.

LET US PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

I always look forward to this time when we are finally together again. This FEDERATION is, by its very nature, a gathering of people, focused on the common goal of furthering the liturgical renewal. This, gathering, then, in itself, is an act of unity which the theme of this meeting implores.

As human beings, we seek unity—the bond of parent and child, the love of husband and wife, the need to community in a parish, a religious community, a presbyterate. Even social media gives us a chance to connect.

But we gather as a wounded people. Hurricane Florence has rocked this very region, there have been floods in Hawaii, fires in California, and heavy rains in most parts of the country.

We are wounded by illness -- members who are ill or who couldn't be here because they are hospitalized or who recently have been. Some are absent because they have elderly parents or young children...families who need them. All of us have left behind busy schedules and crowded desks, but yet, our love for this Federation has made this trip a priority.

And of course, we are wounded by the crisis which has, once again, rocked our beloved Church. We pray for the victims of sexual abuse. We all have been tasked with healing wounds, answering angry questions, assuaging mistrust, and praying for forgiveness and wholeness.

We gather at a time when our whole world seems fractured. Our country is torn by conflicting rhetoric, by political parties with competing platforms, by race riots and white supremacist "rallies," and by news outlets and social media blogs which fuel the flame of debate. It seems like there is always a division of loyalties, of ideologies, and of purpose. When there is such division, one cannot have a common hope, cannot see a common solution, cannot see a way forward. Unity will elude us.

In addition, we continue to heal the wounds of centuries of division among our fellow Christians -- to appreciate our common heritage, to perform charitable works, and to speak our common prayer.

In all this, we turn to Jesus Christ as our sure compass on a path to unity. In his earthly ministry, he reached out to the Samaritan woman at the well, to Roman officials, to Jewish leaders, to fishermen, to the rich, the poor, the lame, to hungry travelers, to lepers, to all those on the margins, and even with his last breath, to sinners. He saw in all of them their need for mercy, for compassion, and for unity with him!

Especially in our liturgies, we will serve a common purpose -- to glorify the living God and to seek holiness with him. And, most of all, especially at the Eucharistic table – joining in the sacrament of unity – we will find strength to accomplish it all.

Enjoy the week. Meet someone new, make connections, inspire unity

