

**FATHER THOMAS RANZINO**  
**OPENING ADDRESS TO THE FEDERATION**  
**October 2, 2018**

I welcome you to the forty-ninth annual meeting of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions. I especially welcome the new faces to the Federation. Our sincere thanks to Region 14, the Archdiocese of Atlanta, and the Bishop's Committee on Divine Worship for their contributions to this gathering, as we consider *The Body of Christ: A Prophetic Sign of Unity and Concord*.

We are privileged to be here to examine the reality of what these words mean: Body, Christ, Prophetic, Unity, and Concord while living in the midst of the broken but graced humanity of the Church. We are lacerated by these other words: broken, anti-Christ, corrupt, splintered, and divided. Faithful to our Catholic Tradition we believe God's grace is at work in the sorrow and the pity of it all. With certain humility we seek that Divine Love who is our companion. This belief will shape and nuance our conversations this week. We will draw upon our personal experience of carrying in our own bodies the dying of the Lord so that we might also experience the gift of His life.

To the many dioceses that suffered and still suffer damage from Hurricanes on the Eastern seaboard, particularly Hurricane Florence in this very Region; the diocese of Honolulu; to those dioceses in the West who have been contending with deadly fires; and to all whose lives and landscapes have been altered -- God's mercy will be shown to you so that you do not lose hope.

The Federation is deeply grateful to the Bishop's Committee on Divine Worship for our unique and fruitful partnership. Our primary task in light of our Mission is to advise the Bishops of our country on matters liturgical. We respect the trust our Bishops place in us as we bring energy to our common work:

To explore the enactment of the art of ritual;

To be collaborators in clarifying the vision of Catholic worship in the dioceses of the United States;

To collegially carry forward the principles of Catholic worship as envisioned by the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*.

In the midst of so many challenges facing the Bishops of our country, the Federation brings to our relationship the desire to walk in companionship with them, to help our country pray within the liturgy—for it is our best hope for unity and concord. It is here we meet the One in whom the many find rest.

The gathering of our Federation is our sixth under the multi-talented leadership of Mrs. Rita Thiron, Executive Director, as well as the governance of a restructured Board of Directors. It may sound odd that I bring up the restructured Board every year. I do so because not every organization has a board that works, that intentionally puts aside personal agendas to deliberately work as a Board. This Board does. Six years ago the Board concluded that its primary work was to hold in trust the Mission of the Federation for the sake of the membership. This means what we do is to govern, not micromanage. The Board entrusts the day to day work of the Federation to Rita Thiron, and in the words of John Carver, we tell Rita *to go until we say stop, not stop until we say go*. Rita is extraordinarily equipped with a discerning background in both academic and pastoral liturgy, plus executive skills which move the Federation forward as the trusted name in Catholic worship. Being the trusted name is a high priority for the Board. In that priority, Rita continues to serve the Federation very well.

Each of the representatives of the 14 regions who make up the Board of Directors has his or her own preoccupations with their own Bishops and diocesan duties; together the Board seeks to be consistent in looking broadly, acting collaboratively and thinking wisely for the good of the Federation. I am grateful to each of the Board members for imparting their expertise and time to the Federation.

Even when we are not gathered like this as a Federation, we still are on mission.

Here is our purpose:

The work of the Federation is clear. We are to promote the liturgy of the Church as the heart of Christian life, especially in the parish community. This is the target; we aim at this target in these ways:

1. We encourage and promote the interconnectivity of diocesan liturgical personnel. Sometimes this is an overlooked asset. We have a network of 14 regions in the United States of professional and volunteer colleagues who share creative work, who collaborate. We do not have to recreate the liturgical wheel in our home dioceses knowing that our colleagues may have already done good work which we can adapt and use in our own dioceses.
2. We are about liturgical formation guided by the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. It is true that we are not a publishing house; but we do produce practical materials for liturgical catechesis, faithful to the principles of the liturgy. We also can offer competent liturgical personnel who are willing to teach and mentor beyond their own dioceses for the greater good. This is how the Federation exists -- not just for a few days in October. We are challenged to be creative, accessible and collaborative all year long.
3. We work collaboratively with the BCDW on liturgical matters proposed by the USCCB. As in every other part of life, understood correctly, this means our mission as a Federation is shaped and promoted by handling relationships well:
  - a. the relationship between the Executive Director and the Board of Directors;
  - b. the relationships between the member dioceses of each region;
  - c. the relationships between Federation members and their own Bishops;
  - d. the relationships the Federation has with other organizations who work in the field of liturgy;
  - e. the relationship the Federation has with the BCDW.

All of these relationships need to be held in balance. Within each of these relationships compassion and respect are demanded. It is true that within the Federation we may not agree of every “thing” on or off the agenda; however, we can find common ground in acceptance and compassion *for what is*. Respectfully remaining faithful to the principles of the *Constitution* as well as finding best practices in the field means the Federation has something to contribute in both conversations – about the nature and the doing of the liturgy in the United States. It is our responsibility to say this *out loud*. We must deal with what is, yet, instead of criticizing, we seek unity and concord and do what we do best for the sake of the Church.

4. We are the one national organization with a unique history within the Church through which diocesan liturgical personnel can articulate the voice of the laity, the clergy and religious in order to promote and develop the liturgical arts. It is our responsibility to consider the signs of the times, to look proactively ahead, to examine liturgical issues from the academic and pastoral perspectives, informing the conversation with charity, staying true to the Tradition of the Church. We do our best work in such engagements, because we have an informed voice.
  
5. Yearly, the national meeting is cohosted by the Federation, the BCDW and the local host dioceses. We come here to meet and to work. So, do not be a passive observer. Attend the committee meetings on Thursday; go to the workshops; go to your regional caucus; mingle at the receptions; have fun at the banquet. Help the Federation do our work.

#### WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE LAST OCTOBER

The Federation does not go to sleep after this meeting only to wake up again next year for the national meeting in Chicago. No, the Federation does its agenda all year long. Here are a few highlights:

1. Much talent, time and travel was spent by members of the Federation in creating the multi-platform, formational opportunities for Spanish-speaking Catholics to welcome the Misal Romano. Rita will give you details.

Suffice it to say these efforts were a gift to the Spanish- speaking Church, and will bear good fruit. I thank Fr. James Burkhart, Chair of the *Misal Committee*, along with Rita and the Committee members, who have been creative in leading this effort with the support of the BCDW.

2. The Board of Directors approved the 2019 Federation operating budget. We are operating in the black, with a conservative budget. Thanks to those member dioceses that have been faithful in paying your member dues; thank you, as well, to the individuals who have contributed to the Annual Appeal. The Federation and its mission depend on your financial support.
3. Handbooks are not the thing for causal reading; but they are the thing for governance. Recently the *Financial Policy Handbook* and the *Personnel Handbooks* were completed; the *National Meeting Handbook* revision is almost complete. The *Publications Handbook* is on the way. Dense material, yes; keeping us accountable to you, yes.
4. Next year will be the Federations 50<sup>th</sup> year. The Committee that is planning this national meeting is already at work. It will be held in Chicago, but all the other regions of the Federation will be asked to take responsibility for a part of the National Meeting. If that's not enough to set your regional hair on fire, I don't know what is...
5. Board elections were held again this spring in five regions and, due to term limits, the Board again will undergo change. We welcome
  - from Region Five: Mrs. Betty –Ann Hickey of the Archdiocese of New Orleans;
  - from Region Eight: Mrs. Mary Dahl of the Diocese of Crookston
  - From Region Ten: Fr. Marcus McFadin of the Diocese of El Paso
  - From Region Thirteen: Fr. Cliff Jacobson of the Diocese of Cheyenne
  - And Chris Ferraro was re-elected from Region Two.

It is also my pleasure to announce to you the newly-elected officers of the Board of Directors who will serve the Federation:

Treasurer	Ms. Laura Bertone
Vice Chair	Mr. Michael Poradek
Chair of the Board	Fr. James Bessert

With that, then, I say thank you to you all. It has been my real pleasure and honor to serve as Chair of the Board of the Federation. I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve with all the Board members during my term.

So welcome. Have a good week.

Engage your colleagues, do the work, enter the prayer, expect to be surprised.