
OPENING SPEECH
2016 NATIONAL MEETING OF DIOCESAN LITURGICAL COMMISSIONS
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Welcome to Dallas and to the forty-sixth annual meeting of diocesan liturgical commissions!

THANK YOU!

I [too] extend my sincere thanks to Bishop Kevin Farrell, our host; to Dr. Patricia Hughes, our local chair, to the local volunteers, and to all the good folks of Regions X and XIII. Yes, they DO do everything big in Dallas, but why did this meeting take TWO regions to plan it, you ask? Is this a new trend? The truth is that our members agreed to host this 2015 meeting way back in 2012, when they were all in Region Ten. Since then, our Federation has passed new bylaws and has restructured into 14 regions, to be more compatible with the USCCB regions. Region ten became regions ten and thirteen.

As most of you know, this meeting takes many hands to prepare and execute. Many thanks to those who have prepared liturgies, rehearsed music; planned receptions, meals, coffee breaks, and banquets; tastefully created sacred space in ballrooms, stuffed registration bags, and unpacked boxes.

Many thanks to our presenters and workshop speakers --because of you, our days will be enriched, our practices will be affirmed and challenged, and our minds will be expanded.

This year's meeting will focus on liturgy and ecclesiology. Specifically, we will look at a topic which speaks to the very nature of our Federation --our role as members of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions and as staffs of Offices of Worship. Why did the Second Vatican Council mandate liturgical commissions (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 44-45)? How do we best serve our local bishops in their sanctifying, governing, and teaching duties? How can we best serve the liturgical apostolate in the dioceses of the United States? And since the Eucharist is central to the life of the Church and since liturgy is seen as the "source and summit" of all the Church's activities, what role does the diocesan commission play in expressing, fostering and forming the faith of our people?

In addition, our time together will include workshops on a variety of current issues, including the translation and implementation of liturgical books and deepening our appreciation for other rites in our Catholic communion. And building on the energy of last year's meeting in Lombard, we will provide ongoing formation on the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

Responding to many requests, we have also built into our schedule some time for committee meetings! These will go beyond the previous "hearing sessions." On Friday afternoon, choose an interest section. Participate in the planning and implementation of so many wonderful new short-term and long-term projects. Where would you like to be involved?

Please also take time to SHOP! We have a record number of exhibitors this year –some old friends and some new acquaintances. We are very grateful for their presence and support. Please also take advantage of the “FDLC Flash Sale” –stop by the FDLC booth and see the order form in your packet. There are some substantial savings on FDLC products.

“ROLL CALL”

About 175 people have registered for this national meeting. Would you please stand up as your region is called?

- 1, 2, 3 (*Please sit down.*)
- 4, 5, 6
- 7, 8, 9
- 10
- 11, 12
- 13, 14

Would you please stand if this is your first FDLC National Meeting? There are 34 of you this year – a sign of great growth!!

Welcome back to many of you who have come here from near and far:

- I think the “award” for coming the farthest goes to Paul Inwood (Portsmouth, in the United Kingdom)
- I think the ‘award” for coming the shortest distance comes to the folks from the Diocese of Dallas (give a shout out)
- Let’s give a round of applause to the person who was so excited to be with us today, that he was the FIRST person registered – Father Tom Ranzino of Baton Rouge, LA (our Board Chair).

Let us also keep in mind those who cannot be with us this week. I received many notes and e-mails from members who wished they could be with us, but could not come due to financial constraints, diocesan conflicts, or family commitments. All the notes were quite touching, but none more so than the one from John DiBacco of West Virginia, who had just been told that he would be starting chemotherapy treatments this week. Please hold him in prayer, as well as all our absent members.

THE PAPAL VISIT

We gather here in Dallas just days after the visit of Pope Francis. I am sure that we will all have a lot of stories to share this week. We offer our thanks and congratulations to many of our members and to the BCDW staff who had a hand in preparations for the Holy Father’s liturgies in Washington, New York, and Philadelphia (*please stand...applause*). Well done!

By all accounts, the Pope’s visit to the United States was a grand success!

- We experienced people standing in line for twelve hours just to get a glimpse of “Papa Francisco” -- only to be thrilled at the site of him in his pope mobile or Fiat.

- Millions of people took off work to make pilgrimages
- Millions more watched day and night coverage on TV

We were enthralled by his well-crafted speeches; we were inspired by his homilies; and we were delighted by his spontaneous remarks to families in Philadelphia.

We watched as he so graciously engaged

- school children and heads of state,
- Little Sisters of the Poor and the poor themselves
- persons with severe disabilities and those who cared for them,
- the homeless and the hierarchy,
- people of all faiths,
- and families from every part of the globe,

He even had journalists confessing their faith on national television and brought powerful politicians to tears.

His kindness touched a few people in a room, a few million on the Parkway, and a nation of believers and non-believers.

Pope Francis seemed to feel equally at home in cathedrals, convents, and Congress; at the White House, the United Nations, at massive open-air venues, and in small parlors of embassies.

Why did we all feel this “Francis effect?” It’s simple really. We all recognize in Pope Francis one who authentically proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With humility and kindness, he reflects what the Lord did in His time on this earth. He showed great compassion. He preached God’s mercy. He reminded people that they are loved.

CONCLUSION

This week, may our labors and our learnings be guided by that same Spirit. May we gain an even greater appreciation for what we do – whose liturgy we prepare, whom we serve, and whose Gospel we proclaim.

May God bless your week.