

OPENING ADDRESS TO THE 2016 FDLC NATIONAL MEETING

RITA THIRON

Welcome to the forty-seventh annual national meeting of diocesan liturgical commissions! Thank you for taking time out of your own busy schedules to gather with colleagues in this lovely hotel amidst the beautiful fall colors of Albany, New York.

THANK YOU TO REGION TWO

This week we will be enjoying the hospitality of the good folks of Region 2, who have been preparing hundreds of details to make our stay more enjoyable and our meeting more memorable. The region volunteered to host this meeting over two years ago, while we were gathered in Lombard. They have been led by our wonderful local chair, Elizabeth Simcoe, Director of the Office of Worship and Chancellor of the Diocese of Albany.

The region has had multiple meetings as well as monthly, then weekly conference calls... discussing countless details -- altars and ambos, buses and banquets, menus and music, transportation and technology, hotels and hospitality ...and more hospitality.

They have arranged a colossal collection of speakers made possible by a generous donation from the Whalen Family Foundation.

We are so grateful to Bishop Edward Scharfenberger who has welcomed us with open arms into his diocese and offered generous support in funding and personnel. We look forward to celebrating the Eucharist with him tomorrow evening. Indeed, we are so grateful for the wonderful support from the Bishops of this region –the state of New York.

THANK YOU'S

We are blessed to have a colossal collection of speakers this year made possible from a generous grant from the Whalen Foundation. We welcome Bishop Mark Seitz (Diocese of El Paso), Dr. Diana Hayes, Father Mark Francis, Msgr. Anthony Sherman, Fr. Ed Foley, Fr. John Baldovin, Fr. Richard Vosko, Dr. Judith Kubicki, Fr. Bob Kennedy, and Mr. Todd Williamson. Because of you, our days will be enriched, our practices will be challenged and affirmed, and our minds will be expanded.

We are especially happy to welcome our McManus Award recipient, Fr. J. Michael Joncas who will be with us this week! Indeed, at liturgies over the next few days, we will be singing three Canticle settings which he composed and dedicated to the FDLC. Welcome, too, to Dr. Judy Bullock, recipient of this year's Alleluia Award. Welcome back, Judy!

Our Federation was founded by the then Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy and we continue to be grateful for the collaboration of the BCDW as well as its Secretariat Staff. We welcome Ms. Carmen Aguinaco and Father Michael Flynn who has been a valued friend of the FDLC for over two and a half years.

Thank you to our Board of Directors who already has been hard at work with two days of Board meetings. On Tuesday night, Fr. Jim Bessert (Region VI) was elected Treasurer and Fr. Tom Ranzino was re-elected to a second term as Board Chair! Many, many thanks to those who are retiring from the Board and those newly-elected to the Board.

We have a record number of exhibitors this year! Please visit their tables, browse their wares and services, and chat with our vendors.

THIS HAS BEEN QUITE A YEAR!

Since we first learned of the imminent publication of the revised *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (last February) we have conducted thirty-two nationwide workshops which served over 3300 clergy and lay leaders. We have produced four new resources which are selling well mainly because all of YOU have promoted them and purchased them in large quantities.

ROLL CALL

We have about 130 full meeting registrants and another fifty or so local leaders who will be joining us on Thursday and Friday.

- Those of you from Regions 12, 13, and 14, please stand. [applause]
- From Regions 10 and 11, please stand
- From Regions 8 and 9, please stand
- From Regions 6 and 7, please stand
- From Regions 4 and 5, please stand
- From Regions 3 and 1, please stand
- And from our host region... from the great state of NY, please stand.

Please be seated.

If this is your FIRST FDLC meeting, please stand! What a wonderful sign of new growth!

If you have attended at least twenty national meetings (prior to 1996), please stand!

There some who could not be with us this week and wrote personal notes of regrets. Please hold in mind Father Matt Ernst of the Archdiocese of New York who was instrumental in preparing this meeting who is home with his mother who is near death and several others who could not be with us due to illness.

In 1969, the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy gathered leaders of diocesan liturgical Commissions from all over the country. Their purpose was to help with formation on the newly-revised liturgical books, mandated by the Second Vatican Council. They elected a Board –two members from each of the regions. This came to be known as the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions.

This Federation is aptly named! It is a network of people dedicated to the same cause, bound by a common goal. It is a “coalition,” a “group,” a “partnership,” an “association,” a “union.”

We enjoy gathering with like-minded colleagues at regional and national meetings. We share resources, experiences, and ideas. We share a passion for liturgy and its authentic celebration.

Where else can you ask questions like ...How do you distribute the Holy Oils? Who should be next in the procession? How did they do that in the fifteenth century/

We are a federation who cares about each other and for each other -- when parents die, when parishes are flooded, when jobs are lost, or when illness strikes.

We are a Federation of dedicated people who already are serving in multiple jobs and in multiple ministries, yet who readily say.. "Yes, I can help with that. When do you need it?"

I have witnessed this FEDERATION in action in innumerable ways this year... in hosting workshops, promoting projects, working on committees, writing documents, and serving each other and their bishops with grace.

It is an honor to serve you. It is an honor to know you.

LITURGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

And so again this year, we gather as a Federation to examine a topic we have not covered since 1988 in San Diego – liturgy and social justice.

We gather at a time in our history

- when terrorists strike fear into everyday living
- where tragedies have shocked entire communities -- in Orlando, Dallas, Baton Rouge, San Bernadino, and elsewhere.
- when madmen with guns kill innocents and dictators of countries test nuclear weapons
- where the poor cry for bread and mothers cry for their children
- when refugees drown in an attempt to flee war-torn countries
- when politicians seek to serve their own interests instead of the common good.

Instead, we who know the Church's liturgy, hold a richer perspective on life itself. We seek common ground and seek the common good. We offer mercy. We promise reconciliation. We preach of hope and offer it to those who have none.

How can what we do help comfort the grieving, help change minds, and help heal a world so in need of the Gospel message?

We will explore the answers to these questions this week. Let us "open wide the gates of justice and praise God within them!"