

OPENING REMARKS TO THE FEDERATION – THIRON

Well, as Saint Peter said to Jesus on the Mount of Olives “Lord, it is good for us to be here” (Mt 17:4). And happily, we will pitch our tents here for a few days in order to focus on “The RCIA: Ever Ancient, Ever New.” For in the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, we find so many facets of Church ministry – catechesis, pastoral practice, sacramental preparation, spirituality, apostolic works, and the authentic celebration of liturgical rites. And in this important rite, we as a Christian community of faith, find our baptismal mandate to share the Good News and to make disciples of all nations.

And so we gather here in Lombard, Illinois from all corners of our country. We cannot begin without first offering thanks. We have many reasons to be grateful.

THANK YOU’S

First, we are here at the gracious invitation of Bishop Daniel Conlon. Thank you, Bishop, for your spirit of collaboration, for your generous contributions, and for welcoming us to your cathedral on Thursday evening.

Thank you to the Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship who officially co-sponsor this meeting. Bishop Arthur Serratelli, BCDW chairman, sends his regrets that he could not be with us personally. His diocese is engaged in a special canonization effort these same days and he had commitments back in the Diocese of Paterson. But the Committee is ably represented by Bishop Mark Seitz of the Diocese of El Paso, who will be with us all this week and by Bishop Edward Braxton who will be with us on Friday for the consultation.

And we are always blessed to have the BCDW Secretariat staff with us – Mrs. Sylvia Sanchez (multicultural specialist); and Father Dan Merz (Associate Director). And we offer a warm welcome to Father Michael J. Flynn, the new Executive Director of the Secretariat for Divine Worship.

We offer our continued thanks to Almighty God for the great gift of allowing Bishop Ron Herzog to be with us again this year. Bishop Ron is a long-time member and friend of the FDLC and we are so very happy to see your improved health and to have you here among us.

Of course, we offer our deepest thanks to Sr. Sharon Stola and to the fine folks of Region VII for all their hard work these past two years. On top of their daily duties in Offices of

Worship, diocesan commissions, and parishes, they have met frequently to tend to every last detail. Because of them, we will pray reverently, study well, and eat heartily. Please look for those ribbons which say “Local Committee” and extend your personal thanks as well. Thanks, too, to the volunteers who have helped with registration, transportation and countless tasks.

Thank you to our all our speakers, especially Dr. Mary Gautier, Father Ron Lewinski, and Father Paul Turner who will introduce us to the results of the national survey on Christian Initiation practices and offer a pastoral and theological response to the findings.

Thank you to your new Board of Directors who have already been meeting a day and night ahead of this opening rite.

Thanks to our seventeen exhibitors –some loyal colleagues and some new friends – who will be with us this week. Please visit their booths often and patronize their businesses.

RECOGNIZING THE ASSEMBLY

But most of all, I am thankful to all of you for coming. Over 220 of us will be here this week! You left busy lives and busy offices to do so. And often you did so at great personal expense. As I opened up each registration envelope, it did not escape me that many of you paid the registration fee with personal checks. This is yet another sign of your great love for this Federation and your dedication to its mission. Moreover, it is a sign of your love the Church and her liturgy.

ROLL CALL

For nearly thirty of you, this is your first FDLC meeting. Please stand and remain standing.

Regions 1, 2, 3, 4 *please stand*

Region 5, 6, 7, 8

Region 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

A process follows which identifies how many national meetings each participant has attended. One participant remained standing who first attendee an FDLC meeting in the 1970's!!

We are especially enriched by the presence of some very special colleagues. We are delighted to be welcoming Former Forum Team members (look for their light blue ribbons). Their presence here is a testimony to the enduring legacy of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate and its over forty years of forming parish and diocesan leaders in the authentic implementation of the RCIA. *Please stand.* A generous grant from the ACTA Foundation in Chicago has underwritten some of their expenses.

We are also catechetical leaders from dioceses around the country. These are our colleagues with whom we work each day and who share our respect for the RCIA and its power to form new Christians in the ways of faith. *Please stand.*

We will be joined this week, too, by Jeanne Marino from the USCCB Secretariat for Canonical Affairs and Siobhan Verbeek of the USCCB's Office of Education and Catechesis.

A NEW EXCITEMENT

It seems like only yesterday that we gathered with Region III in Erie, PA. And what a year it's been! The Board passed new bylaws in January – they reduced the size of the board and restructured committees. A year ago, I stood before you and promised increased communication, a review of office procedures and fiscal belt-tightening, outreach to members, free resources, and more formation opportunities.

In this past year, we awarded the first four Forum Legacy Grants. These funds were entrusted to the FDLC for the sole purpose of supporting diocesan formation programs in the United States and Canada.

Tomorrow during the business session we will hear details of the nationwide workshops on the revised *Rite of Celebrating Matrimony* which are planned for 2015. Resources are already in development, thanks to the leadership of Region V.

I hope you are feeling a renewed excitement for our Federation. And I hope that renewed excitement motivates you to become more personally involved. I have been a member of the FDLC for over twenty years. I was a member of the Board for eight of those years and I would constantly preach that we were not doing enough to tap the vast expertise of the “200 people in the room.” In the next few days we will do just that.

For years, the Board of Directors worked very hard to fulfill position statements and to advance projects. The new bylaws have put structures in place to permit all of us share in the mission of the FDLC. These are divided into four categories:

The Governance Committee

Father Thomas Ranzino, Chair (F)
 Sr. Lois Paha, Vice Chair
 Kathy Proefke, Treasurer
 with
 Father Pat Beidelman
 Father John Sauer

Finances
 Personnel
 Marketing
 Development
 Strategic Planning
 National Process

Pastoral Liturgy Committee

Dr. Bernadette McMasters Kime
 Father Lou Dorn (F)
 Sr. Elissa Rinere

Eucharist Prayer
 Sacraments Ministry
 Liturgical Year Seminaries
 Lit. Arts and Music Multicultural

Member Services

Fr. Duane Wachowiak (F)
 Father Steve Sallis
 Mr. Christopher Ferraro

Membership
 Communications
 Regional Meetings
 Data Base, National Meetings

Formation Committee

Father Leon Strieder
 Mrs. Virginia Meagher (F)
 Mr. Matt Clark

Certification/Alliance
 Workshops—youth, marriage, RCIA
 Publications and Resources

In your packets you will find a yellow form that lets you express your own interest in project teams and committees. Some projects will be long term. Others will be short lived. Where might you share your gifts? And just to make it a little more fun, all forms which are submitted are eligible for a door prize! The earlier you submit your form, the more chances you have to win!!!

THIS MEETING

In the next few days, please take advantage of every opportunity to network with your colleagues, to support each other, and to learn from each other. That is what this Federation does best! And along the way, have some fun! Region VII has planned many ways to make your stay in Indiana and Illinois most enjoyable and memorable!

This meeting will look and feel a bit different -- the Business Session will be brief, but informative, on Thursday afternoon. Be patient with us as we try to address your needs with creative solutions.

CONCLUSION

So we will study and teach. We will caucus and consult. We will meet and eat.

And best of all, we will pray often. In the daily celebration of Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours, we will pray with and for the whole Kingdom of God. Let us pray to God the Father who deserves all our praise. Let us pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray to the Son who always intercedes for us. And let us ask that all our labors and our learnings may build up the Kingdom of God.

Thank you.

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