
ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

The Frederick R. McManus Award

By Mr. Peter Dwyer, Director, Liturgical Press

October 5, 2017 FDLC National Meeting

Fr. Ranzino, Board Members, Mrs. Thiron, Fr. Menke, Fr. Stice, delegates and guests:

On behalf of Abbot John Klassen, the monks of Saint John's Abbey, and the staff of Liturgical Press, profound thanks for this award. It is humbling and gratifying for Liturgical Press to be honored in the name of Frederick McManus.

I want to take just a moment to acknowledge and introduce a few members of the Liturgical Press staff here tonight who are keenly involved in our liturgical publishing. Barry Hudock is Publisher for the Parish Market. Mark Rodriguez works with Barry, as Music and Liturgy Editor. Mary Stommes is Editor of *Give Us This Day*. And Cathy Donovan is Associate Publisher for *Give Us This Day*. Collectively we represent another 30 or so back in Collegeville.

To be on staff at Liturgical Press is akin to walking among the towering redwoods in a California grove like Muir Woods. We count ourselves amazed to be moving among the giants of liturgical scholarship and the liturgical movement spanning our 91 years as a publishing house: Virgil Michel and H.A. Reinhold; Jungmann, Kavanagh, Diekman, and McManus; Gabrielle Winkler, Robert Taft, Max Johnson, and Joyce Zimmerman; and so many dozens more who have appeared in the pages of *Worship*, or in one of several thousand books we have published over the years. Or lately in *Give Us This Day* or on *Pray Tell Blog*.

We place a high value on scholarship but our mission as a publisher has always been to put scholarship at the service of the liturgy.

Fr. Virgil Michel wrote in the Foreward to the first issue of *Orate Frates* in November 1926: “Our general aim is to develop a better understanding of the spiritual import of the liturgy, an understanding that is truly sympathetic. This means that we are not aiming at a cold scholastic interest in the liturgy of the Church, but at an interest that is more thoroughly intimate, that seizes upon the entire person, touching not only intellect but will and heart, as well as mind. . . . A sympathetic understanding of the liturgy is one that will affect the actual life of the Catholic. “

When Fr. Virgil wrote those words he was newly embarked on an ambitious effort to plant the seeds of the liturgical movement on this continent. He would be astounded I think to see how far the movement has advanced. And yet . . .

I’ve been thinking about the “and yet” quite a lot the past few years. I imagine you have too. It is so easy to become discouraged over translation arguments or the widely varying quality of liturgical experience or the temptation to look back to a pre-conciliar time. I was once tempted to say, Vatican II settled all of that. But of course, it did not. The liturgy is not static. It lives as the Church lives and prays.

In a phrase worthy of regular contemplation, St. Paul urges us to “pray without ceasing”. In a literal sense to pray without ceasing can only mean that we live our whole life as prayer. This, I think, is where Pope Francis is leading us. Our conduct as Christians – how we live the Gospel, how we live in relationship with one another – cannot be understood apart from our personal and communal prayer with God. Liturgy is integral to and reflects the way we live. It is integral to our understanding of Church.

Seen in this light it is not surprising that we have struggled to realize the liturgical vision of Vatican II because we have also been struggling to realize the ecclesial vision of Vatican II.

As we struggle with understanding the work and future of liturgical and ecclesial renewal it is apparent to me that, until the Parousia, renewal will be a work in process, just as each of us in a work in process. And, since every generation has to learn lessons for themselves, we should understand our work in fostering “a sympathetic understanding of the liturgy” as a task that we will pass on to succeeding generations of pastoral ministers, and scholars, and yes – at least in some fashion – to publishers.

Thank you.

