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**OPENING SPEECH**  
**2017 NATIONAL MEETING OF DIOCESAN LITURGICAL COMMISSIONS**  
**RITA A. THIRON**

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Welcome to Bloomington and to the forty-eighth annual meeting of diocesan liturgical commissions!

**THANK YOU!**

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I [too] extend my sincere thanks to Archbishop Bernard Hebda, our host, for his gracious invitation; to Fr. John Sauer, our local chair, to the local volunteers, and to all the good folks of Region VIII. I have seen “Minnesota nice” in action for nearly two years and I am sure that you will experience it this week.

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; who have tastefully created sacred space in hotel meeting rooms, stuffed registration bags, and unpacked boxes.

Many thanks to our plenary speakers and workshop presenters --each brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to their topic. Because of you, our days will be enriched, our practices will be affirmed and challenged, and our minds will be expanded.

Special thanks to our Board of Directors. They have already been hard at work –meeting all day Monday and early this morning. We have six new members all chosen by their region and their contributions and great ideas are already being felt. Last evening the Board held elections for officers. Father Tom Ranzino remains as our very capable Chair, Father Jim Bessert (Diocese of Saginaw) was elected as Vice Chair; and Laura Bertone (Archdiocese of San Francisco) was elected as Treasurer. She brings to us a wealth of experience in the banking world.

Outgoing members of the Board include Matthew Clark (Region 3); Dr. Bernadette Kime (Region 4) Father Patrick Beidelman (Region 7); and Virginia Meagher (Region 11). THANK YOU to our hard-working Board of Directors!

We are always happy to collaborate with the Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship. They founded the FDLIC and for forty-eight years have been the official co-sponsor of our national meeting. We are pleased to welcome the Secretariat Staff to our gathering – Father Andrew Menke (Executive Director), Father Randy Stice (new Assoc. Director) and Carmen Aguinaco (Multi-Cultural Specialist).



Recent events have also reminded us that we are helpless against natural disasters which can force us to do without basic necessities of life –food, water, shelter. Such crises also impel us to care for others’ basic needs. There are people in this room who were victims of hurricanes – who have lost homes, whose parish facilities have been damaged, and who have lost loved ones. Here, too, we have come to rely on the assistance of our communities and on the power of prayer.

We are faced, too, with a country which is sick – where immigrants are feared and mistreated, where lone gunmen can slay fifty-eight people and injure hundreds, where hatred and dissent make the daily news headlines. Here, too, we must rely on the power of our prayer and the courage that must result from it. Here, too, our voices must be the medicine and the healing balm that soothes the rage and gives peace to a world in need of it.

May we give ourselves over to this focus in the next three days. In our labors and our learnings and especially in our prayer, may we come to better appreciate the gifts of God –in sickness and in health – to heal what is ailing, to give us the power to heal, and to remind a troubled patient or a troubled city, or a troubled nation what relying solely on God can accomplish.

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Please take advantage of all that this meeting has been designed to accomplish in just three short days. You will have time to study, to network, and to pray.

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 Thursday afternoon, choose a committee or a project. Participate in the planning and implementation of so many wonderful new short-term and long-term projects. Offer your abundant gifts a bit of your time. Where would you like to be involved?

Please also take time to SHOP! We have a fourteen exhibitors this year –some old friends and some new acquaintances. We are very grateful for their presence and support. Please also take advantage of this meeting to order your FDLC products --stop by the FDLC booth and use the order form on the table. Use your members discount!

## **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.

RT/10-3-17