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From: Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions
415 Michigan Avenue NE, Suite 70
Washington, DC 20017

Contact: Rita Thiron, Executive Director FDLC

Phone: 202-635-6990

E-mail: Rita@fdlc.org



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LITURGICAL LEADERS GATHER IN ATLANTA TO DISCUSS CHRISTIAN UNITY

Nearly one hundred fifty leaders from eighty-five dioceses gathered in Atlanta, Georgia, October 2-4, for the forty-ninth annual national meeting of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC). Their focus was “The Body of Christ: A Prophetic Sign of Unity and Concord.” Specifically, they addressed the current state of division in the country, in the world, and among the Christian communities. They examined pastoral activities which might alleviate them.

The members of the FDLC were greeted by Archbishop Wilton Gregory of the Archdiocese of Atlanta. He expressed his deep gratitude for the Federation’s members for “the leadership, scholarship, and resources which you provide to aid in the authentic implementation and celebration of the liturgy.”

Archbishop Gregory presided at the opening liturgy at the historic Basilica of the Sacred Heart in downtown Atlanta. On the feast of the Guardian Angels, he asked the assembly to recall their childlike fascination with their guardian angel’s protection, a duty which those angels have not abandoned.

FDLC's Executive Director, Rita Thiron, brought the meeting's theme into focus: "We gather at a time when our whole world seems fractured. Our country is torn by conflicting rhetoric, by political parties with competing platforms, by race riots and white supremacist "rallies," and by news outlets and social media blogs which fuel the flame of debate. It seems like there is always a division of loyalties, of ideologies, and of purpose. When there is such division, one cannot have a common hope, cannot see a common solution, cannot see a way forward. Unity will elude us."

An impressive group of presenters aided the discussions in Atlanta. Archbishop Gregory spoke on the debates caused by the translation of liturgical texts. Father Don Rooney, a consultant to the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, gave an historic and thought-provoking analysis of the schisms which have beset the Church with a special emphasis on sixteenth century reformers. He spoke hopefully of post-conciliar dialogue and recent efforts by Pope Francis to heal century-old divisions.

Wednesday was a local Study Day which was also attended by local clergy and lay leaders. They were treated to several workshops. First, Dr. Don Saliers of Emory University spoke eloquently about the poor and the psalmody which refers to them. Second, Dr. Eileen Jaramillo addressed the issue of candidates in the RCIA process and offered canonical, pastoral, and liturgical advice. Finally, the participants heard from Pastor Walter Still who spoke about ongoing dialogue and pastoral initiatives between Catholics and Lutherans.

Since its founding, the FDLC National Meeting has been co-sponsored annually by the FDLC and the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship. On Thursday, diocesan leaders heard updates on the progress of the translation of liturgical texts, on the status of liturgical books currently under review at the Vatican, and on other liturgical initiatives. They were especially interested in the implementation of the third edition of the *Misal Romano* and this year's efforts at liturgical catechesis by the FDLC and the Secretariat for Divine Worship.

The celebrations of daily Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours were integral to the meeting. The attendees also participated in a Eucharistic liturgy at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Atlanta, a historic site which survived General Sherman's infamous burning of Atlanta when it was converted to a field hospital for both Union and Confederate soldiers.

The three-day event ended with committee work on various Federation efforts, including plans for the FDLC's fiftieth anniversary next year in Chicago. The meeting closed with a banquet at the Omni Atlanta Hotel at CNN Center.

Rev. Thomas Ranzino of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, retiring Board Chair, was honored with the fifth annual *Alleluia Award* which recognizes a member for distinguished service to the mission of the Federation.

The FDLC's highest honor, the prestigious Frederick R. McManus Award was presented to the National Association of Pastoral Musicians in recognition of its forty-two years of forming pastoral musicians. Founding President, Father Virgil Funk, and current President, Steven Petrunak accepted the award.

The FDLC was established in 1969 by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy. At that time, members of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions from across the country were called together by the bishops in order to provide formation on the liturgical books, newly revised after the Second Vatican Council. ■

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