

FDLC OPENING ADDRESS
October 7, 2015
Rev. Thomas Ranzino

I welcome you to the forty-sixth annual meeting of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions. Our sincere thanks to Regions X and XIII of the Federation, the Bishop's Committee on Divine Worship, and in particular the Diocese of Dallas for preparing this meeting and for offering for our consideration: *The Church at Prayer, Received Fostered and Formed*.

Our Federation is named for the fundamental insight, derived from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, that every Diocese should have a Liturgical Commission to assist the Bishop in the promotion and oversight of liturgical life in a diocese. While our Church structure has evolved to include Offices of Worship, the concept of a Liturgical Commission is still vital. The Commission is the laboratory in which shared expertise, a collaborative vision of Catholic Worship, and a dedication to the principles given in the *Constitution*. In the next few days, we will reaffirm this standard and examine this mission.

For forty-six years this Federation has manifested the importance of diocesan liturgical commissions. We have been true to what and who we are – a national organization composed primarily of members of diocesan liturgical commissions and worship office personnel. We are appointed by our bishops, with the responsibility for the promotion of the liturgical life in our diocese. The FDLC serves as an official collaborating agent between the local churches through diocesan liturgical commissions and worship offices and with the support and collaboration of the USCCB Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship.

Our gathering marks the second year under the leadership of Mrs. Rita Thiron, Executive Director, and a newly -restructured Board of Directors. Together, we hold in trust the Mission of this Federation. The Board continues to examine the present and to look to the future in promoting the liturgical life of the Church in the United States. While the representatives from each of the 14 Regions who make up the Board of Directors have their own duties to their Bishops and dioceses, the Board continues to think broadly, act collaboratively, and serve the good of the entire Federation. I am grateful to each of the Board members for lending their expertise and their time for the Federation. We are the better for it.

What are we as a Federation supposed to be doing?

It's simple: to promote the liturgy as the heart of Christian life- especially in the parish community. We keep our eye on this target. We do this in the following ways:

1. We foster and coordinate the word of diocesan liturgy personnel. One of the greatest benefits of being in the Federation is the network created within the 14 Regions -- colleagues who collaborate, inform, and share resources.
2. We promote liturgical formation: we create materials to aid diocesan liturgical personnel. In all honesty, this is an area in which as a Federation, we have a split mind. We are not a publishing house- yet, we need to publish for income and to promote liturgical formation.
3. We work with the BCDW on matters proposed by the USCCB. Our Mission is a Federation is based on relationships: the relationship between the Executive Director and the Board of Directors; the relationships between the member dioceses in the Regions; the relationship between members and their Bishops; the relationship the Federation has with the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship. In each of these relationships, respect and compassion are always qualities demonstrated. We may not all agree about every "thing", but we can all find our common place in compassion.
4. We are the medium in which diocesan liturgical personnel can contribute responsibility and effectively in articulating the voice of the laity, the clergy and religious in the promotion and development of the liturgy. We have all noticed that the work of the Federation has shifted away from multiple position statements which were at times contentious. This does not mean that our work in liturgical renewal and reform has ended. The great proposition is this: the Federation wants to inform the conversation, to remain true to the Tradition, and to constantly dialogue.
5. Finally, we sponsor with the BCDW and the local host diocese, the National Meeting. This is our yearly opportunity to meet and work. We want you to work: attend the sessions, all of them. Be active in the Committee meeting gatherings on Friday; go to regional caucuses, add your voice, attend the banquet. In short, help the Federation do our work!

What has happened since our last National Meeting?

1. The Board of Directors has reviewed and approved our budget. Under the direction of Rita Thiron, and treasurers, Kathy Proefke and Steve Sallis, the budget priorities have been monitored with accountability.
 - a. Is the Federation financially sound? Yes.
 - b. Is money for our work available? Yes.
 - c. Are we on a tight budget? Always. The key issue is not expenditures, it is finding revenue streams. Folks, this is a key issue. Put your heads around it in your Regions.
2. The Board Committees -- Governance, Member Services, Pastoral Liturgy and Formation -- have been active since last October. The structure of these committees is such that the Committees are not only Board members. You volunteered to help on the various

committees last year. Your offer was given to the Chairs of the committees and they were to contact you. This kind of structure only works if it is done well. The agenda of the Federation lies in the national office or in one these Committees. The Board members cannot research, create conceptualls, write scripts, test results, evaluate those tests, seek funding by themselves. Everyone here needs to have a piece of the wisdom.

3. The revision of the Marriage Rite was awaited last October. The Federation set hopes on national workshops, a pastoral companion and other pieces that could, as did the Roman Missal, be a productive contribution to the liturgical life of the Church. The recognitio took longer than anyone expected, but it has arrived! The final text continues to be scrutinized at the USCCB, but we have been told to prepare, once again, for national workshops and formation on the revised translation. If you attend Dr Judy Bullock's workshop on Friday morning, you can learn more.
4. An initiative regarding the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, a fruit of the last national meeting in Lombard, Illinois, is producing good work. The FDLC intends to be a significant voice in the formation of initiation ministers in parishes in our country.

A Request

I close with a request. In my early years of formation at St Meinrad School of Theology and Notre Dame University, the purpose of the Liturgy was described in two main areas: to praise God and to make us holy. We are professional liturgists, pastoral liturgists. We tend to get caught up in texts, in contradictory rules, in diagraming people in processions, in structuring the look, the feel, the sound, the movement of what the Church has already planned. Sometimes, we get caught up -- missing the forest because of the trees. We notice too much. We realize that something is out of place, someone misses their cue, or something is forgotten, missed, dropped, not quite right, too fast, or too slow. While we notice most everything, most people in the pews have no idea what we are doing. To *smile and look like you know what you are doing* sometimes has to suffice for our desire to make our bishops look good as they lead our liturgies.

I offer this: think about your own spiritual life. Don't neglect what the liturgy does to you. We are not immune to noticing ever detail for the goofs, the miscues -- but don't neglect the One to whom all this worship is aimed. Can you worship the One who calls you by name without being distracted into oblivion by what is not right or what is right? Can you step out of your role as liturgist and seek closeness with the One whose heart is greater than our fears? Or are you like the chef who never eats because s/he is already too full because of the work, never tasking the end result, being too exhausted to engage in the banquet.

I say this not to nag- but to remind us of our true calling. If the liturgy is about salvation and growing in the likeness of the One who loves us without end, then, surprisingly or not, even a

liturgy that is far from perfect holds the power of moving hearts into a deeper intimacy. I am not saying “don’t care” about the liturgy; but rather, “care” for what is most important, with the end in mind: as John Shea says so well in *The Prayer of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*: “a mystery which masks itself as mistake and a power which perfects itself in weakness.”

So, welcome, and have a good week. Engage your colleagues, do the work, enter the prayer, expect to be surprised.