



NewsLetter

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2013 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

The 2013 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions—co-sponsored by the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship and the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC)—took place in Erie, Pennsylvania from October 8-11. 138 Diocesan liturgists plus 50 additional study day participants considered the topic “The Christian Mystery and the Enduring Value of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*” with the assistance of major presentations by Archbishop Piero Marini, Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA, and Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila of Denver. At the opening of the meeting on Tuesday, October 8, Msgr. John Burton, Chairman of the Board of Directors, officially welcomed the FDLC’s new Executive Director, Mrs. Rita Thiron. During the course of the business sessions, the delegates at the National Meeting received reports on the reorganization of the FDLC as it looks to the future.

The Study Day consisted of three major addresses. Archbishop Marini, President of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses and Master of Pontifical Liturgical Celebrations under Blessed John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, opened the day with an address entitled “The Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: The Primacy of the Liturgy in the Life of the Church,” in which he reflected on the history and impact of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Speaking about the influence of the constitution, he said, quoting the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, “the liturgical renewal is the most visible fruit of the entire work of the Council.”

Archbishop Marini set the Second Vatican Council in its historical context, providing background on the decades that led up to the Council. He noted that it was the first Council to be a truly universal council, not simply European or regional. Moreover, it was rightfully called a pastoral council—unique in that this was called to address Church issues, not to react to a crisis of thought from outside entities. This fact, he assessed, tends not to lessen, but to increase, the weight of conciliar decisions.

Drawing on the writings of Blessed John XXIII, Archbishop Marini offered theological reflection on the nature of councils. He said, “Precisely in her Councils, the Church both celebrates Christ’s union with herself and points to the presence of Christ in history. Historical events must therefore, in some sense, be interpreted by believers as a new manifestation of the incarnation: the signs of the times are signs of the continuing presence of the risen Christ in history, through his Spirit.”

Although the Church celebrates this year the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (December 4, 1963), Archbishop Marini asked the participants to look ahead: “The reform has proved faithful to the will of the Council



Archbishops Gregory M. Aymond (New Orleans), Samuel J. Aquila (Denver), and Piero Marini (President of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses) – photo courtesy of Msgr. Rick Hilgartner

Fathers and the basic principles on which it was built are enduring. Its concrete implementation, however, could not and cannot ever be perfect or complete. The Council is not behind us; it still precedes us.”

Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver was the second presenter, and he reflected on the history of Confirmation as a sacrament of initiation. He offered an historical overview of the sacrament from the Acts of the Apostles to our present age. He drew on his experience of restoring the traditional order of the sacraments of initiation in his former Diocese of Fargo. Alluding to Pope Benedict XVI’s words in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Archbishop Aquila noted that this practice “better enables the faithful to put the Sacrament of the Eucharist at the center, as the goal of the whole process of initiation” (no. 18).

Further, Archbishop Aquila noted that “Confirmation is anticipated by Baptism, but the full strength and mission given by the Holy Spirit is lacking without Confirmation... The gift of the Holy Spirit given in Confirmation is ordered to the life of worship. Saint Thomas Aquinas affirms that the seal given in Confirmation qualifies the Christian to participate in worship...”

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA, noted Scripture scholar and professor at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, emphasized in the third presentation how the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy affirmed the role of Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church and set it as an integral part of all liturgical celebrations. The Council called for an increased use of Sacred Scripture and a renewed appreciation of the Bible using the methodology of historical criticism. One must appreciate the genre of the text, the culture of the times, and for whom it was written. A preacher, then, Sr. Bergant noted, has to examine the text in all its dimensions—the word that the text creates, the world that the author creates, and the world of the hearing assembly. She noted, “The story of the Bible is that God remains faithful.”

During the presentation of the Committee on Divine Worship, Archbishop Gregory Aymond, Committee Chairman, addressed the delegates about the work of the Committee. Following his address, Msgr. Rick Hilgartner and the staff of the Secretariat of Divine Worship gave a presentation on its current work and took time to answer questions from the delegates. In his remarks, Archbishop Aymond expressed his gratitude for the work of the FDLC and its members in their own dioceses, and he expressed hope about the future collaboration of the FDLC with the Committee in light of the USCCB’s pastoral plan in regard to the New Evangelization:

This November I will conclude my term as Chairman of the Committee on Divine Worship. When I began my term in November 2010, all of us in the liturgical apostolate were busy preparing for the implementation of the *Roman Missal*, which took place simultaneously throughout the dioceses of the United States on November 27, 2011. We have come a long way since that day, and I want, first of all, to express my gratitude for your work in your dioceses and for the work of the Federation, which took a leading role in the catechetical process. I think the Federation is stronger today for your collaborative efforts with the Bishops’ Committee.

As we conclude the Year of Faith, we don’t just simply set aside this task of proclaiming the Gospel, because this is always the mission of the Church. The current pastoral plan of the Bishops, “Journey with Christ: Faith, Worship, Witness,” is only in its first year. The next three



Staff of the Secretariat for Divine Worship: Rev. Daniel Merz (Associate Director), Ms. Sylvia Sánchez (Multicultural Specialist), and Msgr. Rick Hilgartner (Executive Director) – photo courtesy of Christopher Ferraro

years will see a number of initiatives and resources introduced to help this mission at the national, diocesan, and local levels. I hope that the Liturgy will be a big part of these efforts, because it needs to be. As I conclude my term as Chair of the Committee on Divine Worship, I want to express to you my gratitude for your collaboration, your ministry, and your friendship. Let us together recommit ourselves to this work before us. Last year the participants at the Synod on the New Evangelization offered us this encouragement to celebrate the Liturgy well:

The “primary and most powerful expression of the New Evangelization” is the celebration of the Liturgy. “Evangelization in the Church calls for a liturgy that lifts the hearts of men and women to God. The liturgy is not just a human action but an encounter with God which leads to contemplation and deepening friendship with God. In this sense, the liturgy of the Church is the best school of the faith” (2012 Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, proposition 35).

FDLC Welcomes Mrs. Rita Thiron as New Executive Director

In August 2013, the Board of Directors of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC) announced the appointment of Mrs. Rita Thiron as its Executive Director. Thiron previously served as Director of the Office of Worship of the Diocese of Lansing since 1993. Her pastoral liturgical service has provided rich and diverse experiences in her home parish, through her diocesan office work, and in significant national liturgical organizations. She holds a Masters in Liturgical Studies from the University of Notre Dame. Thiron has been a member of the FDLC since 1993. In addition to an impressive service record as a Board member, she served as Vice Chair of the Board from 2006 until 2010. As Executive Director of the FDLC, Thiron serves as a consultant to the Committee on Divine Worship.

At the same time, the Committee on Divine Worship bids farewell and expresses deep gratitude to Mrs. Lisa Tarker, who completed her service as FDLC Executive Director in July 2013, after nearly 12 years of loyal and dedicated service. Her tireless efforts on behalf of the FDLC and her service to the Committee on Divine Worship during that time have contributed much to the ongoing reform of the liturgy, especially in preparation of the implementation of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*.

Rev. Paul Turner Presented with 2013 McManus Award



Msgr. John Burton (FDLC Chairman) and Mrs. Rita Thiron (FDLC Executive Director) present the Frederick R. McManus Award to Rev. Paul Turner – photo courtesy of Msgr. Rick Hilgartner

On October 11, 2013, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions awarded the Frederick R. McManus Award to Rev. Paul Turner, a priest of the Dioceses of Kansas City–St. Joseph and a noted scholar on the liturgy. He is past president of the North American Academy of Liturgy and a prolific writer of books and articles. This award particularly recognized his outstanding contributions to dioceses, presbyterates, and parishes as they prepared for the implementation of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*.

In accepting the McManus Award, Turner encouraged the assembly to listen to God’s call. “Other people might know you better than you do. Always, God knows you better than you do... You may not know what all your gifts are. But when you figure them out, you’ll also realize that you got them for a reason. You got those gifts because you are the right person. Give them back for the glory of God.”

50 Years of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: Sacred Art and Furnishings

Very rightly the fine arts are considered to rank among the noblest activities of man's genius, and this applies especially to religious art and to its highest achievement, which is sacred art. These arts, by their very nature, are oriented toward the infinite beauty of God which they attempt in some way to portray by the work of human hands... Holy Mother Church has therefore always been the friend of the fine arts and has ever sought their noble help, with the special aim that **all things set apart for use in divine worship should be truly worthy, becoming, and beautiful, signs and symbols of the supernatural world**, and for this purpose she has trained artists.

— *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 122
(emphasis added)

The final chapter of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy takes up a theme that is both inspiration and evangelization, the theme of translating the transcendental “Beauty” into a visual feast for the liturgy. The original Artist spoke a beautiful word that came to be in creation, supremely in the incarnation, but also in Mary, “the masterwork of the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the fullness of time” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 721). “All artists who, prompted by their talents, desire to serve God's glory in holy Church, should ever bear in mind that they are engaged in a kind of sacred imitation of God the Creator, and are concerned with works destined to be used in Catholic worship, to edify the faithful, and to foster their piety and their religious formation” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 127).

Taking her cue from the vast and beautiful diversity in God's own creation, the Church “has admitted styles from every period according to the natural talents and circumstances of peoples, and the needs of the various rites” (no. 123). We must be mindful not to place the limits of our own preferences upon the kinds of art deemed acceptable for the Church's worship. There are two main

criteria, then, which the Church bears in mind for judging whether to admit a piece of art or furnishing into the Sacred Liturgy: its aesthetic/noble quality (which will inevitably include some subjective judgment), and its suitability to the “needs of the various rites.” Sacred art is neither pure expression nor pure function. In the Church, even beauty must serve, being trained and disciplined in order to be of service for a higher cause: the raising of hearts and minds to God (prayer), and the communication of grace through signs and symbols (sanctification). The constitution notes the importance of beauty being ordered by reason and informed by faith: “The practice of placing sacred images in churches so that they may be venerated by the faithful is to be maintained. Nevertheless their number should be moderate and their relative positions should reflect right order” (no. 125). These kinds of boundary limits are also expressed specifically for the diocesan bishop: “Ordinaries... should strive after noble beauty rather than mere sumptuous display” (no. 124).

In his 2009 address to artists in the Sistine Chapel, Pope Benedict XVI quoted from Hans Urs von Balthasar to show how beauty, truth and goodness are integrally related: “Beauty... forms a halo, an untouchable crown around the double constellation of the true and the good and their inseparable relation to one another.” The criteria for sacred use should never be only a subjective matter of personal taste, but also reflect theological and liturgical principles. This is why the constitution encourages the formation of clergy in the principles of sacred art (no. 129), as well as the creation of diocesan commissions dedicated to liturgy, music and art (nos. 44-46 and 126). *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is also witness to the desire by the council fathers that artists themselves be included in the pastoral outreach and care of the Church. “Bishops should have a special concern for artists, so as to imbue them with the spirit of sacred art and of the sacred liturgy... It is also desirable that schools or academies of sacred art should be founded... so that artists may be trained” (no. 127). This is certainly a challenge still relevant for many in the Church today, namely, that instead of simply lamenting the quality of sacred art available to the Church, we take an active role in forming and catechizing a new generation of artists, imbuing in them the spirit of the liturgy with the sound principles found in the constitution. Pope Paul VI, addressing artists in May 1964, acknowledged the reciprocal relationship between artists and the magisterium, going so far as to say, “If we were deprived of your assistance, our ministry would become faltering and uncertain, and a special effort would be needed, one might say, to make it artistic, even prophetic. In order to scale the heights of lyrical expression of intuitive beauty, priesthood would have to coincide with art.” The Church's insight is that sacred art itself must be sacramental, reflecting the divine mysteries it portrays. The French writer, Simone Weil, sums this up well: “In all that awakens within us the pure and authentic sentiment of beauty, there, truly, is the presence of God. There is a kind of incarnation of God in the world, of which beauty is the sign.”