



NewsLetter

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Bishop Mark Seitz Addresses the 2014 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

The 2014 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions took place in Lombard, Illinois on October 1-3, 2014. Delegates from 103 dioceses considered the theme The RCIA: Ever Ancient, Ever New. Various issues surrounding the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults were raised, assisted by major presentations from Dr. Mary Gautier, Rev. Ronald Lewinski, and Rev. Paul Turner. Bishop Mark J. Seitz, Bishop of El Paso and member of the Committee on Divine Worship, addressed the delegates during the meeting in place of the Committee Chairman, Bishop Arthur Serratelli:

I'm pleased to be able to be present at this national meeting of the FDLC and in particular to represent Bishop Serratelli and the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship. The collaboration between our Committee and the FDLC has been from the beginning of the FDLC, and continues to be, an important and fruitful collaboration for the liturgical life of the Church in our country.

The theme for this meeting which focuses on the RCIA is one that is close to the heart of all Bishops, because at root this is about fulfilling the great commandment that Christ entrusted to the Apostles: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19).

The second part of that great command should not be forgotten. We don't simply rush out and baptize people in an emotional high. We ritually accompany them on their journey gradually opening them to the mystery of God's grace, teach them the fullness of the faith; we form their hearts in the image and likeness of Christ, we incorporate them into our communities and we support them week in and week out with our faith, our worship, and our witness.

RCIA is not a flash in the pan, because the Christian life is not a flash in the pan. Christ comes into our lives for the long haul, which is why we build schools and churches and hospitals and hospices and relief agencies—and why we construct an initiation program that goes on for months and months, and—in one regard, hopefully—never ends. It's something that takes time: God's time, not our time. It can't be neatly packaged into a program or a school year. It takes effort; and it takes learning and wisdom. In our reflections during this meeting, we follow in the footsteps of Initiation luminaries like Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, and Cyril of Jerusalem.

I don't think I exaggerate to say that the U.S. Church is a model for much of the world in the extent to which we have embraced the RCIA model and had it bear great fruit in our culture and context. It is sad to note that, although it is normative for the Church throughout the world and not proposed simply as an option, the RCIA is little known in much of the Church to this day. Clearly, much work lies ahead on a global level for the implementation of this rich rediscovery. Might we in the United States be a part of this rediscovery by sharing what we have learned in our celebration of the RCIA?

I understand that there may be some concerns among some individuals that our U.S. adaptations for the RCIA may not be renewed. Let me speak to that briefly. As far as my understanding goes, those concerns are without foundation, and what is more, the U.S. bishops believe firmly in the RCIA model that we have in the United States and are eager to see it continue. Your help in reviewing the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* and other aspects of the Rite itself is an important part of ensuring that the good work being done with the RCIA in our country will continue. Thank you in advance for your engagement and consultation during these days. We want to hear your voices on this topic, and I personally look forward to engaging with you over it in the coming days.

I want to highlight a few liturgical matters that are important for the bishops in the present day:

New Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

We continue to await with "fear and trembling" the naming of a new Prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Given the scope of translation work that lies ahead of us, this is particularly important. Please join with me in praying for whoever the new person will be, that the Lord bless him for the many tasks that he will face.

Staff of the Secretariat of Divine Worship

While not on the same level as the Prefect of a Roman Congregation, we are nevertheless very pleased to welcome Fr. Michael Flynn as the Executive Director of the Secretariat. Fr. Mike made it through his first Administrative Committee meeting last month with flying colors and he continues to settle into his new role with competence and with our support and encouragement.

The Associate Director, Fr. Dan Merz, will soon complete his time with the Secretariat. Following the November meeting of the Bishops, Fr. Dan will head back to his Diocese of Jefferson City in December, where he will receive a parish assignment. The Bishops are grateful for the hard work and leadership of all the Secretariat staff.

Spanish Liturgical Texts

The growing presence of Hispanics in the U.S. Church is a great joy that enriches our parishes and dioceses. We are growing, too slowly, but growing in our awareness of and ability to minister within the Hispanic context. This is reflected, for example, in the liturgical concerns of the Conference. While the status of the *Leccionario* is still pending, we already enjoy now in the U.S. Spanish versions of the *Ritual para el Bautismo de los Niños*, *Ritual del Matrimonio*, *Ritual de Exequias Cristianas*, *Ritual para la Confirmation*, and very soon, hopefully, the *Misal Romano*. We are hopeful that the *recognitio* will be received any day now from Rome and that you may have it on your shelves by next year.

Language is an essential aspect of culture, and having these books in Spanish is a sign of our desire to minister more fully to this growing part of our flock. Certainly, there is much that needs to be done, not least of all on the parish and diocesan level. We need to work harder not only in welcoming Latinos, but in bringing them into leadership positions within the Church structure. I think this is another area where the FDLC can be a key collaborator with the U.S. Bishops.

Revision of the Liturgy of the Hours

A revised English Liturgy of the Hours is in the works, but is still years from completion. The Revised Grail Psalms was approved by the U.S. Bishops a few years back. The translation came back to the Bishops from Rome with some corrections. A "revision of the revision" will be before the Bishops in November. It is a long

process, but hopefully we can keep it moving forward. The version that first went to the Holy See is available, if you wish to see it, from GIA Publications.

Synod of Bishops on the Family

A key event going on right now in the Church is the Extraordinary Synod on the Family with its theme examining the Pastoral Challenges of the Family. These challenges which the family faces have a liturgical dimension as well, particularly in the formational approaches and supportive resources we can marshal and offer to families today. We would do well for our part to consider how our liturgies can be more family-friendly, more supportive of families. A parish I previously served comes to mind in this context. It was a large affluent parish where the liturgy was extremely well-planned, flawlessly executed, with outstanding music suited well to the feast, but in which children were unseen and unheard. How can we carve out a place within the liturgy for children and adolescents, for the elderly and the handicapped? Is the answer to divide the community into interest groups (cry rooms, children's liturgies, teen Masses, etc.), or can we find ways to allow the liturgy to truly gather and unite the whole family of God?

Human nature being what it is, there will always be challenges to face in proclaiming the Gospel message, in celebrating the Paschal Mystery with reverent joy and holy fervor, and in living what we celebrate in word and act. Still, some 50 years since the groundbreaking *Sacrosanctum Concilium* the work of the full implementation of the liturgical renewal and the changed attitudes of mind and heart to which we have been called still lie before us.

The pastoral experience that all of you can bring to these challenges is a gift to the Church, certainly to us Bishops. In their name, I want to thank you for the hard work that you have done and continue to do on behalf of the Gospel, and specifically on behalf of the Church's liturgical and catechetical life in the United States. Our joy and our hope—which we maintain in the face of whatever challenges—are grounded in our faith that Christ, our great High Priest, is with us; he loves us and he walks with us all the days of our life; indeed, he walks with us all the way into the new heaven and new earth that is to come.

God bless each of you and may God bless our work in the coming days.

Highlights of the 2014 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) and its implementation were the focus of intensive study and discussion at the National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions in Lombard, Illinois from October 1-3, 2014. Attended by over 220 diocesan liturgical leaders, the theme of the meeting was “The RCIA: Ever Ancient, Ever New.”

The centerpiece of the meeting's discussions was a recent survey co-sponsored by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC), the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship, and the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis. Conducted during the spring and summer of 2014 by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), the survey consisted of around 100 detailed questions examining such issues as the length of the RCIA process, the ministers who perform the various rites, the use of the Combined Rites versus separate rites for catechumens and previously baptized candidates for full communion with the Catholic Church, along with many other areas of liturgical practice and catechesis pertaining to the RCIA. Five thousand randomly selected parishes in the United States had been invited to participate in the survey. Highlights of the survey's findings were presented to attendants by Dr. Mary Gautier of CARA. The findings of this survey will be shared with the Committee on Divine Worship at their November 2014 meeting for further discussion and planning.

Noted for their scholarship and expertise in the area of the RCIA, Rev. Ron Lewinski (Archdiocese of Chicago) and Rev. Paul Turner (Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph) offered responses to the survey. Fr. Lewinski, in focusing on the pastoral dimension, lauded the growth and acceptance of the RCIA in dioceses across the United States, but noted cautiously that greater attention needed to be given to preparation and adequate catechesis prior

to Initiation, a task which cannot always be accomplished in only a few months. In his reflection on the theological implications of the findings of the survey, Fr. Turner recalled the development of the rites for the reception of baptized Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church, and reminded attendees that the reception into full communion was intended to be celebrated when needed at Sunday liturgies throughout the year.

Following two days of reviewing the survey, together with expert commentary and table discussions on the fruits and challenges of the RCIA in their dioceses and communities, the attendees entered a second major phase of the meeting – a formal consultation on the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate*. Approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1986 and confirmed by the Holy See in 1988, the National Statutes provide detailed instructions for dioceses in the United States on the various parts of the RCIA, and on the appropriate celebration of the liturgical rites which mark the stages in the journey toward Christian Initiation. Although a revised English translation of the RCIA is still some years in the future, a summary of the comments and recommendations by the FDLC on the National Statutes are intended as an aid to the U.S. Bishops as they consider what, if any, changes may be desirable for the National Statutes.

This year's Frederick R. McManus Award, the FDLC's highest honor, was awarded to Msgr. Kevin W. Irwin, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to liturgical scholarship and ministerial formation. A priest of the Archdiocese of New York, Msgr. Irwin presently holds the Walter J. Schmitz Chair of Liturgical Studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, where he also served as the Dean of Theology and Religious Studies. The author of sixteen books and numerous articles in the field of liturgical theology and praxis, Msgr. Irwin noted in his remarks that the important role of so many of his former students in areas of liturgical leadership and scholarship was a particular source of pride for him.

The next National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions is slated for October 7-9, 2015, in Dallas, Texas.

Liturgical Calendar Advisory for the Immaculate Conception

December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, will fall on a Monday this year. In accord with the USCCB decision of November 1991, confirmed by the Holy See in July 1992, the precept to attend Mass on this Solemnity is maintained, even when it falls on a Saturday or Monday. Therefore, Monday, December 8, 2014, will be a holy day of obligation for the faithful in the United States.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception begins with Morning Prayer on Monday, December 8, and concludes with the celebration of Evening Prayer II. Because an Advent Sunday takes precedence over a Solemnity in the Table of Liturgical Days, any Mass celebrated on the evening of Sunday, December 7 would be the Mass of the Second Sunday of Advent, not an anticipated Mass for the Immaculate Conception.

Administrative Committee Approves Shrine of St. Alphonsus Liguori as National Shrine

The USCCB Administrative Committee voted on September 9, 2014 to grant the designation of National Shrine to the Shrine of Saint Alphonsus Liguori in Baltimore, Maryland. Responding to the request of Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, the Committee on Divine Worship examined the Shrine's application, conducted a site visit, and ultimately recommended approval of the designation at their June 2014 meeting.

Founded in 1800 as St. John's Church, the parish was given over to the care of the Redemptorist Fathers in August 1840. After renaming the parish in honor of St. Alphonsus Liguori and constructing a new church building, Saint John Neumann served as its first rector, and was ordained there as Bishop of Philadelphia in 1852. Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos also served as rector from 1854-1857. The parish was returned to archdiocesan administration in 1917 and became the national parish for the Lithuanian community. Today, the National Shrine of St. Alphonsus Liguori has become a place of devotion to St. John Neumann and Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos, while continuing as a parish within the Archdiocese of Baltimore.