



NewsLetter

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Mr. Matthew M. Godbey
Administrative Assistant
Mr. David K. Ringwald
Staff Assistant

**USCCB Secretariat of
Divine Worship**
3211 Fourth Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017
Tel: (202) 541-3060
Fax: (202) 541-3088
www.USCCB.org

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Cancellation of Fall 2018 Committee and Subcommittee Meetings, Postponement of Liturgy Action Items

The Committee on Divine Worship approved two new translations prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) at its June 2018 meeting: the final Gray Book translation of *Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons* and the first half of the hymnody for the *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition*. When the USCCB Administrative Committee set the agenda for the November 2018 plenary meeting, however, they judged it prudent that the bishops should focus the majority of their time and attention on more urgent matters, particularly concerning the current clerical sex abuse crisis. Therefore, the two liturgical action items were not accepted for canonical vote at this time. They will be resubmitted to the Administrative Committee for vote at a future plenary meeting.

Since the Committee no longer needs to discuss proposed modifications or amendments to these two translations, and no other pressing liturgical matters appear to require discussion, the November 11, 2018 meeting of the Committee has been cancelled. The Secretariat of Divine Worship anticipates two Committee meetings in 2019.

Finally, the meeting of the Subcommittee on Divine Worship in Spanish, originally scheduled for October 9, 2018 in Washington, DC, was also cancelled due to the lack of quorum. At least one meeting of the Subcommittee is planned for 2019.

From Liturgical Apostolate to Divine Worship: The Introduction of Vernacular Languages into the Liturgy

One of the issues that occupied the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy during the first decades of the liturgical reform was the introduction of vernacular languages into the liturgy of the Church in the United States. It is, in a sense, the story of four legislative documents from 1963 to 2001, and of the collaboration between the Holy See and the Conferences of Bishops. The use of the vernacular illuminates one of the many aspects of the Church's efforts to promote the "full, conscious, and active participation" of the People of God in the sacred liturgy.

Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the NCCB Decree *Ut universi Christi

The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy authorized Conferences of Bishops to determine which languages to introduce into the liturgy (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 36, §3). Less than four months after the Constitution's promulgation, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) approved a decree

on April 2, 1964 – *Ut universi Christi* – establishing English as the first vernacular liturgical language for the United States. The same decree also permitted the use of other vernacular languages under specific circumstances:

Where in the judgment of the local Ordinary, the true and certain necessity of the Church requires it, in liturgical services which are celebrated with the attendance of people of another language, the same local Ordinary may permit the use of the mother tongue of the people. This is allowed under the same conditions determined for the English language, but according to a version approved by a competent territorial ecclesiastical authority of the same language... (no. 6)

The NCCB decree was confirmed by the Holy See’s *Consilium* for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy on May 1, 1964. It was to be another nineteen years, however, before a second vernacular language was approved for widespread liturgical use in the United States.

Decem iam annos

In 1976, the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship sent the letter *Decem iam annos* (DIA) – “On Use of the Vernacular in the Liturgy” – to conference presidents. One of the issues addressed in the letter was the criteria for a vernacular language to be introduced into the liturgy. Three criteria were identified: a proposed vernacular liturgical language should 1) be a living language spoken by the people; 2) be taught in schools; and 3) be approved by the Conference of Bishops (cf. August-September 1983 *Newsletter*, found in *35 Years of the BCL Newsletter, 1965-2000 [35 Years]*, pg. 873). The letter also cautioned against approving “an excessive number of particular languages” since “[a] manageable uniformity of liturgical languages within a country” contributes to the participation of the faithful and the preparation of liturgical books “that are sound and precise in doctrine, worthy and complete, and of other resources serving the faithful” (DIA, no. 1, found in *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979*, no. 912). Each vernacular language introduced into the liturgy required confirmation by the Holy See.

During the 1980s, several vernacular languages were approved for liturgical use in the United States: Navajo in 1983, Choctaw in 1984, Spanish in 1985, Pima-Papago in 1987, and Lakota in 1989. (More recently, Laguna Keres was approved in 2002.) In announcing the approval of Choctaw, the September 1984 *Newsletter* described the use of Choctaw, addressing the three criteria outlined by the Congregation in DIA. First, Choctaw was a living language: at the time of its approval, it was the primary language for 97% of the Choctaw people living in Mississippi, and used by more than 40,000 people in Oklahoma, Alabama, and Louisiana. Second, it was taught in the school system on the reservation. Finally, it was duly approved by the NCCB Administrative Committee on September 11, 1984 and confirmed by the Congregation for Divine Worship on October 1, 1984.

The process which led to the approval of Spanish is also instructive. An important factor was the 1964 NCCB decree permitting the celebration of the liturgy in a vernacular language using liturgical books approved by a Conference of Bishops of the same language. One concern that arose was the lack of a uniform Spanish translation of the liturgical books – ritual books were used from a number of Spanish-speaking countries. The *Newsletter* noted that “these books often differ significantly one from the other... Such variation causes some confusion and hinders the unity of liturgical assemblies of many Spanish-speaking people” (September 1984, found in *35 Years*, pg. 925). The Committee on the Liturgy recommended that the conference seek the approval of Spanish as a liturgical language so that it could “approve a single adapted version of Spanish-language liturgical books for uniform use in the dioceses of the United States” (September 1984 *Newsletter*, italics original). The conference agreed, and the Holy See confirmed the request on January 19, 1985. Since that time, a number of Spanish-language liturgical books have been adapted and confirmed for the United States; the latest is the *Misal Romano, Tercera Edición*, entering into mandatory use on the First Sunday of Advent 2018.

Liturgiam authenticam

Additional guidance came with the 2001 instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* (LA), “On the Use of Vernacular Languages in the Publication of the Books of the Roman Liturgy,” which addressed the criteria for introducing vernacular languages into the liturgy. LA distinguishes between languages that are used “for pastoral communication” and those “that are to be used in the Sacred Liturgy” (no. 11). It also urges consideration of the resources needed to support a given language, not only the number of clergy and laity competent in the language,

but also the availability of scholars and experts who can prepare translations of the liturgical books and the necessary financial and technical resources for preparing and printing the books. It reiterates the principle given in DIA of not increasing the number of liturgical languages “too greatly” so as to foster “a certain unity of language” within a given country. Although the criteria outlined in LA preclude some languages from full liturgical use, the instruction does suggest ways that they can still be included in the liturgy: “in the Prayer of the Faithful, in the sung texts, in the invitations or instructions given to the people, or in parts of the homily, especially if the language is proper to some of Christ’s faithful who are in attendance” (no. 13).

Timeline of the Committee on Divine Worship, 1970-1980

Continuing the timeline begun in the August 2018 Newsletter (from 1958 to 1970), highlights of the Committee on Divine Worship during the 1970s are presented here. The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy (BCL) was very active in the reform of the liturgy, issuing a number of pastoral statements and guidelines, and overseeing the approval and implementation of the first wave of liturgical books after the Second Vatican Council.

February 14, 1971	BCL statement “Place of Women in the Liturgy”
November 28, 1971	Implementation of the <i>Rite of Baptism of Children</i> and <i>Rite of Marriage</i>
1972	BCL statement “Music in Catholic Worship”
July 1974	Publication of the <i>Sacramentary</i> , approved for use on the First Sunday of Advent
September 1974	Provisional English translation of the <i>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</i>
1975	First BCL guidelines on the publication of liturgical books and materials
June 5, 1975	Holy See confirms the English translation of Eucharistic Prayers for Masses with children and for reconciliation, for <i>ad experimentum</i> use for three years
November 1976	BCL statement “The Sign of Peace”
June 17, 1977	Holy See grants U.S. indult for optional practice of Holy Communion in the hand, at the discretion of the diocesan bishop
September 15, 1977	Implementation of the <i>Rite of Confirmation</i>
November 1977	BCL statements “Environment and Art in Catholic Worship” and “A Call to Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours”
March 1978	Founding and first convention of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM)
April 1978	BCL statement “Christian Commitment,” drawing on liturgical elements from different rites and celebrations to explain one’s life in Christ from initial acceptance to viaticum
November 1978	NCCB approves BCL proposal to expand Holy Communion under both kinds
October 1979	BCL statement “General Intercessions,” with concerns that included a local rather than universal focus; “didactic, partisan, or tendentious” petitions; and structural and stylistic elements

2018 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions

The 2018 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions took place in Atlanta, Georgia on October 2-4, 2018. Nearly 150 delegates from eighty-five U.S. dioceses considered the theme “The Body of Christ: A Prophetic Sign of Unity and Concord.” The current state of division – in the country, world, and Christian communities – was considered, with the hope of encouraging pastoral activities that could help address these distressing problems. Mrs. Rita Thiron, Executive Director of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC), captured the importance of efforts to work for peace in her opening remarks: “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.”

In addition to liturgies celebrated in the hotel meeting space, attendees had the opportunity to participate in two Masses celebrated in historic Atlanta churches. Atlanta Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Divine Worship, presided at the downtown Basilica of the Sacred Heart, and Auxiliary Bishop Bernard E. Shlesinger presided at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The latter parish survived General Sherman’s burning of Atlanta when it was converted to a field hospital for both Union and Confederate soldiers.

Archbishop Gregory also spoke at the first plenary session during the study day portion of the meeting, addressing the ongoing question of liturgical translations. His presentation included an overview of the initial post-conciliar efforts to put the liturgical texts into the vernacular, and an examination of the way the principles of translation have evolved over the last fifty years. While praising the doctrinal accuracy and the Biblical allusions found in the current English translation of the *Roman Missal*, and noting that the elevated language it uses can be an expression of love, he recognized that it is not permanently frozen in its current form and suggested that at some point it will need revision.

A second plenary session featured an address by Rev. Don Rooney of the Diocese of Arlington, and a consultant to the USCCB Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Father Rooney analyzed some of the divisions which have beset the Church, with a special emphasis on the events of the sixteenth century. He spoke hopefully of post-conciliar dialogue and of recent efforts by Pope Francis to heal centuries-old wounds. Three workshops were also part of the study day. Dr. Don Saliers of Emory University spoke about the poor and the Psalms which refer to them. Dr. Eileen Jaramillo, a canon lawyer, addressed issues relating to Eastern Christians and the RCIA process, and offered canonical, pastoral, and liturgical advice. Finally, Lutheran pastor Walter Still spoke about ongoing dialogue and pastoral initiatives between Catholics and Lutherans.

Representatives of the USCCB Secretariat of Divine Worship were also on hand to talk about liturgical news from the Bishops’ Conference. Rev. Andrew Menke, Executive Director, provided an update on current projects regarding various liturgical books. Ms. Carmen Aguinaco, Multicultural Specialist, reviewed the activity of the Subcommittee on Divine Worship in Spanish, particularly liturgical catechesis connected to the implementation of the U.S. edition of the *Misal Romano*. Finally, Rev. Randy Stice, Associate Director, commented on the early stages of the preparation of a new edition of the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*.

The Board of Directors chose Rev. James W. Bessert of the Diocese of Saginaw as its new Chairman. Rev. Thomas C. Ranzino of the Diocese of Baton Rouge, retiring Chairman, was honored with the fifth annual Alleluia Award which recognizes a member for distinguished service to the mission of the FDLC. The FDLC’s highest honor, the Frederick R. McManus Award, was presented to the National Association of Pastoral Musicians in recognition of over forty years of forming pastoral musicians. Founding President Rev. Virgil Funk, and current President Steven Petrunak accepted the award.

Preparations are already underway for the 2019 National Meeting, which will be held in Chicago, and will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the FDLC.