



# NewsLetter

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Volume LI

November 2015

## **Bishop Braxton Addresses the 2015 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions**

*The 2015 National Meeting of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions took place in Dallas, Texas on October 7-9, 2015. Nearly 200 delegates from U.S. dioceses considered the theme The Church at Prayer: Faith Received, Fostered, and Formed. Various issues surrounding liturgy, ecclesiology, and the role of diocesan liturgical commissions as advisors to bishops were considered, assisted by major presentations from Msgr. Paul McPartlan and Msgr. John Foster. The Msgr. Frederick R. McManus Award for 2015 was presented to Sr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S., in recognition of her outstanding contributions to liturgical scholarship and ministerial formation.*

*Bishop Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Belleville and member of the Committee on Divine Worship, addressed the delegates during the meeting, and his thoughtful presentation is reproduced here for the benefit of our readers:*

May the peace of Jesus Christ be with all of you! This afternoon, on behalf of Bishop Serratelli, our Chairman, and the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, I am certainly very pleased to greet all of you and wish all of you a Spirit-filled time together.

### **Information Update**

Since last year's Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions meeting in Lombard, Illinois, the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship has met twice, in November and in June, prior to the meetings of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. During this past year, there have been liturgical developments in several areas.

In November, His Holiness Pope Francis appointed His Eminence Robert Cardinal Sarah to be the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, a position that was vacant at this time last year. There have also been changes in the staff of this Congregation. I have known Cardinal Sarah since his time as President of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum* and I spoke with him just last month during the World Meeting of Families. His prayerful spirit, his love for the liturgy, and his fluent knowledge of English are surely assets to his new position. There should be no language issues regarding communication between our Conference and the Congregation.

The Conference's Secretariat for Divine Worship also has seen some changes in staff. Father Michael Flynn has now been the Executive Director for over a year, and he has become quite familiar with the work of the Secretariat. He and the staff provided very good assistance during the Papal visit. Father Andrew Menke, a priest of the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, became the new Associate Director in May, filling a position

vacant for almost six months following the departure of Father Daniel Merz. Father Menke has a licentiate from the Pontifical Liturgical Institute at Sant'Anselmo in Rome. His experience working as a diocesan Master of Ceremonies and as an official in the Congregation for Divine Worship should be an asset to the Secretariat. Recently, Sylvia Sánchez, the Secretariat's Multicultural Specialist, informed us that she will be returning to her Diocese, St. Petersburg, Florida, to assume important liturgical duties. We are grateful for her very helpful service to the Secretariat. A search has begun to find someone to succeed her.

The project of revising the English translation of the *Liturgy of the Hours* is still years from completion, but steady progress does continue to be made. The translators with the International Commission on English in the Liturgy continue to work through its various sections; the translators are working diligently. At the present time, they are concentrating especially on the intercessions and on the antiphons for the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat*.

In recent years, the Holy See has insisted on unified worldwide English translations of liturgical texts, with the exception of the Scriptural texts. The various Bishops' Conferences have some latitude in determining the best Biblical translation to use in their own areas. With that in mind, the Conference has been moving forward in preparing Scriptural elements of the revised *Liturgy of the Hours*. Last November, the Bishops approved a series of further revisions in the *Revised Grail Psalms*. This was done partly as a "counteroffer" to revisions that the Holy See made to the first draft of the translation, and partly in response to experience gained by several religious communities who have been using these Psalms in their regular prayer. Last June, the Bishops approved a new translation of the Old and New Testament Canticles of the breviary, which were prepared by Conception Abbey. So, together with our existing New American Bible, the Biblical elements of our revised *Liturgy of the Hours* are falling into place. The last two elements will still require the *recognitio* of the Holy See.

The Holy See has been gently encouraging the English-speaking Conferences to try to come to a consensus on Scriptural translations for the liturgy. The growing ease of international travel and communication and the growing worldwide influence of the English language obviously are factors here. The possibility of finding a Psalter that could be adopted in common will be discussed in the upcoming International Commission on English in the Liturgy meeting. We look forward to hearing the observations that the representatives of various groups will have about this question. This is a project that may or may not come to fruition. Therefore, it is premature to say what impact, if any, it would have on our new breviary.

Unfortunately, even as the importance of Hispanic ministry in our country continues to grow, the situation with our Spanish liturgical texts has not developed very much in this past year. The Conference is still waiting for word from the Holy See on the approval of the *Misal Romano* for the United States, as well as the progress of the *Leccionario* project for this country. This has continued to move quite slowly. Hopefully, this situation will have changed by this time next year. We all know that many parishes are in need of new Spanish Missals. We also know that pastoral concerns arise when different Spanish translations are being used, even in neighboring parishes. It will be very helpful to have some uniformity in Spanish liturgy in this country as soon as possible.

I know many of you have been waiting anxiously for the approval and publication of the revised Marriage rites. Although the *recognitio* of the Holy See for the English text has finally arrived, some serious discrepancies between the approved Spanish text for the United States and this new English translation have become apparent. After this information update, I will now turn to more theological and pastoral observations.

### **Liturgy as Drama**

For many years, I served as the personal theologian and chancellor for theological affairs to James Cardinal Hickey, Archbishop of Washington. In 1980, when he was Bishop of Cleveland, I assisted him in drafting a pastoral letter on the liturgy, called "Let Us Give Thanks to the Lord Our God." (That letter is published in *Origins*, and you will find there the analogy of liturgy to drama well-developed.)

Your focus this week is "The Church at Prayer: Faith Received, Fostered and Formed." Every faithful bishop, priest, and deacon, like every faithful liturgical minister, knows that his spiritual life and ministry are nourished by the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation in the Eucharist, since the Mass is source and summit of authentic

Catholic spirituality. But this may not mean that everyone who is ordained and every lay minister has the interest, time, expertise, or disposition that is necessary for thinking about, studying, and actually attending to the many and sometimes minute details involved in the effective celebration of the sacred rites of the Church, which help us to form and foster the faith that has been received. While it is imperative for every ordained minister to attend to his interior preparation for public worship (including personal prayer – especially *lectio divina* – spiritual direction, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, frequent confession), it is understandable that ordained ministers, pressed by other matters, may not always be able to give as much attention to the details of remote and proximate preparation for liturgical celebrations as they would like.

Nevertheless, these details are important for meaningful and effective liturgical celebrations. The Sacred Liturgy, celebrated according to the mind of the Church with prayerfulness and beauty, is one of the fundamental ways by which we hold and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the apostles. This is why there are many situations in which parish liturgy committees or liturgical commissions, or diocesan offices of worship or liturgical commissions, are not simply very helpful resources for the appropriate preparation of public prayer of the Church. They are, in fact, simply *necessary*: necessary resources for the bishop and the priests who have a kind of four-fold role during the celebration of the liturgy: celebrating the Sacrament, praying in public, presiding over public prayer, and assisting those gathered for the liturgy in engaging in public and communal prayer as well.

Good liturgy, therefore, is in many ways like good theater. Recently, I had the wonderful opportunity to be invited to see a performance of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s brilliant, ground-breaking Broadway play, “Hamilton,” which dramatizes the relationship between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr with hip-hop and rap music and lyrics. Watching this remarkable production, I was amazed by the extraordinary attention that had been paid to the many details which contributed to the overall and powerful impact of the production. Clearly there was exceptional remote and proximate preparation as well as a profound interior preparation on the part of all the performers. Prayerful liturgy is not entertainment. However, good liturgy is *like* good theater, though it is not exactly the same as theater. Parish and diocesan liturgy commissions, as well as bishops, priests, deacons, lectors, music ministers, sacristans, and altar servers, would benefit from considering carefully this analogy. Good liturgies do not just happen. Whether it is the 6:30 AM weekday Mass for a few in a parish, or the ordination of priests in the cathedral church with standing room only, attention to detail is important.

Sadly, the People of God often participate in liturgies which would not move theater audiences to applause. I am sure you know the experience. As the people are gathered for Sunday Mass, they do not see a sanctuary in readiness or hear prayerful and serene music. Instead, there is a flurry of last-minute activity in the sanctuary. It sometimes happens that ministers of the liturgy (including we who are priests) arrive in a cluttered sacristy without sufficient time to attend to the practical details before the liturgy *and* to recollect ourselves in silence before the rite begins. Lectors have not prayerfully familiarized themselves with the sacred text. Liturgical vestures may lack beauty and vibrant color. They may not fit the priest celebrant. The sanctuary may be cluttered with irrelevant liturgical furnishing. Prayers or readings may be mumbled inaudibly, or rushed beyond comprehension. The microphones may not work properly. Appropriate times for pause and silence are neglected. Liturgical gestures are not entered into as embodiment of personal prayer. In some cases the celebrants, lectors, cantors, and musicians seem to be competing with each other for the attention of the faithful. The end of the Mass is marred by an interminable list of not particularly relevant announcements. A drama thus performed would surely win no ovation. A competent, pastoral parish liturgy committee or liturgy commission, and diocesan liturgy commissions, can make all the difference, particularly in remote and proximate preparation and attention to detail when all involve reflect on liturgy as drama.

### **The Church at Prayer**

During your annual meeting here in Dallas, you turn your attention to the topic and the theme, “The Church at Prayer.” Many events in our world and our country call you to be the Church at prayer even while you have gathered here during these days. Let me call your attention to three of them.

1) Since your meeting a year ago, there have been numerous instances of men of color dying in controversial encounters with representatives of law enforcement. Many of them have been documented in detail for the world to see. This has led to the cry “Black Lives Matter” and the counter-cry “All Lives Matter,” exacerbating the racial divide that has prevailed in the United States since the original sin of this nation, buying and selling human beings.

2) The second event is the recent historic pastoral visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to the United States. In his magisterial address to the members of the 114th Congress, the Pontiff obliquely acknowledged the racial divide in the United States when he spoke of Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., African-American people and their “dream deferred.” He then raised up the Servant of God Dorothy Day and the Trappist mystic Thomas Merton (names unknown to many members of Congress and to many American Catholics); he raised them up as heroic examples of the Church engaged in prayer and in transformative action.

3) The third and most recent event unfolded on that terrible day, last Thursday [October 1], when yet another slaughter of the innocents took place in our country: ten people lost their lives and many others injured in the massacre on the campus of Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon. President Barack Obama rightly said that we have become immune to such terrors because they have become commonplace. As you pray for those whose lives were so violently interrupted and ended, and for the man who slew them, you must pray urgently for the American people and our legislators that reasonable laws will be enacted that will help diminish the endless succession of senseless slaughter that is filling our land with blood. We must be the Church at prayer even at a meeting about “The Church at Prayer”!

If you are individually and collectively prayerful during your time together, you will not only think about what it means to be a Church at prayer, but also you will be experiencing yourselves as the praying Church, and this experience will help you in your liturgical ministry as you foster and form the faith of the People of God into full maturity. During this assembly, your attention is focused on the essentials, renewing in our awareness that the mystery of God dwelling in unapproachable light, disclosed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, is the reason for everything we do. At the same time, you have the opportunity to deepen practical skills that are needed to support communities of faith in their acts of prayer and worship through your work in diocesan liturgical commissions. The time you spend together listening, learning, and sharing experiences and ideas has the power to reawaken your own life of faith and provide you with the resources needed for your daily service to the Christian faithful, assisting them in truly experiencing in the Sacred Liturgy the reality that Christ is the sacrament of the encounter with God. In the Sacred Liturgy, the People of God gather and they experience the encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ himself. This is why we do what we do.

In the name of Bishop Serratelli, my brother Bishops in the Conference, I thank all of you for the good work that you do for God’s holy people. As I have said, it is not only helpful, it is essential: good liturgy is like good drama. Be assured of my prayers for the fruitfulness of your days together, and I ask you to pray for me as well! It is not easy to be a Bishop today. And I leave you with this final thought for meditation: “God is not God the way you would be God, if you were God!” Thank you.

### **Sylvia Sánchez Completes Term as Secretariat Multicultural Specialist**

Ms. Sylvia L. Sánchez has left the Secretariat of Divine Worship after serving for two years as Multicultural Specialist; her last day of formal service to the USCCB was October 16, 2015. She has returned to her home Diocese of St. Petersburg to serve as Associate Director of the Office of Worship.

During her tenure at the USCCB, Sánchez was the staff liaison to the Subcommittee on Divine Worship in Spanish and made advancements in various liturgical books and resources, including the *Misal Romano, Tercera Edición, Leccionario de la Misa, Bendicional*, and the recently-published *Edificada con Piedras Vivas*, the Spanish translation of the Conference’s guidelines on church art and architecture. The Committee and staff of the Secretariat congratulate Ms. Sánchez on her new position and express their wholehearted thanks for her work on behalf of the many Spanish-speaking Catholics in the United States.