



NewsLetter

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Prayerfully Responding to the 2018 Sexual Abuse Scandal

The sexual abuse of minors and other vulnerable adults by members of the clergy – and actions of complicity by some bishops – have dominated news reports in the summer of 2018. Accusations against the former Archbishop of Washington, Theodore E. McCarrick, were made public in June and July, and in August the former Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, asserted that members of the hierarchy had knowledge of his conduct but failed to act. In addition, a grand jury report from Pennsylvania earlier in August detailed decades of statewide clerical sex abuse. The incidents that have been made known, and those yet unknown, rightly stir up feelings of anger, betrayal, and sadness for the Church in the United States.

In these times, both the liturgy and popular devotions can serve as sources of healing. They have the potential to inspire both clergy and faithful alike to renew their dedication to assist the victims of abuse with compassion and to eradicate the causes which permit abuses of power to occur in the first place. Pope Francis exhorted that “every one of the baptized should feel involved in the ecclesial and social change that we so greatly need” (*Letter to the People of God*, August 20, 2018, no. 2).

Many dioceses and parishes have already begun to respond spiritually to the sex abuse crisis with special Masses of reparation and periods of Eucharistic Adoration. From the Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions in the *Roman Missal*, two formularies might be particularly useful: “For Reconciliation” (no. 16) and “For the Forgiveness of Sins” (no. 38). The second formulary of the latter Mass, sometimes known as the Mass for the Gift of Tears, was prayed at the June 2002 USCCB plenary meeting held in Dallas, during the sex abuse scandal at that time. Votive Masses of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or diocesan or parish patron saints may also be helpful in invoking heavenly intercession to carry out needed reforms.

Whether or not a special formulary and readings are chosen, “[a]s sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], no. 1414). Highlighting this aspect of the Mass can help the whole Church direct its intentions toward contrition for past sins and resolve for future works of change.

Celebrations of the word of God, also known as Liturgy of the Word services, and Holy Hours of Eucharistic Adoration provide more flexibility to incorporate both Scriptural and non-Scriptural readings, additional acts of reparation such as extended forms of penitence, special prayers, longer-form homilies, and periods for the Sacrament of Penance.

Devotional acts – such as the rosary, various novenas, litanies, and prayers – along with one or more days of fasting and abstinence are also powerful and effective responses. “Reading Sacred Scripture, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the Our Father—every sincere act of worship or devotion revives the spirit of conversion and repentance within us and contributes to the forgiveness of our sins” (CCC, no. 1437). It is always important, however, to bear in mind that in no way does undertaking liturgical and devotional works of reparation deflect responsibility from those who are responsible for heinous crimes. Rather, justice, solidarity, and compassion motivate the clergy and faithful to work and pray together during this time of trial: “If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it” (1 Cor 12:26).

Among other resources, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions has produced a resource document entitled “In Every Age, O Lord, You Have Been Our Refuge,” available for free PDF download at FDLC.org/resources. In addition, the following prayer, first used by the body of bishops in June 2017, is also reprinted for the benefit of our readers:

A Prayer for Healing and Reconciliation

*Almighty and most loving God,
through your Son
your compassion brought healing to many.*

*We ask for your healing once more
for all who have been profoundly wounded by abuse,
especially those who have been hurt by your ministers.*

*In your mercy,
we also ask for forgiveness.
Words cannot express fully
the sorrow we have for the great harm done
by those who were called to be trusted.*

*In your goodness,
we ask for the grace
to be a source of healing
to all who have been abused
and to be ever vigilant
in protecting all your people.*

*Grant, we pray,
our prayers for healing and forgiveness,
for we ask them through your Son,
Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

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From Liturgical Apostolate to Divine Worship: Magisterial Sources and Episcopal Implementation

The history of this nation’s liturgical commission is, in many ways, the history of the liturgy over the past sixty years – a history with many interesting themes, including: initial changes to the liturgy following the Second Vatican Council, a growing understanding of the science and art of liturgical translation, the importance of catechesis for “full and active participation by all the people” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* [SC], no. 14), the developing and evolving relationship between the Holy See and the national Conference of Bishops, and the exploration of appropriate ways to utilize technology in support of the liturgy. To commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Committee on Divine Worship, the *Newsletter* will explore its history and reflect in more detail on some of the topics addressed by the Committee since its inception.

On November 13, 1958, the U.S. body of bishops established the Bishops’ Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate similar to liturgical commissions in Germany, France, Spain, and elsewhere. The title “liturgical apostolate” was proposed by Samuel Cardinal Stritch of Chicago, taken from Venerable Pius XII’s 1947 encyclical on the liturgy, *Mediator Dei*, in which the pope urged the establishment of diocesan committees “to promote the liturgical apostolate” (no. 109). The Commission’s primary function was to serve as a liaison between the American bishops and the Holy See’s Sacred Congregation for Rites. It was also charged to consider practical liturgical matters to foster greater uniformity and protect “against variations or abuses that might creep in through the imprudence of some, excessive zeal of others, or simple lack of direction on the part of the hierarchy”

(*Thirty Years of Liturgical Renewal: Statements of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy* [TYLR], pg. 8). It was “strictly an agency to render service to the bishops” without in any way infringing on the authority of the diocesan bishop to moderate the liturgy in his diocese (pgs. 8-9).

The Second Vatican Council addressed the role of the national liturgical commission in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy just five years later. “It is desirable that the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned in Art. 22, 2, set up a liturgical commission, to be assisted by experts in liturgical science, sacred music, art and pastoral practice” (SC, no. 44). Such a commission is entrusted “to regulate pastoral-liturgical action throughout the territory, and to promote studies and necessary experiments whenever there is question of adaptations to be proposed to the Apostolic See.” The Constitution also recommended “some kind of Institute for Pastoral Liturgy,” whose members would include laity, to assist the commission (no. 44).

The Holy See further refined the role of national liturgical commissions in the 1964 instruction *Inter Oecumenici* (IO). In no. 45 of the instruction, it was properly tasked with the following:

1. to carry out studies and experiments in keeping with the norms of the Constitution, art. 40, §§ 1 and 2;
2. to further practical initiatives for the whole region that will foster liturgical life and the application of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy;
3. to prepare studies and the resources required as a result of decrees of the plenary assembly of bishops;
4. to control pastoral liturgy in the whole nation, to see to the application of decrees of the plenary assembly, and to report on these matters to the assembly; and
5. to further frequent consultation and promote collaboration with regional associations involved with Scripture, catechetics, pastoral care, music, and art, as well as with every kind of lay religious association.

The instruction also stipulated that “the commission should ideally meet several times a year to deal with issues as a group” (no. 44).

In the United States, the development of the Bishops' Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate differed in some respects from the provisions of the conciliar documents. First, according to IO, the commission could be composed solely of bishops “or at least include one of them, along with priests expert in liturgical and pastoral matters” (no. 44), but it has always been exclusively episcopal from its establishment, conforming to the Conference's statutes for standing committees (both in 1966 and subsequently). Second, both SC (in no. 44) and IO (in nos. 44 and 46) called for the formation of an institute, and the matter was discussed into the early 1980s, but ultimately the commission drew upon the wisdom of liturgical scholars at existing Catholic institutions rather than form its own institute. Finally, although IO authorized the commission to “carry out studies and experiments” (no. 45a; cf. SC, no. 40 §§1-2), the Conference did not obtain the faculties necessary for substantive experiments. However, it did assist the Holy See's *Consilium* for Implementing the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy in developing several reformed rites, including funerals and Christian initiation (cf. TYLR, pg. 13). In February 1967, the Bishops' Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate was renamed the NCCB Committee on the Liturgy, most commonly referred to as the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy or the BCL.

Following both the Constitution and *Inter Oecumenici*, the principal change was not to the commission itself but in the creation of a Secretariat in January 1965 to support the work of the commission, by:

1. Preparing materials and documents for the commission for distribution to the bishops;
2. Serving as a channel for documents and official responses from the *Consilium*;
3. Handling official inquiries to the commission from bishops and diocesan liturgical commissions; and
4. Functioning as a liaison for the commission and various organizations concerned with liturgical renewal. (cf. March 1994 *Newsletter*, found in *35 Years of the BCL Newsletter, 1965-2000*, pg. 1387)

The work of the Secretariat evolved over the following decades, so that by 1994 its regular work included the publication of the *Newsletter* and the national liturgical calendar, preparing liturgical books for approval and publication, responding to liturgical inquiries, and reviewing participation aids and other liturgical materials.

In November 2006, the USCCB approved a reorganization plan that included changes to the BCL, taking effect one year later. First, the Committee on the Liturgy was renamed the Committee on Divine Worship. The committee was also given a new mandate: “to assist the bishops, both collectively and individually, in fulfilling

their roles as priests and leaders of the worshipping community, especially with the translation of liturgical texts and the development of guidelines for the celebration of the Mass and the sacraments. The committee addresses in a particular way prayer and worship within culturally diverse communities” (November 2006 *Newsletter*, found in *Ten Years of the Newsletter, 2001-2010*, pg. 312). The committee is presently entrusted with several key mission responsibilities:

1. Translating, adapting, reviewing, and promoting liturgical texts, especially for the Mass and the celebration of the sacraments;
2. Developing pastoral practices and guidelines for various liturgical questions and issues, including musical settings and adaptations for use in culturally diverse communities of the Church in the United States;
3. Reviewing liturgical participation aids and musical settings;
4. Responding to specific questions from bishops and providing information when requested to bishops and diocesan offices; and
5. Collaborating with USCCB Communications in the publications of liturgical text and rituals.

To facilitate the fulfillment of its responsibilities, the committee continues to work collaboratively with the Holy See, appropriate USCCB committees and offices, dioceses and national liturgical groups, and the body of bishops regarding the conference’s relationship with ICEL. For sixty years, the Committee on Divine Worship, together with its Secretariat, with consultants, experts, and regional and local leaders, has participated in all these endeavors and made important and lasting contributions to the liturgical life of the Church in the United States.

Timeline of the Committee on Divine Worship, 1958-1970

Highlights of the Committee on Divine Worship’s early years are presented here; future issues of the Newsletter will continue the timeline into subsequent periods of the Committee’s history.

November 13, 1958	Bishops’ Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate established
December 4, 1963	Second Vatican Council issues the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, <i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> , which addresses national liturgical commissions
September 26, 1964	Holy See instruction <i>Inter Oecumenici</i> addresses the role of liturgical commissions
January 1965	Establishment of the Secretariat, led by Rev. Frederick R. McManus
May 1965	First subcommittee established: the Music Advisory Board
September 1965	First issue of the <i>Newsletter</i> , initially directed to bishops and diocesan liturgical commissions
February 1967	Bishops’ Commission on the Liturgical Apostolate renamed the NCCB (or Bishops’) Committee on the Liturgy (BCL)
November 1968	BCL sponsors meeting of over 400 members of diocesan music and liturgical commissions; proceedings include the passing of a resolution to create an advisory committee to the BCL comprised of members elected from the various episcopal regions
January 27, 1970	BCL advisory committee approves a constitution and bylaws, formally establishing itself as the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC)