Renewing Diocesan Liturgical Commissions
What is a Diocesan Liturgical Commission?

(Conciliar and Papal Documents)

* 1588 – Sixtus V, Constitution, Immensa
* Pius XII, encyclical Mediator Dei (1947)
* Vatican II, Sacrosanctum Concilium (1963)
* Inter Oecumenici - first instruction of implementation of SC (1964)
* Code of Canon Law (1983)

Liturgical Commissions in Australia Today

* Purpose of a Diocesan Liturgical Commission
* Distinguishing between the Diocesan Liturgical Commission and the Liturgy Office
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* Diocesan Level
* Communications Network Model
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* Communication: Sending Information
What is a Diocesan Liturgical Commission?

1588 – Sixtus V, Constitution, Immensa

Rome centred with universal purview. Pius XII, Mediator Dei 57, identifies the remote origin of Liturgical Commissions at this time, saying:

… to protect the purity of divine worship against abuse from dangerous and imprudent innovations introduced by private individuals and particular churches … in the year 1588, Our predecessor Sixtus V of immortal memory established the Sacred Congregation of Rites, charged with the defence of the legitimate rites of the Church and with the prohibition of any spurious innovation. This body fulfils even today the official function of supervision and legislation with regard to all matters touching the sacred liturgy.

1947 – Pius XII, encyclical, Mediator Dei

Locally centred cognisant of universal principals. Pius XII notes the Liturgical Movement’s influences (especially the “Dialogue Mass”) in historical context, and adds this:

56. It is likewise easy to understand that the progress of the fine arts, those of architecture, painting and music above all, has exerted considerable influence on the choice and disposition of the various external features of the sacred liturgy.

He exhorts diocesan bishops to:

109. … supervise and regulate the manner and method in which the people take part in the liturgy, according to the rubrics of the missal and in keeping with the injunctions which the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the Code of Canon Law have published. Let everything be done with due order and dignity, and let no one, not even a priest, make use of the sacred edifices according to his whim to try out experiments. It is also Our wish that in each diocese an advisory committee to promote the liturgical apostolate should be established, similar to that which cares for sacred music and art, so that with your watchful guidance everything may be carefully carried out in accordance with the prescriptions of the Apostolic See.

That is the origin of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions. He later exhorts bishops:

186. … after errors and falsehoods have been removed, and anything that is contrary to truth or moderation has been condemned, you promote a deeper knowledge among the people of the sacred liturgy so that they more readily and easily follow the sacred rites and take part in them with true Christian dispositions.

194. … to promote with care congregational singing…

195. What we have said about music, applies to the other fine arts, especially to architecture, sculpture and painting. … Modern art should be given free scope in the due and reverent service of the church and the sacred rites …
196. … take great care to enlighten and direct the minds and hearts of the artists to whom is given the task today of restoring or rebuilding the many churches which have been ruined or completely destroyed by war. … The fine arts are really in conformity with religion when “as noblest handmaids they are at the service of divine worship” [Pius XI, Divini cultus].

1963 – Vatican II, Sacrosanctum Concilium

Nationally/Provincially and locally centred, cognisant of universal principals.

43. Zeal for the promotion and restoration of the liturgy is rightly held to be a sign of the providential dispositions of God in our time… So that this pastoral-liturgical action may become even more vigorous in the Church, the sacred Council decrees:

44. It is desirable that the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned in 22.2, set up a liturgical commission, to be assisted by experts in liturgical science, sacred music, art and pastoral practice. So far as possible the commission should be aided by some kind of Institute for Pastoral Liturgy… The commission is 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.

45. For the same reason every diocese is to have a commission on the sacred liturgy under the direction of the bishop, for promoting the liturgical apostolate. Sometimes it may be expedient that several dioceses should form between them one single commission which will be able to promote the liturgy by common consultation.

46. Besides the commission on the sacred liturgy, every diocese, as far as possible, should have commissions for sacred music and sacred art. These three commissions must work in closest collaboration; indeed it will often be best to fuse the three of them into one single commission.

1964 – Inter Oecumenici, 1st instruction on the implementation of SC

44. The [national] liturgical commission, which should be expeditiously established by the territorial authority, shall as far as possible be chosen from among the bishops themselves or at least include one of them, along with priests expert in liturgical and pastoral matters and designated by name for this office. The members and consultants of the commission should ideally meet several times a year to deal with issues as a group.

45. The territorial authority may properly entrust the following to the commission:
   a. to carry out studies and experiments in keeping with the norms of the Constitution art. 40 §1 and §2;
   b. to further practical initiatives for the whole region that will foster liturgical life and the application of the Constitution on the Liturgy;
c. to prepare studies and the resources required as a result of decrees of the plenary assembly of bishops;
d. 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;
e. 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.

47. The diocesan liturgical commission, under the direction of the bishop, has these responsibilities:
a. to be fully informed on the state of pastoral-liturgical activity in the diocese;
b. to carry out faithfully those proposals in liturgical matters made by the competent authority and to keep informed on the studies and programs taking place elsewhere in this field;
c. to suggest and promote practical programs of every kind that may contribute to the advancement of liturgical life, especially in the interest of aiding priests labouring in the Lord's vineyard;
d. to suggest, in individual cases or even for the whole diocese, timely, step-by-step measures for the work of pastoral liturgy, to appoint and to call upon people capable of helping priests in this matter as occasion arises, to propose suitable means and resources;
e. to see to it that programs in the diocese designed to promote liturgy go forward with the cooperation and mutual help of other groups along the lines mentioned above (45.e) regarding the liturgical commission of the assembly of bishops.

1983 – Code of Canon Law

The Code of Canon Law does not mention Diocesan Liturgical Commissions. Only one Canon is found that pertains to this area:

1216. In the building and restoration of churches the advice of experts is to be used, and the principles and norms of liturgy and of sacred art are to be observed.
Liturgical Commissions in Australia Today

Purpose of a Diocesan Liturgical Commission

Although the ‘reform of the liturgy’ has now stabilised, the responsibilities of the DLC outlined in IE 47 are no less applicable now than they were in the years following Vatican II.

47. The diocesan liturgical commission, under the direction of the bishop, has these responsibilities:

* a) to be fully informed on the state of pastoral - liturgical activity in the diocese;

Knowledge of the current challenges and successes in parishes across the diocese is an important prerequisite for a liturgical commission to support them in promoting best liturgical practice.

* b) to carry out faithfully those proposals in liturgical matters made by the competent authority and to keep informed on the studies and programs taking place elsewhere in this field;

The DCL must keep up to date with liturgical directives of the Holy See and ensure that this information is distributed to clergy, religious and lay people working in parishes, liturgy offices and Catholic schools.

NB Recent examples of Order of Celebrating Matrimony and Order of Confirmation.

Keeping informed about workshops or resources being produced by other DLCs can prompt a diocese to develop their own material, invite workshop participants to their own diocese or purchase resources with common relevance.

* c) to suggest and promote practical programs of every kind that may contribute to the advancement of liturgical life, especially in the interest of aiding priests labouring in the Lord's vineyard;

Educating clergy and providing ongoing opportunities for liturgical formation is a continuing purpose of a DLC. Networks can be established with the Seminary and with those organising the annual Clergy Convocation to inform seminarians and priests about formation opportunities.
d) to suggest, in individual cases or even for the whole diocese, timely, step-by-step measures for the work of pastoral liturgy, to appoint and to call upon people capable of helping priests in this matter as occasion arises, to propose suitable means and resources;

Clergy, especially the newly ordained or priests from overseas, benefit from having a central body they can approach for advice, and obtain information about resources or formation opportunities.

Lay people in parishes may need help with setting up a liturgy committee or an RCIA group.

* e) to see to it that programs in the diocese designed to promote liturgy go forward with the cooperation and mutual help of other groups along the lines mentioned above (no. 45 e) regarding the liturgical commission of the assembly of bishops.

The DLC stays in contact with and creates networks between the Liturgy Office, the Catechumenate Committee, Catholic Education Office, and Seminary in the diocese. It should also maintain connections with national bodies such as the National Liturgical Council.

It has a pivotal role in the development of liturgical resources and formation workshops, especially in response to revised rites or sacramental policies.

**Distinguishing between the Diocesan Liturgical Commission and the Liturgy Office**

Some dioceses have both a liturgy office and a DLC.

In these cases the lines of responsibility can blur.

Some have neither! In this case the bishop himself is the liturgical commission. The bishop’s secretary would be the one responsible for passing on information from the Holy See.

The Liturgy Office often has its aim the areas of education, consulting and publishing.

These diocesan offices, where they exist in addition to a DLC, may take on some of the educative function of the DLC but cannot take the place of a DLC which is mandated by the Holy See.

The ACBC website provides a list of “Local Liturgical Councils, Commissions and Offices”.

There is a website listed for each of Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra-Goulburn, Hobart, Perth, Sydney, but only 1 of these refers to a Liturgical Commission – the others are all Liturgy Offices.
BISHOPS COMMISSION FOR LITURGY (BCL)

MEMBERS:
Bishop Patrick O’Regan (Chairman)
Bishop Paul Bird CSsR
Bishop Peter Elliott
Bishop Richard Umbers

FUNCTIONS / TASKS:
The Commission assists the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) in matters relating to liturgy and reports to the Conference on liturgical matters.

- Liturgical books for Australia
- Liturgical directives of the Holy See as they apply to Australia
- Pastoral liturgical life of Australia
- Encourages liturgical education, academic study and research in liturgy in Australia
- Promotes liturgical music, liturgical art and liturgical architecture

ADVISED BY:
- NATIONAL LITURGICAL COUNCIL
- NATIONAL LITURGICAL ARCHITECTURE AND ART BOARD
- NATIONAL LITURGICAL MUSIC BOARD

DIRECT CONTACT WITH:
- Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments
- International Commission on English in the Liturgy

INFORMAL CONTACT WITH:
- Diocesan Liturgical Commissions
- Australian Consultation on the Liturgy
- Christian Initiation Australia Network
- Diocesan Liturgy Offices or Offices of Worship
MEMBERSHIP OF DIOCESAN LITURGICAL COMMISSIONS

- Usually volunteers (invited by DLC Chairperson on recommendation of members)
- A balance of men and women, ordained and lay, and a range of ages is advisable. Some members should ideally have specific liturgical training.

According to Sacrosanctum Concilium, there should be a liturgical commission in each diocese or at least one commission formed between several dioceses.

45. For the same reason every diocese is to have a commission on the sacred liturgy under the direction of the bishop, for promoting the liturgical apostolate.

Sometimes it may be expedient that several dioceses should form between them one single commission which will be able to promote the liturgy by common consultation.

**Perhaps there is the need for a statement from the BCL to bishops at a local level and an offer of support in establishing these commissions across the dioceses of Australia.**

What sort of support is available for DLCs from the national liturgical level?

How do the DLCs receive communication about liturgical developments?
The NLC occupies a pivotal role in the network of communication between national and diocesan liturgical commissions.

Every arrow in this model is bi-directional.

The model is consistent with Pope Francis’ vision for a Church that is synodal at every level, characterised by a “mutual listening in which each one has something to learn”.

Proposed Model:

1) It is proposed that the NLC send minutes from meetings not only to the BCL but also to each diocesan liturgical commission. NLC minutes include reports from the NLAAB and NLMB giving a comprehensive overview of national liturgical issues.

* Various items in the minutes should be marked prominently as “Feedback Requested”.

* DLCs would be invited to respond with comments or suggestions to the NLC.

This would:
- keep diocesan liturgy commissions informed about what is going on at a national level;
- provide a focus for discussions at DLC meetings;
- invite participation and contribution at a diocesan level towards the national discussion;
- revitalise diocesan liturgical commissions, giving them a real sense of purpose and active contribution.

2) Similarly, DLCs should communicate matters of interest from the NLC to parishes and schools, requesting feedback as marked. Such communication could include local liturgical news or formation opportunities. More frequent communication from DLCs would lead to a greater awareness of the role of the DLC and would encourage liturgical dialogue at a diocesan level.

3) A part of each NLC meeting could involve a review of feedback received from dioceses around the country which could inform future directions, lead to agenda items for subsequent NLC meetings and promote an understanding of the current situation in Australian dioceses.

This Communication Network Model would ensure that liturgical developments and announcements are disseminated all the way to the grass roots and will also inform the national liturgical bodies about what is happening in the parishes around the country.

It would give a dynamic role to diocesan liturgical commissions in receiving communications from the NLC, discussing current topics at DLC meetings and providing feedback on certain issues as requested, as well as distributing information to parishes and evaluating their feedback.
Specific Tasks Undertaken by Diocesan Liturgy Commissions

**Advisory Role to the Bishop**

- advise the bishop in liturgical matters;
- inform the bishop of liturgical developments or concerns;
- regularly invite the bishop to meetings and ask him to identify any areas which may need exploration or clarification within the diocese;
- respond to liturgical issues as identified by the bishop;
- formulate policies and guidelines to be approved by the bishop for liturgical rites, church architecture, sacramental policies etc;
- propose adaptations to diocesan liturgical and sacramental policy and present it to the bishop for approval.

**Monitoring**

- keep up-to-date with latest official liturgical developments;
- ensure that liturgical practice in the diocese is consistent with norms of Universal Church;
- assess the liturgical needs of parishes and schools and respond accordingly;
- identify areas of need in the diocese and formulate strategies to support or clarify.
Education

❖ organise and offer liturgical formation workshops for clergy;

❖ organise and offer workshops to support parish liturgy committees, liturgical ministers, sacramental co-ordinators, RCIA team leaders, lay leaders of Liturgy of the Word and Communion;

❖ promote appropriate and worthy liturgical music and sacred art;

❖ assist in the development of resources and support material to promote the liturgical life of the diocese;

❖ promote educational opportunities within the diocese and nationally;

❖ suggest and make available such resources as will ensure dignity and devotion in liturgical celebrations;

❖ work in collaboration with Liturgy Office (publications), Seminary, Catholic Education, Adult Faith Education.

Consultation

❖ answer questions from clergy and organise formation opportunities;

❖ assist parishes and clergy in evaluating their space for worship and planning the renovation or construction of church buildings;

❖ answer ad hoc questions from parishes and individuals;

❖ plan major diocesan liturgical events;

❖ liaise with parish liturgy groups throughout the diocese in determining what support is needed;

❖ be responsive to isolated communities and diverse cultures within the diocese;

❖ answer questions and fulfil a consultative function for clergy, sacramental co-ordinators, liturgical ministers and all those working in the area of liturgy within the diocese.
Communication

- keep informed about latest liturgical developments in the Church - local and universal;
- ensure that all relevant people receive word of liturgical developments;
- stay in touch with parishes and Catholic schools to communicate information and receive feedback;
- establish contacts within the diocese who can be called upon for workshops or training opportunities when necessary;
- inform parishes of changes to ritual books eg Marriage, Confirmation... and organise specific training or presentation of these new resources;
- maintain contact with the National Liturgical Commission;
- maintain contact with liturgical commissions and liturgy personnel in other dioceses;
- maintain contact with other agencies in the diocese eg Catechumenate Committee, Liturgy Office, Catholic Education, Adult Faith Education, Seminary;
- notify clergy and other relevant personnel in the diocese of liturgical developments as advised by the NLC. It will be essential to develop a register of diocesan contacts;
- diocesan websites are important for communicating the role of the DLC, and for sharing information about liturgical developments and formation opportunities.
Does your diocese have a functioning liturgical commission?

Does it fulfil the tasks that have been outlined here?

Do you think that the role of the liturgical commission is well understood by clergy, key people in parishes and schools, and members of diocesan agencies? If so, how is this made known?

How might a better awareness of the DLC and its purpose be promoted?

Which specific tasks does the liturgical commission perform well in your diocese? Are there any tasks that represent a particular challenge?

Can you identify some specific tasks that your liturgical commission could engage in more earnestly, to positively influence the liturgical life of your diocese?
Challenges and Strategies

1) Resourcing – Budget and Personnel

Challenges:

* Financial limitations make it difficult to achieve aims.
* A lack of qualified liturgists in some dioceses limits the ability to run education programs or provide adequate support to parishes and schools.

Strategies:

* Set long term goals and short term priorities.
* Put succession plans in place.
* Share workshops among dioceses.
  - Presenters could travel to other dioceses – this happened with the release of CWBII.
  - Workshops could be filmed and made available online.
* It would seem prudent for some dioceses to establish a shared/joint DLC, especially where there are limited people with liturgical training in a particular diocese.
* There may be a need for a provincial diocesan commission in some places. The digital age makes it possible for people to connect across vast distances via Skype calls.
2) Membership

Challenges:

* It can be difficult to find a balance of men and women, ordained and lay, across a range of ages. The Vatican documents also suggest that some members should have expertise in liturgical art and music. How realistic is this for most dioceses?

* Frequently the challenge is to find personnel with a sound understanding of liturgy and sufficient pastoral experience to comment accurately on the situation in parishes. There is a need for ongoing formation and to ensure that members are made aware of these opportunities.

Strategies:

Support:

* DLCs should be aware of avenues for seeking support from the NLC, NLAAB or NLMB where expert advice is required. The Vatican documents stipulate that experts are necessary at the national but not the diocesan level.

Formation:

* University theology units, such as those offered by the ACU Centre for Liturgy, as well as non-accredited courses and workshops run at the diocesan level provide opportunities for further education and formation for members of DLCs.

* Subscriptions to liturgical journals: The Summit, Liturgy News, Worship, Pastoral Liturgy, Living Liturgy.

* Journals such as The Tablet, and electronic news services such as Cath News and Zenit can also assist members in staying up-to-date with the latest liturgical happenings in the Church.

* During DCL meetings share a book review, paper, report, or listen to a visiting speaker.

Membership:

* Specific and rotating terms of office for members. Fresh faces, minds and voices should be balanced with continuity and experience. Members may be appointed for a 2 or 3 year period. Connections should be made with Catholic Education and other agencies.

* New members will often be invited on the recommendation of an existing member of the commission.
3) Communication – Receiving Information

Challenges:

* When information about liturgical developments is received from the Holy See, there needs to be a clear chain of communication for disseminating this information to the DLCs around Australia.

* DLCs are not clearly listed in the Directory or on a central website. This makes it difficult for liturgical commissions in different dioceses to connect with one another. Inconsistency in the naming of these commissions adds to the difficulty.

Strategies:

* It is important to establish a register of DLCs and their contact details to facilitate dissemination of information across Australia. A clear section could be set aside in the Directory for this purpose.

* Such a register would promote communication between DLCs as well. This would facilitate the sharing of workshops and other resources for the benefit of a wider audience.

* The chain of communication needs to be clear so that information filters through reliably.

* Dioceses with a domain name can ask I.T. people to set up an easily identifiable email for the DLC. (liturgicalcommission@bne.catholic.net.au) ..... An automatic redirect to a personal email could also be established if necessary.

* Clear reference should be made to the DLC on the diocesan website, with details of the contact person, phone number, statement of purpose and practical assistance offered.
4) Communication: Sending Information

Challenges:

* Reliable distribution of information to clergy, religious and lay people working in parishes and Catholic schools about liturgical developments is a challenge.

* Some avenues for advertising opportunities for liturgical formation are clearly ineffective.

* There is a challenge in raising awareness of the role and function of the DLC amongst clergy (especially those from overseas), key people in parishes and schools, and members of diocesan agencies.

* DLC members need to be familiar with the range of available liturgical resources in order to respond to queries from parishes and schools.

CASE STUDY Order of Celebrating Matrimony

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony was published in 2015, replacing the 1969 translation of the 1969 typical edition. It is not only a new translation but the first based on the Latin second typical edition of 1990. Clergy and those preparing weddings need to be aware that there is a new Order and that it includes changes such as the singing of the Gloria in a Nuptial Mass (added in the amended edition of the Missale Romanum in 2008), a new direction specifying that at least one of certain readings must be used, and an acclamation after the reception of consent.

What happened in your diocese when the Order of Celebrating Matrimony was published?

How did you become aware that the Order had been revised?

How did you become aware of the details of the revisions and additions?

How did you become aware of the forthcoming publication and implementation dates?

Who advised your clergy of the above matters?

Was any work done with your clergy to introduced the revised Order to them?

How could communication and education have been improved?
Strategies:

* DCLs should keep registers of contact people e.g. clergy, liturgical musicians, RCIA contacts and so on. These lists may be maintained by the Liturgy Office in some cases.

* Develop connections with the Clergy Support Office, organisers of the Clergy Convocation, and Seminary to make sure that clergy and seminarians are aware of ongoing liturgical formation opportunities. This will also help to highlight areas where support is needed.

* Use new and innovative ways to present information.
  
  - Instead of conducting workshops, create a short video and post it online for people to view.

  - Small group training techniques for clergy where presiding is filmed on I pads, followed by self evaluation and peer appraisal.

* Each DLC should develop a list of current resources which can be referred to when advising parishes. For example:
  
  - And When Churches (for those who are renovating or building new churches);

  - LabOra Worship (for those needing help with Liturgy Preparation) and LabOra Marriage (for those planning a wedding);

  - Catholic Worship Book II (for those enquiring about music repertoire);

  - Life is Changed, Not Ended (for funeral preparation);

  - Break Open the Word (for Ministers of the Word).

Are there any particular challenges faced by the liturgical commission in your diocese?

Think of some practical strategies that could be implemented to renew or revitalise the liturgical commission in your diocese.
Notes