



AN INTRODUCTION TO HOMILETICS

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BACKGROUND

PLACE in the CHURCH

TOOLS TO PREPARE

SUGGESTED READING and REFERENCES



INTRODUCTION TO HOMILETICS

What

Why

Who

When



WHAT IS A HOMILY



The practice and study of the art of preaching; **the rhetoric of a sermon.**

Greek word ***homilia*** signifies conversation, mutual talk, and so familiar discourse. The Latin word ***sermo*** has the same sense, of conversation, talk, discussion.

It is instructive to observe that the early Christians did not at first apply to their public teachings the names given to the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, but called **them *talks, familiar discourses***. Under the influence of rhetorical teaching and the popularizing of Christian worship, the talk soon became a more formal and extended discourse

WHAT IS A HOMILY



NOT PREACHING AND MORALISING

No difference in word but may to remind “preachers” of what is the aim of a homily



WHAT

A sermon is a speech delivered in a *Christian assembly* for *worship*

by an *authorised person* that applies some point of doctrine, usually drawn from a biblical passage, to the lives of the members of the congregation

with the purpose of *moving them* by use of narrative analogy and other rhetorical devices to accept that application and *act on it*

(O C Edwards “*Elements of Homiletics*”)



WHAT

The homily is an explanation of some aspect of readings from sacred scripture or of another text from the Ordinary or Proper of the mass and take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the needs of the listeners

GIRM 65- 66 pg 45 -46 ; 136



WHO AND WHEN

“ The sermon should draw its content mainly from **scriptural and liturgical** sources and its character should be that of **a proclamation** of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation , the mystery of Christ , ever made present and active within us , especially in the celebration of the liturgy “

(SC 35,2)



WHAT IS A HOMILY

It is :

“ ... Christ Pascal Mystery proclaimed ... (HD 12)

The community sharing [through the word] in the mystery of Christ's Death and Resurrection (HD 13)

Transformed to be carried into our daily lives (HD 14)

The Homilist 's task is :

“ To help his people read and experience the Scriptures
in the light of the Pascal Mystery (HN 18)



WHAT

.... The **HOMILY** ... is to “foster a deeper understanding of the word of God “ (VD 59)

“How can we derive more profit from the homilies we hear ? “

“How can we encourage our preachers in their work of breaking open the word of God for the community ?”



WHAT

So

A liturgical experience

A dialogue between God and his people which lead up to sacramental communion

The heart of the community

“Cor ad cor loquitur “ (Blessed Cardinal Henry Newman)



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

JESUS PREACHING TO HIS DISCIPLES – ministerium; to others magisterium

JESUS styles ; parable :

COMMISION to his DISCIPLES Mt 28 : 16-20

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

HEBREW concept of **word**



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Early and Patristic Church

Medieval Preaching Manuals

Not aimed at converting the audience.

The preacher instructs them about the meaning of the Bible,

Emphasis on moral action



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Use of Biblical exegesis ; scholastic logic; thematic preaching,

"Handbooks of preaching were very common in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. No one of them, however, was widely circulated to be the standard work on the subject."

(George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric & Its Christian & Secular Tradition*. University of North Carolina Press, 1999)



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Homiletics From the 18th Century to the Present

"Homiletics [in the 18th and 19th centuries] increasingly became a species of rhetoric

Preaching became pulpit oratory, and sermons became moral discourses.

Less bound to classical rhetorical models



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Zealous fundamentalist and 20th-century homileticians adapted various inductive, narrative-based sermon strategies

derived, respectively, from biblical models (jeremiad, parable, Pauline exhortation, revelation)

and theories of mass communication."

(Gregory Kneidel, "Homiletics." *Encyclopaedia of Rhetoric*,

ed. by T.O. Sloane. Oxford University Press, 2001)



HISTORY

Reformation onwards

The Council of Trent decrees on preaching were not so at variance with the reformers ;

The homily was to be frequent, in the mass (but not part of the liturgy)

- its aims were to address devotion, morality, Credal statements..



HISTORY

Reformation onwards

A preoccupation with the mysterious dynamics of God in a sacramental system which operated *ex opere operato* had developed in place at the expense of the presence of God in the power of the Word .

The reformers concentrated on the primacy of the word



HISTORY

In 1971 publication of

“ As One without Authority “ Fred B Craddock

ushered in the New Homiletics with the idea of turning towards the hearer in the congregation and their needs



WHY

The origin of the word action structure for Christian worship are found in the Jewish context of word.

In antiquity a persons words were **inseparable from oneself**.

One's words were perceived to convey the **expression of oneself**.

(Monshau pg 2)



WHY

Dabar Yahweh = the Word of God – his being

Dynamic and effective force in God's word

“For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth ,making it fertile ,and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats , so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth ; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my wil,achieving the end for which I sent it “ ISAIAH 55:10-11

“The word is seen to be a heavenly force which is always present and at
(“Theological Dictionary of New Testament cited in Preaching at
the Double Feast “ Monshau Liturgical Press 2006)

Cf logos



WHY

Christian Word and Table mirrors the way Jesus prayed, worked and ministered

The power of the word – the healing of the Centurion (Matt 8:5 -13)

Last Supper narratives in the Synoptic gospels – word and sacrament

Chapter 6 of John and the Washing of Feet

Miraculous feedings

The Road to Emmaus



WHY AND HISTORY

Early Church

Origen(185-254)

“receive the body.....protecting it with all caution lest any small part fall... But if so..... careful..... How do you think there is *any less guilt to neglect God's word* ?

Jerome(342 - 420)

“If the flesh is true food We have in this life the only good that of eating his flesh Not only in the Eucharist but also **in reading Scripture** “

(Monshau pg 8 - 12 et seq)



WHY AND HISTORY

From the late Patristic gradual loss of linking word and sacrament
Preaching became a separate event even though space
was always left in the liturgy

(Monshau pg 8 - 12 et seq)



WHY

The Church is the community that hears and proclaims the word of God (VD 51)

... the “home of the word “ and it is above all in the liturgy, the privileged setting for the word of God, that the word is received (VD 52)

The word and sacrament are intertwined. There is no separation between God’s word and God’s action. The word ... is “alive and active “ (Hebrews 4:12) cf Is 55:11



WHY

The Eucharist opens us to an understanding of Scripture, just as Scripture for its part illuminates and explains the mystery of the Eucharist (VD 55)

Road to Emmaus (Lk 24)

The sacrament of the word (VD 71)

“..... the bread of life from the table of both of the Word of God and of the Body of Christ “ (DV 21)

..... in the mass is spread the table both of God’s word and of the Body of Christ , and from it the faithful are to be instructed and refreshed (GIRM par 28 quoting SC no 48)



WHY

A deeper understanding of the **sacramentality of God's word** canlead us to a more unified understanding of the mystery of revelation which takes place through deeds and words intimately connected {this}... can only benefit **the spiritual life** of the faithful and **the Church's pastoral activity** (VD 56)

..... the mysteries of faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text during the course of the liturgical year. **The homily is to be highly esteemed as part of the liturgy itself.** In fact at those Masses which are celebrated on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation It should not be omitted SC 52



HOW

Avoid : “generic and abstract obscure the word of God

Useless digressions which risk drawing greater attention to preacher than the heart of the gospel message “ (VD 59)

Make Close contact with the sacred text since it is his duty to hear the word of God for himself , to ponder it in his heart and then proclaim it to the community (VD 59)

Not a “sermon” on an abstract topic or simply a “biblical exegesis (HD 6)



WHO AND HOW

Evangelii Gaudium

Touchstone for judging a pastor's closeness and ability to communicate to his people

The Lord desires to reach other people by means of our word (cf Rom 10:14-17)



WHO AND HOW - EVANGELII GAUDIUM

Ordinarily the priest – mandatory on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and must not be omitted without grave reason.

Only an ordained minister

GIRM 65- 66 pg 45 -46 ; 136



HOW EVANGELII GAUDIUM

IT IS

Not entertainment (EG) or preacher's personal witness (HD 6)

BUT

Lively

Brief -

Spiritual



HOW EVANGELII GAUDIUM

It's style should be

A Mothers conversation

Plain speaking

Made with love

Warm in tone

Unpretentious



HOW

The preacher has the wonderful but difficult task of **joining loving hearts** , the hearts of the Lord and his people (EG para 143)

We are mediating **not** our words **but God's word** to

Ourselves

To others

WORDS WHICH SET HEARTS ON FIRE

To God



HOW

We are an INSTRUMENT

... in the homily they { the people } want someone to serve as a n instrument and to express their feelings in such a way that afterwards each one may choose how he or she continues the conversation (EG par a 13)

“... what we preach is not ourselves , but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake “ (2 Cor 4:5)



HOW EVANGELII GAUDIUM

Reverence for Truth - awe filled “ we are neither its masters or owners, but its guardians, heralds and servants “ (Paul VI Evangelii Nuntiandi 1975 ,78) quoted in EG para 146

Personalise the word - what does it mean. Seek after truth

Spiritual reading – lectio divina

An ear to the people – what is needed to be heard

Speak concisely, say much in few words (Sir 32:8)
(EG para 145- 158)



HOW

PLANNING

- 1 Pray
- 2 Analyse the congregation
- 3 Pray
- 4 Choose the texts
- 5 Pray
- 6 Read the texts



HOW

PLANNING

- 7 Personal exegetical work - not yet time to consult the exegetes and commentaries
- 8 Integrate the exegetical work – match the lessons inherent in the text with the needs of the congregation
- 9 Consult authorities and commentaries



HOW

CONSTRUCTION

Focus statement

Function statement

The Move (Concept) - ideas - 4 minutes length of homily (Buttrick)



HOW

DELIVERY

- 1 Relationality - different mass congregations at different times of day or venues
- 2 Conversational style
- 3 Calibrate the congregation – read their moods
- 4 Do not be rude or patronising to the congregation
- 5 Give good simple , clear , concrete messages ideas , images



HOW

DELIVERY

6 Don't waffle

7 A good theologian – speak the truth ; explain but do not “ dumb” down or avoid the difficult

FEED BACK



HOW

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio = read : “What does it mean ? “

Mediatio = thinking ; “What does it say to ME “

Oratio = prayer : “ How do I respond ? “

Contemplio = judging : “ What is the Lord asking ? “

Actio = action: added by Pope Benedict XVI ; “ moves the believer to make their life as a gift for others in charity “ (VD 87)

The importance of the “missa” at Mass

**QUESTION : “ Is the dismissal the most important words
and most potent symbol of the deacon ? “**



HOW AND WHY - HOMILETICS DIRECTORY

The Homilist needs to be :

Reverent in style and approach to the ambo

Be conscious of and integrate the homily with:

Hymns

Penitential rite

Prayer of the Faithful

Music

Prayers of the mass



HOW AND WHY – HOMILETIC DIRECTORY

Importance of:

The Word in the Liturgy

Interpreting the Word

Consequences for the preacher

Needs of the people



HOW AND WHY – HOMILETIC DIRECTORY

Not necessary to be a great orator – just be !!!

Make the word central to your life

: Receive the gospel of Christ whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, practice what you believe (*Spoken by the bishop at diaconal ordination*)



HOW AND WHY – HOMILETIC DIRECTORY

Know your people well

Reflect on the events of the times

Hone your skills

In spiritual poverty , invite in the Holy Spirit

SOME WORDS TO KNOW

Kerygma - preaching, the proclamation : by extension preaching the original message of *Christ Risen*

Exegesis - to explain , to draw out ; the act of explaining a text ; “ what **DID** it mean, what does it mean **NOW**

Exegete - one who explains

Hermeneutics – *the science of the methods of exegesis.*

– *from Hermes – the messenger of the Gods*



SOME WORDS TO KNOW

Redaction – to edit ; applied to the process of selection by the gospel writers

Form criticism – the attempt to discover the origin and trace the history of certain biblical passages by analysing their structural form

Parable – similitudes drawn from nature and people

Pericope - a section



READING LIST

CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church

DV = Second Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation – “ Dei Verbum”

EG = Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis “ Evangelium Gaudium”

OLM = Ordo Lectionum Missae (Introduction to the Lectionary)

SC = Second Vatican Council Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy “ Sacrosanctum Concilium”

VD = Apostolic Exhortation of Benedict XVI “ Verbum Domini”

HD = Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments
- Homiletic Directory



READING LIST

The Three Volume Lectionary – especially the General Introduction on the Roman Lectionary in vol I (“ GIRL “)

The Roman Missal especially the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (“ GIRM”)

“ Preaching the Lectionary “ - Reginald H Fuller , The Liturgical Press 1984

“ Preaching at the Double Feast “ – ed Michael Monshau , The Liturgical Press 2006

“ Elements of Homiletics “ O C Edwards , Pueblo Publishing 1982

“ Gospel Parallels “ B Throckmorton , 4th ed Thomas Nelson 1979

“ New Jerome Biblical Commentary “ editors : R E Brown, J Fitzmyer
& R E Murphy , Geoffrey Chapman

