

POPE FRANCIS ON THE MINISTRY OF PREACHING

“The homily, in particular, has a distinctive function, for it possesses ‘a quasi-sacramental character’. Helping people to enter more deeply into the word of God through simple and suitable language will allow priests themselves to discover the ‘beauty of the images used by the Lord to encourage the practice of the good’. This is a pastoral opportunity that should not be wasted!” – [*Aperuit Illis*](#), 5

“For many of our faithful, in fact, this is the only opportunity they have to grasp the beauty of God’s word and to see it applied to their daily lives. Consequently, sufficient time must be devoted to the preparation of the homily. A commentary on the sacred readings cannot be improvised. Those of us who are preachers should not give long, pedantic homilies or wander off into unrelated topics. When we take time to pray and meditate on the sacred text, we can speak from the heart and thus reach the hearts of those who hear us, conveying what is essential and capable of bearing fruit. May we never tire of devoting time and prayer to Scripture, so that it may be received “not as a human word but as what it really is, the word of God” (1 Thess 2:13).” – [*Aperuit Illis*](#), 5

“The homily cannot be a form of entertainment like those presented by the media, yet it does need to give life and meaning to the celebration. It is a distinctive genre, since it is preaching situated within the framework of a liturgical celebration; hence it should be brief and avoid taking on the semblance of a speech or a lecture. A preacher may be able to hold the attention of his listeners for a whole hour, but in this case his words become more important than the celebration of faith. If the homily goes on too long, it will affect two characteristic elements of the liturgical celebration: its balance and its rhythm. When preaching takes place within the context of the liturgy, it is part of the offering made to the Father and a mediation of the grace which Christ pours out during the celebration. This context demands that preaching should guide the assembly, and the preacher, to a lifechanging communion with Christ in the Eucharist. This means that the words of the preacher must be measured, so that the Lord, more than his minister, will be the centre of attention.” – [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#), 138

“The same Spirit who inspired the Gospels and who acts in the Church also inspires the preacher to hear the faith of the God’s people and to find the right way to preach at each Eucharist.” – *EG*, 139

“The preacher also needs to keep his ear to the people and to discover what it is that the faithful need to hear.” – *EG*, 154

“A preaching which would be purely moralistic or doctrinaire, or one which turns into a lecture on biblical exegesis, detracts from this heart-to-heart communication which takes place in the homily and possesses a quasi-sacramental character: “Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Rom 10:17). In the homily, truth goes hand in hand with beauty and goodness. Far from dealing with abstract truths or cold syllogisms, it communicates the beauty of the images used by the Lord to encourage the practice of good. The memory of the faithful, like that of Mary, should overflow with the wondrous things done by God. Their hearts, growing in hope from the joyful and practical exercise of the love which they have received, will sense that each word of Scripture is a gift before it is a demand.” – *EG*, 142



“When the preacher believes he is too intelligent, or when the one who is responsible for carrying forward the Word of God tries to be clever – ‘Ah, I can get along with these people’ – just so, it will end badly. Instead, we must go forward like a lamb among wolves.” – Weds General Audience, Feb 2017



“The one who gives the homily has to remember he isn’t doing something of his own... He’s preaching, he’s giving a voice to Jesus, he’s preaching the Word of Jesus. It has to be well-prepared and brief, brief.” – Weds General Audience, Feb 2018



“A priest said to me once that he had gone to another city, where his parents lived. His dad told him, ‘You know, I’m happy, because me and my friends found a church where they do the Mass without a homily.’ How many times have we seen people sleeping during a homily, or chatting among themselves, or outside smoking a cigarette? It’s true, you all know it ... it’s true! Please be brief ... no more than 10 minutes, please!” – Weds General Audience, Feb 2018



“Certainly, to understand properly the meaning of the central message of a text we need to relate it to the teaching of the entire Bible as handed on by the Church. This is an important principle of biblical interpretation which recognizes that the Holy Spirit has inspired not just a part of the Bible, but the Bible as a whole, and that in some areas people have grown in their understanding of God’s will on the basis of their personal experience. It also prevents erroneous or partial interpretations which would contradict other teachings of the same Scriptures. But it does not mean that we can weaken the distinct and specific emphasis of a text which we are called to preach. One of the defects of a tedious and ineffectual preaching is precisely its inability to transmit the intrinsic power of the text which has been proclaimed.” – *EG*, 148