“The Proclamation of God’s Wonderful Works in the History of Salvation”:
The Approach of Robert Waznak, SS,
To the Theology, Theory and Practice of the Liturgical Homily

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“The Proclamation of God’s Wonderful Works in the History of Salvation”:
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The Fathers of Vatican Council II, established the principles for the reform of the liturgy of the Roman Rite in Sacrosanctum Concilium. These principles were predicated upon the work of a number of liturgical and scriptural scholars, historians and pastoral theologians from the various centers of research and liturgical practice of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Article thirty-five of Sacrosanctum Concilium called for the restoration of the liturgical homily to the rites of the Church, especially to the Mass. The homily is preached on Sundays and holydays in the post-conciliar Church; however, the liturgical homily itself is one area to which theologians in the post-conciliar era have not given substantial energy. Often authors will publish collections of homilies, but few have undertaken the work of understanding this integral liturgical unit. Robert Waznak, SS, is one of the trailblazers in this field.

Waznak (1938–2002) devoted his career to teaching, writing about, and practicing the liturgical homily. Ordained for Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1964, he preached in the diocese during the Council. After joining the Sulpicians in 1968, he taught homiletics at Saint Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore and at the Catholic University of America before beginning his doctoral studies in Rhetoric at Temple University in Philadelphia. Following his doctorate, he returned to
teaching, eventually earning tenure at Washington Theological Union and assisting in parishes until his untimely death from cancer in 2002.

During the course of his career Waznak made two significant contributions to the field of homiletics: an inclusive definition of the homily and an inclusion of the Protestant New Homiletic via the topic of narrative theology in his work. He also recognized a lacuna in the field, a need for a comprehensive theology of preaching, which he was unable to fill.

This present study examines Waznak’s two contributions in light of magisterial writings about the homily and the work of the New Homiletic on narrative preaching. It then uses Waznak’s methodology of using what modern scholars consider the theological lynchpin of Vatican II, communion theology, to fill his lacuna by creating a theology of the homily based on communion ecclesiology.

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Chapter One: Father Robert Paul Waznak, S.S.: A Brief Biography

According to James Wallace, C.SS.R, if one were asked to choose a single letter of the alphabet to describe Father Robert Paul Waznak, SS,¹ this letter would be “P.”² Waznak, the provocative yet pensive son of Polish-Americans placed under patron of Paul, was gifted as a prophetic preacher.

Frank and Sophia Waznak, along with their sons Frank and Charlie, welcomed Robert Paul Waznak into their Polish family in Scranton, Pennsylvania on February 5, 1938. Frank Waznak worked as a coal miner while Sophia took care of the boys. Neither Frank nor Sophia finished high school, but they provided for their sons so that they could have an education. (The elder two Waznak boys would enter into law enforcement on the state and city level.) Life in the Waznak home was not easy as the coal miners of the mid-twentieth century suffered many injustices, and most certainly Frank, Charles and Robert overheard conversations and had their own experiences of being sons of working class parents.³ These family experiences would stay with Robert throughout his life and influence his preaching by a careful attention to the plight of the poor, the discriminated, and the marginalized.

¹ Office of the Provincial, “Robert Paul Waznak, SS.: February 5, 1938—December 5, 2002” Baltimore, MD: Associated Archives, Undated [December 2002]; all biographical dates, unless otherwise noted, are from this obituary.
³ Mel Blanchette, SS, interview by author, Washington, DC, 11 June 2012; hereafter, “Mel Blanchette, SS.”
Even in the midst of poverty, Robert developed an appreciation for God’s presence reflected in art and the beauty that he encountered. One of these places was in his parish church. In an All Saints’ Day Homily, Waznak described the parish church he grew up in:

The church where I was baptized and worshiped as a boy was a venerable Polish pantheon. It had many statues and paintings. When the sermon and rites were dry and unintelligible, as most often they were, there was always a place to gaze. The statue of St. Lucy with her eyes on a plate; Therese of Liseux clutching her roses and cross; Anthony of Padua ready to help us find not only our lost souls but our lost keys; and high above the main altar a mural of our parish’s patron saint, Stanislaus, Bishop of Kraków being murdered in the cathedral by King Boleslaus and his goon squad. The Saints for me were a refuge, a wild and wonderful communion.

Waznak’s friend, Fr. Mel Blanchette, SS, reflected: “The poor need beauty just as much as they need food. Bob was a pioneer in that area. He liked to make things beautiful. This had a two-edged quality to it. He wanted things to be perfect, not just good. … But this also contributed to his preaching; he could call people to beyond where they were. He would not shy away from asking people to do something great.”

Robert grew up in the same town of his birth, attending the Catholic grade school and public high school. He graduated from Scranton Central High School in the class of 1956. He spent his summers as a golf caddy, as he described in the funeral homily for his brother: “As a

4 Ibid.
5 Robert Waznak, “Homily for All Saints” Baltimore, MD: Associated Archives (undated). This parish church was closed in the year 2005.
6 This is undocumented. According to his obituary, Waznak attended public school. But according to Blanchette, he attended Catholic grade school.
kid for many summers, I was a caddie hustling those big leather bags down the fairway.” 7 He and his brothers also helped around the house, the garden and the yard. 8

He matriculated into the University of Scranton that fall. He became a seminarian for Scranton and transferred to Mount Saint Mary’s Seminary in the fall of 1958, and graduated from the College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy in 1960. That fall he returned to the Mount to begin his major seminary studies. He graduated from the Mount in 1964, earning a Master of Arts degree in Religious Education. On 23 May 1964, Bishop J. Carroll McCormick ordained Robert and his classmates to the priesthood.

Father Waznak was assigned as a parochial vicar at Holy Rosary Parish in Scranton following his ordination. During this year, he also assisted with Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Lake Silkworth, PA. The following year, Waznak was transferred to The Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (also known as Saint Mary’s) Parish in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, where he served as parochial vicar and religion instructor at Marymount High School until 1968.

These assignments were difficult for Waznak. He faced discrimination by his Irish pastors, but he dearly loved the people of the parishes. 9 During his time at Saint Mary’s Parish, Mrs. Kate Purta, the mother of a Sulpician, recognized the preaching talent of the new associate and encouraged Waznak to contact her son, who was serving as Provincial of the American province of the Sulpician Fathers at the time, and to consider joining the Society. Seeing this as

8 Ibid. He spoke of his brother’s later disdain for mowing and weeding since they had to do it all the time growing up.
9 Mel Blanchette, SS.
a good way to use his talents and serve the wider Church, Father Waznak began to explore membership into the Society of Saint Sulpice. As a Society of Apostolic Life, these diocesan priests undertake the primary apostolates of seminary education and ongoing formation of clergy. In 1968, Waznak joined the faculty at the oldest Sulpician foundation in the United States, Saint Mary’s Seminary and University in Roland Park, Maryland, to teach homiletics. He began doctoral studies at Temple University in the fall of 1969. The following year, 1970, Father Waznak was formally admitted to the Society.

In two homilies for his 25th jubilee, Waznak summarized this experience:

In 1964, I was ordained “priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” But six years later, even the assured identity of the priesthood began to crack. When my mother died in 1970, my dad insisted on ordering three cemetery markers that would be uniform: one for my mother, one for my dad, and one for me. He gave instructions to Mario the man who lived his life putting words in stone. When my dad gave him the words for my stone and said, Rev. Robert P. Waznak, even Mario doubted: “Are you sure Mr. Waznak that you wanted it to read “Rev.”? Once it's in stone, it's hard to change, and in the way things are going these days, you never know.”

Mario was right, you never know. I always thought that I would serve my entire life as a priest in my diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania. But in the late ‘60s when the church was launching out into new waters, I wanted to be where the action was: I wanted to be a minister to ministers, to commit my life to the education and formation of future priests and ministers. And so I took off for Baltimore to join the Sulpician Fathers, a society of priests dating back to the seventeenth century whose sole mission was to renew the Church by renewing the Church's priests. The first question the Sulpician provincial asked me when I came to Baltimore was: “Has there ever been any mental illness in your family?” Thank God, I didn't know the answer to that question. But the second question was: “What would you like to teach in seminary?” That answer was easy. There was never a doubt in my mind that I wanted to teach preaching.10

10 “Corpus Christi” undated [1989]: Associated Archives.
It happened quickly and unexpectedly like the Ethiopian’s surprise visit by Philip in Gaza, the last outpost before the desert; After Mass one Sunday, Kate Purta, Paul’s mother came up to me and simply said: “You shouldn't be here, you should be a Sulpician.” Sometimes, especially at a time of wondering, someone says the right thing to you at the right moment. And so I drove my chariot to Baltimore.11

Waznak wanted to teach preaching, but there were not established doctoral programs in preaching in Catholic institutions at the time. He researched creative alternatives, and was very impressed with the work of Dr. Julia Wing from the Rhetoric and Communications Department12 and Fr. Gerard Sloyan of the Religious Studies Department13 at Temple University in Philadelphia. He applied and was admitted into the Department of Rhetoric and Communications for these doctoral studies. The department had a great reputation, and provided a dual curriculum of classic rhetoric with modern communication theory.14 He completed his dissertation under the guidance of Dr. Donald Eckroyd, with readers of Drs. Dennis Smith, William Thompson and Ralph Towne on “A Descriptive and Evaluative Study of Contemporary Catholic Homiletic Services in the Light of the Philosophy of the Second Vatican Council.”

While Waznak was completing his doctoral studies, he began serving as a member of the formation faculty at Theological College, the Sulpician Seminary at the Catholic University of America. He continued as a faculty member of Theological College until the Spring of 1980. Working under Fr. Gerald Brown, SS, Waznak implemented the preaching components of the

12 Mel Blanchette, SS.
13 Gerald Brown, SS. phone interview by author, Menlo Park, CA/Washington, DC, 22 May 2012; hereafter, “Gerald Brown, SS.”
14 Gerald Lardner, SS, interview by author, Baltimore, MD, 10 May 2012.
1971 *Program for Priestly Formation*. Waznak taught the introductory course to homiletics because he judged that the seminarians “need to know the general principles articulated by the Council documents” of preaching and their preaching “needed to relate to the times in which they were living.”\(^\text{15}\) Waznak knew that the future preachers needed to be spiritually grounded and they could learn the other elements of preaching later.\(^\text{16}\)

While he was serving at Theological College, he taught homiletics and presented workshops on the Oral Interpretation of Scripture at the Catholic University of America. Additionally, in 1977, Waznak was named the Director of Formation and Recruitment for the Society. That same academic year, Waznak served as a visiting professor of Homiletics at Princeton Theological Seminary. All of these major assignments concluded in the Spring of 1980.

In 1980, Waznak returned to Saint Mary’s Seminary and University in Roland Park to teach homiletics, and at the same time, began teaching in the Word and Worship Department of the Washington Theological Union (WTU). His assignment at Saint Mary’s ended in 1984, but he continued at WTU until his retirement in 2002. During his tenure at WTU, he transformed the Word and Worship Department into an outstanding program with a state-of-the-art preaching and presiding studio.\(^\text{17}\)

As a professor, Waznak demanded excellence from his students. One of his former students recalled that an image joked about among his classmates was that of Fr. Waznak sitting

\(^{15}\) Gerald Brown, SS.  
\(^{16}\) Ibid.  
\(^{17}\) Mel Blanchette, SS.
on a Saturday night with his cat on his lap going over the text of his homily so the he knew the homily so well that even though he had the text with him, he would never need to look down. This is what he also expected his students to do.\textsuperscript{18}

During his time at WTU, Waznak’s research and writing was focused in two major areas. First, from his own reading and study as well as his own natural talent as “a raconteur,”\textsuperscript{19} he developed an interest in narrative preaching. Beginning with his reading of Fred Craddock’s ground breaking work on inductive preaching and the influential work \textit{Preaching the Story}\textsuperscript{20} by Edmund A. Steimle, Morris J. Niedenthal and Charles L. Rice, Waznak brought attention to this in Catholic circles with his first published book \textit{Sunday after Sunday}.\textsuperscript{21}

Additionally, Waznak taught in Summer programs and institutes across the country. In 1971, he taught speech and debate at Temple University. In 1974 he taught courses in ministry and theology at Mary Manse College in Toledo, Ohio. In 1976 he taught Adult Religious Education courses at Barry College in Miami, Florida. In 1994 he taught homiletics at the National Institute for Clergy Formation at Seton Hall University.

In 1987 Waznak joined with Fr. James Wallace, C.SS.R., Dr. Mary Lyons, and Fr. John Melloh, SM, as the founding board of the Catholic Association of Teachers of Homiletics. Waznak served as first president of the group. He would remain active until his retirement in their yearly meetings that addressed topical issues of preaching.

\textsuperscript{18} David P. Dwyer, CSP, interviewed by author, Washington, DC, 13 November 2012.
\textsuperscript{19} Mel Blanchette, SS.
In addition to his teaching assignments, Waznak traveled the country conducting workshops for clergy and religious on the subject of preaching. After James Wallace, C.SS.R. joined the WTU faculty in 1986, they would partner to conduct these workshops. According to Wallace, “Bob would begin with ‘The Turns.’ The turn to the Subject, the turn to narrative. Then I would give a session on the images of the preacher: Herald, Teacher, Witness, and Interpreter.”

They would present on average between one and two workshops a year in the diocese or community, working around the academic schedule.

In his final years of teaching, Waznak also became the co-editor of *New Theology Review*, a joint publication of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and the Washington Theological Union. He had contributed several articles as well prior to his assumption of the editorial reigns.

Throughout the course of his professional career, Waznak remained engaged with preaching at the parochial level. With the exception of the four year period when he was teaching at both Saint Mary’s and WTU, Waznak presided and preached regularly at Masses in parishes in the Archdioceses of Washington (District of Columbia) and Baltimore (Maryland) and the Diocese of Arlington (Virginia). He published homilies from his time in Virginia in his first collection of homilies, *Like Fresh Bread* in 1993, and homilies from his ministry in Washington were published after his death in *Lift Up Your Hearts.*

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22 James Wallace, C.SS.R.
23 These two collections will be treated more extensively in the next chapter.
In 1998, Waznak was diagnosed with leukemia, but he continued to teach until he was no longer able to do so. He received early retirement in the Spring of 2002. Later that year, on December 5, 2002, Waznak died from the cancer.
Chapter Two: The Development of the Theory and Theology of the Liturgical Homily in the Writings of Robert Waznak, SS

Introduction

Through the course of his career Robert Waznak, SS, developed his theology and theory of the liturgical unit called the homily. As noted in the previous chapter, Waznak began his priestly ministry six months after the promulgation in December of 1963 of the first constitution of the Vatican Council II, Sacrosanctum Concilium. As a member of the ordination class of 1964, Waznak brought the zeal of a newly ordained priest to the responsibility of implementing the reforms called for by the conciliar fathers. He carried this responsibility of implementing this reform into his studies and then into his teaching by instructing seminarians and lay ministers in the art of preaching the liturgical homily.

This chapter will survey the development of his theory and theology of the liturgical homily over the course of his priestly and scholarly ministry. Waznak first treated the liturgical homily in his doctoral dissertation, “A Descriptive and Evaluative Study of Contemporary Catholic Homiletic Services in the Light of the Philosophy of the Second Vatican Council.” In his dissertation, Waznak critiques thirteen then-contemporary homily services with criteria developed from his articulation of a theory and theology of the liturgical homily. Ten years later, he published his first book on preaching Sunday after Sunday: Preaching the Homily as Story.


2 Waznak, Sunday after Sunday: Preaching the Homily as Story (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993); hereafter Sunday.
In *Sunday after Sunday*, Waznak views the liturgical homily through the lens of narrative theology. Ten years after his first book, Waznak published a collection of his own homilies in *Like Fresh Bread: Sunday Homilies in the Parish*. In the introduction to this collection, Waznak expands his previous work and introduces his first theological presentation of the homily derived from the Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry’s 1982 statement on preaching, *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*. In his magnum opus *An Introduction to the Homily* published in 1998, Waznak integrates his previous work with four images of the preacher to develop his final statement on the theory and theology of the liturgical homily. In addition to the four major works listed, Waznak published seventeen articles and recorded two video sessions on various aspects of preaching and the liturgical homily. His articles and presentations that correspond to the major themes will be treated as the themes emerge.

This chapter will examine three themes developed in the major writings of Waznak, which are presented in chronological order: the liturgical homily, narrative preaching and images of the homilists. Additionally, it will examine briefly the Lectionary, which Waznak treats in each of these primary themes. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the development of Waznak’s theory and theology of the liturgical homily by exploring his writings.

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4 National Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, *Fulfilled in Your Hearing* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1982); hereafter *FIYH*. Unlike other curial and conference documents, *FIYH* does not number its paragraphs; therefore, all numbers in succeeding references will be to the page number of the USCC text.

“A Descriptive and Evaluative Study of Contemporary Catholic Homiletic Services in the Light of the Philosophy of the Second Vatican Council” (1973): “Philosophy of Vatican II” and the Liturgical Homily

Under the guidance of Dr. Donald Eckroyd, Waznak sought to answer three questions in his dissertation for the Doctor of Philosophy degree from Temple University: (1) What is the nature of the homiletic services that were available in the early 1970’s and utilized by Roman Catholics? (2) What kinds of services are available? (3) Do these services reflect “the philosophy of Vatican II”?6 While Waznak’s exploration of the first two questions provides insight into the ecclesial culture of the period following the Council, these insights do not directly concern this present investigation. The third question, however, provides Waznak’s first substantial treatment of the liturgical homily, and it becomes the foundation for his development of the theory and theology of the homily.

“The Homiletic Teachings of Vatican II”

In his explanation of the third question above, Waznak observes: “The Fathers of Vatican II sought to renew preaching in the Church by insisting that the homily should not be a dogmatic, social, socio-political, or hagiographical topical sermon. Rather, it should primarily open up to

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6 Waznak, Dissertation, 17–18. Waznak uses the term “philosophy of Vatican II” throughout his dissertation to refer to what today would be termed “the theology of Vatican II.”
the congregation the meaning of the Word of God just proclaimed in the liturgy.”7 Waznak devotes the third chapter of his dissertation to the topic of “The Homiletic Teachings of the Contemporary Roman Catholic Church.” Waznak defines the purpose of this chapter in the following way: “Since the thrust of this dissertation is an examination and an evaluation of contemporary Roman Catholic homiletic services, it would seem wise to examine the recent reforming event of the Roman Church, the Second Vatican Council, and to consider the way in which it defined a new kind of ideal for the preaching ministry of the Catholic Church.”8

Waznak begins his exploration of the liturgical homily in relationship to Vatican Council II by exploring how Pope John XXIII’s aggiornamento was a culmination of renewal that had been in preparation for decades prior to the calling of the Council. In particular, he highlights the work of two scholarly and pastoral movements within the Church which received papal approbation by Pope Pius XII. First, the Biblical Movement, which Pius XII affirmed in Divino Afflante Spiritu (1943), provided for “modern methods of interpretation of the Scriptures.”9 And the Liturgical Movement, affirmed by Mediator Dei (1947), provided a “liturgical and theological framework for Vatican II’s document on the Sacred Liturgy.”10

Next, Waznak briefly outlines the state of preaching before the Council. He describes “a loss of the homiletic ideal of the primitive Church,”11 that is, the homily in early witnesses of the Eucharistic celebration was seen as an exposition of the Scripture readings of the liturgy and the

7 Ibid., 19.
8 Ibid., 55.
9 Ibid., 58.
10 Ibid., 58.
11 Ibid., 61.
admonition to participate in the Eucharist. By the Middle Ages, the homily had lost the intimate connection to the liturgical celebration and becomes “a platform for scholastic speeches, denunciations of heresies, and recitations of fantastic tales and fables.”12 This led to the state of preaching before the Vatican Council II where “many dioceses provided homiletic syllabi containing various religious topics that were totally unrelated to the Scriptural readings of the mass.”13

Waznak then shows how Vatican Council II restored the primitive homiletic ideal in various texts. He does this by highlighting several important themes of Vatican II related to preaching. He first demonstrates how the conciliar fathers emphasized the importance of preaching in Lumen Gentium 25,14 Presbyterorum ordinis 4,15 Optatam totius 19,16 and Ad gentes divinitus 6.17 Next he illustrates the conciliar relationship of Scripture and preaching

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium, no. 25 in Vatican II, Volume I: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery, OP, new rev. ed. (Northport, NY: Costello, 1992): “Among the more important duties of bishops that of preaching the Gospel has pride of place. For the bishops are heralds of the faith, who draw new disciples to Christ; they are authentic teachers, that is, teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach the faith to the people assigned to them, their faith which is destined to inform their thinking and direct their conduct…” Hereafter LG. All subsequent quotations from Vatican Council II will be taken from the Flannery translation unless otherwise noted.
15 Ibid., Presbyterorum ordinis, no. 4: “The People of God is formed into one in the first place by the Word of the living God, which is quite rightly sought from the mouth of priests. For since nobody can be saved who has not first believed, it is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the Gospel of God to all men. In this way they carry out the Lord’s command “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15) and thus set up and increase the people of God.” Hereafter PO.
16 Ibid., Optatam totius, no. 19: “The pastoral preoccupation which should characterize every feature of the students’ training also requires that they should be carefully instructed in all matters which are especially relevant in the sacred ministry. These are, principally, catechesis, preaching, liturgical worship and the administration of the sacraments, works of charity, their duty to contact those in error and the unbelievers, and other pastoral duties.” Hereafter OT.
17 Ibid., Ad gentes divinitus, no. 6: “The principal instrument in this work of implanting the Church is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was to announce this Gospel that the Lord sent his disciples into the whole world,
through *Dei Verbum* 21\(^{18}\) and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 24.\(^{19}\) After this Waznak shows how preaching is an indispensable means of instruction in *Christus Dominus* 13\(^{20}\) and 30.\(^{21}\) He then proceeds to illustrate how *Gaudium et Spes* 62\(^{22}\) and *Presbyterorum ordinis* 4\(^{23}\) connect preaching to the present age and the contemporary issues facing the assembly. He concludes the section by articulating the type of preaching expected by the Council: “While one can locate evidence of a renewal of preaching throughout the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the most specific program for homiletic renewal is found in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. It is here that the Council spells out the new kind of preaching that is expected of Catholic

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\(^{18}\) Ibid., *Dei Verbum*, no. 21: “It follows that all the preaching of the Church, as indeed the entire Christian religion, should be nourished and ruled by sacred Scripture. In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them.” Hereafter *DV*.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 24: “Sacred scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from it that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung. It is from the scriptures that the prayers, collects, and hymns draw their inspiration and force, and that actions and signs derive their meaning.” Hereafter *SC*.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., *Christus Dominus*, no. 13: “Bishops should also endeavor to use the various methods available nowadays for proclaiming Christian doctrine. These are, first of all, preaching and catechetical instruction, which always hold pride of place.” Hereafter *CD*.

\(^{21}\) *CD* 30.2: “In their role as teachers it is the duty of parish priests to preach the word of God to all the faithful so that they, firmly rooted in faith, hope and charity, may grow in Christ, and the Christian community may give that witness to charity which the Lord commended.”

\(^{22}\) Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 62: “Every effort should be made, therefore, to make artists feel that they are understood by the Church in their artistic work and to encourage them, while enjoying a reasonable standard of freedom, to enter into happier relations with the Christian community. New art forms adapted to our times and in keeping with the characteristics of different nations and regions should be acknowledged by the Church. They may also be brought into the sanctuary whenever they raise the mind up to God with suitable forms of expression and in conformity with liturgical requirements. Thus the knowledge of God will be made better known; the preaching of the Gospel will be rendered more intelligible to man’s mind and will appear more relevant to his situation.” Hereafter *GS*.

\(^{23}\) *PO* 4: “Moreover, the priest’s preaching, often very difficult in the present-day conditions, if it is to become more effective in moving the minds of his hearers, must expound the Word of God not merely in a general and abstract way but by an application of the eternal truth of the Gospel to the concrete circumstances of life.”
priests—the liturgical homily.” Waznak quotes SC 35 and 52 followed by the first instruction on its implementation, Inter Oecumenici (1965) 53–55. He concludes, based upon these conciliar documents, that the Vatican Council II’s liturgical homily has four principal qualities: kerygmatic, liturgical, Scriptural and relevant.

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24 Waznak, “Descriptive,” 66. “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” is underlined in the original work, but italicized here for the sake of consistency within this paper.
25 SC 35: “That the intimate connection between rite and words may be apparent in the liturgy:
1. In sacred celebrations a more ample, more varied, and more suitable reading from sacred scripture should be restored.
2. The most suitable place for a sermon ought to be indicated in the rubrics, for a sermon is part of the liturgical action whenever a rite involves one. The ministry of preaching is to be fulfilled most faithfully and carefully. The sermon, however, should draw its contents mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources, for it is the proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, which is the mystery of Christ ever made present and active in us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy.”
26 SC 52: “By means of the homily 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, therefore, 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, with the people assisting, it should not be omitted except for serious reason.”
27 Sacred Congregation of Rites, Inter Oecumenici, no. 53, in International Commission on English in the Liturgy, Documents on the Liturgy: 1963–1979: Conciliar, Papal and Curial Texts, no. 23 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1982): “There shall be a homily on Sundays and holydays of obligation at all Masses celebrated with a congregation, including conventual, sung, or pontifical Masses.
“On days other than Sundays and holydays a homily is recommended, especially on some of the weekdays of Advent and Lent or on other occasions when the faithful come to church in large numbers.
54: “A homily on the sacred text means an explanation, pertinent to the mystery celebrated and the special needs of the listeners, of some point in either the reading from sacred Scripture or in another text from the Ordinary or Proper of the day’s Mass.
55: “Because the homily is part of the liturgy for the day, any syllabus proposed for preaching within the Mass during certain periods must keep intact the intimate connection with at least the principal seasons and feasts of the liturgical year (see SC art. 102–104), that is, with the mystery of redemption.” Hereafter IOE.
28 Waznak, Dissertation, 68.
“The Interpretation of the Homiletic Teachings of Vatican II”

In the next section of the third chapter of his dissertation Waznak begins to interpret the meaning of the previous section through an exploration the conciliar definition of the word “homily.”

1. “The Homily”

First, Waznak notes that this re-appropriated Greek, patristic term, “homily,” is used more frequently in SC and ICE than the previous Latin term “sermon.” The former is found in article 52 of the Constitution and in articles 53–55 of the Instruction while the latter term is found only in article 35 of the Constitution.

Further, he demonstrates that in DV 24 the homily receives special attention: “The ministry of the Word, too—pastoral preaching, catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction, among which the liturgical homily should hold pride of place—is healthily nourished and thrives in holiness through the Word of Scripture.”

Waznak argues that SC 52 and ICE 53 support this interpretation that the homily “is a specific type of preaching that is highly esteemed” in the conciliar documents.

29 DV 24.
30 SC 52: “By means of the homily the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life are expounded from the sacred text during the course of the liturgical year. The homily, therefore, 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, with the people assisting, it should not be omitted except for a serious reason.”
31 See note #27 above.
Based upon these texts Waznak argues that “[t]he word ‘homily’ itself suggests a new kind of preaching in the Catholic Church.” This new kind of preaching fits into a paraclesis oriented aim of preaching which seeks the continued conversion of the assembly. It does not exclude the kerygma or didache oriented preaching, but rather recognizes the purposes and limitations of the liturgical context for preaching.

2. “Kerygmatic Preaching”

Second, Waznak returns to the first characteristic of post-Vatican II preaching that he named above: the liturgical homily is “kerygmatic.” He first differentiates this term from the kerygma oriented preaching discussed above because the liturgical homily has a paraclesis oriented aim. Building upon SC 35, Waznak stresses that the contemporary homily “would focus upon the good news of salvation.” The root of this style of preaching is found in the writings of the Liturgical Movement. Waznak draws from Josef Jungmann, SJ’s, La bonne Nouvelle et notre predication. He argues that the content of kerygmatic preaching “is the story of salvation as centered on Jesus Christ, who suffered, died, rose from the dead, returned to the Father, now

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33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 70: Following the work of Charles H. Dodd in The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, Waznak distinguishes between three types of preaching: kerygma oriented preaching that focuses upon evangelization and calls for conversion; paraclesis oriented preaching that aims to continue the conversion begun by those who have accepted the kerygma oriented preaching; and didache oriented preaching that aims to teach or explain Christian doctrine.
35 Ibid., 72.
36 Waznak cites this as “Josef Jungmann, SJ, La bonne Nouvelle et notre predication (Ratisbone, 1936).” Most likely he is referring to a French translation of Jungmann’s Die Frohbotschaft und unsere Glaubensverkündigung (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1936). This work was not published in English until 1962 in an abridged form: The Good News: Yesterday and Today (New York: Sadlier, 1962).
lives in the Spirit in the church and will one day return.”

He continues: “The early Apostles proclaimed the ‘Good News’ or Gospel of Jesus: that just as God has marvelously acted in the people of Israel, so too has He acted through His Son Jesus, Who by His life and death saved us and continues to save us.” Kerygmatic preaching “does not simply concern [itself] with the historical dimension of the Scripture reading, but a proclamation of the Christ event as present reality.”

3. “Liturgical Preaching”

Third, Waznak distinguishes what makes a homily “liturgical.” Drawing from SC and IŒ, he asserts that one of the most significant reforms called for by the conciliar fathers was that the homily is an integral component of the liturgy. As such, it must be understood in the context of the liturgy.

Following his then-contemporary homileticians, Waznak sees the homily as a bridge between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. He identifies this as a restoration of “the ancient tradition of the liturgical homily so ‘that the intimate connection between words and rites may be apparent in the liturgy’.” He grounds this view in the ancient sources, citing particularly the “First Apology” of St. Justin, Martyr.

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37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 73.
40 Ibid., 74. Quotation from SC 35.
Waznak further identifies this liturgical type of homily containing a “mystagogical element.” By this term he uses John Burke, OP’s, notion that the goal of a liturgical homily is to “evoke a response which leads to liturgical contemplation of the paschal mystery through active participation in the liturgical celebrations of Christ’s Church.”

4. “Scriptural Preaching”

Fourth, Waznak identifies post-Vatican II preaching as “scriptural.” Citing SC 35 and 52 as well as ICE 54, which state that the homily should be based upon the “sacred text,” he argues that the nature of the homily is scriptural.

He then points out that “the liturgical homily is not a mere exegesis or lecture on the Scriptural texts of the day’s liturgy, ‘but a presentation of the text under its spiritual, historical and pastoral aspects, as being closely related to the spiritual good of the faithful’.”

Waznak also warns of an accommodated use of Scripture, where the passage is used for a homilist’s predetermined agenda. Using Raymond Brown, SS, Waznak also warns of the dangers of allegorizing the Scripture, and using the Scripture as a “springboard for one’s own thoughts.”

In the final part of this section, Waznak makes an excursus on the Lectionary based upon the mandate of ICE 54 which allows for the Scriptures or proper texts of the day to be a source for

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43 Waznak, Dissertation, 77.
the preaching. He describes the format of the Lectionary and its Sunday, weekday and sanctoral cycles, and the challenges related to preaching using the Lectionary.\(^{44}\)

5. “Relevant preaching”

Relevancy is Waznak’s final characteristic of post-Vatican II preaching. It is based on ICE 54, which says that preachers should address “the particular needs of the hearers.” Waznak furthers this description based upon PO 4 which exhorts priests to apply “the eternal truth of the Gospel to the concrete circumstances of life.”\(^{45}\)

Waznak further notes that in line with the mystagogical element of preaching listed above and SC 52 that preaching “is not divorced from daily activities of people’s lives outside the liturgical meeting place...but leads to dogmatic and ethical principles for the social dimension of daily Christian life.”\(^{46}\)

6. Conclusion

These four elements of the liturgical homily—kerygmatic, liturgical, scriptural and relevant—form the checklist which Waznak employed in his evaluation of the homiletic services that he studied in his dissertation. The remainder of his dissertation described the homiletic scene in the early 1970’s vis-a-vis the homiletic service. Waznak came to the conclusion that

\(^{44}\) See Waznak, Dissertation, 77–81; Sunday 58–66; Introduction 72–91. This description of the Lectionary is common in his works. An exploration of Waznak’s thought on the Lectionary will be presented in the final section of this chapter.

\(^{45}\) PO 4.

\(^{46}\) Waznak, Dissertation, 82.
overall the majority of the services examined did share this philosophy of preaching found in the Vatican Council II documents.

“Homiletic Services: Not Sleeping Soundly”47

In 1974, Waznak published an article in the journal *Liturgy* summarizing the results of his doctoral research. In the article, he describes a “middle way” to approach a homiletic service that would avoid the extremes of a preacher using a homiletic service verbatim or the material provided by the service becoming a barrier to authentic communication. He advises preachers first to use the homiletic service during the preparation stage of the homily as a source of insight and information. Second, he notes that creative preaching demands preparation and an abundance of source material that the homiletic service can provide for a preacher. Third, he urges preachers to contextualize their preaching with authentic examples from the lives of those in the assembly. Finally, he reminds preachers that preaching is an “exercise of wrestling with the Word to allow the Word to speak authentically” to the assembly.48

*Sunday after Sunday: Preaching the Homily as Story* (1983): Narrative Preaching

After over a decade of teaching preaching at Saint Mary’s University and Theological College, Waznak joined the faculty of the Washington Theological Union. Shortly after his arrival at WTU, he published *Sunday after Sunday: Preaching the Homily as Story*. This text

48 Ibid.
introduces one of Waznak’s interests that will continue throughout his career: narrative preaching.

**Introduction**

In the Introduction Waznak begins his first published book with the question, “What does it mean to preach?” He answers the question with an ancient metaphor: to wrestle with God. It is this metaphor that provides the reason for his venture into the quest for understanding what it means and how to preach weekly. Waznak judges that it is the weekly task which requires “work, humility and creativity.”

He then reiterates the brief history of preaching he outlined in his dissertation, comparing the approaches to preaching in a pre-conciliar and post-conciliar Church in the twentieth century.

Waznak then summarizes the theological foundation for post-Vatican II preaching found in his dissertation. Using SC and PO, he highlights that the liturgical homily is integral to the Mass, that the preacher has a primary duty to proclaim the Word, including the homily, and to “apply the perennial truth of the Gospel to the concrete circumstances of life.” Waznak recognizes that this provides a challenge to the modern Church: to train seminarians and to educate priests about the how to wrestle with the Word in a contemporary way.

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49 Waznak, *Sunday*, 1
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 3; quotation of *PO* 4.
52 Waznak uses the term “preacher” in *Sunday*. He does not specify who the preacher is, but will in later works speak primarily of the priest, while acknowledging the preacher can also be a deacon or a qualified lay person.
In the final section of the Introduction, Waznak introduces three goals for preaching: cognitive, attitudinal, and performance.\textsuperscript{53} Waznak summarized these as the what, the why and the how. He outlines the goals for preaching then as the following:

(1) Cognitive, to offer an interpretation of life based on the biblical view which calls for an awareness of who we are and who we are called to be. It is an interpretation that orders the events of our life with a vision, a way of “seeing in the dark.”

(2) Attitudinal, to invite people to a change of heart, to confront the comfortable and to comfort the afflicted. This conversion experience is ongoing and is found in our liturgical tradition of the homily envisioned by the renewal of Vatican II. The homily is a proclamation of the good news which invites people to thanksgiving and conversion not only at the Eucharistic table, but also in our personal and social choices of life.

(3) Performance, to offer people not just a skilled performance in the pulpit, but a caring ministry. Basic performance skills such as effective eye contact, appropriate body language, and voice projection and variation, vital to effective preaching, are not touched upon in this text. An attempt is made, however, to present a homily with a “planned spontaneity”: a technique that emphasizes a storylike quality for preaching.\textsuperscript{54}


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 7. In regard to the last goal, Waznak makes it clear in the Introduction that he is not writing a “how-to” book on preaching; rather, he is writing a book about the “why” of preaching.
The Homily

The first chapter of *Sunday after Sunday* highlights the pre-Vatican II foundations that were established by the Biblical and Liturgical Movements. As noted above, Pope Pius XII gave papal approbation to the respective movements with his encyclicals *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) and *Mediator Dei* (1947). Waznak then covers the material of his dissertation, concluding that preaching in the post-Vatican II Church should be kerygmatic, liturgical, scriptural, and relevant.

The Homily and Story

1. Narrative Theology

The second chapter begins the heart of this work. Waznak uses narrative theology, a “return to the story as an authentic mode of theological expression.”\(^{55}\) Referencing the thought of Sallie TeSelle,\(^{56}\) John Baptist Metz,\(^{57}\) and John Dominic Crossan,\(^{58}\) Waznak argues that Christianity “began as a community of storytellers,”\(^{59}\) and that story was the original mode of theology, and that dogmas, creeds and scholastic propositions came later. “We know, however, that Christianity did not remain a storytelling community. When it entered the Hellenistic world,

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 26–27.
\(^{59}\) Waznak, *Sunday*, 27.
it inherited *logos* (argument), which for the Greeks was always subordinate to *mythos* (story)."\(^{60}\)

He further notes “there was always among theologians a tendency to drive narrative out of the Christian tradition through ‘dymytholigication’--and not always without good reason."\(^{61}\) He argues *mythos* is the primary language of the Scriptures, not *logos*. The *logos* language has prevailed in theology, and narrative theology seeks to restore the place of *mythos* language in theology.

2. Story in Our Time

Waznak demonstrates that the present age calls for a return to storytelling for two reasons: “personalism and a climate of participation created by the modern media."\(^{62}\)

Waznak observes that the present age is a personal age concerned “with the individual conversion, the personal experience that provided insight to our lives and to our world view."\(^{63}\)

This focus on the individual in the present age challenges modern preachers who live in western society where universal principles and ideas are not prized nor do they dominate in the culture, yet the modern world is described as a global village brought together through television.\(^{64}\)

Story is presented as how to interpret the events of contemporary life. Waznak carefully defines story not as a “fanciful tale” but as a

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 28.

\(^{61}\) Ibid.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 29.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) Ibid.: It must be noted that Waznak’s words were written before the internet age, but already by 1983, the age of technology had brought images into the homes of individuals.
quest, a search of this particular person or community in history. Story is the narrative symbol of how we have ordered our experiences with a vision. Urban T. Holmes has described that vision as “a way of seeing in the dark.” The story’s central character is the pilgrim who in the telling of the story remembers the past in order to understand the present and give meaning to the future. The pilgrim has a story to tell while the wanderer does not. John Navone describes the difference: “The pilgrim differs from the wanderer in that one has the assurance of direction, the other does not. The assurance of direction corresponds to the theological virtue of hope, the spirits with which the pilgrim confronts the wilderness condition.”

It is for this reason Waznak argues that modern psychology and many “growth processes such as Marriage Encounter and Alcoholics Anonymous” depend upon the individual telling his/her story and gaining insight from the process.

Waznak, as noted above, recognizes that the new communications media have impacted the lives of people, but they have also changed the perception of their world. “Ours is the electronic age of the telephone, telegraph, television, and the film where all of our senses are massaged at once. Our electronic communications are instantaneous and all pervasive. They have broken down the linear, segmented ways of awareness developed by centuries of reading.” For this reason, didactic sermons no longer work for people. Story, however, invites participation by the listener in a subtle way. “They conjure up our own past story and help us to

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66 Waznak, Sunday 30.
67 Waznak wrote several articles on this subject which is tangential to the present study. Included among them are: “The Church’s Response to the Media: Twenty-five Years after Inter Mirifica,” America (21 January 1989): 36–40; “Preaching the Gospel in the Age of Technology,” New Theology Review 2 (1989): 48–60. See the bibliography for his complete works.
68 Waznak, Sunday, 31.
complete the story we are hearing with our own story.” Further, quoting a contemporary and prominent storyteller, Robert Béla Wilhelm, Waznak elucidates how this happens:

Human speech always tends toward dialogue, and a speech—or a sermon—is itself an annoying reminder of the one-sided relationship between speaker and audience. The magic of a story is that it casts a spell over us, making us forget that there is a speaker and a topic in front of us. The way this works is simple: the story takes us out of the room, or hall, or church, and into another world. We forget about his topic, and—perhaps, even best of all—we even forget about ourselves.

3. The Story and Preaching

Before entering into the rationale for a narrative theology of preaching, Waznak delineates two ways that preachers, especially before the Vatican Council II, misused stories in preaching. First, the powerful nature of the story was not respected, but used as an ice-breaker or warm up before getting to the serious matter of the sermon. And, second, using an allegorical approach, preachers often manipulated stories, especially Biblical ones, to their own agendas.

Waznak next describes four important insights learned from biblical studies and narrative theology in regard to preaching. He will build upon these insights in his later works.

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69 Ibid., 31.
71 Waznak includes a brief intermediate section on “The Story and the Church” on the development of story in other fields such as religious education and spiritual direction. While interesting, it goes beyond the scope of this investigation.
72 Waznak, Sunday, 33: Waznak illustrates this with a classic example of a priest on March 19 who will have a sermon that follows this line of reasoning: “Saint Joseph was a carpenter. A carpenter makes things out of wood. Confessinals are made of wood. We should go to confession.”
First, “[t]he biblical story intersects with our own stories.”73 The stories of the members of the assembly often intersect with the biblical narrative, and preaching that acknowledges this will allow the listeners to make their own connections. Waznak invites homilists while meditating on biblical pericopes to ask how the biblical story is similar to the stories of themselves and the assembly, what are “the feelings, values and particular needs of the people in the biblical story” and of the people today, and what “promises, invitations and hopes” does the biblical story hold out to the community.74

Second, “[s]tories are opportunities for transformation and challenge and are not tools for moralizing.” Stories persuade because they invite a participation in their reality. It is this invitation that appeals to modern society and which inspires people.75

Third, “[t]he story shape of the homily often emerges from the biblical text itself.” By respecting the biblical shape of the text, the preacher will avoid the “Aristotelean straightjacket” of having three points, but will allow the listeners to participate in the Scriptures. Waznak cautions against understanding this as needing to have every homily narrate a tale, but that homilies include the narrative structure of situation, complication, and resolution as many of Jesus’ parables do.76 Most important: because homilies should be scriptural, they should look to the Scriptures to guide not only content, but structure as well.77

73 Waznak, Sunday, 33.
74 Ibid., 34.
75 Ibid., 35.
76 Ibid., 36: He borrows Milton Crum’s argument from Manual on Preaching.
77 Ibid., 37.
Fourth, “[a] homily contains three stories: the story of the preacher, the story of God, and the story of the listener.” Based upon an Aristotelean model of verbal communication that the three basic elements of any communication are speaker, listener and message, Waznak articulates the three stories which are involved in preaching. It is these three stories that Waznak will attend to in the next three chapters of the book. He cautions that this does not mean that an individual homily should focus equally upon the three stories, but that each homily should include elements of each story.

The Story of the Preacher

“The key to the renewal of the homily by Vatican II is a renewal of the homilist.” With these words, Waznak begins his treatment of the preacher and his story. Waznak grounds this renewal of the homilist on Pope Paul VI’s address to the members of the Consilium de laicis:

“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” The preacher as witness captures for Waznak the ministerial function of the homilist because the primary story for the Church is God’s story that involves both ecclesial and personal faith, and recognizes that the contemporary person places a high demand upon personal integrity and involvement of homilists, or in Marshall McLuhan’s

78 Ibid., 37.
79 Ibid., 40.
80 Ibid., 42.
words, “the medium is the message.” Thus, Waznak identifies four characteristics of the preacher’s story: truthful, human, insightful and interpretive.

Following the insights of Hans Küng, Waznak argues that the twentieth century is marked by a passion for truthfulness. Citing examples from architecture, painting, literature, psychology, and philosophy, Waznak contends that Vatican II, both the conciliar documents and the subsequent wave of enthusiasm, is the Church’s manifestation of this passion. Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* said, “the present century thirsts for authenticity. Especially in regard to young people it is said that they have a horror of the artificial or false and that they are searching above all for truth and honesty.” It is this thirst for authenticity which leads to much criticism about preaching.

Waznak holds that the Vatican II call for relevant preaching in *SC* 52, *IŒ* 54 and *PO* 4 quenches this thirst. Paraphrasing William Faulkner, Waznak said that if preaching is to be relevant, “(1) it must be true: the creator must feel that his or her art with deep persuasion and must be able to answer ‘yes’ to the question, ‘Is it true?’; (2) it must be loaded with the realities of the human heart: the artist must delve into the universal and moving questions of love and hate, guilt and forgiveness, pain and joy and hope, life and death.”

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82 Waznak, *Sunday*, 42–43. Waznak does not give a citation to McLuhan’s statement. It was first used in his work *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Mentor, 1964) and developed in McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam, 1967).
83 Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Apostolic Exhortation), 8 December 1975, no. 76.
When preachers fail these two criteria, then they “easily revert to lies—not wicked ones, but shallow ones.”85 These lies prevent the Word of God from revealing the truth of who we are: “weak, sinful, in need of renewal and conversion.”86 For Waznak, if preachers believe what they preach, they will preach the truth, and they will be authentic.

The second characteristic of the preacher’s story is that it must be human. In particular, Waznak believed that preachers who lose their zeal for preaching and become mechanical have done so because they have ignored their humanity. Instead, they begin to “fake the part, learn the lines and make the right moves since the show must go on.”87 Waznak cautions here about a narcissism that some preachers exhibit in their preaching, “I am not speaking here of preachers who speak their own story so loudly that God’s story and the story of the listener go untold. … When I speak of the need of us preachers to share our humanity, I am suggesting an honest confessing of our sins, doubts and struggles as well as our faith.”88 He then cites Myron R. Chartier:

The preacher’s task is to make God visible through the transparency of his or her own person. When the preacher tries to be something other than he or she is, then the good news of the Gospel is blocked by deception. The truth of the incarnation is that God has been revealed in humanity. To the degree that the preacher can be authentically human by revealing self, he or she is in the position to be an instrument of the revelation of God. Appropriate self-disclosure on the part of the preacher provides the congregation a point of identification with the Word.89

85 Ibid., 47.
86 Ibid., 47.
87 Ibid., 49.
88 Ibid., 50.
All of this happens when a preacher’s story is human so that “[w]hen we can chuckle at our own foibles as we tell our story, our fellow pilgrims can chuckle, too, at their own. … When that wonderful moment of identification occurs, you can be sure that the good news has a real chance of being heard and believed.”

Waznak’s third mark of the preacher’s story is that it is insightful. The homily answers the questions “so what?” by allowing a link between Scripture and human reality to be made by the assembly. This is modeled on Jesus’ use of parables in the Gospel which invites the hearers to read the signs of the times in relationship to the proclamation of the Good News.

The final characteristic of the preacher’s story is interpretive. Waznak says that in the preacher’s story, the Church needs an experience of God to be conveyed rather than catechesis. It is from this experience that authentic interpretation of reality flows. Using H. Grady Davis’ categories from Design for Preaching, Waznak maintains that this interpretation uses diagnosis (what have we?), etiology (how come?) and prescription (what to do?).

Waznak’s checklist for authenticity, the four characteristics of the preacher’s story being relevant, human, insightful and interpretive, allows the preacher to share his faith in proclaiming the Good News. It is in the authentic witness that Waznak believes that the story of the preacher would interact with the other two primary stories of preaching.

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90 Waznak, Sunday, 51.
91 Waznak, Sunday, 52.
93 Waznak, Sunday, 54–55.
The Story of God

The fourth chapter of Waznak’s book, “The Story of God,” highlights the role that Scripture should have in the homily. “Vatican II’s renewal of the ancient homily signaled a return to the proclamation of the story of God: ‘All the preaching of the Church must be nourished and ruled by Sacred Scripture’ (Constitution on Divine Revelation, Art. 21). The character of the homily ‘should be that of a proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation’ (S.L., Art. 35).”94

After an excursus on the Lectionary,95 Waznak explores how to interpret God’s story. He first observes that “[t]he miracle of good storytelling is that tellers and listeners are healed because they recognize the story as their own.”96 This happens when preachers use the Hebrew sense of the Word, dabar, as an event when the word is spoken as an action. The Word of God is composed of both the Scriptures and human experience. As such, this living Word is not the object of interpretation but is its subject, that is, the Word of God interprets the present reality.97

As part of this exploration of what an interpretation of God’s story is, Waznak necessarily discusses biblical hermeneutics, specifically the traps of extremes that preachers can fall into. Preachers can either fall into biblicism, an extreme emphasis on the “thenness” of

94 Ibid., 58.
95 See note #44 above.
96 Waznak, Sunday, 67.
97 Ibid., 67–68; Waznak credits without a specific citation Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs with the origin of this idea. Ebeling and Fuchs were German Balthasarians who published on the history of the Word of God in proclamation.
Scripture where revelation ends with the book of Revelation,\(^\text{98}\) or into eisegesis, an emphasis on the “nowness” of the assembly which eclipses the biblical story with the needs of the present.

Waznak believes that the preacher must do responsible exegesis, so that “the preacher is constantly engaged in biblical studies, thinking of the now in terms of the then.”\(^\text{99}\)

Waznak insists that for the preacher to responsibly exegete the text, he must be engaged in “study and prayerful imagination.” In *Dei Verbum* the conciliar fathers desired that “preachers should immerse themselves in the scriptures”\(^\text{100}\) so that they do not become, in the words of St. Augustine, “an empty preacher of the Word to others because they have not heard the Word first in their heart.”\(^\text{101}\) Study will provide the layers of Tradition that are found in the text which will uncover the words of Jesus, the oral tradition that was collected, the redaction of the evangelists in light of their context, and the ways the text has been used throughout history. The prayerful imagination allows the surplus of meanings to emerge from the text based on a reading of the text intended for transformation.\(^\text{102}\) It is the interplay of the study and prayerful imagination that allows the text to interpret the situation and the situation to shape the interpretation of the text.\(^\text{103}\)

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\(^{98}\) Scripture scholars recognize that the letters of John were most likely the last books of Scripture to be written, but the point is that God’s revelation ends with the Bible.

\(^{99}\) Waznak attributes this to Gerard Sloyan, “How Do I Know What I Think Till I Hear What I Say?” (Washington, DC: The Liturgical Conference), 3. The collection where this article can be found is unknown.

\(^{100}\) *DV* 25.

\(^{101}\) Waznak, *Sunday* 70: Waznak is paraphrasing Augustine’s *Sermon 179*, 1 (PL: 38, 966).

\(^{102}\) Waznak, *Sunday*, 72–73. By “imagination,” Waznak is building upon Alfred North Whitehead’s description that “imagination is not to be divorced from the facts; it is a way of illuminating them.” (A.N. Whitehead, *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 139. We will see in his later text that Waznak calls this process of prayerful imagination *lectio divina*.

\(^{103}\) Waznak, *Sunday*, 73.
Taking a step back, Waznak next reflects upon the “uniqueness of God’s story.” God, who has revealed himself in the Scriptures, is unlike any other god, not only because He stretches human boundaries, challenges human wisdom and upsets human conventions. God is active and living, involved in the concrete circumstances of human life. The preacher’s task according to Waznak, then, is to highlight the why of God’s activity in human history.\(^{104}\)

In order to interpret God’s activity the preacher must understand how the worldview revealed in Scripture is different from other worldviews. Building upon Walter Brueggemann’s *The Bible Makes Sense*, Waznak argues that the worldview presented in Scripture is “covenantal-historical.”\(^{105}\) This covenantal-historical worldview embraces mystery, grace and transcendence rather than explanations, rewards and earning, or a managed, ordered world found in a “modern-industrial-scientific view of the world.”\(^{106}\) It finds meaning in the traditions and structures where the past illuminates the present and future, rather than meaning in the individual person and his/her present as found in an “existential view.”\(^{107}\) But the covenantal-historical view sees an inherent value in the give-and-take of history because of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. This viewpoints sees the world as good because it is where God chooses to act in contrast to a “transcendental” view that looks to another, holier world for God’s activity.\(^{108}\)

The story of God is one where He is active in the pilgrim story of the Church. His story, revealed in the Scriptures, especially in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, provides the lens

\(^{104}\) Ibid., 73–74.
\(^{106}\) Ibid., 76–77.
\(^{107}\) Ibid., 76–77.
\(^{108}\) Ibid., 76–78.
through which the lives of the members of the assembly can be interpreted. This is expressed in
the Scriptures in the covenants that God has made with his people throughout time.\footnote{Ibid., 78–79.}

The Story of the Listener

The final story that Waznak treated is that of the listener. Based upon the conciliar
fathers’ admonition to apply the Gospel “to the concrete circumstances of life”\footnote{PO 4.} and see the
homily as a proclamation “of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation,”\footnote{SC 35.} Waznak
argues that the story of the listener is told when members of the assembly say to the preacher
after Mass, “Father, ‘I felt as though you were speaking directly to me’.”\footnote{Waznak, Sunday, 81.}

In a society that has lost the sense of universal truths expressed in stories and focuses
upon the individual, Waznak identifies one of the central tasks of the preacher as naming the
assembly’s story and giving the story perspective, a “way of seeing in the dark,” so that they can
embrace their own story in a way that leads to “mystery, possibility and conversion.”\footnote{Ibid., 83.}
In order to do this, the preacher must first listen to the stories through either direct or indirect feedback.\footnote{Ibid., 83–87. Waznak offers a variety of methods for obtaining feedback that are outside the scope of this study.}

In addition to listening to the stories of members of the assembly, Waznak believes that
preachers need to listen to the stories of our times. By being attuned to the larger world, the
preacher is better able to hear the stories of the assembly, but also to make unpredictable
connections and to name the experiences of glory and pain, violence and peace in our sad yet hopeful times.  

Waznak clearly indicates the purpose of attending to the story of the listeners:

During Eastertime, we hear the transforming story of the disciples on their way to Emmaus. It is a story similar to our own—people on the way who are sad, anxious, confused by the events of their lives. Cleopas and his friend were transformed because the Lord walked with them and dared to ask them: “What are you discussing as you go on your way?” Before he said a thing, he listened. He allowed them to tell their own story of conflict and lost hope. Then the Lord placed their story in the context of Scripture, which is the story of God’s promise to his people. We preachers must do the same so that our listeners too can exclaim: “Were not our hearts burning inside us as he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?”

A Creative Approach

The final chapter of Waznak’s work is a model for homily preparation based upon the three stories treated above. Borrowing from Alex Osborn’s *Applied Imagination*, Waznak outlines a four-step approach to preparing a homily. First, he identifies the preparation step. In his step the homilist collaborates with others and uses the process of “selective perception,” the process of “seeing surprising new relationships which are at the heart of the creative event.”

This is followed with a period of incubation. This is “a time of ‘purposive relaxation’ when the mind’s power of association is collecting data and when ‘ideas spontaneously will up into our

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115 Ibid., 89–91.
116 Ibid., 93–94.
consciousness’.”

These two steps lead to illumination, where the preacher has an “experience where new ideas begin to emerge or old ideas are seen in a new light.”

This can either lead the preacher to return to the first two steps or begin the fourth step of verification. This is “the practical ordering and carrying out of the insights gained in illumination.”

In this final step, Waznak encourages the preacher to use a “planned spontaneity,” “which is the fruit of an oral draft and a natural story line.”

**Waznak’s Homilies**

Waznak did not hesitate to use stories in his homilies. Over the course of nearly forty years of preaching, Waznak’s preferred method of homily arrangement was to begin with a story. Often times it was a story about someone or an event, but at times it was a commentary on social norms or historical situations. The story is brought to a pithy statement, and then related to the Scriptural readings and then applied to present day living. For example, in a homily preached on April 17, 1966, the First Sunday after Easter, Waznak began,

Pope Paul made history two years ago when he visited the Holy Land...the land where Jesus lived and died. And when our Holy Father’s plane landed, the first greeting he gave to the Jewish people there was the Hebrew greeting: Shalom! This beautiful expression means: “peace be with you.” It was the same greeting that Jesus gave to his disciples the first time he appeared to them after his resurrection.

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119 Ibid., 98; citing Osborn, 314.
120 Ibid., 99.
121 Ibid., 100.
122 Ibid., 108.
Today’s Gospel tells us that the disciples were frightened...they had even closed the doors so that the leaders of the Jews could not come after them.\footnote{Robert Waznak, homily for St. Mary’s Park Avenue, April 17, 1966; Sulpician Archives. Waznak used the ellipses are in the original text as a means to signal pauses or emphasis.}

He used the story to compliment the Gospel reading, and help the assembly see the relevant connection to their lives.


In this 1991 article in the \textit{New Theology Review}, Waznak reports on the developments in narrative theology, which he utilized in \textit{Sunday after Sunday}. He begins with the purpose of narrative theology in relationship to preaching. His premise is that story remains the primary means through which human beings reveal life’s meaning. The experience of people is primarily narrative in form, rather than conceptual. Further, the purpose of religion, especially Christianity, is to transform the human person. Story was a primary means that the Hebrew people used when recording the revealed Word of God in Scripture.\footnote{Ibid., 94–96.}

In the section, \textit{“The How,”} Waznak first turns to \textit{Journeys Toward Narrative Preaching}—a collection of essays published in 1990 in which Robert G. Hughes, Eugene Lowry, Wayne Bradley Robinson, Lucy Rose, Richard L. Thulin and Michael E. Williams demonstrate their own approach to narrative preaching—to clarify his purpose of showing the development of narrative theology in the field of homiletics. Waznak highlights two points from this collection.
First he highlights Eugene Lowry’s distinction of terminology. “Story” is a tale that utilizes one of many literary forms such as myth, parable, saga, or legend. “Narrative” is the shape that a discourse may take. Narrative preaching, thus, is not limited to telling stories within a homily, but rather a way to organize a homily. Second, each of the essayists demonstrates this distinction through a variety of methods. Some tell a single story, others follow the form of the biblical narrative.

He concludes with “Some lingering questions.” These include the fact that Scripture is not exclusively written in narrative, such as the Letter to the Hebrews, but is written in a other forms as well. Waznak acknowledges that some preachers have misused narrative preaching to be a “stream of consciousness” approach. But he counters both of these by arguing, “But just because some preachers have misused narrative preaching is not reason to throw out the baby with the bath water. What these preachers need are some helpful models of narrative preaching.”

Similarly, critics worry about preachers who are narcissistic. Building upon the human nature of the preacher’s story, Waznak believes that first person narrative is appropriately included when it illuminates the Scriptural story and the assembly’s context, making the homily relevant to the assembly. He concludes, “The personal stories employed in Journeys Toward Narrative Preaching are neither narcissistic or distracting. Their stories resonate with our stories

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126 Ibid., 96.
127 Ibid., 96–97.
128 Ibid., 98.
129 Ibid., 98.
and intersect with God’s story. They are models of how preachers can appropriately witness in the pulpit.”

*Like Fresh Bread: Sunday Homilies in the Parish (1993)*

Waznak’s second book, *Like Fresh Bread: Sunday Homilies in the Parish*, was published in 1993, a decade following *Sunday after Sunday*. The title of this book, a collection of homilies he preached at Good Shepherd Parish in Mt. Vernon, VA, was taken from an image used by Gilberto Gorgulho, OP, a seminary professor in São Paulo, Brazil. Waznak wrote:

“A homily,” [Gorgulho] said, “is like fresh bread.” He then went on to say how many preachers do not feed people with fresh bread because they have given up the prayerful task of reading the signs of the times in light of the biblical text of the day; “they serve stale bread.” Gilberto told me, “No doubt, you have noticed how creative we are here in reconstructing the bread that was once fresh—we toast it, put fruit and sweets on it, we make croutons out of it for our chicken soup and sprinkle its crumbs on our fried bananas. There comes a time, however, that no matter how well we toast the bread or even drunk it in our rich black coffee, the bread just won’t go down the throat. The bread is stale. It is time to bake fresh bread!”

The collection of homilies is intended as models for other preachers of what fresh bread can look like.

In the Introduction to the book, Waznak reviews the three stories outlined above in *Sunday after Sunday*. Waznak sees “Fulfilled in Your Hearing,” the 1982 document on

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130 Ibid.
131 Waznak, *Like Fresh Bread*, 1–2.
132 The next chapter will examine the homilies contained in this collection in relationship to Waznak’s theory and theology of the homily.
preaching issued by the Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, as complimenting his work. He demonstrates how the three stories are found within the texts of FIYH.

When Waznak reiterates the story of the preacher, he summarizes, “As I understand the story of the preacher, it means that the homily emerges not primarily from a book (biblical commentary, homily service, church document, newspaper account), but from the preacher’s own religious imagination and prayer.”

Using FIYH, Waznak emphasizes, “Ultimately, that’s what preaching is about, not lofty theological speculation, not painstaking biblical exegesis, not oratorical flamboyance. The preacher is a person speaking to people about life and faith.”

Waznak then identifies the roles of a preacher: “sometimes an exegete, sometimes a teacher, but primarily a poet”.

The story of God is one again founded upon Dei Verbum’s declaration that the preaching of the Church “should be nourished and ruled by sacred scripture.” While Waznak affirms the preacher’s need to do responsible exegesis using biblical commentaries and other resources provided by Scripture scholars, he states: “When preachers approach the scriptures only with questions of authenticity in mind, they miss the symbolic, evocative, existential perception of the text. They forget the church’s worthy tradition of lectio divina. … They fail to grasp the fact that the biblical text is fulfilled in our hearing.”

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133 Waznak, Like Fresh Bread, 2.
134 FIYH, 15.
135 Waznak, Like Fresh Bread, 2.
136 DV 21.
137 Waznak, Like Fresh Bread, 3.
is “a scriptural interpretation of human existence which enables a community to recognize God’s active presence.”

A shift also takes place in Waznak’s theory about the liturgical homily. In this section, he notes,

The NCCB document extended the restrictive definitions of the homily found in Sacrosanctum Concilium. It assimilated the “reading of the signs of the times” motif from Gaudium et Spes and insights from contemporary biblical and theological studies. …

The new shift, from an interpretation of scripture with an application to life, to an interpretation of the human situation through scripture, helps the homilist to name grace not only in the liturgy, but in our world of boundaries and limitations. Fulfilled in Your Hearing names the homilist not a teacher but a “mediator of meaning.” As “mediator of meaning,” the homilist strives to attend to the present moment as revelatory of God.

The section on the story of the listener begins with new material:

Karl Rahner’s foundational statement that God’s self-communication is human transcendence and vice versa helps us to situate the context of liturgical preaching in the transcendental experience of men and women. Recent Catholic theological literature on preaching highlights the concrete experiences of people. It is a theology of preaching that is incarnational and sacramental. It is anchored in God’s word in history and in human experience, naming grace in our world of limitations. Systematic theologians are urging a contemporary mystagogy which can enable people to surrender to mystery found in the midst of ordinary life.

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138 FIYH, 29.
139 Waznak, Like Fresh Bread, 4. “Mediator of meaning” from FIYH, 7.
141 Waznak, Like Fresh Bread, 4. In the endnote at the conclusion of this paragraph, Waznak refers to the doctoral dissertations of Srs. Eileen McKeown, SSJ, “A Theology of Preaching based on Karl Rahner’s Theology of the Word” (Ph.D. Fordham, 1989) and Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, “Towards a Theology of Proclamation: Edward Schillebeeckx’s Hermeneutics of Tradition as a Foundation for a Theology of Proclamation” (Ph.D. CUA, 1984).
He then returns to *PO* 4, preaching the Gospel “to the concrete circumstance of life.” He supplements this with a quotation from *FIYH*: “For humans everywhere, the people who make up the liturgical assembly are people hungry, sometimes desperately so, for meaning in their lives…. Without ultimate meaning, we are ultimately unsatisfied. If we hear a word which gives our lives another level of meaning, which interprets them in relation to God, then our response is to turn to this source of meaning in an attitude of praise and thanksgiving.”\(^{142}\)

Waznak concludes the Introduction with a section on “A Narrative Form.” He returned to the narrative form of preaching that “moves like a story.”\(^ {143}\) He presents Lowry’s distinction of story and narrative,\(^ {144}\) and concludes with the statement: “The homilies in this collection represent my own brand of narrative preaching. They appear here as I first typed them—as a preacher’s script, not in grammatical paragraphs but in an oral form of communication.”\(^ {145}\)

In a homily for the Second Sunday of Easter, Year C, Waznak demonstrates once again his typical model of narrative preaching that uses first person narrative:

One of the most exciting days of my life as a kid was when my mother announced, “Your brother Charlie has the measles!” I had never seen a kid with measles. The thought of my older brother covered with red dots tickled my imagination. And I knew that since I always copied whatever my big brother did, I, too, would soon sport measles and have a few days off from school. I went up to my bedroom and waited for hours, but the measles never arrived. Finally, I gave up and went downstairs to dinner. I felt cheated not only because I didn’t have the measles, but because of all those wasted hours I had spent looking for them to appear. But in the middle of the meal, my father suddenly pointed to my arm and said, “Look, you’ve got measles...better get upstairs to bed.”

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\(^{142}\) *FIYH*, 7.
\(^{143}\) Waznak, *Like Fresh Bread*, 6.
\(^{144}\) See note #126 above.
\(^{145}\) Ibid., 6.
One of my great childhood discoveries was that no matter how long or how intensely you stare at your arms you will never actually see a measle pop out. But as soon as you look away, in a split second one will appear. Measles are something like forsythia or magnolia or the red bud trees that seem to pop out suddenly at this time of year. No matter how long you stare at these trees you will never actually spot a sudden bloom. It’s when you look away that blossoms grow.

The disciple Thomas was a realist. I bet that when he was a kid, he, too, stared at his arm to watch his measles appear. Some people are like that. They need more than words or promises. Thomas missed the risen Lord the first time around.\footnote{Waznak, \textit{Like Fresh Bread}, 97–98. Waznak wrote his homilies in sense lines, or “preacher’s script.” They are put into grammatical paragraphs for the sake of space and ease of reading.}

Waznak uses the story to begin his homily and to lead the assembly on a journey with him. He allows them to make his points and then draws from them meanings that can be applied to the assembly’s life and the lives of individual members.


The analogy of preacher as poet is a recurring theme through much of Waznak’s writing. The \textit{Worship} article that he published in January 1986 systematizes this analogy. He roots it in the premise that poetry captures that which is deepest in the human heart and this is the task of theology, particularly preaching. The poet and the preacher illustrate this through the details of ordinary existence.
Waznak shows that there are three specific elements the poet can teach the preacher about effective articulation of the deep-seated mystery. First, poets use their imaginations when attending to life. In doing so they put words to feelings that are universal. Preachers need a “prayerful imagination” as they attend to the word. Waznak defines imagination in this article using Alfred North Whitehead: “Imagination is not to be divorced from facts, it is a way of illuminating the facts.” Preachers do this with Scripture using lectio divina, which for Waznak is when “Scripture is read not for information but for transformation.” This is all done because “[p]reaching is information, but it is more than that. It is the moving of hearts, the invitation to conversion, the sharing of a new vision through God’s living word.”

Second, Waznak notes that poets use language creatively. They “weave words” by using concrete words to describe a universal reality. It is their description of the common that illustrates the eternal. Poets do not have a specialized vocabulary, but use words that all people can relate to and understand, even if it is done outside of the conventional mechanics of writing.

Finally, Waznak believes that the poet offers the preacher vision. Using Holmes’ image of “seeing in the dark,” the preacher is to see “the unseen yet what can be.” Preachers, like poets and prophets, are to use the “divine indicative” rather than the “human imperative.” They are to describe who people are and who they can become rather than what they must be or do.

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149 Ibid., 51.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid., 52–53.
152 See note #65 above.
But they also recognize that God is present in paradox, and He reveals Himself in failure and affliction.  

“Homily”

In the 1995 *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* Waznak contributed the entry for “Homily” which offers a succinct summary of his theology of the homily. He begins by defining the terms “homily” and “sermon” as he has done above. He then turns to the characteristics of the homily. In his dissertation and in *Sunday after Sunday*, he listed these four as: kerygmatic, liturgi
cal, Scriptural and relevant. He refines and rearranges these terms in the *Dictionary* entry. He says, “Homiletic preaching is (a) biblical, (b) liturgical, (c) kerygmatic, and (d) familiar.”

In describing homiletic preaching as “biblical,” Waznak begins from a different historical place from his dissertation and *Sunday after Sunday*. In the *Dictionary* he grounds the homily as biblical with the synagogue practices of *midrash kalah* and *midrash haggadah*. The former interpreted the fundamental principles of the Torah and the latter the rest of the Scriptures through “imaginative instruction and exhortation.” Waznak argues that “[t]his prophetic exposition of scripture was continued in the liturgical preaching of the early Christian churches.” He argues that Saint Justin, Martyr, witnesses to “more than an exegesis of the sacred texts” in

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153 Ibid., 53–55.
155 Ibid., 553.
the First Apology. It is Origen, however, whom Waznak highlights as having pride of place:

“The first and foremost of all Christian homilists was Origen who strove through allegorical
exegesis to adapt the scripture to all levels of his congregation through ‘scriptural
understandings’ (Hom. Lev., 1.4).” He acknowledges that after the Peace of Constantine in
AD 313, the styles of preaching in the Church changed due to differing needs caused by a more
public worship, and by greater numbers of catechumens: “These circumstances gave rise to
catechetical, thematic, and rhetorical features that affected the popular exposition of biblical
texts. … Nevertheless, from Origen to St. Bernard (12th century), the homily remained a popular
exposition of scripture read or sung in the liturgical assembly.”

It is not until Vatican II that the homily is again theologically united with Scripture. This unification, though, poses
challenges for the homily since many preachers understand this to mean that the homily is
primarily an interpretation of the Scriptures. Waznak argues that *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*
counters this with a call for the homily to interpret life through the Scriptures, and a broader use
of interpretive methods, including literary, feminist, sociological and others.

156 St. Justin, Martyr, *Apology* I LXVII: “And on the day that is called Sunday all who live in the cities or in rural
areas gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are reads for as
long as time allows. Then after the lector concludes, the president verbally instructs and exhorts us to imitate all
these excellent things.” In Lawrence J. Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church: An Anthology of Historical Sources,*
157 Waznak, “Homily,” 553.
158 Waznak failed to provide documentation to this claim that homilies were sung. Such a notion is not discussed by
other contemporary authors who have detailed the history of preaching, such as Yves Brilloth, O.C. Edwards and
Hughes Oliphant Old.
159 *Dictionary*, 553.
160 See SC 35 and 52; *DV* 21.
161 Waznak, “Homily,” 556.
The history of the homily as “liturgical” is similar to his previous articulation. The description of the homily in Saint Justin, Martyr, demonstrates the unifying effect of the homily where it “expounded the scriptures and led to an active participation in the eucharist [sic]. Ancient Christian homilies contained what some authors name the mystagogical feature of preaching. The homily invited the congregation to the mysteries of Christ celebrated in the eucharist. For Origen, preaching made the Word flesh again in the liturgical assembly.”¹⁶²

Following the Patristic era, the liturgical action became separated from the assembly, as so did the homily. The theologies of revelation that preceded the Vatican Council II sought to unite the homily to the liturgy and restore the “intimate connection between rites and words.”¹⁶³

Waznak does not treat the homily as “kerygmatic” as extensively as the previous two descriptors. He describes Vatican II’s emphasis that the homily as a “proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, which is the mystery of Christ ever made present and active in us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy.”¹⁶⁴ This is derived from Josef Jungmann, SJ’s, work in the late 1930’s which emphasized the apostolic style of preaching that emphasized what God has done in Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁵ He argues that a focus upon this type of preaching counters a pre-conciliar notion of the sermon as a primarily catechetical tool.¹⁶⁶

The fourth descriptor that characterizes the homily according to Waznak is “familiar conversation.” This differs from his previous descriptor as “relevant.” He traces the history of

¹⁶² Ibid., 554.
¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 555; cf. SC 35.
¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 554-555.
¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 557.
the term “homily”: “The word ‘homily’ is derived from the Greek *homou* (together) and *homilos* (a crowd). The word connotes a familiar conversation with a group of people or a pastor conversing with a flock in words and images that they recognize. The crowd is not some haphazard mob of strangers but a gathering of friends, people familiar to the preacher. It is not a conversation of imposition but, rather *cor ad ad loquitur*…”167 Waznak acknowledges that Vatican II did not offer a style of the homily, but says for the homily to be effective, it must address the needs of the assembly.168

“Preaching for Today...and Tomorrow”169

Waznak explained narrative preaching in the fifth session of the Saint Meinrad video series, “Preaching for Today...and Tomorrow” on “Telling the Story.” In his fifteen minute presentation, Waznak discusses many of the themes of narrative preaching that he had written about above.

He begins by relating the historical context of the recovery of narrative preaching. He credits Fred B. Craddock’s call to an inductive method of preaching as the basis for narrative preaching. Waznak harkens to a return to *mythos*, “the way of story,” which is the Jewish and Biblical way of teaching and preaching, from *logos*, “the way of argument,” which took over in the Greco-Roman influenced Church.

167 Ibid., 555.
168 Ibid., 556.
Waznak argues that there should be a return to *mythos* because most of the Bible is shaped like a story. Preachers prepare their homilies in an inductive way, but present their conclusions as they preach in a deductive way. Yet people live in a narrative world where the media presents most material in a narrative manner.

He further references the “New Hermeneutic,” a movement in biblical scholarship that compliments the dominant historical-critical method of interpretation, which seeks to appreciate the Bible as a story. *Mythos* highlights the faith tradition and implications of the faith for Scriptural interpretation, and is one of the areas that the Pontifical Biblical Commission refers to in its 1993 “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church.”

Finally, Waznak reminds his viewers that there are four points to remember about narrative preaching. (1) There is a “difference between story and narrative.” Referring to Eugene Lowry, as he does above, Waznak makes the distinction between the narrative as form and the story as a type of narrative. (2) “Narrative sermons should have a point.” Homilies, and the use of stories, should arrive at a destination and serve a function rather than ramble or be unrelated filler. (3) “The story of the preacher should intersect with the stories of the listener and the story of God.” Waznak is referring to the question articulated above of whether or not self-references could be made in a homily. He maintains his middle of the roadway in the debate and

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states that these references need to contribute to the homily. (4) And finally, he advises the preacher to “read good literature” because it will improve the quality and variety of stories and style in preaching.

Waznak’s Homilies

Waznak employs one uniquely narrative approach to his preaching several times in the collected works. Beginning with a homily that he published in Like Fresh Bread, Waznak developed a narrative style where the preacher “becomes” a biblical character in the readings in homilies that are published in the three volumes of Lift Up Yours Hearts. Waznak begins the homilies that utilize this narrative style similarly to what follows:

When pastors in some Protestant churches take their summer vacations, they invite guest preachers to deliver the Sunday sermon. Last July, as you recall, I resurrected that tradition and invited the apostle Andrew to preach the homily.

Our preacher today is not as famous as the apostle Andrew. But he is a man whom Jesus noticed and then used in a parable. Allow me to introduce you this summer’s guest preacher: a farmer named Seth.

“Thank you, Father Bob. I am deeply honored to be asked to preach today. My name is Seth. I was named Seth after the Seth in the book of Genesis. He was the son born to Adam and Eve after Cain killed Abel. He was named Seth because he was the new seed who was to take Abel’s place. So you see, it’s a darn good name for a farmer to have because it means ‘new seed.’ Jesus often used such images from nature like seed to get across his message.\footnote{Waznak, Like Fresh Bread, 139.}
Using such characters as Andrew and Peter, Martha, Bartimeus and others, Waznak allows each biblical person to “tell” his or her own story, often filling in the gaps where Scripture is silent, always leading the assembly to ponder their message.


Waznak’s final book, An Introduction to the Homily, was published in 1998. In many ways it is his magnum opus because it draws together many of the themes that have appeared in his previous books. In An Introduction to the Liturgical Homily Waznak further develops the characteristics of the liturgical homily and introduces a new contribution to the theology of the liturgical homily: a reflection on the images of the homilist.

Characteristics of the Homily

1. An Introduction to the Homily

In the first chapter, “From Sermon to Homily,” of An Introduction to the Homily, Waznak synthesizes his dissertation and his later research. In the introduction to the chapter, he clearly distinguishes between the homily and the sermon. The homily is “that form of preaching which flows from and immediately follows the scriptural readings of the liturgy and which leads to the celebration of the sacraments. … [The sermon is] a form of preaching that is not
necessarily connected to the biblical and liturgical texts and is heard outside the context of the liturgy."\footnote{172}

Waznak begins by describing the retrieval of the ancient term “homily” in the conciliar documents. He notes the tension among the conciliar fathers about the term to be used for the post Gospel discourse as well as its purpose, similar to what is described above in his dissertation and his first book.

Waznak outlines, though, the use of the term “homily” in Scripture and in patristic writings. In Scripture, *homilia* is not used, but “we do find the Greek verb, *homilein*, which implies a familiar conversation.”\footnote{173} He cites Luke 24:14, the Emmaus story, where the two disciples discussed all that had happened in Jerusalem. But it was Origen who used and defined the homily as a Christian discourse. Origen identifies four qualities of a homily: they are preached at a liturgy; they have a prophetic quality; they offer a running exposition of a biblical text; and they are conversational in tone.\footnote{174} The homily in Origen is distinct from a “sermon,” which followed a classical rhetorical form while the homily was direct and free.

Preaching became more formalized in the fourth century with the rise of the catechumenate, introduction of new liturgical feasts and seasons, defenses against heresies, and a renewal in classic, Hellenistic rhetoric.\footnote{175} This formalization led to a decline in the homily, especially with a shift away from preaching on the Scriptures to explanations of doctrines and

\footnote{172}{Waznak, *Introduction*, 1.}
\footnote{173}{Ibid., 4.}
\footnote{174}{Ibid.}
\footnote{175}{Ibid., 6.}
events. The ritual became the focus of the liturgical action, and preaching becomes more distant from the community. Waznak notes that new movements arose in the Church at various times which attempted to revitalize the preaching, such as the mendicant movement of the medieval era, but were unsuccessful until the latest council.  

Yet as the latest council retrieved an ancient term, its application and definition have gone through a period of refinement in the post-conciliar era. As noted above, PO 4 looked to “apply the eternal truth of the Gospel to the concrete circumstances of life.” DV 21 saw Scriptures as nourishing and ruling the Church’s preaching. The first instruction on the implementation of Sacrosanctum Concilium, IŒ 54 said, “The homily is an explanation that is pertinent to the mystery celebrated and the needs of the assembly.” The IGMR 1970, no. 41 said the homily is an exposition of the Scripture or other liturgical text respecting the mystery celebrated and the needs of the assembly. Finally, though not a Roman document, the US Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry said in FIYH that the preacher is to interpret the human situation through the lens of Scripture and that the homilist is a mediator of meaning. Waznak concludes:

We can always benefit from a reexamination of our homiletic roots, not because our ancestors in the faith were perfect preachers, but because they offer us a perspective different from our own, and on that is closer to the preaching from which our faith and theology first sprang. But we must not think that we can locate one ideal form of the homily in history that will absolutely fulfill the needs of Christians today. ...That is why we must pay attention not only to the rich tradition of the homily in the early Church and the retrieval of this preaching form.

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176 Ibid., 7.
177 Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani, in Missale Romanum, ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum, editio typica (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1970).
by Vatican II but also to the evolving understandings of the homily from those who have tried to respond to the changing cultural patterns, pastoral needs, and theological trends of our days.\footnote{Waznak, Introduction, 15–16.}

Rather than define the form of the homily, Waznak concludes that a homily in the post-Vatican II Church has five characteristics: biblical, liturgical, kerygmatic, conversational and prophetic. He has refined his previous lists that he first developed almost thirty years earlier in his dissertation—kerygmatic, liturgical, scriptural and relevant—and then reworked it in his New Dictionary of Sacramental Theology entry.

The biblical and kerygmatic aspects of the homily remain very much the same in the two presentations. Waznak maintains that the Scriptures are the foundation of the preaching, and that preaching is more than an exegetical lecture. Based upon the 1993 document from the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, he concludes

> The document emphasizes the necessity of actualization that “allows the Bible to remain fruitful at different periods” and inculturation which “ensures that the biblical message take root in a great variety of terrain.” Attention, therefore, is given to the value of literary analysis, canonical criticism, sociological, anthropological and psychological approaches, and the contextual approaches of liberationists and feminists.\footnote{Ibid., 17; citation of Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” (1993) 117.}

Waznak also maintains that the homily, in line with SC 35, is a “proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation.”

Waznak’s original term of “relevant” was modified and renamed into “conversational” in the New Dictionary but now he reworks this and adds Origen’s category of “prophetic.”
Whereas previously he had founded preaching on *PO* 4 and *ICE* 54, which described the homily as treating the “concrete circumstance of life” and “addressing the particular needs of the hearers,” Waznak recognizes that the New Homiletic gave the preacher a means to structure the homily in a way that is more accessible, or relevant, to the assembly by focusing upon them and presenting ideas as one would in a conversation rather than a lecture. But he has maintained that the homily is to lead to conversion and salvation, giving the assembly principles for the social dimensions of daily living of the Christian life.¹⁸⁰

The most significant development in Waznak’s theory on the liturgical homily is in the expansion of the description of the homily as “liturgical.” In previous iterations of the liturgical element of the homily, Waznak noted *SC*’s description of the homily as an “integral” aspect of the liturgy which bridges the Liturgies of the Word and the Eucharist. In *An Introduction to the Homily*, Waznak traces the further development of this understanding. He notes that in the *General Introduction* to the second edition of the *Lectionary for Mass* that the homily “must always lead the community of the faithful to celebrate the Eucharist whole-heartedly, ‘so that they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith.’”¹⁸¹ *FIYH* builds upon this in its central understanding of the homily: “a scriptural interpretation of human existence which enables a community to recognize God’s active presence, to respond to that presence in faith through liturgical word and gesture, and beyond the liturgical assembly, through a life lived

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¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 23–27.
in conformity with the Gospel.” Waznak summarizes this developing thought: “while the existential context of the liturgical assembly allows for a fresh and bold proclamation, the stability of liturgical ritual guarantees a proclamation that is biblical, ecclesial, and eschatologically oriented. The stability of the liturgy helps the homily lead the assembly to prayer and a life lived in conformity with the gospel.”

“If the homily is ‘part of the liturgy itself,’ it follows that the same theological categories we use for Christian worship are appropriate to the homily as well. The homily is doxological, anamnetic, epiklectic, eschatological and ecclesial.” These five theological categories, based upon categories first used by Geoffrey Wainwright and developed by other liturgical theologians, provide a theological foundation for the homily because it squarely places the homily within its liturgical setting.

As doxology, Waznak notes, “The homily is meant to give praise and thanks to God.” Further, it is meant to encourage the members of the liturgical assembly to lift up their hearts because “it is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.”

The anamnetic character of the homily is best captured in SC 35: the homily “is the proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, which is the mystery of

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182 FIYH, 29.
183 Waznak, Introduction, 19.
184 Ibid., 19–20.
187 Introduction to the prefaces in the Roman Missal 2010.
Christ ever made present and active in us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy.”\textsuperscript{188}

Waznak also connects the conciliar teaching of the “various ‘presences’ of Christ, e.g., ‘[Christ] is present in the word since it is he himself who speaks then the holy scriptures are read in the Church.’”\textsuperscript{189}

The homily is “epikletic” for Waznak in the sense that it is a fruit of prayer and meditation, an act of “discernment of what specific phase of human life and what particular word from Scripture needs to be addressed.”\textsuperscript{190} He bases this interpretation on \textit{FIYH’s} shift of interpretation from the biblical text to the life of the community through the Scriptures.

Waznak roots the homily as eschatological in the nature of the liturgy. “The eschatological nature of the liturgy helps us to view the homily as a proclamation of tenacious hope for the coming of the reign of God and a call to convert to the way God wants the world to be. If the sacraments are ‘signs of conversion’ it follows that the homily should be a sign of conversion.”\textsuperscript{191} The homily, as the liturgy, calls forth the assembly to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Finally, Waznak quotes Yves Congar, OP: the liturgy is “the expression of a Church actively living, praising God and bringing about a holy communion with him.”\textsuperscript{192} This happens

\textsuperscript{188} See note 25 above.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 22.
in the ecclesial context of the liturgy, and the homily, according to Waznak, “provides the people with a ‘common vision.’”  

2. “Anatomy of a Homily”

In the August 1998 regular column “Signs of the Times” of *New Theology Review*, Waznak departs from his usual treatment of the homily by offering practical guidance for homilists. In this article he describes six areas that need attention to make homilies better. He does not list them in any particular order, but judges them to make “good preachers.”

First, he critiques many homilies as not having a focus to them. He believes that a homily should learn from a successful commercial. After an assembly hears a homily, members should be able to answer in one sentence the question, “What is the homily about?”

Second, Waznak argues that homilists need a method for their preparation of the homily. He does not advocate for a single method, but rather that homilists have some way of approaching the upcoming homily. Specifically, Waznak argues that homilists need to write out their homily as a way of preparing, whether they utilize the written text or not during the actual preaching event. The act of writing the homily shows preparation and thought, and better ensures that the homily will be precise, have good transitions and a solid ending.

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193 Waznak, *An Introduction*, 22. He refers to *FIYH*: “Through words drawn from the Scriptures, from the church’s theological tradition, and from the personal appropriation of that tradition through study and prayer, the preacher joins himself and congregation in a common vision. We can say, therefore, that the homily is a unifying moment in the celebration of the liturgy, deepening and giving expression to the unity that is already present in the sacrament of baptism.” (6–7).


195 Ibid., 70–71.

196 Ibid., 71.
Waznak also argues that good preachers use poetic language. As indicated above, for Waznak, the homily is a theological event that is meant to “delight, inspire and move listeners to faith.” This is accomplished through the language of poetry.\textsuperscript{197}

He also encourages preachers to use the biblical text in the homily. Since the call of the Vatican Council II to allow Scripture to nourish and rule preaching,\textsuperscript{198} Waznak believes that preachers should faithfully exegete the texts and then dwell with them prayerfully, using \textit{lectio divina}, and then show how the lives of the assembly can be interpreted through these Scripture passages.\textsuperscript{199}

As seen above, and to further illustrate this point, Waznak encourages preachers to start with the lives of people in the act of interpretation. Instead he often sees preachers trying to deliver a lecture on the intricate meaning of the Scriptures rather than offer them how the Good News is breaking into their lives. This according to Waznak is the foundational definition of the homily in \textit{Fulfilled in Your Hearing}.\textsuperscript{200}

Finally, Waznak offers that a good homily should average about seven minutes in most parishes. He bases this on the average length of a television segment between commercials, which informs how long members of the assembly are use to taking in information.\textsuperscript{201}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{197}] Ibid., 71–72.
\item[\textsuperscript{198}] DV 21.
\item[\textsuperscript{199}] Waznak, “Anatomy,” 71–73.
\item[\textsuperscript{200}] Ibid., 73.
\item[\textsuperscript{201}] Ibid., 73–74.
\end{itemize}
These six areas for Waznak—focus, method, poetic language, use of biblical texts, interpretation of life, and length—are always in need of attention by homilists. These areas provide a path to continual renewal of the homily.

“Images” of the Homilist

1. An Introduction to the Homily

The second significant development and the newest contribution of Waznak from An Introduction to the Homily is his adaptation of Avery Dulles, SJ’s Models of the Church and Thomas G. Long’s controlling images of the preacher as herald, pastor, storyteller and witness into his own images of herald, teacher, interpreter and witness through his exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of each image.

Herald

“The image of herald was popular in Catholic liturgical literature at the time of the Second Vatican Council when the homily was described as a ‘proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation’ (SC, 35). Proclaiming is the work of heralds.” This ancient image of the preacher, with its root in the image that the task of the preacher is to announce God’s message of victory, was the focus of much early post-Vatican II discussion of the homily,

202 Avery Dulles, SJ, Models of the Church (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974).
204 Waznak, Introduction, 31.
including in the writing of Waznak. His earlier discussion of kerygmatic preaching fits into this image because it “focused on the kērygma or core of the gospel first preached by the apostles: the saving acts of God in Christ.”

Waznak offers three reasons for preserving this model of preaching. First, it “focuses on the gospel rather than on ‘more important’ topics.” He sees this as a remedy to the pre-Vatican II model of preaching on topics that were at best tangentially related to the Scriptures readings of the day. Second, he sees that the herald image “challenges narcissistic preaching.” He writes: “The herald image stresses that the preacher is a minister who preaches from the Bible as the Church’s book. The herald image challenges the preacher who is narcissistic, is ignorant of the Church’s tradition, and is concerned more with pop psychology, home spun advice, and the power of positive thinking rather than the proclamation of the Good News.” He continues: “The herald image preserves the ancient homiletic advice that we are to preach not ourselves but Christ.” Third, he sees the herald as one who “offers a needed word of encouragement in a world desperately searching for meaning.” As he indicated in the section on the homily as liturgical, Waznak sees “[t]he restored homily of Vatican II was meant to give listeners a word that would enable them to celebrate Eucharist, to give praise and thanks to God.” He cautions

205 Ibid., 33.
206 Ibid., 34.
207 Ibid., 35.
208 Ibid.
210 Ibid., 35.
211 Ibid., 36.
however that this does not mean that the homily does not challenge or ignore the bad news.\textsuperscript{212} He writes: “The herald preacher dares to proclaim the Good News without ignoring the bad news of our lives nor muting the call to conversion and turning away from sin. \textit{FIYH} tells us that we cannot proclaim the Good News without first recognizing the active presence of God in our own lives, broken and shattered as they may be…”\textsuperscript{213}

Waznak recognizes that the herald image was not perfect, and listed three shortcomings. First, he says that it “tends to obscure the context of preaching.”\textsuperscript{214} Citing \textit{PO} 4, Waznak argues: “Preaching never takes place in a vacuum. It takes place in a particular context with its own concerns, dreams, and problems. It is preached not by some disembodied individual but by live flesh and blood with a unique personality.”\textsuperscript{215} Four evangelists in four different styles tell the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the herald can lose the “concrete circumstances of life” that the evangelists had in their accounts. Second, Waznak argues that the herald image “tends to discourage serious homiletic preparation.”\textsuperscript{216} Waznak summarizes his argument as follows: “The herald image has the potential of misuse by preachers who are concerned neither with job security or effectiveness. … The herald image could provide justification for those content to rest on their presbyteral status rather than the serious study and prayerful imagination required of effective homilists” such as Augustine, John Chrysostom, the Cappadocian Fathers, and many

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{212} Waznak draws from Edward Schillebeeckx, OP, Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP and William A. Richard, all who speak about finding God in the “underside,” in the crucifixion, in the context of the real world.
\bibitem{214} Ibid., 37.
\bibitem{215} Ibid.
\bibitem{216} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
other great preachers in the Church.  

Third, Waznak recognizes that the herald image isolates preaching too neatly from teaching.  Waznak holds that “[p]reaching is a theological task. It was so from the beginning of Christianity. The *kērygma* found in the New Testament manifest theologizing. The synoptics reflect a theological interpretation of the original message. … Although the proclamation of the *kērygma* came first in the course of Christian preaching and *didachē* second, in truth, they were not always so easily distinguishable.”  

Teacher

His consideration of the preacher as herald leads into the image of teacher. First, Waznak recognizes that Jesus was a teacher, a title that was used most often in the Gospels. He also recognizes that much of the early Church’s preaching was catechetical in nature. “In the early Church, Lent was a time for catechetical preaching, preparing converts for their baptism at the Easter liturgy. The taproot of catechesis in the early Church was the liturgy and its method was preaching. The content of the catechetical preaching was the kerygma, the paschal mystery, and the promise of God in Christ.”  

The highpoint of this catechetical preaching was mystagogical catechesis. “Its practical function was to articulate the meaning of the sacraments to the newly baptized so that they could enter more fully in faith and understanding into the worship of the community. Some of the richest sources of sacramental theology are found in the mystagogical homilies …

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217 Ibid., 39.
218 Ibid., 39.
219 Ibid., 40.
homilists often preached extemporaneously. Their homilies contained both a commentary upon the various symbols of the rites and a scriptural exegesis.”

Waznak notes that the model of preacher as a teacher did not end with the decline of the mystagogical catechesis. Rather, the preacher began to teach morality and refute heresies in his sermons. During this period, preaching became less tied to the liturgical action. But following the post-Vatican II reforms, a shift has happened that calls for a reclaiming of this catechetical model. Waznak articulates three reasons for this phenomenon. First, Pope John Paul II in his first Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi tradendae*, “hopes for catechetical fruits” from the homily, the “familiarization with the whole of the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian living,” which is a marked shift from Pope Paul VI’s evangelical fruits of “faith, hope, love, peace and unity.” Second, Waznak notes a growing fear of a “hallowing out” or “thinning” of Catholicism. Third, Waznak feels that some preachers desire to use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in a manner similar to how preachers used the *Roman Catechism* that was published after the Council of Trent. He argues, however, that the *CCC* lacks a coherent definition of the homily and its mention is limited within the Catechism.

In relation to the preacher as teacher, Waznak deals with three ways that the preacher as teacher can be preserved: a preaching syllabus that corresponds to the three-year lectionary cycle, short instructions following the prayer after communion, and allowing the lectionary texts

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220 Ibid., 41.
221 Ibid., 43.
222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
naturally to suggest catechetical points.  

He concludes this section with a gentle reminder that the liturgy is not instructional, but it is formational of the people of God.

Interpreter

The third primary image that Waznak treats is Interpreter. He explains the genesis of this image: “In chapter 1 [of *An Introduction to the Homily*] we say how the image of teacher was emphasized in the Roman Catholic tradition, especially from the period of Trent to Vatican II. We also found a new image of the homilist in *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*: ‘mediator of meaning’ or interpreter of God’s word and world. I prefer to view the homiletic metaphors of pastor, storyteller, and prophet (poet) under the master image of interpreter.”

This image derives from *FIYH’s* “‘mediator of meaning’ who attends to the biblical text and the pastoral context in order to offer the liturgical assembly ‘a scriptural interpretation of human existence’ which enable the community ‘to recognize God’s active presence in faith through liturgical word and gesture, and beyond the liturgical assembly, through life in conformity with the Gospel.’” Other homileticians such as Buttrick and Hilkert, Waznak argues, pick up this image from *FIYH*. It is this image that Waznak argues is the development in the theology of the homily that is not found in the conciliar and post-conciliar documents on the homily. He further claims that this is

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224 Ibid., 44–45.
225 Ibid., 32.
226 Ibid., 48.
exactly what Jesus did in his sermons: “He began with the common occurrences of people and invited them to dig deeply into the ordinary to experience the finger of God.”

Since this is a post Vatican II development in homiletics, Waznak offers five sources for understanding the homilist in this manner: communication studies, the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium*, the theology of revelation in *Dei Verbum*, a ministerial understanding of preaching, and an appreciation for imaginative language. The first three are found in *FIYH* while the last two are Waznak’s own contribution.

In regard to communication studies, *FIYH* argues that a homily “will be less effective as a means of instruction and/or exhortation than of interpretation--that is, as a means of enabling people to recognize the implications, in liturgy and life, of the faith that is already theirs.”

Waznak alludes to the *Lumen Gentium*’s ecclesiology when he says that *FIYH* pays attention “where the primary reality is not the necessary office and ministries but Christ in the assembly, the People of God.”

According to Waznak, *FIYH* follows a relational theology of revelation rather than a propositional one. This relational theology allows the homilist to interpret the lives of the assembly in relation to the Word proclaimed in the liturgy. Following Karl Rahner, Waznak

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227 Ibid., 49.
228 Ibid., 50.
229 FIYH, 26.
says, “the task of the preacher [is] not so much as offering information about God but revealing the God already present in people’s lives.”  

David Buttrick described the primary task of ministry is to provide meaning, and Waznak sees this as the task of the preacher as well. The preacher is to interpret the meaning of the Scriptures and liturgy in the lives of people. This meaning for both Buttrick and Waznak is found in the movement of the text whose aim is to transform the assembly. Neither argues for a discourse on Scripture and the liturgy, but rather a leading of the assembly to discover meaning.  

Waznak’s fifth source to understanding the preacher as interpreter is rooted in an earlier theme of the preacher as poet. He describes the language of the preacher in the writings of the New Homiletic is to be more concrete and poetic because the members of the assembly today live in a visual world rather than in an oral society.  

There are three strengths of this image of preacher as interpreter for Waznak. First, it allows the homilist to pay serious attention to the specific context of preaching. “A homily might be exegetically and theologically sound and precise, but if it fails to reveal and name grace in the specific context of listeners’ lives, then the Good News is not heard.” Second, the homilist as interpreter “encourages a prayerful and imaginative preparation of the homily.” By this, Waznak means that the interpreter approaches the homily as an act of contemplation rather
than as a mere act of translation since interpretation involves more than information but involves an identification of the people’s needs and the reality of God in their lives. Finally, Waznak believes this model of the preacher “preserves the prophetic nature of the homily.” Based on an understanding that culture is system of revelation, Waznak believes that the “only acceptable option the homilist has is to engage a particular culture’s habits of the heart with both the balm and the challenge of the gospel. Preaching becomes not a matter of ignoring or denouncing the world but confronting it with gospel’s power to transform.” As an interpreter, the preacher provides the assembly with a vision of what the world could be, which is the vision of a prophet.

Before his treatment of the fourth model, Waznak offers three “caveats” to the model of preacher as interpreter. First, he believes that “interpretation is a communal affair.” He summarizes this caveat by saying, “A preacher who is isolated from the community, the tradition, teaching and prayer of the Church, literature, popular culture, media, political struggles, the violence and new possibilities of our times, will not feed people with fresh bread.” Second, he warns that “interpretation may be clouded by faulty diagnosis.” Waznak believes that preachers are products of the age in which they live, and there are many assumptions and cultural factors that need to be examined in order to make a healthy understanding of the way things are. There are many examples in history of preachers who do

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235 Ibid., 55.
236 Ibid., 56–58.
237 Ibid., 59.
not have this awareness. Third, Waznak recognizes that “interpretation is a risky business.” He warns that interpretation is not done to be liked by the assembly but to bring the Good News of salvation to them. This means the preacher must be willing to risk offending people in order to offer an authentic biblical interpretation of life.

Witness

Waznak returns to a theme from Sunday after Sunday where he identifies the preacher as a witness. He reiterates the quotation from Pope Paul VI’s address to the members of the Concilium de Laicis: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” While acknowledging the danger of narcissism in preaching, Waznak offers his fourth model as answering a need of the contemporary age. He sees the witness as a person of faith speaking to the assembly about matters of faith.

Waznak grounds this image in three sources. First, he says that the tradition of the Church offers witnesses. In Scripture the prophets, especially Jeremiah, Micah and Malachi, speak about God’s witness against the crimes of Israel. In Luke, Jesus commands the apostles to preach because they are witnesses to the Paschal Mystery. “[T]he biblical image of witness reminds us that we are also called to share what we have seen,” not just what we know.

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238 Ibid., 59–60.
239 Ibid., 60.
240 See note #81 above.
241 Ibid., 63.
Second, Waznak believes that preachers receive authority from their connection to the Gospel.\textsuperscript{242} Third, the model of preacher as witness allows the homilist to effectively communicate because it offers the assembly a space in which to interact with the preacher and choose freely to respond to the Gospel.\textsuperscript{243}

Waznak reiterates the danger of narcissism in preaching when he offers caution when using this model. First he does not want the preacher to “embarrass” the congregation by over sharing.\textsuperscript{244} Second, he cautions preachers to not portray themselves as perfect disciples.\textsuperscript{245} Third, he advises preachers to heed the context and offer personal stories that intersect with the story of God and the story of the assembly.\textsuperscript{246}

2. “The Catechism and the Sunday Homily”\textsuperscript{247}

A reoccurring theme in Waznak’s writing is the homily as a liturgical act that serves to interpret the lives of the gathered assembly in light of the proclaimed Scriptures which leads them to more conscious participation in the mysteries celebrated. One of the constant challenges he faces in his writings is the role of instruction or catechesis in the homily. In “The Catechism and the Sunday Homily,” published in America, Waznak deals with this challenge.

He acknowledges that recent polls and statistics about beliefs among Catholics “have caused some worried church leaders to signal a return to the instructional sermon at Mass.”\textsuperscript{248}

\textsuperscript{242} Ibid., 63–64.
\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 64.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 64–65.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., 65–66.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 66.
He also acknowledges the 1993 publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which follows previous pre-conciliar catechisms, has caused a renewal in the interest of catechetical preaching.

Waznak argues that this renewed interest in catechetical preaching is a rekindling of a debate among the conciliar fathers. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* reflects the two sides of this debate in regard to the homily. One side is a return to a patristic understanding of the homily where the homily “was a bridge that expounded the proclaimed Scriptures and led to prayer.”\(^{249}\) The other side wanted sermons governed by “a syllabus of catechetical instruction to govern what was preaching; they urged the teaching of all Christian doctrine over a period of four to five years, based on liturgical texts. This debate about the kerygmatic/mystagogic and the instructional nature of the homily resulted in an ambivalence within the council document, in which sometimes the word ‘homily’ is used and at other times ‘sermon.’”\(^{250}\) The post-conciliar documents favored the “kerygmatic/mystagogic” approach to the homily. The US Bishops’ document on preaching went further with its definition of the homily as a scriptural interpretation of human existence.\(^{251}\)

Waznak does not want to see the homily return to a pre-conciliar sermon, and offers four considerations for catechetical renewal that respects the developments in the homily. First, “*There is a difference between mystagogic catechesis and formal catechesis.*” He says that “the

\(^{248}\) Ibid., 18.  
\(^{249}\) Ibid., 19.  
\(^{250}\) Ibid.  
\(^{251}\) Ibid.
purpose of the first is transformation and takes place in church. The purpose of the second is information and takes place in a classroom.”252 This leads to his second point: “The homily is part of the liturgy itself.” There are other forums for formal catechesis, but the liturgy is not designed for such a purpose. “Preaching is more than explanation, it is transformation.” Waznak refers to Saint Augustine’s notion that the preacher is “to teach, to delight and to persuade.”253 He then refers to Saint Thomas Aquinas’ thought that the preacher is one “who shares the fruits of his contemplation with others.”254 Thus, the “lectio divina tradition of preaching reminds us that we dwell with the word not for information but for transformation.”255 Finally, Waznak offers, “The biblical readings must not be eclipsed by more ‘important topics.’” Scripture and the liturgy are as important as doctrine, and preaching is to utilize both of them if it is liturgical.256

3. “Heralds of Hope”257

The image of the preacher as “herald” is one of the first images that Waznak utilized which he carried through to An Introduction to the Homily. As demonstrated above, the image

252 Ibid., 20.
253 De Doctrina Christiana, Book IV, Chapter 12, no. 27.
254 Waznak attributes this to Aquinas’ Summa Contra Gentiles without a more specific citation. Most likely he is referring instead to Aquinas, Summa Theologicae III q.40 a. 1 ad 2: “As stated in the II-II, 182, 1; SS, 188, 6, the contemplative life is, absolutely speaking, more perfect than the active life, because the latter is taken up with bodily actions: yet that form of active life in which a man, by preaching and teaching, delivers to others the fruits of his contemplation, is more perfect than the life that stops at contemplation, because such a life is built on an abundance of contemplation, and consequently such was the life chosen by Christ.”
256 Ibid., 20–21.
has Scriptural, ecclesial and social roots. The Vatican Council II uses this image in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35. Waznak has also shown other images of the homilist that have developed after the council and have become more popular.

But Waznak reiterates the importance of this image in his *Liturgy 90* article to emphasize several important points of the homily that are found in the image of herald. First, he says that herald “reminds us that the purpose of the homily is to proclaim the good news in such a way that people will want to lift up their hearts to God.” The homily, since the beginning of the Church, has been a proclamation of God’s saving work. It does this in an anamnetic fashion. Second, he notes that the herald image preserves the message while acknowledging the circumstances of the assembly. In the ancient world, the herald proclaimed a message in time of war. In the liturgy, the message is proclaimed in a time of sorrow or joy. The herald brings a message of hope to all people. Waznak encourages preachers then to use the Scriptures to help people see God’s in-breaking in the reality of their world.

4. Waznak’s Homilies

Waznak does not often refer to the characteristics of the homily in his preaching. But in three of his homilies published in the collection *Lift Up Your Hearts,* Waznak does share his insights into the role and characteristics of the homily. These homilies, which date from the late

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258 Ibid., 6.
259 Ibid., 6–7.
260 James A. Wallace, CSSR, Robert P. Waznak, SS, and Guerric DeBona, OSB published a three volume collection of homilies entitled *Lift Up Your Hearts.* Each volume is dedicated to one of the Lectionary cycle of readings. This collection was published after Waznak’s death in 2002.
1990’s or early 2000’s, were preached at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Georgetown, part of the District of Columba.

First, in a homily for the twenty-fourth Sunday of the year in cycle B, which he entitled, “Good News? Yes! But, First, the Bad,” after talking about the barrage of mailings from politicians in the election year, Waznak says:

We call the Third Reading from Scripture that we proclaim at Mass the Gospel, which literally means “good news.” But some folks think that the proclamation of the Good News means that we don’t have to face the reality of the Bad News. There is a tremendous pressure on the preacher of any church to sell Christ in the same Pollyanna way that politicians sell themselves: as the quick fix to solve all our problems.

But before we can really understand the Good News that Jesus offers us we must face the Bad News that exists in our lives and in our world. We cannot separate the two.  

Waznak is teaching the assembly in this homily that a homily must be relevant, as he initially termed it, or prophetic as it developed. The “bad news” is addressing the lived reality of the assembly. He does a similar thing in a homily preached on the Twentieth Sunday of the year, cycle C, “A Faith on Fire.” After a story about a seminarian in his class who was struggling with a particular Gospel passage, Waznak says,

One of the major points a preacher strives to make is that the Gospel on any particular Sunday relates to us today. But how in the world can we possibly relate what Jesus is saying to our own times? The situation described here is so different from our own. Like his ancestor Jeremiah, Jesus was ripping apart the

very fabric of religious, social, and family life. When you accepted Jesus, you had to accept the cost of alienation, persecution and death itself.

There are still places in the world where this Gospel rings true and could easily be applied by any preacher. …

But for most of us assembled today, following Jesus does not alienate us from anyone.262

In another homily for the Fifth Sunday of Easter of the cycle C, entitled, “How to be More Than Nice on Mother’s Day,” Waznak speaks about how the homily is liturgical. After a story about his mother telling him that people go to church to be encouraged, he says: “Except for ignoring the prophetic tradition of biblical preaching, my mother made a lot of sense. After all, the presider says to the assembly, ‘Lift up your hearts.’ That is one of the chief reasons for the homily, to lift up our hearts, to go to Eucharist and to out into the world encouraged.”263

The Lectionary

Before leaving the development of Waznak’s theory and theology of the liturgical homily, one final reoccurring issue must be explored: the Lectionary. While Waznak does not offer a thorough assessment of the Roman Lectionary, he does develop his treatment of the post-Vatican II book throughout the course of his works.

In his dissertation, after founding the principles of the new Lectionary on SC 35 and 51 and describing how the Sunday, weekday, seasonal and sanctoral cycle readings relate to each

263 Ibid., 117.
other, Waznak identifies four implications for the homily from the new Lectionary. First, every Sunday the preacher has a multitude of “themes” from which to select the foundation of the homily. Second, the reading from the Old Testament and the responsorial psalm can be used as background for Gospel events, meaning and fulfillment. Third, he says that the homily in a season can be developed from the common theme of the readings. Fourth, Waznak says that the homily could be broadened from the Gospel pericope itself to “focus on the author and his individual interpretations of the Christian message.”

In *Sunday after Sunday*, Waznak repeats again the conciliar foundations and arrangement of the new Lectionary. Included in his discussion is a section on the purpose of the *Lectionary*. He states: “The purpose of the lectionary is to proclaim the dying and rising of Christ made present in us through faith and baptism. Thus, the story of God expressed in Jesus becomes our story as well.” Waznak argues quite strongly about this:

I am convinced that if we preachers take seriously the purpose of the lectionary, which is to proclaim the dying and rising of Christ and to discern and celebrate this same passage in our own lives and world, a meaning would be given to people who are hungry for good news. …

To exegete, interpret, and brood over the Scriptures requires work, faith, and imagination. Such preaching involves not just information about God, but an invitation to experience God in our lives and in our world. Such preaching demands respect for God’s story, sensitivity to the listeners’ story, and the risky business of embracing our own stories.

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264 Waznak, Dissertation, 81.
266 Ibid., 60.
Waznak now offers three problems he sees with the Lectionary. First, he sees the Lectionary as treating the Old Testament as mere background for the Gospel rather than as capable of offering another perspective. As a consequence of this Waznak laments that "many of the great themes in which God dealt and continues to deal with his people are absent." Second, since the second reading is a semi-continuous reading of a New Testament book, it does not harmonize with the Old Testament and Gospel readings. He suggests that preachers not force a harmonization of themes, but consider preaching a series of homilies on the New Testament reading instead. Finally, Waznak acknowledges that the Lectionary provides "uniformity, harmony with the liturgical year, and a challenge to the subjectivity of the local preacher or congregation…", but he sees the readings as restrictive, especially when special occasions "do not mirror the themes of themes of God’s story for that particular liturgy." In such situations, Waznak calls for "pastoral prudence and flexibility."

Waznak devotes the entire third chapter of *An Introduction to the Homily* to the subject of the Lectionary. In this chapter, he expands his treatment of the purpose and history of the Lectionary by articulating a rooting of the Lectionary in the Jewish synagogue rituals and utilizing *SC 24* and *DV 21* to ground the *Lectionary* in Vatican II principles. In addition to the problems identified in his previous works, Waznak also argues that the Psalm response could give another perspective to the readings. He also argues that some preachers feel the

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267 Ibid., 63.
268 Ibid., 65.
269 Ibid.
270 See Waznak, *Introduction* 81–82.
Lectionary can be “a straight jacket for creativity”\textsuperscript{271} but that this is an invitation to deeper wrestling with the Word in prayerful and imaginative reading.

**Conclusion**

Throughout his scholarly career Robert Waznak wrestled with the primary questions of the meaning and purpose of the liturgical homily. His initial four-fold character of the liturgical homily became the five-fold nature of the homily in his final book. Through the course of this chapter, we have seen several consistencies in these characteristics and some areas of significant development.

First, Waznak stays consistent in his drawing from *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and other Vatican II sources. Paragraph thirty-five of the *Constitution on the Liturgy* provided the foundational definition from which Waznak never drifted. While noting the irony of this being the one place the conciliar fathers call this form of preaching a “sermon,” one could view his entire corpus as a contemplation of the last sentence of the second paragraph: “The sermon, however, should draw its contents mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources, for it is the proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, which is the mystery of Christ ever made present and active in us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy.”\textsuperscript{272}

Second, he also stays consistent with insistence that the focus of the homily is the whole context in which the homilist and assembly are located. He does not lose sight that it is a

\textsuperscript{272} See note #25 above.
combination of the stories of God, of the people and the preacher that intersect in the liturgical moment of preaching.

Waznak devotes much of his thought and approaches the questions around the liturgical homily by exploring the role of the preacher. This most striking development is seen in his exploration of the image of the preacher from a “herald” to a “mediator of meaning” to settling on an image of Pope Paul VI: “witness.”
Chapter Three: The Relationship of Waznak’s Writings on the “Liturgical Homily” to Magisterial Teaching

Introduction: Review of Waznak on “Liturgical Homily”

In this and the subsequent three chapters we will utilize the conclusions\(^1\) of Robert Waznak’s theory and theology of the liturgical homily as a guide to a conversation with magisterial teachings, homileticians, and theologians about the liturgical homily. Waznak’s theory and theology are foundational to this conversation because in addition to a framework, they provide a conversation partner to build a theology of the liturgical homily for the contemporary Church.

In this chapter we will explore more in depth the concept of the liturgical homily that has emerged since the Second Vatican Council. The definition of this concept will be drawn primarily from the writings of the conciliar fathers, the Roman congregations, and the Consilium that were tasked with the implementation of the Council, the popes who have overseen the ongoing implementation of the conciliar reform, and the Bishops’ Conference of the United States who have issued two documents on the Sunday homily. These sources will be presented according to three major periods of development: the period leading up to Vatican Council II, the

\(^1\) See pages 62–63 of chapter 2. These conclusions specifically are: founding a definition of the “liturgical homily” on SC 24, 35 and 52; contemplating the use of story as a means to understand the homily; and focusing the homily on the person of the preacher.
Conciliar period and its immediate implementation, and the post-conciliar period of development. Within each era, the sources will be presented in chronological order.\(^2\)

Since others have done an extensive examination of the evolution of the liturgical homily in these documents,\(^3\) we will examine only the texts that explicitly define, limit or explain the liturgical homily. While the homily is a mode of the Church’s preaching ministry, we will avoid general texts on preaching that do not specifically deal with the homily in the context of the Mass. In order to avoid what Waznak termed “an accommodated use” of the magisterial texts by pulling isolated sentences out of magisterial documents, we will provide full paragraphs from the contents of the documents when possible to define “the liturgical homily.”

We saw in the previous chapter—beginning with his doctoral dissertation until his final book—that Waznak developed characteristics of the liturgical homily. In his dissertation, he characterized the Vatican II liturgical homily as kerygmatic, liturgical, scriptural, and relevant.

\(^2\) The final period, the post-conciliar developments, will be further divided to papal, curial and episcopal conference documents, each respectively being presented chronologically.

\(^3\) This aim of this chapter is to define the “liturgical homily,” not to give a through account of the magisterial teaching on every aspect of the liturgical homily.

For a more detailed evaluation of the history of the liturgical homily in Roman documents see:


For a more detailed examination of the canonical history of preaching, see:


The material on Pope Benedict XVI and the latest USCCB document on preaching has not been previously covered by others.
In his article on the homily for the New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship, he reorders the terms, and renames “scriptural” as “biblical” and “relevant” as “familiar conversation.” In his final tome, Waznak adds a fifth characteristic to his list, “prophetic,” and expanded what he meant by the homily as “liturgical.” Thus Waznak saw the liturgical homily as:

- **biblical**: rooted in the Scriptures of the Church;
- **liturgical**: an integral part of the Church’s ritual that is …
  - doxological: a praise and thanksgiving to God,
  - anamnetic: Jesus Christ is made present and active,
  - epicletic: fruit of the Holy Spirit’s action discerned through prayer and mediation by the preacher,
  - eschatological: a proclamation of hope for coming reign of God,
  - ecclesial: provides the community with a common vision;
- **kerygmatic**: a proclamation of God’s wonderful works in salvation history;
- **relevant**: addresses particular needs of the assembly;
- **conversational**: spoken by a shepherd to his flock using familiar language; and
- **prophetic**: leads to conversion and salvation and at times challenges social order.

In order to evaluate these characterizations of the liturgical homily, we will now turn to the liturgical homily as it evolves within the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church.

**Magisterial Teaching about the Liturgical Homily**

**The Homily before Vatican Council II**

To speak of the liturgical “homily” prior to the Council is not anarchistic because the term “homily” appears in Roman documents prior to the Vatican Council II. The conciliar fathers will modify its precise meaning. The codification of Church law under Popes Pius X and

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4The Latin terms *homilia* and *sermo* were in use in official documents before the Council, though the extent and use of both terms is beyond the scope of this investigation.

The following canons are germane to our discussion:

1342. §1. The faculty of preaching [concionandi] should be made only to priests and deacons, but not to other clerics, except for reasonable cause, in the judgment of the Ordinary, and in individual cases.

§2. All laity are forbidden to preach [concionari] in churches, even religious.

1344. §1. On Sundays and other feasts of precept throughout the year, it is the personal duty of the pastor to announce the Word of God to the people, in the customary homily [homilia], especially at Mass which the greater part of the people attend.

§2. The pastor cannot habitually satisfy the obligation through another, except for just cause approved by the Ordinary.

§3. The Ordinary can permit that on certain more solemn feasts, and even, for a just cause, on Sundays, the homily [concio] be omitted.

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6 Throughout this chapter whenever the English term “homily,” “sermon,” or other synonym is used, the Latin term will follow in brackets. This highlighted text is not part of the original (and official) English translations.

7 CIC 1917, c. 1342. § 1. Concionandi facultas solis sacerdotibus vel diaconis fiat, non vero ceteris clericis, nisi rationabili de causa, iudicio Ordinarii et in casibus singularibus.

The Latin terms following words associated with the homily are added.

§ 2. Concionari in ecclesia vetantur laici omnes, etsi religiosi.

8 Ibid., c. 1344. § 1. Diebus dominicis ceterisque per annum festis de praecepto proprium cuiusque parochi officium est, consueta homilia, praesertim intra Missam in qua maior soleat esse populii frequentia, verbum Dei populo nuntiare.

§ 2. Parochus huic obligationi nequit per alium habitualiter satisfacere, nisi ob iustam causam ab Ordinario probatam.

§ 3. Potest Ordinarius permettere ut sollemnioribus quibusdam festis aut etiam, ex iusta causa aliquibus diebus dominicis concio omittatur.
1345. It is desirable that, the faithful being present, on feast days of precept that are celebrated in all churches and public oratories, there be a brief explanation [explanatio] of the Gospel and some part of Christian doctrine; and if the local Ordinary so orders, opportune instructions [instructionibus] having been given, this law binds not only secular priests and clerics, but also religious, even exempt ones, in their own churches.9

1346. §1. Let Ordinaries take care that in Lent, and likewise, if it seems it can be done, during Advent, frequent sacred sermons [conciones] be offered in cathedral and parish churches attended by the faithful.
§2. Canons and others in the Chapter are bound to attend these sermons [concioni], if they are held in their own churches immediately after choir, unless detained by a just cause; and the Ordinary can urge this [attendance] even by adding penalties.10

1347. §1. In sacred sermons [concionibus] there shall be set forth first of all those things that the faithful must believe and that which they ought to do for salvation.
§2. Preachers [praecones] of the divine word shall abstain from profane or abstruse arguments exceeding the common capacity of their listeners; they shall exercise evangelical ministry, not in the persuasive words of human wisdom or in the get-up and flattery of profane emptiness and ambitious eloquence, but in a spiritual and virtuous show, preaching not themselves, but Christ crucified.
§3. If, far be it from here, a preacher [concionator] disseminates errors or scandal, the prescription of Canon 2317 shall be observed; if he is a heretic, other things come against him according to the norm of law.11

9 Ibid., c. 1345: Optandum ut in Missis quae, fidelibus adstantibus, diebus festis de praecepto in omnibus ecclesiis vel oratoriiis publicis celebrantur, brevis Evangelii aut alicuius partis doctrinae christianae explanatio fiat; quod si loci Ordinarius id praeceperit, opportunis datis instructionibus, hac lege tenentur non solum sacerdotes et clero saeculari, sed etiam religiosi, exempti quoque, in suis ipsorum ecclesiis.
10 Ibid., c. 1346 § 1. Curent locorum Ordinarii ut tempore Quadragesimae, itemque, si id expedire visum fuerit, tempore Adventus, in ecclesiis cathedralibus et paroecialibus sacrae conciones frequentius ad fideles habeantur.
§ 2. Canonici aliique de Capitulo huic concioni, si in propria ecclesia continuo post chorum habeatur, interesse tenentur, nisi iusto impedimento detineantur; et illos Ordinarius, poenis quoque adhibitis, ad id adigere potest.
11 Ibid., c. 1347 § 1. In sacris concionibus exponenda in primis sunt quae fideles credere et facere ad salutem oportet.
§ 2. Divini verbi praecones abstanteae profanis aut abstruis argumentis communem audientium captum excedentibus; et evangelicum ministerium non in persuasibilibus humanae sapientiae verbis, non in profano inanis et ambitiosae eloquentiae apparatu et lenocinio, sed in ostensione spiritus et virtutis exerceant, non semetipsos, sed Christum crucifixum praedicantes.
§ 3. Si, quod absit, concionator errores aut scandal dissemnet, servetur praescriptum can. 2317; si haereses, in eum praetererea, ad normam iuris, agatur.
1348. The faithful are to be diligently warned and encouraged to be present frequently for holy sermons [concionibus].

First, the 1917 Code uses forms of the Latin terms concio, concionis; explanatio, explanationis; homilia, homiliae; instructio, instructionis and praecon, praeconis when speaking about the liturgical unit of preaching. Clearly concio is the preferred term, but the CIC 1917 utilizes a variety of terms that will continue to appear in later documents.

Second, it is important to note in the above canons several points: 1) liturgical preaching is important for Sundays and holy days (feast days of precept) throughout the year (c. 1344); 2) this liturgical preaching is “a brief explanation of the Gospel or some part of Christian doctrine” (c. 1345); 3) it is recommended for the liturgical (penitential) seasons of Lent and Advent (c. 1346); 4) that preaching should be understandable to those in the assembly (c. 1347); and, 5) preaching is a ministry done by a priest or deacon (c. 1342). These points will reappear and be developed in the subsequent magisterial documents.

In 1947 Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical Mediator Dei, which affirmed the work of the Liturgical Movement. In regard to the liturgical homily, Pope Pius XII said:

21. Liturgical practice begins with the very founding of the Church. The first Christians, in fact, “were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles and in the

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12 Ibid., c. 1348. Monendi et adhortandi diligenter fideles sunt ut sacris concionibus frequententer intersint.
communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers.”[Acts 2:42] Whenever their pastors can summon a little group of the faithful together, they set up an altar on which they proceed to offer the sacrifice, and around which are ranged all the other rites appropriate for the saving of souls and for the honor due to God. Among these latter rites, the first place is reserved for the sacraments, namely, the seven principal founts of salvation. There follows the celebration of the divine praises in which the faithful also join, obeying the behest of the Apostle Paul, “In all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God.”[Col. 3:16] Next comes the reading of the Law, the prophets, the gospel and the apostolic epistles; and last of all the homily or sermon [homilia, seu sacra concio] in which the official head of the congregation recalls and explains the practical bearing of the commandments of the divine Master and the chief events of His life, combining instruction with appropriate exhortation and illustration of the benefit of all his listeners.15

This encyclical is significant in that the pope describes the nature of the liturgical homily or sermon as an essential element of the sacraments, especially the Mass. He also connects the readings of the liturgy to the homily as well as connecting the homily to both the Paschal Mystery and the life of the community. He then describes one of the purposes of the homily as benefitting the community through a combination of instruction, exhortation and illustration. Finally, Pope Pius XII connects liturgical preaching with the ministry of presiding at the liturgy.

15 Ibid., no. 21: Liturgica autem actio tum initium sumpsit, cum Ecclesia divinitus condita fuit. Priscae siquidem aetatis christiani « erant perseverantes in doctrina Apostolorum et communicatione fractionis panis et orationibus » (Act. 2, 42). Quocumque Pastores possunt christifidelium coetum cogere, ibi erigunt aram, in qua sacris operantur, et quam circum ceteri ordinantur ritus, quibus homines possint sanctitate imbui, debitamque Deo tribuere gloriam. Quibus in ritibus primo loco Sacramenta habentur, hoc est septem praeципui salutis fontes; dein vero divinæ laudis celebratio, qua christifideles etiam invicem coniuncti hortationi Pauli Apostoli obtemperant :« In omni sapientia docentes et commonentes vosmet ipso, psalmis, hymnis et canticis spiritualibus, in gratia cantantes in cordibus vestris Deo » (Col. 3, 16); deinde autem Legis, Prophetarum, Evangelii Apostolorumque epistularum lectio; ac postremo homilia, seu sacra concio, qua coetus præses Divini Magistri praecepta in memoriam revocata utiliter commentatur, res eventusque graviore vitae Christi commemorat, atque adstantes omnes opportunis adhorationibus et exemplis commonefacit.
In 1960 Pope John XXIII issued through the Sacred Congregation on the Rites a revised edition\textsuperscript{16} of the \textit{Rubricae Generalis Missalis Romani}, which is found in the front of every \textit{Missale Romanum} 1962:

After the Gospel, especially on Sundays and prescribed feast days, where opportune, a brief homily [\textit{homilia}] may be done facing the people. A homily [\textit{homilia}], whether done by another priest or the celebrant, truly is not superimposed during a celebration of the Mass requiring participation of the faithful; in such a case, the celebration of the Mass must be suspended, and may be resumed upon completion of the homily.\textsuperscript{17}

Significant in the \textit{RGMR} 1960 is the admonition to preach on Sundays and holy days, the placement after the Gospel and the connection to presbyteral ministry. While on the surface it may seem that the terminology of “the Mass must be suspended” is a degradation of the homily, it seems that the \textit{RMGR} is trying to emphasize the integral nature of all parts of the liturgy, even if the Mass “is suspended and resumed.”

Clearly, the foundation and the development of the liturgical homily began prior the Vatican Council II. We have seen that there was an obligation to preach on Sundays and holy

\textsuperscript{16} In 1920, Pope Pius X issued an appendix to the \textit{Rubricae Generalis Missalis Romani [RMGR]} that modified some of the rubrics for the celebration of Mass. The section, “On the Letter, Gradual, Alleluia and Tract, and the Gospel,” includes nothing about a homily or sermon. However, the \textit{Ritus servandus in celebratione Missae} in the 1962 Missal remains unchanged from the 1920 Missal: “If, however, someone is to preach, the Homilist, after the Gospel has finished, preaches, and when the sermon or moral address has been completed, the Credo is said, or if it is not said, the Offertory is sung.” (Si autem sit praedicandum, Contionator, finito Evangelio, proedicit, et sermon, sive contione expleto, dicatur Credo, vel, si non sit dicendum, cantetur Offertorium.)

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Missale Romanum ex Decreto Sacrosanctii Concilii Tridentini Restitutum Summorum Pontificum Cura Recognitum} (Rome: Typis Polyglottis, 1962) [Hereafter \textit{RM} 1962]; Sacred Congregation of Rites, \textit{RGMR}, 26 July 1960, no. 474: Post Evangelium, praeertim in dominicis et diebus festis de praecepto, habeatur, iuxta opportunitatem, brevis homilia ad populum.

\textit{Homilia vero, si fiat ab alio sacerdote ac celebrante, non superimponatur Missae celebreati, impediendo fidelium participationem; proinde, hoc in casu, Missae celebratio suspendatur, et tantummodo expleta homilia resumatur.}
days of obligation, which could be dispensed, the homily is tied to the Scriptural readings and Christian living, a shift to being considered a part of the liturgy, and a view of the homily as part of the presbyteral ministry.

**Vatican II’s “Liturgical Homily”**

While the “liturgical homily” was not rediscovered at the Vatican Council II, the Council significantly developed our understanding of it. On 4 December 1963, the Council Fathers issued the first constitution to come from Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. In *SC*, the liturgical homily is featured in three locations. The first two occur in the third section of the first chapter of the Constitution, “General Principles for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy.”

24. Sacred scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from it that lessons are read and explained in the homily [*homilia*], and psalms are sung. It is from the scriptures that the prayers, collects, and hymns draw their inspiration and force, and that actions and signs derive their meaning. 18

35. That the intimate connection between rite and words may be apparent in the liturgy: In sacred celebrations a more ample, more varied, and more suitable reading from sacred scripture should be restored. The most suitable place for a sermon [*sermonis*] ought to be indicated in the rubrics, for a sermon [*sermonis*] is part of the liturgical action whenever a rite involves one. The ministry of preaching is to be fulfilled most faithfully and carefully. The sermon [*haec*], however, should draw its contents mainly from

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18 *SC* 24: Maximum est sacrae Scripturae momentum in Liturgia celebranda. Ex ea enim lectiones leguntur et in homilia explicantur, psalmi canuntur, atque ex eius afflatu instinctuque preces, orationes et carmina liturgica effusa sunt, et ex ea significationem suam actiones et signa accipiant. Unde, ad procurandam sacrae Liturgiae instaurationem, progressum et aptationem, oportet ut promoveatur ille suavis et vivus sacrae Scripturae affectus, quem testatur venerabilis rituum cum orientalium tum occidentalium traditio.
scriptural and liturgical sources, for it is the proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, which is the mystery of Christ ever made present and active in us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy.¹⁹

The third appearance of the liturgical homily in the Constitution is in the second chapter, “The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist.”

52. By means of the homily [homilia] 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 [homilia], therefore, 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, with the people assisting, it should not be omitted except for serious reason.²⁰

The Constitution sees the homily as an explanation of the Scriptural readings or Scriptural themes of the prayers, collects and hymns. It also clearly indicates the homily is not an addition to the liturgy, but a part of the liturgy. SC clearly sees the homily as a continuation of the proclamation of the Gospel. It is the proclamation of the Gospel which gives shape to the Christian faith and from which the Christian receives guidance for ethical living. SC maintains, and strengthens, the obligation to preach on Sundays and feast days.

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¹⁹ SC 35: Ut clare appareat in Liturgia ritum et verbum intime coniungi:
  1) In celebrationibus sacris abundantior, varior et aptior lectio sacrae Scripturae instauretur.
  2) Locus aptior sermonis, utpote partis actionis liturgicae, prout ritus patitur, etiam in rubricis notetur; et fidelissime ac rite adimpleatur ministerium praedicationis. Haec vero imprimis ex fonte sacrae Scripturae et Liturgiae hauriatur, quasi annuntiatio mirabilium Dei in historia salutis seu mysterio Christi, quod in nobis prae sent adest et operatur, praeertim in celebrationibus liturgicis.

²⁰ SC 52: Homilia, qua per anni liturgici cursum ex textu sacro fidei mysteria et normae vitae christiana exponuntur, ut pars ipsius liturgiae valde commendatur; quinimmo in Missis quae diebus dominicis et festis de praecceito concorrente populo celebrantur, ne omittatur, nisi gravi de causa.
The Sacred Congregation for Rites on 26 September 1964 issued Inter Ócumenici, the first “Instruction on the Proper Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.” The Instruction further clarified the liturgical homily in two paragraphs:

54. A homily \[Nomine homiliae\] on the sacred text means an explanation, pertinent to the mystery celebrated and the special needs of the listeners, of some point in either the reading from sacred Scripture or in another text from the Ordinary or Proper of the day’s Mass.\[21\]

55. Because the homily \[homilia\] is part of the liturgy for the day, any syllabus proposed for preaching within the Mass during certain periods must keep intact the intimate connection with at least the principal seasons and feasts of the liturgical year (see \textit{SC} art. 102–104), that is, with the mystery of redemption.\[22\]

The Instruction clarified two important points from the Constitution. First, it defined “liturgical sources” of \textit{SC} 35 (2) by naming “the Ordinary or Proper of the day’s Mass.” Second, it clarified the role of these liturgical sources as being a connection to the “mystery of redemption” celebrated throughout the liturgical year.

Over a year later, on 7 December 1965, the Council Fathers issued \textit{Presbyterorum Ordinis}, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests. In relation to the ministry of preaching and the Liturgy of the Word, the Decree teaches:

4. The people of God is formed into one in the first place by the Word of the living God, which is quite rightly sought from the mouth of priests. For since nobody can be saved who has not first believed, it is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the Gospel of God to all men. In this way they carry out the Lord’s command “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to

\[21\] \textit{ICE} 54: Nomine homiliae ex textu sacro faciendae intellegitur explicatio aut alicuius aspectus lectionum Sacrae Scripturae aut alterius textus ex Ordinario vel Proprio Missae diei, ratione habita sive mysterii quod celebratur sive peculiarii necessitatum auditorum.

\[22\] \textit{ICE} 55: Si schemata praedicationis intra Missam habendae pro aliquibus temporibus proponuntur, intimus nexus cum praecipuis saeclum temporibus et festis anni liturgici (cfr. Const. art. 102-104) seu cum mysterio Redemptionis harmonice servandus est; homilia enim est pars Liturgiae diei.
every creature” (Mk 16:15) and thus set up and increase the People of God. For by the saving Word of God faith is aroused in the heart of unbelievers and is nourished in the heart of believers. By this faith then the congregation of the faithful begins and grows, according to the saying of the apostle: “Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Rom. 10:17).

Priests then owe it to everybody to share with them the truth of the Gospel in which they rejoice in the Lord. Therefore, whether by their exemplary behavior they lead people to glorify God; or by their preaching proclaim the mystery of Christ to unbelievers; or teach the Christian message or explain the Church’s doctrine; or endeavor to treat contemporary problems in the light of Christ’s teaching—in every case their role is to teach not their own wisdom but the Word of God and to issue a pressing invitation to all men to conversion and to holiness. Moreover, the priest’s preaching, often very difficult in present-day conditions, if it is to become more effective in moving the minds of his hearers, must expound the Word of God not merely in a general and abstract way but by application of the eternal truth of the Gospel to the concrete circumstances of life.

Thus the ministry of the Word is exercised in many different ways according to the needs of the hearers and the spiritual gifts of preachers. In non-Christian territories or societies people are led by the proclamation of the Gospel to faith and by the saving sacraments. In the Christian community itself, on the other hand, especially for those who seem to have little understanding or belief underlying their practice, the preaching of the Word is required for the sacramental ministry itself, since the sacraments are sacraments of faith, drawing their origin and nourishment from the Word. This is of paramount importance in the case of the liturgy of the Word within the celebration of Mass where there is an inseparable union of proclamation of the Lord’s death and resurrection, the response of its hearers and the offering itself by which Christ confirmed the new covenant in his blood. In this offering the faithful share both by their sacrificial sentiments and by the reception of the sacrament.23


Omnibus ergo debitores sunt Presbyteri, ut cum eis communicent veritatem Evangelii qua in Domino gaudent. Sive igitur, conversationem inter gentes habentes bonam, ad Deum glorificandum eas adducunt, sive, aperte praedicantes, mysterium Christi non credentibus annuntiant, sive catechesim christianam tradunt vel Ecclesiae doctrinam explainant, sive sui temporis questiones sub luce Christi tractare student, eorum semper est non sapientiam suam, sed Dei Verbum docere omnesque ad conversionem et ad sanctitatem instanter invitare. Sacerdotalis vero praedicatio, in hodiernis mundi adiunctis haud raro perdiffilis, ut auditorum mentes aptius
First, the Decree itself never uses the terms *concio, homilia* or *sermo* in this passage on preaching. Rather it references the *ministerium verbi*, the *verbi praedicatio*, and the *praedicantium charismata* to speak in terms of preaching. However, it maintains that the homily, or the preaching within the sacramental ministry, is of paramount importance within the preaching of the Church because the liturgy’s union of the proclamation of the Paschal Mystery, the response of the assembly and the offering itself.

Further, we see that the Decree maintains the requirement from *CIC* 1917 that the preaching of the Church be applicable to the concrete circumstances of life. More fundamentally, the Decree further distinguishes the modes of the ministry of the Word, that is, the different objectives of the ministry of preaching. This distinction helps to clarify the nature of the liturgical homily because the homily as a way to preach within “the Christian community itself” seeks the union of proclamation, response of the assembly and the Eucharistic sacrifice. It also strengthens the relationship of Scripture to the sacraments since the Word nourishes and is the origin of faith and the sacraments.

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moveat, verbum Dei non modo generali et abstracto tantum exponere debet, sed concretis applicando vitae circumstantiis veritatem Evangelii perennem.

Ita ministerium verbi multiformiter exercetur, secundum diversas audientium necessitates et praedicantium charismata. In regionibus vel coetibus non christianis, nuntio Evangelico homines ad fidem et Sacramenta salutis adducuntur, in ipsa autem communitate christianorum, praeertim pro illis qui parum intellegere vel credere videntur quod frequentant, verbi praedicatio requiritur ad ipsum ministerium Sacramentorum, quippe quae sint Sacramenta fidei, quae de verbo nascitur et nutritur; quod praecipue valet pro Liturgia verbi in Missarum celebratione, in qua inseparabili uniuntur annuntiatio mortis et resurrectionis Domini, responsum populi audientis et oblationi ipsa qua Christus Novum Foedus confirmavit in Sanguine suo, cui oblationi fideles, et votis et Sacramenti perceptione, communicant.
On 25 May 1967 the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, the Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery. The Congregation wrote:

10. The Connection Between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist

Pastors should therefore “carefully teach the faithful to participate in the whole Mass,” showing the close connection between the liturgy of the Word and the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, so that they can see clearly how the two constitute a single act of worship. For “the teaching of the Word is necessary for the very administration of the sacraments, in as much as they are sacraments of faith, which is born of the Word and fed by it.” This is especially true of the celebration of Mass, in which it is the purpose of the liturgy of the Word to develop the close connection between the preaching and hearing of the Word of God and the eucharistic mystery.

When therefore the faithful hear the Word of God, they should realize that the wonders it proclaims culminate in the Paschal Mystery, of which the memorial is sacramentally celebrated in the Mass. In this way the faithful will be nourished by the Word of God which they have received and in a spirit of thanksgiving will be led on to a fruitful participation in the mysteries of salvation. Thus the Church is nourished by the bread of life both at the table of the Word of God and that of the Body of Christ.

The Congregation repeats the intimate connection between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Instruction highlights this connection by stating that the Liturgy of the Word nourishes the faithful. Further, the Instruction equates the Word of God and

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Pastores igitur « fideles sedulo doceant de integra Missa partici- panda », intimam rationem illustrando quae inter liturgiam verbi et celebrationem Cenae Domini intercedit, ita ut clare percipient ex his unum actum cultus effici. Nam «verbi praedicatio requiritur ad ipsum ministerium sacramentorum, quippe quae sint sacramenta fidei, quae de verbo nascitur et nutritur ». Hoc praecipue dicendum est de Missarum celebrazione in qua liturgiae verbi propitium est intimum nexum inter annuntiationem auditionemque verbi Dei et mysterium eucharisticum peculiari modo fovere.

Fideles igitur verbum Dei audientes agnoscant eius mirabilia, quae annuntiantur, fastigium in mysterio paschali attingere, cuius memoriae in Missa sacramentaliter celebratur. Hoc modo, verbum Dei suscipientes, coque nutriti, fideles in gratiarum actione ad fructuosam participationem mysteriorum salutis inducentur. Ita pane vitae e mensa tum verbi Dei tum corporis Christi Ecclesia nutritur.
the Body of Christ with the bread of life while also maintaining that the Liturgy of the Word leads into the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the memorial of the Paschal Mystery.\footnote{The Instruction, like other magisterial documents we have seen, reflects the tension noted above in \textit{RGMR} of the \textit{MR} 1962 which sees the Mass beginning with the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Liturgy of the Word is not seen in itself as a memorial of the Paschal Mystery; rather it appears to be the Liturgy of the Eucharist that is the memorial.}

The Instruction does not explicitly use the terms for the homily we have seen above. Since the homily was restored by \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium}, and seen as a the Liturgy of the Word, it is safe to extend the Instruction’s teaching to the homily itself as the part of the Liturgy of the Word. The homily is meant to connect the Word of God and the Eucharist, as well as to nourish the People of God and lead them to full participation “in the mysteries of salvation.”

On 15 August 1968 the same congregation issued the revised \textit{Rites of Ordination}. The rubric about the liturgical preaching in the rite for the ordination of a deacon exemplifies the role of the homily throughout the revised \textit{Rites of Ordination}. The text reads:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Then all sit, and the bishop gives the homily \textit{[no corresponding word in the Latin]}. He begins with the text of the readings from Scripture and then speaks to the people and the candidate about the office of deacon and the meaning and importance of celibacy in the Church.\footnote{SCR, \textit{De ordinatione}, 15 August 1968 [Civitate Vaticana: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1968], no. 14: Deinde, omnibus sedentibus, Episcopus alloquitur populum et Electos de munere Diaconi; quod facere potest his verbis: …}
\end{enumerate}

It is significant to note that the English text for the \textit{Rites of Ordination} is very different from the Latin \textit{editio typica}. The Latin simply reads, “…Episcopus alloquitur populum et Electos de munere Diaconi…” Thus, the homily, situated within the rite of ordination, is spoken to the assembly and the elect about the office of the deacon (\textit{de munere Diaconi}). The Rite itself does not advise the bishop to speak about the Scriptures or the meaning and importance of
celibacy in the Church. It does provide the bishop with a homily which he may use [quod facere potest his verbis]. The focus of the provided homily is on the sacrament celebrated, in this case the office of the deacon. The nature of the written homily is instruction.  

Less than a year later, on 19 March 1969 the Congregation promulgated the *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium*. In reference to the homily, the rite states:

22. After the gospel, the priest gives a homily [homilia] drawn from the sacred text. He speaks about the mystery of Christian marriage, the dignity of wedded love, the grace of the sacrament and the responsibilities of married people, keeping in mind the circumstances of this particular marriage.

The Congregation returns to an understanding of the homily as based upon the Scriptures (e textu sacro) and is meant to lead to a fruitful celebration of the sacrament by teaching about various aspects of the sacrament of marriage.

On 8 May 1969, Pope Paul VI issued the Apostolic Constitution *Sacra Rituum Congregatio*, which divided the Sacred Congregation of Rites into the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. A week later on 15 May 1969 the new Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship issued *Actio Pastoralis Ecclesiae*, the Instruction on Masses for Special Groups. In relation to the homily, the Instruction dictates:

6. In order to achieve a celebration corresponding to circumstances and environment, the single parts should be well organized, keeping in mind the following norms and principles:

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27 We will explore the 1989 Revised *Rite of Ordination* later in this chapter.
(a) In the fullest way possible, participation of the faithful should be encouraged, according to the particular circumstances. ...
(d) With the exception of the following norms (cf. f and h below) and the role of the commentator during the celebration, the faithful will refrain from any interventions in the way of reflections, exhortations and the like. ...
(g) In the homily [homilia] the priest should recall the particular character of the celebration, and its link with the local and universal Church. 39

Letter (f) of this paragraph refers to the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, while letter (h) refers to the petitions.

The Instruction is important for the via negativa of the homily. Letter (d) excludes members of the assembly, even in special groups, to interrupt the homily by means of reflection or exhortation. Further, the homily, because of its nature as a part of the celebration is linked to the local and universal Church. The homily, then, is ecclesial by nature. 30

The Congregation for Divine Worship issued the first edition of the Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani on 6 April 1969. Before the IGRM took the force of law, less than a year later

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29 Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship [SCDW], Instruction Actio Pastoralis Ecclesiae, 15 May 1969 [AAS 61 (1969) 806–11; English translation in DOL 275], no. 6: Quo facilius Eucharistica celebratio evadat rerum personarumque adiunctis vere consentanea, singulæ eius partes apte componuntur, attentis normis generalibus, et, quae sequuntur, principiis:
a) Participatio fidelium quam maxime foveatur, attentis peculiari bus adiunctis in quibus fit celebratio et facultate id facilius obtinendi.
d) Firmo praescripto litteris f et h, quae sequuntur, notato et his exceptis quae ab aliquo « commentatore » aguntur, fideles sese abstinent considerationibus, adhortationibus hisque rebus similibus in ipsa celebratione.
g) In homilia Sacerdos mentionem habeat huius particularis celebrationis et rationes illustret inter coetum, qui actu congregatur, et Ecclesiam localem atque universalem intercedentes.
on 26 March 1970 the same congregation issued its second edition with the editio typica of the Missale Romanum.\(^{31}\) The IGRM 1970 treats the nature of the homily in four paragraphs:

9. When the Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself is speaking to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, is proclaiming the Gospel. The readings must therefore be listened to by all with reverence; they make up a principal element of the liturgy. In the biblical readings God’s word addresses all people of every era and is understandable to them, but a living commentary on the word, that is, the homily [\textit{homilia}], as an integral part of the liturgy, increases the word’s effectiveness.\(^{32}\)

33. Readings from Scripture and the chants between the readings form the main part of the liturgy of the word [\textit{sic}]. The homily [\textit{homilia}], the profession of faith, and general intercessions or prayer of the faithful expand and complete this part of Mass. In the readings, explained by the homily [\textit{homilia}], God is speaking to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and nourishing their spirit; Christ is present to the faithful through his own word. Through the chants the people make God’s word their own and through the profession of faith affirm their adherence to it. Finally, having been fed by this word, they make their petitions in the general intercessions for the needs of the church and for the salvation of the whole world.\(^{33}\)

\(^{31}\) For a complete comparison of the various editions of the IGRM, see Maurizio Barba, \textit{Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani: Textus-Synopsis-Variationes}, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006).


\(^{33}\) Ibid., no. 33: Partem praeceptuam liturgiae verbi constituunt lectiones e sacrae Scripturae desumptae cum cantibus inter eas occurrentibus; homilia autem, professio fidei et oration universalis seu oration fidelium illam evolvunt et conclusunt. Nam in lectionibus, quas homilia exponit, Deus populum suum alloquitur, mysterium redemptionis et salutis patefacit, atque nutrimentum spirituale offert; et ipse Christus per verbum suum in medio fidelium praeens adest. Hoc verbum divinum populus suujm facit cantibus, et ipsi adhaeret professione fidei; eo autem nutritus, oratione universalis pro necessitabitus totius Ecclesiae et pro totius mundi salute preces fundit.
41. The homily [homilia] is an integral part of the liturgy and is strongly recommended: it is necessary for the nurturing of the Christian life. It should develop some point of the readings or of another text from the Ordinary or from the Proper of the Mass of the day, and take into account the mystery being celebrated and the needs proper to the listeners.\textsuperscript{34}

42. There must be a homily [homilia] on Sundays and holy days of obligation at all Masses that are celebrated with a congregation; it may not be omitted without a serious reason. It is recommended on other days, especially on the weekdays of Advent, Lent, and the Easter season, as well as on other feasts and occasions when the people come to Church in large numbers.

The homily [homilia] should ordinarily be given by the priest celebrant.\textsuperscript{35}

97. The homily [homilia] is given at the chair or at the lecturn.\textsuperscript{36}

165. As a rule the principal celebrant or one of the concelebrants gives the homily [homiliam].\textsuperscript{37}

338. At the funeral Mass there should be as a rule a short homily [homilia], but never a eulogy of any kind. The homily [homilia] is also recommended at other Masses for the dead celebrated with a congregation.\textsuperscript{38}

\textit{IGRM} 9, 41 and 42 affirm that the homily is an integral part of the liturgy from \textit{SC} 35.

Further, the homily expands the Liturgy of the Word by providing “a living commentary on the word” that “increases the word’s effectiveness.” The \textit{IGRM} 1970 further states that “God is speaking to his people” in the homily and affirms Christ’s presence through the homily. It also

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., no. 41: Homilia est pars liturgiae et valde commendatur: est enim ad nutrimentum vitae christianaer necessaria. Sit oportet explicatio aut alicuius aspectus lectionum sacrae Scripturae aut alterius textus ex Ordinario vel Proprio Missae diei, ratione habita sive mysterii, quod celebratur, sive peculariorum necessitatum auditorum.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., no. 42: Diebus dominicis et festis de praеcepto homilia hабеatur in omnibus Missis, quae concurrеnte populo celebrantus; ceteris vero diebus commendatur, praesertim in feriis Adventus, Quadragesimae et temporis paschalis, necnon in aliis festis et occasionibus, in quibus populus frequentior ad ecclesiam convenit. Homilia de more ab ipso [sacerdote] celebrante habeatur.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., no. 97: Homilia fit ad sedem vel in ipso ambone.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., no. 165. Homiliam habet de more celebrans principalis, vel unus e concelebrantibus.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., no. 338: In Missis exsequialiibus hабеatur de more brevis homilia, secluso tamen quovis genere laudationis funebris. Homilia etiam in ceteris Missis defunctorum cum populo suadetur.
continues the language of nourishment in 33 and 41. Paragraph 42 is almost a direct quotation from \textit{CIC} 1917. It also specifies that the priest celebrant is the ordinary minister of the homily. Paragraph 97 specifies where the homily may be given with the first place given as the location of the presider throughout the rest of the Liturgy of the Word. Paragraph 165 repeats the presbyteral nature of the homily. Finally, paragraph 338 by the \textit{via negativa} shows that the homily is a specific type of public, liturgical discourse that needs to be respected.

The \textit{IGRM} 1970 is a good summary of the development of the nature of the liturgical homily. It is clear that the term \textit{homilia} has become the standard term for this liturgical unit in the post-Vatican Council II Church at this point. Several common elements have emerged in many of the magisterial documents that we have seen. First, the homily is a part of the Mass and other liturgies that connects the readings from Scripture to the sacrament being celebrated and to the lives of the people in the assembly. Second, it is a part of the Church’s ministry of preaching that is done by a member of the clergy, but is most appropriately done by the one presiding at the sacrament. Third, because of its nature as part of the liturgy, the homily belongs most especially to Masses and other liturgies with a large congregation, especially Sundays and holy days of obligation. Finally, the homily, as an element of the Liturgy of the Word, has the general characteristics of the Liturgy of the Word.

On 5 September 1970 the Congregation issued the \textit{Third Instruction on the Correct Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy}. Regarding the homily, the Instruction further develops the nature of the homily by identifying a two-fold purpose.

2. Sacred Scripture, above all the texts used in the liturgical assembly, enjoys a special dignity: in the readings, God speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, announces the good news of the gospel. Therefore:
(a) The liturgy of the Word should be conducted with the greatest reverence. Other readings, from past or present, sacred or profane authors, may never be substituted for the word of God. The purpose of the homily [homiliae] is to explain the readings and make them relevant for the present day. The homily [ipsa] is the task of the priest; the faithful should refrain from comments, dialogue, etc. It is not permissible to have only one reading.

(b) The Liturgy of the Word prepares for and leads into the Liturgy of the Eucharist, forming with it one act of worship. The two parts should not be celebrated separately at different times or in different places.

Special rules for the integrating of other liturgical action or part of the divine office in the Liturgy of the Word will be indicated in the relative liturgical books. 39

The Instruction reiterates that the homily is intimately connected to the readings as it explains the Scripture that makes it pertinent to contemporary society. It also asserts that the homily is a part of the Liturgy of the Word, and thus it, too, “prepares for and leads into the Liturgy of the Eucharist.” One cannot understand the homily apart from the immediate context of the Liturgy of the Word and the greater context of the Mass.

The Sacred Congregation for Clergy on 11 April 1971 issued the General Catechetical Directory. The Directory demonstrates a tension in the purpose of the homily that will become

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a) Liturgia verbi summa cura excolenda est. Numquam licet pro ea alias lectiones substituere, sive a sacris sive a profanis auctoribus, veteribus vel recentioribus, depromptas. Homiliae finis est nuntiatum Dei verbum fidelibus explanare et ad huius aetatis sensum accommodare. Ipsa proinde ad sacerdotem spectat; christifideles vero notationibus, dialogis, hisque similibus sese abstineant. Non licet unam tantummodo lectionem proferre.

b) Liturgia verbi eucharisticam liturgiam praeparat et ad eam ducit, quacum unum actum cultus efficit. Quapropter alteram ab altera separare non licet, casque diverso tempore et loco celebrare.

Ad aliquam vero actionem liturgicam vel divini Officii partem, quae Missam praecedit, cum liturgia verbi apte coniungendam, peculiare normae, libris liturgicis statutaes quatenus opus sit, consulent.
more prominent in later decades. The Directory discusses the homily in two paragraphs in its program of catechesis:

17. The ministry of the word takes many forms, catechesis being one of them; the forms vary because conditions for the exercise of the ministry vary or because different objectives are envisaged. Thus, there is evangelization, or missionary preaching, whose objective is to implant the faith for the first times (see CD 11, 13; AG 6, 13), thereby securing the acceptance of the word of God.

There follows catechesis: ‘Its function is to develop in man a living, explicit and active faith, enlightened by doctrine.’ (CD 14)

Next comes liturgy, in the context of a liturgical celebration, especially a eucharistic celebration (e.g. the homily [homilia]) (see SC 33, 52: Inter oecumenici, 54)

Lastly, there is theology, the systematic treatment and scientific investigation of the truths of faith.

The distinction between these different forms [of catechesis] is important for our purposes, each of them being subject to its own laws. In the concrete reality of pastoral ministry, however, they are closely connected.

All that has been said up to now, therefore, about the ministry of the word in general applies also to catechesis.

115. Ecclesiastical authorities must need to be persuaded that the formation of catechists is a matter of greatest importance.

This formation is intended for all catechists (see AG 17, 26), lay and religious, for Christian parents, who will find it very helpful when involved in preliminary and occasional catechesis that falls to them. It is intended for deacons

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40 The brackets indicate that the “of catechesis” is not found in the Latin text, but is an interpolation on the part of the translator. See the Latin text below.


Habetur forma quae evangelizatio nuncupatur, seu praedicatio missionaria, quae finem habet fidelis initialiter excitandi, ita ut ab hominibus adhaesio verbo Dei habeatur.

Sequitur forma catechetica, « quae eo tendit ut in hominibus fides, per doctrinam illustrata, viva fiat atque explicita et operosa ».

Accedit forma liturgica, intra ambitum celebrationis liturgicae, praeertim eucharisticae (v.g. homilia).

Est denique forma theologica, scilicet pertractatio systematica et investigatio scientifica veritatum fidei.

Ad nostrum propositum quod attinet, momentum habet distinctio harum formarum, quae propriis reguntur legibus. Eaedem tamen, in concreta ministerii pastoralis realitate, inter se arce colligantur.

Proinde omnia, quae hucusque de ministerio verbi generali ratione spectato dicta sunt, ad catechesim quoque applicanda sunt.
and especially for priests. For “in virtue of the sacrament of orders, after the image of Christ, the supreme and eternal priest (see Heb. 5:1-10; 7:24; 9:11-28), they are consecrated in order to preach the gospel and shepherd the faithful as well as to celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament.” (LG 28) In fact, in every parish it is to the priests that the preaching of the word of God is principally entrusted. They are obliged to open the treasures of sacred scripture to the faithful and, through the liturgical year, to expound the mysteries of faith and the norms of the Christian life in homilies [homiliis] (see SC 51, 52). Hence it is of the greatest importance that students in seminaries and scholasticiates be given a sound grounding in catechetics and that this be completed by the ongoing formation mentioned above (see n. 110). ...

The Sacred Congregation for the Clergy did not intend in its Directory to define the liturgical unit of the homily, or even to mine the riches of the liturgy. Its purpose is to outline a program of catechesis for the whole Church. With this acknowledged, the Directory itself sees the liturgy, and with it, the homily, as a means of the Church’s ministry of the Word. It acknowledges that there are different forms (forma) that this ministry takes: missionary preaching, catechetical preaching, liturgical preaching, and theological preaching. Liturgical preaching, then, is distinct from but closely connected to the other forms of the ministry of the Word.

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42 Ibid., no. 115: Necessarium est ut auctoritates ecclesiasticæ aestiment formationem catechistarum tamquam munus maximi momenti. Haec formatio dirigitur ad omnes catechistas, tum laicos tum religiosos, et etiam ad parentes christianos, qui exinde validum auxilium sumere possunt ad peragendum catechesim initialem et occasionalem, quae ad ipso pertinet. Dirigitur diaconis et, peculiari modo, presbyteris. Ii, enim, « vi sacramenti Ordinis, ad imaginem Christi, summi atque aeterni Sacerdotis ad Evangelium praedicandum fidelesque pascendos et ad divinum cultum celebrandum consecrantur, ut veri sacerdotes Novi Testamenti ». Reversa in singulis paroecis verbi Dei praedicatio maxime committitur coetui sacerdotum, qui tenentur thesauros sacrae scripturae christifidelibus aperire atque, per anni liturgici cursum, fidei mysteria et normas vitae christianae homiliis exponere. Quare magni momenti est ut accurata praeparatio catechetica in seminariis et scholasticatibus alumnis imperitiur, eademque postea praefata formatione permanenti perficiatur. ...
Paragraph 115 ties the purpose of liturgical preaching with catechesis, while maintaining its distinctive characteristics and purpose. It illustrates how the pastoral reality of the ministry of the word is not about keeping distinctions but about an interconnectedness of the forms of the ministry.

The Sacred Congregation for Bishops issued on 22 February 1973 *Ecclesiae imago*, the Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of the Bishops. Within this Directory there are three paragraphs that pertain to the liturgical homily.

57. As the bishop devotes himself to the task of preaching he is concerned not just about choosing arguments and having a good, elegant style, but he also speaks in a way that is filled with faith, redolent of the sacred scriptures, and expressive of pastoral love. His sermons [*sermonis*] are faithful to the mind of the Church and show an understanding of the many needs of modern man. He never forgets that it is his office — and the example of his own life lights the way — to proclaim the Gospel and make known to all men the greatness and the truth and the power of the Word of God (cf. 1 Cor 2:4) rather than make an academic exposé of some thesis.43

59. The special form of preaching for a community that is already evangelized is the homily [*homilia*] which the bishop gives at the celebration of the sacred liturgy, in a plain, familiar way suited to the understanding of all, as from the sacred text he recalls the wonderful works of God and the mysteries of Christ and instructs the faithful in the laws of Christian living.

Since the homily [*homilia*] comes after the sacred readings in the liturgy—which is the source and summit of the entire life of the Church (SC 10)—it excels all other forms of preaching and in a certain way embraces them, especially

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43 Sacred Congregation for Bishops, Directory *Ecclesiae imago*, 31 May 1973 [Not published in *AAS*]; ET: Benedictine Monks of the Seminary of Christ the King, trans., *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops* (Ottawa: Canadian Catholic Conference, 1974), no. 57: *Operi praedicationis incumbens, Episcopus non solum de argumentis eligendis curat, et de modo bene et concinne dicendi, sed etiam genere utitur sermonis fide imbuti, qui divinas litteras sapiat et pastoralem caritatem expromat, qui menti Ecclesiae adhaerat et plurimas hodierni hominis necessitates intellegat; numquam obliviscitur suum esse officium, luce suae vitae praeeunte, Evangelium proclamare et omnibus notam facere magnitudinem et veritatem et potentiam verbi Dei (cf. 1 Cor. 2, 4), non vero scholarum dissertationes elucubrare.*
catechizing. If the bishop himself can but rarely and with difficulty perform this
task of catechizing in a formal way, the homily \textit{homilia} does give him an
effective opportunity briefly and very pointedly to draw from the liturgy of the
day—unless pastoral reasons suggest something else—the principal truths of the
Christian faith.

That he may more easily move the hearts of the faithful and draw them to the
truth, the bishop should above all understand the mentality, customs, conditions,
dangers and prejudices of the individuals and groups to whom he speaks and he
should constantly adapt his method of teaching to their capacity, character and
needs so that each one may be able to draw water joyfully from the springs of
salvation (cf. Is 12:3) and the treasury of sacred doctrine.\textsuperscript{44}

64. Since the homily \textit{homilia} and other traditional forms of preaching are not
adequate for the needs of our times: if the national episcopal conference does not
draw up a unified preaching program for the whole country, the individual bishop
can do so for his own diocese, and this program is be followed in the religious
instruction of any group.

Therefore, after consulting theological and catechetical experts, the bishop
promotes, regulates and supervises the preaching in all the churches of his diocese
open to the public, even in those of religious, especially as regarding the
following:
A) The homily \textit{homiliam} should never be omitted at Masses on Sundays and
feasts where people are present (\textit{SC} 52) and also at nuptial and other ritual Masses
according to the rubrics (\textit{SC} 18). It is also highly recommended on weekdays of
Advent and Lent and paschaltide so that the paschal mystery of Christ re-

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., no. 59: Peculiaris praedicationis forma pro communitate iam evangelizata extat homilia, quam Episcopus
inter divinorum officiorum sollemnia sermone quidem plano, familiari et omnium adstantium captui accommodato,
pronuntiat e textu sacro mirabilia Dei ac mysteria Christi recolens et vitae christianae legibus fideles instituens.

Homilia, cum post lectionem divinam in actionibus liturgicis habitur, quae sunt omnis vitae Ecclesiae culmen et
fons, ceteris praedicationis formis praestat et quodammodo eas recipit, cathechesim praeertim. Quam, si Episcopus
raro vel difficilius ex professo per se ipse agere queat, homilia efficaciter praebet, summas veritatem christianae e
liturgia diei, nisi ratio pastoralis alius suadeat, breviter et pressius expromens.

Quo vero facilius animi attingantur et ad veritatem alliciantur, debet Episcopus apprime cognoscere mentem,
consuetudines, adiuncta, pericula, praejudicatas opiniones personarum ac coetuum quos alloquitur, et formam sui
magisterii eorum captui, ingenio, necessitatibus indesimenter aptare ita ut unusquisque de fontibus
salutis (cf. Is. 12, 3) et sacrae doctrinae thesauro possit cum gaudio haurire.
presented in the Eucharist may become known to all and celebrated with faith.

While paragraph 57 is not explicitly about the liturgical homily, its identification of the primary qualities of the preaching of bishops is relevant to the discussion of the liturgical homily. First, framed in the *via negativa*, preaching, including the liturgical homily, has rhetorical qualities, including strong arguments and a good, elegant style. Second, the homily is “filled with faith, redolent of the sacred scriptures, and expressive of pastoral love.” Third, it connects the homily with the “mind of the Church” while being attentive to the needs of the assembly.

Paragraph 59 reiterates many of the elements that previous conciliar and curial documents have contained. The liturgical homily differs from evangelical preaching in that it is meant, as part of the Church’s liturgy, for those who have already heard the initial proclamation of the Gospel. It recalls the “wonderful works of God and mysteries of Christ” and teaches about how to live as a disciple of Christ. Recalling the distinctions and interconnection of the types of preaching seen above, the Directory sees the homily as incorporating a catechetical aim that is rooted in “the liturgy of the day.” And it certainly emphasizes the relevant and contemporary style of the preaching which always seeks to lead people deeper into the Paschal Mystery.

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45 Ibid., no. 64: Cum homilia aliaeque traditae praedicationis formae nostris temporibus iam non censeantur sufficere, Episcopus, nisi Conferentia episcopalis nationalis unicam generalem praedicationis rationem pro toto territorio paraverit, ipse pro sua dioecesi c endemic conficere potest, quam religiosa cuiusvis coetus institutio sequatur. Episcopus itaque, auditis peritis de re theologica et catechetica, in omnibus suae dioeceseos ecclesiis, etiam religiosorum, populo patentibus, praedicationem promovet et ordinat et moderatur, praesertim quod attinet: a) ad homiliam, quae numquam omittenda est in Missis quae diebus dominicis et festis concurrente populo celebratur necon in Missa matrimonii et ceteris Missis ritualibus iuxta rubricas, et insuper valde commendatur in feriis adventus, quadragesimae et paschae, ut Christi paschale mysterium in Eucharistia repraesentatum omnibus innotescat et in fide celebretur; ...
The last paragraph above, number 64, grounds the bishop’s responsibility for the liturgical homilies that are preached in his diocese in his role as the one responsible for the liturgy of the Church while it acknowledges that the homily, or any other form of preaching, itself is not adequate to meet the catechetical needs of the community.

The Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship issued *Eucharistiae Participationem*, a circular letter on the Eucharistic Prayers, on 27 April 1973. While the Congregation’s intention is not to treat the Liturgy of the Word, paragraph 15 includes one important reference to the liturgical homily:

15. Next comes the homily [*homilia*], which is “part of the liturgy itself.” In the homily the word of God which has been proclaimed in the liturgical assembly is explained to the community present, taking into account its capacity and way of life, and in the context of the actual celebration.\(^{46}\)

This final curial document of the Vatican Council II era of liturgical reform and its implementation reiterates the fundamental elements of the definition of the liturgical homily: it is a liturgical element where the Scriptures utilized in the liturgy of the day are explained to the community in a relevant and understandable manner to lead the assembly into a deeper participation in the liturgical action.

**Post-conciliar Developments**

The year 1975 marks the end of the conciliar era of liturgical reform and implementation and the beginning of the post-conciliar developments of the liturgy. The *editio typica* for each sacrament had been promulgated by 1974, and the second edition of the *Roman Missal* appeared in 1975. On 11 July 1975, Pope Paul VI reorganized the curia and merged the CSDW with the Sacred Congregation for the Disciple of the Sacraments to form the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship. In this next section, the papal documents will take greater prominence while the curial documents will continue to be issued and episcopal conference documents will emerge in regard to the Sunday homily.

1. The Homily in Papal Teachings

*Pope Paul VI*

The Third Ordinary Synod of Bishops met in Rome from 27 September to 26 October 1974 to discuss the role of evangelization in the modern world. On 8 December 1975, Pope Paul VI issued his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (On Evangelization in the Modern World). In this Apostolic Exhortation, the pope speaks about the liturgical homily in one paragraph:

43. This evangelizing preaching takes on many forms, and zeal will inspire the reshaping of them almost indefinitely. In fact there are innumerable events in life and human situations which offer the opportunity for a discreet but incisive statement of what the Lord has to say in this or that particular circumstance. It suffices to have true spiritual sensitivity for reading God’s message in events. But at a time when the liturgy renewed by the Council has given greatly increased value to the Liturgy of the Word, it would be a mistake not to see in the homily [*homiliam*] an important and adaptable instrument of evangelization. Of course it
is necessary to know and put to good use the exigencies and the possibilities of the homily \([\text{homiliae}]\), so that it can acquire all its pastoral effectiveness. But above all it is necessary to be convinced of this and to devote oneself to it with love. This preaching, inserted in a unique way into the Eucharistic celebration, from which it receives special force and vigor, certainly has a particular role in evangelization, to the extent that it expresses the profound faith of the sacred minister and impregnated with love. The faithful assembled as a Paschal Church, celebrating the feast of the Lord present in their midst, expect much from this preaching, and will greatly benefit from it provided that it is simple, clear, direct, well-adapted, profoundly dependent on Gospel teaching and faithful to the Magisterium, animated by a balanced apostolic ardor coming from its own characteristic nature, full of hope, fostering belief, and productive of peace and unity. Many parochial or other communities live and are held together thanks to the Sunday homily \([\text{homiliam}]\), when it possesses these qualities.

Let us add that, thanks to the same liturgical renewal, the Eucharistic celebration is not the only appropriate moment for the homily \([\text{homiliae}]\). The homily \([\text{Haec}]\) has a place and must not be neglected in the celebration of all the Sacraments at para-liturgies, and in assemblies of the faithful. It will always be a privileged occasion for communicating the Word of the Lord.47

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Huc insuper accedit quod, propter eandem sacrae liturgiae instaurationem, non in eucharistica tantummodo celebratione tempus adest habendae homiliae conveniens. Haec enim suum locum obtinet, neque proinde est neglegenda in Sacramentis omnibus celebrandis, atque etiam in caeremoniis liturgiae adsimilioribus peragendis, cum fideles una simul conveniunt. Semper eadem ad Verbum Domini annuntiandum opportunitas maxime singularis erit.
Pope Paul VI sees the liturgical homily as “an instrument” of evangelization as it encompasses all forms of preaching. The Holy Father adds a new dimension that the previous period did not include in this type of preaching: an expression of the “profound faith of the minister.” Previously, faith has always been used in relationship to the creedal statements of the liturgy or the divine gift to the assembly. Pope Paul VI is developing the notion that the liturgical homily, as a tool of evangelization, witnesses to the faith of the one speaking as well as his profound love for the people. Similarly, as an implement of the evangelical mission of the Church, the liturgical homily must be rooted in both Gospel and Magisterium.

The Holy Father also expands the notion of the liturgical homily to celebrations of all the Sacraments, even those done outside of the Mass.

**Pope John Paul II**

The Fourth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops met to discuss catechesis during the final year of Paul VI’s pontificate from 30 September to 29 October 1977. Pope Paul died on 6 August 1978, and the task of writing the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation fell to his second successor, Pope John Paul II. On October 16, 1979, the Holy Father issued *Catechesi Tradendae* (On Catechesis in our Time), on the first anniversary of his election as pope. In regard to the liturgical homily, Pope John Paul II wrote:

48. This remark is even more valid for the catechesis given in the setting of the liturgy especially at the Eucharistic assembly. Respecting the specific nature and proper cadence of this setting, the homily [homilia] takes up again the journey of faith put forward by catechesis, and brings it to its natural fulfillment. At the same time it encourages the Lord’s disciples to begin anew each day their spiritual journey in truth, adoration and thanksgiving. Accordingly, one can say that catechetical teaching too finds its source and fulfillment in the Eucharist,
within the whole circle of the liturgical year. Preaching, centered upon the Bible texts, must then in its own way make it possible to familiarize the faithful with the whole of the mysteries of the faith and with the norms of Christian living. Much attention must be given to the homily [homiliae]: it should be neither too long nor too short; it should always be carefully prepared, rich in substance and adapted to the hearers and reserved to ordained ministers. The homily should have its place not only in every Sunday and feast-day Eucharist, but also in the celebrations of baptisms, penitential liturgies, marriages and funerals. This is one of the benefits of the liturgical renewal.48

Given the different focus of the synod, it is not surprising that Pope John Paul II would emphasize the catechetical nature of the liturgical homily. In this Exhortation on catechesis, the Pope maintains the homily’s intimate connection with the Scriptural readings of the liturgy while repeating the homily’s connection with the liturgical season and with particular liturgies.

The next year, John Paul II wrote the Letter Domincae Cenae (On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist) to the bishops of the world published on Holy Thursday (though it was promulgated on the First Sunday of Lent, 24 February 1980).49 The homily in this letter appears in the section “The Table of the Word of God.”

48 John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in our Time), 16 October 1979 [AAS 71 (1979): 1277-1340]; ET: Washington, DC: USCC, 1980], no. 49: Haec animadversio ei catechesi etiam magis convenit, quae in Liturgiae fit celebratione, maxime in eucharisticis coetibus; in quibus sane, ratione ducta tum indolis peculiaris tum cursus sacrorum huiusmodi, homilia iter fidei resumit, quod catechesis proposuit, idque ad naturalem sibi terminum adducit; parit er discipulos Domini movet, ut iter spirituale in veritate, in adoratione gratiarumque actione cotidie suscipiant. Si res ita intellegatur, affirmari potest ipsam etiam paedagogiam catecheticae in Eucharistia initium atque perfectionem habere per totum nempe circulum anni liturgici.

Praedicatio sacra vero, in textibus biblicis innixa, id, sua quidem ratione, efficit, ut Christifideles universa mysteria fidei atque normas christianae vitae satius altiusque cognoscant. Homiliae summa est diligentia adhibenda, atque curandum, ne nimirum sit nee nimir brevis, ut accurate semper praeparetur, sententia sit copiosa et apta auditibus, atque sacrorum administris reservetur. Locique suum in omnium eucharistica Liturgia dominicis ac festis diebus de praecepto debet obtinere, atque etiam in celebratione baptismatis ac ritus paenitentialis, matrimonii et funeris. Hoc beneficiorum unum est liturgicae renovationis.

10. We are well aware that from the earliest times the celebration of the Eucharist has been linked not only with prayer but also with the reading of Sacred Scripture and with singing by the whole assembly. As a result, it has long been possible to apply to the Mass the comparison, made by the Fathers, with the two tables, at which the Church prepares for her children the word of God and the Eucharist, that is, the bread of the Lord. We must therefore go back to the first part of the sacred mystery, the part that at present is most often called the Liturgy of the Word, and devote some attention to it.

The reading of the passages of Sacred Scripture chosen for each day has been subjected by the Council to new criteria and requirements. As a result of these norms of the Council a new collection of readings has been made, in which there has been applied to some extent the principle of continuity of texts and the struggle against the idea of discontinuity in the reading of Sacred Scripture.

Facultates, quas trac in re attulit renovatio post Concilium inducta, ita crebrius adhibentur ut testes nos participes quos germanae celebrationis verbi Dei. Numerus etiam crescit eorum qui illis in celebrationibus partes agunt actus. Nascuntur manipuli lectorum et cantorum, quin saepius etiam “scholae cantorum”, virorum et mulierum, qui magno cum studio se huic devovent operi.

Verbum Dei, Sacra nempe Scriptura, apud multas Christianorum communitates iam nova coepit vigescere vita. Ad liturgiam congregati fideles cantando praeparantur ad Evangelium audientur, quod consentanea nuntiatur cum pietate curae.

His omnibus permagna cum aestimatione et grata mente cognitis ac perceptis, haud tamen oblivisci licet renovatem plenam aliis semper necessitates inferre. Quae reapse consistunt novo in sensu officii circa verbum Dei variis linguarum per liturgiam transmittis; id quod congruit certe cum natura universalis ipsiusque Evangelio propositis finibus. Idem vero illud officium tangit etiam executionem singularum actionum liturgicarum lectionis vel cantus, ubi obtemperandum pariter est artis principiis.

Ut autem actiones illae a quovis ficto arceantur artificio, demonstretur in eis recesse est talis facultas, simplicita, simulque talis dignitas ut ex ipsa legendi vel canendi ratione eluceat indoles sacri textus properant.

Quocirca necessitates istae, quae ex renovato officii sensu efflueunt circa verbum Dei in liturgia, altius descendent immo pervadunt ad interiorem affectionem, qua ministri verbi munus suum inter liturgicam congregacionem explent. Tandem respicit illud officium selectionem textuum. Haec iam legitima Ecclesiae autonomitate facta est, quae etiam casus praeclavit in quibus fas est aptiores deligi locos peculiari cuidam occasione. Meminerint autem semper omnes intrar in textus Missae Lectionum indigent possis solum Dei verbum. Pro Sacrae enim Scripturae usu minime potest aliorum textuum recitatio substituti, quantumvis magna bona religiosa et moralia illi forsitan prae se ferant. Possunt contra tales lectiones utilissime in homilias adhiberi. Nam homiliae reapse perquam idonea est ad illos textuum usum, dummodo necessariis doctrinae postulatis et conditionibus respondant, quoniam ipsa homiliae natura eos spectat, ut, praetar alia, illuminet convenientiam inter divinam revelatamque sapientiam ac praestabilem, humanam cogitationem, quae variis viis quaerit veritatem.
principle of making all the sacred books accessible. The insertion of the Psalms with responses into the liturgy makes the participants familiar with the great wealth of Old Testament prayer and poetry. The fact that these texts are read and sung in the vernacular enables everyone to participate with fuller understanding.

…

The possibilities that the post-conciliar renewal has introduced in this respect are indeed often utilized so as to make us witnesses of and sharers in the authentic celebration of the Word of God. There is also an increase in the number of people taking an active part in this celebration. Groups of readers and cantors, and still more often choirs of men or women, are being set up and are devoting themselves with great enthusiasm to this aspect. The Word of God, Sacred Scripture, is beginning to take on new life in many Christian communities. The faithful gathered for the liturgy prepare with song for listening to the Gospel, which is proclaimed with the devotion and love due to it.

All this is noted with great esteem and gratitude, but it must not be forgotten that complete renewal makes yet other demands. These demands consist in a new sense of responsibility towards the Word of God transmitted through the liturgy in various languages, something that is certainly in keeping with the universality of the Gospel and its purposes. The same sense of responsibility also involves the performance of the corresponding liturgical actions (reading or singing), which must accord with the principles of art. To preserve these actions from all artificiality, they should express such capacity, simplicity and dignity as to highlight the special character of the sacred text, even by the very manner of reading or singing.

Accordingly, these demands, which spring from a new responsibility for the Word of God in the liturgy, go yet deeper and concern the inner attitude with which the ministers of the Word perform their function in the liturgical assembly. This responsibility also concerns the choice of texts. The choice has already been made by the competent ecclesiastical authority, which has also made provision for the cases in which readings more suited to a particular situation may be chosen. Furthermore, it must always be remembered that only the Word of God can be used for Mass readings. The reading of Scripture cannot be replaced by the reading of other texts, however much they may be endowed with undoubted religious and moral values. On the other hand such texts can be used very profitably in the homily. Indeed the homily is supremely suitable for the use of such texts, provided that their content corresponds to the required conditions, since it is one of the tasks that belong to the nature of the homily to show the points of convergence between revealed divine wisdom and noble human thought seeking the truth by various paths.
In this Letter, John Paul II utilizes the image of the two tables for the bread of life found in the 1967 Instruction *Eucharisticum Mysticum* from the Sacred Congregation of Rites. The homily, as a part of the Liturgy of the Word, is to nourish the faithful. In doing so, he differentiates the nature of the homily “to show the points of convergence between revealed divine wisdom and noble human thought seeking the truth by various paths.”


**CHAPTER I. THE PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD**

Can. 762 Sacred ministers, among whose principal duties is the proclamation of the gospel of God to all, are to hold the function of preaching in esteem since the people of God are first brought together by the word of the living God, which it is certainly right to require from the mouth of priests.

Can. 763 Bishops have the right to preach the word of God everywhere, including in churches and oratories of religious institutes of pontifical right, unless the local bishop has expressly forbidden it in particular cases.

Can. 764 Without prejudice to the prescript of can. 765, presbyters and deacons possess the faculty of preaching everywhere; this faculty is to be exercised with at least the presumed consent of the rector of the church, unless the competent

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51 Ibid., CAPUT I DE VERBI DEI PRAEDICATIONE c. 762: Cum Dei populus primum coadunetur verbo Dei vivi, quod ex ore sacerdotum omnino fas est recipere, munus praedicationis magni habeant sacri ministri, inter quorum praecipua officia sit Evangelium Dei omnibus annuntiare.

52 Ibid., c. 763: Episcopis ius est ubique, non exclusis ecclesiis et oratoris institutorum religiosorum iuris pontificii, Dei verbum praedicare, nisi Episcopus loci in casibus particularibus expresse renuerit.
ordinary has restricted or taken away the faculty or particular law requires express permission.\footnote{53}\footnote{Ibid., c. 764: Salvo praescripto can. 765, facultate ubique praedicandi, de consensu saltem praesumpto rectoris ecclesiae exercendae, gaudent presbyteri et diaconi, nisi ab Ordinario competenti eadem facultas restricta aut sublata, aut lege particulari licentia expressa requiratur.}

Can. 765 Preaching to religious in their churches or oratories requires the permission of the superior competent according to the norm of the constitutions.\footnote{54}\footnote{Ibid., c. 765: Ad praedicandum religiosis in eorum ecclesiis vel oratoris licentia requiritur Superioris ad normam constitutionum competentis.}

Can. 766 Lay persons can be permitted to preach in a church or oratory, if necessity requires it in certain circumstances or it seems advantageous in particular cases, according to the prescripts of the conference of bishops and without prejudice to can. 767, §1.\footnote{55}\footnote{Ibid., c. 766: Ad praedicandum in ecclesia vel oratorio admitti possunt laici, si certis in adiunctis necessitas id requirat aut in casibus particularibus utilitas id suadeat, iuxta Episcoporum conferentiae praescripta, et salvo can. 767, § 1.}

Can. 767 §1. Among the forms of preaching, the homily, which is part of the liturgy itself and is reserved to a priest or deacon, is preeminent; in the homily the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian life are to be explained from the sacred text during the course of the liturgical year.

§2. A homily must be given at all Masses on Sundays and holy days of obligation which are celebrated with a congregation, and it cannot be omitted except for a grave cause.

§3. It is strongly recommended that if there is a sufficient congregation, a homily is to be given even at Masses celebrated during the week, especially during the time of Advent and Lent or on the occasion of some feast day or a sorrowful event.

§4. It is for the pastor or rector of a church to take care that these prescripts are observed conscientiously.\footnote{56}\footnote{Ibid., c. 767: § 1. Inter praedicationis formas eminet homilia, quae est pars ipsius liturgiae et sacerdoti aut diacono reservatur; in eadem per anni liturgici cursum ex textus sacro fidei mysteria et normae vitae christianae exponantur.}

Can. 768 §1. Those who proclaim the divine word are to propose first of all to the Christian faithful those things which one must believe and do for the glory of God and the salvation of humanity.

§2. They are also to impart to the faithful the doctrine which the magisterium of the Church sets forth concerning the dignity and freedom of the human person,
the unity and stability of the family and its duties, the obligations which people have from being joined together in society, and the ordering of temporal affairs according to the plan established by God.\textsuperscript{57}

Can. 769 Christian doctrine is to be set forth in a way accommodated to the condition of the listeners and in a manner adapted to the needs of the times.\textsuperscript{58}

Can. 772 §1. In the exercise of preaching, moreover, all are to observe the norms issued by the diocesan bishop.

§2. In giving a radio or television talk on Christian doctrine, the prescripts established by the conference of bishops are to be observed.\textsuperscript{59}

The \textit{CIC} 1983 summarizes much of what has already been seen in \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium} and the documents of implementation from the conciliar era. It affirms the prominence and placement of the homily during the liturgy and the liturgical seasons, the ordained minister as the proper minister of the homily and the need for an accommodation to the needs of the assembly. The topic of the homily focuses upon the mysteries of salvation using the Scriptures as a guide which can include teaching and doctrine laid out by the Magisterium.

The first canon, 762, provides a new theological insight into the purpose and role of the homily within the liturgy. The homily, as a form of preaching and a proclamation of the Word of God, is meant to foster communion since the “people of God are first brought together by the word of the living God.”

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., c. 768: § 1. Divini verbi praecones christifidelibus imprimis proponant, quae ad Dei glori
dumque salutem credere et facere oportet.
\textsuperscript{58} §2. Impertiant quoque fidelibus doctrinam, quam Ecclesiae magisterium proponit de personae humanae dignitate et libertate, de familiae unitate et stabilitate eiusque munis, de obligationibus quae ad homines in societate coniunctos pertinent, necnon de rebus temporalibus iuxta ordinem a Deo statutum componendis.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., c. 769: Doctrina christiana proponatur modo auditorum condicioni accommodato atque ratione temporum necessitatibus aptata.
\end{flushright}
On 4 December 1988, John Paul II issued the Apostolic Letter *Vicesimus Quintus Annus* for the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the conciliar Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the Sacred Liturgy. In the Apostolic Letter, the Pope said the following in relation to the homily:

7. In order to reenact his Paschal Mystery, Christ is ever present in his Church, especially in liturgical celebrations. Hence the Liturgy is the privileged place for the encounter of Christians with God and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ (cf Jn 17:3).

Christ is present in the Church assembled at prayer in his name. It is this fact which gives such a unique character to the Christian assembly with the consequent duties not only of brotherly welcome but also of forgiveness (cf Mt 5:23-24), and of dignity of behaviour, gesture and song.

Christ is present and acts in the person of the ordained minister who celebrates. The priest is not merely entrusted with a function, but in virtue of the Ordination received he has been consecrated to act “in persona Christi.” To this consecration there must be a corresponding disposition, both inward and outward, also reflected in liturgical vestments, in the place which he occupies and in the word which he utters.

Christ is present in his word as proclaimed in the assembly and which, commented upon in the homily [*homilia*], is to be listened to in faith and assimilated in prayer. All this must derive from the dignity of the book and of the place appointed for the proclamation of the word of God, and from the attitude of the reader, based upon an awareness of the fact that the reader is the spokesman of God before his or her brothers and sisters.

Christ is present and acts by the power of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments and, in a special and preeminent fashion (*sublimiori modo*), in the Sacrifice of the Mass under the Eucharistic Species, also when these are reserved in the tabernacle apart from the celebration with a view to Communion of the sick and adoration by the faithful. With regard to this real and mysterious presence, it is the duty of pastors

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to recall frequently in their catechetical instruction the teaching of the faith, a
teaching that the faithful must live out and that theologians are called upon to
expound. Faith in this presence of the Lord involves an outward sign of respect
towards the church, the holy place in which God manifests himself in mystery (cf
Ex. 3:5), especially during the celebration of the sacraments: holy things must
always be treated in a holy manner.\(^{61}\)

b) The reading of the Word of God.

8. The second principle is the presence of the word of God.

The Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium sets out likewise to restore a “more
abundant reading from Holy Scripture, one more varied and more appropriate.”
The basic reasons for this restoration is expressed both in the Constitution on the
Liturgy, namely, so that “the intimate link between rite and word” may be
manifested, and also in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, which
teaches: “The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures, just as she has
venerated the very body of the Lord, never ceasing above all in the Sacred Liturgy
to nourish herself on the bread of life and the table both of the word of God, and
of the Body of Christ, and to minister it to the faithful.”

\(^{61}\) Ibid., no. 7: Suae Christus adest Ecclesiae, in actibus potissimum liturgicis, ut paschale impleat mysterium suum
(Cfr. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 7; Pauli VI Mysterium Fidei, die 3 sept.1965: AAS 57 (1965) 762. 764). “Locus”
idecirca praecipuns Liturgia ipse est christifidelium congressionis cum Deo coque simul, quem ille misit, Iesu Christo
(Cfr. Io. 17, 3).

Ecclesiae Christus interest convocatae ac suo nomine precanti. Quod ipsum ecclesiae sive congregationis
christianae amplam constituit dignitatem una cum consequentibus inde postulatis benignitatis fraternae - ad
indulgentiam usque propulsae (Cfr. Matth. 5. 23-24) - neconon in habitu et gestu et cantu decoris.

In persona praeterea adest Christus agitque ordinati, qui celebrat, ministri (SACRAE CONGR. RITUUM Instr.
Eucharisticum Mysterium, 9, die 25 maii 1967: AAS 59 (1967) 547). Non munere dumtaxat aliquo est instruets,
verum ex perpecta Ordinatione consecratus ad agendum “in persona Christi”. Qua cum re concinere habitus interior
debet exteriorque etiam liturgicis in vestimentis, in loco quoque quem occupat ac quas proft vocibus.

Suo adstat Christus in verbo quod in congregacione praedicatur et in homilia explainatum exaudiri in fide debet in
preceque excipi. Quae omnia profluere oportet ex libri dignitate ac loci, unde Verbum Dei proclamatur, ex legentis
habitut, non sine conscientia eum interpretem esse Dei propriis coram fratribus.

Spiritus porro Sancti virtute adsidit et agit Christus in sacramentis ac singulares et sublimiore modo in Missae
Sacrificio eucharisticis sub speciebus (Cfr. PAULI VI Mysterium Fidei, die 3 sept. 1965: AAS 57 (1965) 763),
quotiens etiam in tabernaculo adservantur extra celebrationem ad infirmorum maxime communionem fideliumque
adorationem (Cfr. ibid., l.c., pp. 769-771). De qua arcana quidem at vera praesentia sacrorum est pastorum saepius
in catechetica institutione doctrinam fidei commemorare, de qua vivere fideles debent et in quam subtilius inquirere
theologi. In hanc Domini praesentiam fides secum infert externum erga Ecclesiam observantiae signum, locum
nempe sacram ubi suo se in mysterio Deus demonstrat (Cfr. Ex. 3, 5), praesertim cum sacramenta celebrantur:
semp et enim sunt sancte sancta tractanda.
Growth in liturgical life and consequently progress in Christian life cannot be achieved except by continually promoting among the faithful, and above all among priests, a “warm and living knowledge of Scripture.” The word of God is now better known in the Christian communities, but a true renewal sets further and ever new requirements: fidelity to the authentic meaning of the Scriptures which must never be lost from view, especially when the Scriptures are translated into different languages; the manner of proclaiming the word of God so that it may be perceived for what it is; the use of appropriate technical means; the interior disposition of the ministers of the Word so that they carry out properly their function in the liturgical assembly; careful preparation of the homily through study and meditation; effort on the part of the faithful to participate at the table of the word; a taste for prayer with the Psalms; a desire to discover Christ – like the disciples at Emmaus – at the table of the word and the bread. 

Guidelines for the renewal of liturgical life

10. From these principles are derived certain norms and guidelines which must govern the renewal of liturgical life. While the reform of the Liturgy desired by the Second Vatican Council, can be considered already in progress, the pastoral promotion of the Liturgy constitutes a permanent commitment to draw ever more abundantly from the riches of the Liturgy that vital force which spreads from Christ to the members of his Body which is the Church.

62 Ibid.

b) Verbi lectio divini

8. Secundum est principium praesentiae Verbi Dei. Praecipit insuper Constitutio “Sacrosanctum Concilium” ut “abundantior, varior et aptior lectio sacrae Scripturae instauretur” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 35). Cuius novationis ratio eadem declaratur in Constitutione liturgica, “ut clare appareat in Liturgia ritum et verbum intime coniungi” (Ibid.) itemque in dogmatica Constitutione de divina Revelatione: “Divinas Scripturas sicut et ipsum Corpus dominicum semper venerata est Ecclesia, cum, maxime in sacra Liturgia, non desinat ex mensa tam verbi Dei quam Corporis Christi panem vitae sumere atque fidelibus porrigere” (Dei Verbum, 21). Vitae vero liturgicae auctus proindeque christianae vitae progressus effici non poterunt nisi in fidelibus ipsis constanter et in sacerdotibus potissimum promovebitur “suavis et vius sacrae Scripturae affectus” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 24). Iam inter christianam communitatem plenius cognoscitur Verbum Dei; sed germana renovatio etiamnunc ac semper novas admittit necessitates: fidelitatem vero Scripturae sensui, qui ante oculos perpetuo est constitundus praesertim cum varias convertit in linguas; rationem Verbi Dei pronuntiandi, qua percipi id valeat uti tale; idoneorum instrumentorum technicorum usum; interiorem Verbi ministeriorum praeparationem, unde suo apud liturgicam congregationem officio bene fungantur (Cfr. IOANNIS PAULI PP. II Dominicae Cenae, 10); diligenter homiliae compositionem per studium ac meditationem; christifidelium impensam operam in Verbi communicanda mensa; gustatum ipsum precandi ex Psalmis necnon ferventem voluntatem Christum agnoscendi, perinde discipuli in Emmaus fecerunt, ad Verbi panisque mensam (Cfr. Liturgia Horarum, Feria II Hebdomadae IV, Oratio ad Vesperas).
Since the Liturgy is the exercise of the priesthood of Christ, it is necessary to keep ever alive the affirmation of the disciple faced with the mysterious presence of the Lord: “It is the Lord!” (Jn 21:7). Nothing of what we do in the Liturgy can appear more important than what in an unseen but real manner Christ accomplishes by the power of his Spirit. A faith alive in charity, adoration, praise of the Father and silent contemplation will always be the prime objective of liturgical and pastoral care.

Since the Liturgy is totally permeated by the word of God, any other word must be in harmony with it, above all in the homily, but also in the various interventions of the minister and in the hymns which are sung. No other reading may supplant the Biblical word, and the words of men must be at the service of the word of God without obscuring it. …

In this Apostolic Letter, the Pope makes several important statements about the liturgy, from which the homily derives its meaning. First, in reiterating the manner of ways in which Christ is present in the liturgy, and by explicitly naming the homily under Christ’s presence in the Word, he derives the meaning and dignity of the homily from the Word of God. Second, he emphasizes the notion that the homily “comments” on the Scriptures, or it is derived from the

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63 Ibid.

DIRECTORIA PRINCIPIA
AD LITURGICAE VITAE
TEMPERANDAM RENOVATIONEM

10. Superioribus ex praeceptis normae deducuntur quaedam ac moderatrices rationes quibus est vitae liturgicae gubernanda renovatio. Etsi enim a Concilio Vaticano Secundo decreta Liturgiae instauratio aestimari potest iam ad effectum perducta, pastoralis tamen Liturgiae industria secum perpetuum quoddam infert officium et opus, quo abundantius usque ex Liturgiae divitiis illa hauriatur virtus vitalis quae Corporis ipsius partibus quod est Ecclesia a Christo effunditur.

Quoniam Christi sacerdotii Liturgia perfunctio est, viva semper illa discipuli sustinatur recesse est adfirmatio coram arcana Christi prae sentia: “Dominus est!” (Io. 21, 7). Eorum autem omnium quae in Liturgia agimus nihil maioris esse potest momenti quam id quod invisibili at vero solidoque modo perificit Spiritus sui opera Christus. Vivens per caritatem fides et adoratio, laus Patris et contemplationis silentium prima numquam non ernunt proposita per pastora lem liturgicam sacramentalisque actionem adsequenda.

Quod Liturgia verbo Dei universa pervaditur, aliud quodlibet verbum oportet cum illo congruat, in primis homilia, verum cantus etiam ac monitiones. Non licet lectionem aliam ullam in verbi biblici locum suffici; hominum contra voces Verbo Dei famulari neque obscurre quasquam oportet.
liturgical biblical texts. Third, he repeats the image of being nourished at the table of the Word that we have seen above. Finally, he teaches that the words of people, which include the homily, are always at the service of the Word of God. Clearly, Pope John Paul II intends that the homily derives its nature and meaning in relationship to the biblical proclamation of the liturgy.

Pope John Paul II reflects further upon this relationship of the priest to the Word of God in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* issued on 25 March 1992. While the Exhortation itself does not mention the homily or even explicitly discuss preaching, it does provide insight into his teaching about the intrinsic relationship between the homily and the priest. Throughout the Exhortation, John Paul II speaks about the relationship between the priest and God and the priest and the Church’s bishops and laity. Three places represent his thought about the how the homily, a part of the Church’s liturgy and ministry of the Word, relates to the priest:

18. …Today, in particular, the pressing pastoral task of the new evangelization calls for the involvement of the entire People of God, and requires a new fervor, new methods and a new expression for the announcing and witnessing of the Gospel. This task demands priests who are deeply and fully immersed in the mystery of Christ and capable of embodying a new style of pastoral life, marked by a profound communion with the pope, the bishops and other priests, and a fruitful cooperation with the lay faithful, always respecting and fostering the different roles, charisms and ministries present within the ecclesial community.

“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk. 4:21). Let us listen once again to these words of Jesus in the light of the ministerial priesthood which we have presented in its nature and mission. The “today” to which Jesus refers, precisely because it belongs to and defines the “fullness of time,” the time of full and definitive salvation, indicates the time of the Church. The consecration

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and mission of Christ — “The Spirit of the Lord...has anointed me and has sent me to preach good news to the poor” (cf. Lk. 4:18) — are the living branch from which bud the consecration and mission of the Church, the “fullness” of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:23). In the rebirth of baptism, the Spirit of the Lord is poured out on all believers, consecrating them as a spiritual temple and a holy priesthood and sending them forth to make known the marvels of him who out of darkness has called them into his marvelous light (cf. 1 Pt. 2:4-10). The priest shares in Christ's consecration and mission in a specific and authoritative way, through the sacrament of holy orders, by virtue of which he is configured in his being to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd, and shares in the mission of “preaching the good news to the poor” in the name and person of Christ himself.

In their final message the synod fathers summarized briefly but eloquently the “truth,” or better the “mystery” and “gift” of the ministerial priesthood, when they stated: “We derive our identity ultimately from the love of the Father, we turn our gaze to the Son, sent by the Father as high priest and good shepherd. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are united sacramentally to him in the ministerial priesthood. Our priestly life and activity continue the life and activity of Christ himself. Here lies our identity, our true dignity, the source of our joy, the very basis of our life.”

65 Ibid., no. 18: Hodie praesertim urgentius illud munus pastorale novae evangelizationis, quod universum Dei Populum sollicitat novamque alacritatem, novas methodos, novam denique linguam pro Evangelio nuntiandi postulat, sacerdotes requirit qui radicitus atque integre in Christi mysterium immersi sint, capaces novum pastoralis vitae stilum in actum ponendi; qui et profunda communione cum Summo Pontifice, cum Episcopis, apud semetipsum eminat, et per fecundam cum chrisstitedibus laicis collaborationem signentur, reverentes nihilominus et provehentes quae, intra ecclesialem communitatem, diversa sunt vel munera, vel charismata, vel ministeria. «Hodie impleta est haec Scriptura in auribus vestris». Audiamus denuo oportet haec Iesu verba, sub luce tamen sacerdotii ministerialis, prout id ostendimus, natura praesertim in missione eius perspecta. Si Iesus «hodie» dicit, meminerimus etiam temporum plenitudinem designari, tempus nempe assequendae plenioris et definitivae salutis, id est, Ecclesiae tempus! Consecratio ergo et missio Christi: «Spiritus Domini... unxit me, evangelizare pauperibus, misit me praedicare... annum Domini acceptum», sunt radices vivae e quibus consecratio et missio Ecclesiae germinant, cum ipsa sit Christi «plenitudo»: per baptismi enim lavacrum Spiritus Domini super universos effunditur credentes, qui in id consecratur ut aedificatio fiant spiritualis per sacerdotium sanctum, quos eosdem mitit ut testes sint prodigiorum illius qui eos e tenebris eruit in admirabile lumen suum. Presbyter partem habet modo quodam specifico ac probabili, consecrationis et missionis Christi, id est per sacramentum ordinis, cuius vi ipse configuratur ad similitudinem Christi Capitis et Pastoris, missionem tum accipiens «nuntiandi pauperibus... annum Domini acceptum». Idque nomine et persona Ipsiusti Christi.

Patres synodales, in ipsorum ad Populum Dei nuntio, paucis quidem sed ditissimis verbis in compendium duxerunt sacerdotii ministerialis «veritatem», melius «mysterium» seu «donum», cum ita scripsissent: «Nostra identitas, tanquam ultimum fontem amorem habet Patris. Cum Filio, Summo Sacerdote et Bono Pastore ab eo misso, in sacerdotio ministeriali per Spiritus Sancti actionem sacramentaliter coniungimus. Vita et navitas sacerdotis est vita et navitatis ipsius Christi Sacerdotis continuatio: haec est nostra identitas, vera dignitas, gaudii fons, vitae certitudo». 
26. Thanks to the insightful teaching of the Second Vatican Council, we can grasp the conditions and demands, the manifestations and fruits of the intimate bond between the priest’s spiritual life and the exercise of his threefold ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral charity.

The priest is first of all a minister of the word of God. He is consecrated and sent forth to proclaim the good news of the kingdom to all, calling every person to the obedience of faith and leading believers to an ever increasing knowledge of and communion in the mystery of God, as revealed and communicated to us in Christ. For this reason, the priest himself ought first of all to develop a great personal familiarity with the word of God. Knowledge of its linguistic or exegetical aspects, though certainly necessary, is not enough. He needs to approach the word with a docile and prayerful heart so that it may deeply penetrate his thoughts and feelings and bring about a new outlook in him “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16) - such that his words and his choices and attitudes may become ever more a reflection, a proclamation and a witness to the Gospel. Only if he “abides” in the word will the priest become a perfect disciple of the Lord. Only then will he know the truth and be set truly free, overcoming every conditioning which is contrary or foreign to the Gospel (cf. Jn. 8:31-32). The priest ought to be the first “believer” in the word, while being fully aware that the words of his ministry are not “his,” but those of the One who sent him. He is not the master of the word, but its servant. He is not the sole possessor of the word; in its regard he is in debt to the People of God. Precisely because he can and does evangelize, the priest - like every other member of the Church - ought to grow in awareness that he himself is continually in need of being evangelized. He proclaims the word in his capacity as “minister,” as a sharer in the prophetic authority of Christ and the Church. As a result, in order that he himself may possess and give to the faithful the guarantee that he is transmitting the Gospel in its fullness, the priest is called to develop a special sensitivity, love and docility to the living tradition of the Church and to her magisterium. These are not foreign to the word, but serve its proper interpretation and preserve its authentic meaning.

It is above all in the celebration of the sacraments and in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours that the priest is called to live and witness to the deep unity between the exercise of his ministry and his spiritual life. The gift of grace offered to the Church becomes the principle of holiness and a call to sanctification. For the priest as well, the truly central place, both in his ministry and spiritual life, belongs to the Eucharist, since in it is contained “the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself our pasch and the living bread which gives life to men through his flesh - that flesh which is given life and gives
life through the Holy Spirit. Thus people are invited and led to offer themselves, their works and all creation with Christ.  

39. In carrying out her prophetic role, the Church feels herself irrevocably committed to the task of proclaiming and witnessing to the Christian meaning of vocation, or as we might say, to “the Gospel of vocation.” Here too, she feels the urgency of the apostle's exclamation: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16) This admonishment rings out especially for us who are pastors but, together with us, it touches all educators in the Church. Preaching and catechesis must always show their intrinsic vocational dimension: The word of God enlightens believers to appreciate life as a response to God's call and leads them to embrace in faith the gift of a personal vocation.

But all this, however important and even essential, is not enough: We need a “direct preaching on the mystery of vocation in the Church, on the value of the ministerial priesthood, on God's people.” A properly structured catechesis, directed to all the members of the Church, in addition to dissipating doubts and

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66 Ibid, no. 26: Percipere ex ditissima Concilii Vaticani II doctrina possumus quaenam sint condiciones, exigentiae, fructus ex intima relatione quae viget inter vitam spirituallem presbyteri et exercitium eius triplicis ministerii: Verbi, Sacramenti, servitii Caritatis.

Est enim imprimis sacerdos Verbi Dei administer, cum conveniret et missus sit ad nuntiandum hominibus universis Evangelium Regni, singulos ad oboedientiam fidei provocando et christifideles perducendo ad profundiorem in dies notitiam et communionem Dei mysterii, nobis in Christo revelati et communicati. Sacerdos ergo debeat properea usu et consuetudinem cum Dei verbo imprimere, cui non insufficiet linguistique dumtaxat et exegetici aspectus novisse, licet id quoque necessarium sit; accedendum enim ad Dei Verbum est, corde docilio et orante, ut sic possint ipsum cogitationes et affectum sacerdotis nuntiandi et instruendi mentis conformentem—«sensum Domini»—ita etiam presbyteri verba, immo optata et placita, sensim evadant per��idium Evangelii testimonium et nuntium. Tum enim, tantummodo si in Verbo «remaneat», poterit sacerdos fieri perfectus Domini discipulus; tum veritatem disceret; tum veritatem dicat. Verba sacerdotis, immo optata et placita, sensim evadant perlucidum Evangelii testimonium et nuntium. Tum enim, tantummodo si in Verbo «remaneat», poterit sacerdos fieri perfectus Domini discipulus; tum veritatem disceret; tum veritatem dicat.

Presbyteri est in Verbo «credentium» esse primum, bene scientem Verba sui ministerii non «sua» esse, sed illius qui eum misit. Cuius Verbi non ille dominus est, sed servus; neque unus possessor, sed debitor, coram Dei Populo. Quandoquidem autem sacerdos, qui de facto evangelizat, ut etiam evangelizare quaedam sit, ipse, sicut Ecclesia, conscius omnino esse debet necessitatis suae ipsius evangelizationis. Verbum ipse nuntiat, qua administret et, particeps propheticae auctoritatis Christi et Ecclesiae; propeterea, ut christifideles tutos faciat sese eis Evangelium integrum traditurum, vocatur sacerdos ad animi sensibilitatem augendam; omnem dilectionem colendam, peculiarem quandam promptitudinem exhibendam erga vivam Ecclesiae et Magisterii traditionem: quae nullatenus aliena a Verbo Dei sunt, sed illius rectam interpretationem novumque sensum custodiunt.

Maxime autem vocatur sacerdos ad testificandam profundam unitatem quae viget inter exercitium sui ministerii et vitam spirituallem, in celebrandis Sacramentis et in celebratione Liturgiae Horarum: donum gratiae, quod Ecclesiae offertur, vitae et sanctitatis principium et vocatio ad sanctificationem est. Ministerii et spiritualis vitae etiam sacerdoti locus centralis, tum in ministerio exercendo, tum in vita spirituali Eucharistiae est quoniam in ea «totum bonum spirituale Ecclesiae continetur, ipse scilicet Christus, Pascha nostrum panisque vivus per carmem suam Spiritu Sancto vivificatam et vivificantem, vitam praestans hominibus, qui ita invitantur et adducuntur ad se ipsos, suos labores cunctaque res creatas una cum ipso offerendos».
countering one-sided or distorted ideas about priestly ministry, will open believers’ hearts to expect the gift and create favorable conditions for the birth of new vocations. The time has come to speak courageously about priestly life as a priceless gift and a splendid and privileged form of Christian living. Educators, and priests in particular, should not be afraid to set forth explicitly and forcefully the priestly vocation as a real possibility for those young people who demonstrate the necessary gifts and talents. There should be no fear that one is thereby conditioning them or limiting their freedom; quite the contrary, a clear invitation, made at the right time, can be decisive in eliciting from young people a free and genuine response. Besides, the history of the Church and that of many individual priests whose vocations blossomed at a young age bear ample witness to how providential the presence and conversation of a priest can be: not only his words, but his very presence, a concrete and joyful witness which can raise questions and lead to decisions, even definitive ones.  

Given that the Pope is not directly addressing the liturgical homily, he makes three important points about the homily here. 1) As a ministry of the Word, the homily, as does all the

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67 Ibid., no. 39: Sentit Ecclesia in exercenda sua prophetica missione incumbendum sibi esse (idque opus nulli esse delegandum) in munus «Evangelii Nuntiandi», ista tamen ut simul testimonium quoque reddat de sensu christiano tante «vocationis»; velut si dicamus, eidem esse praedicandum quoddam «Evangelium vocationis». Atque in hoc impellitur Ecclesia eodem illo propriae missionis sensu quo Apostolus in hanc exclamationem ducitur: «Vae enim mihi est, si non evangelizavero». Id monitum nobis imprimis, pastoribus, resonat, et nobiscum ceteros in Ecclesiae educatores pertingit: nam tum catechesis tum praedicatio hunc vocationalem prospectum ante oculos habeant necessae est; Verbum enim Dei christifideles sic debet illuminare ut vitam respiciant tanquam responsionem Deo vocanti: quos eo ipso disponet ad acceptandum per fidem etiam donum personalis cuiusdam vocationis.

Quae omnia, licet summi sint momenti, non tamen sufficiunt: requiritur insuper «Praedicatio directa de mysterio vocationis in Ecclesia, de valore sacerdotii ministerialis et de eius instanti neecessitate pro Populo Dei». Catechesis ergo, organica atque universis Ecclesiae membris apte oblata, non dubia tantum dispellet et conceptus unilaterales vel erratos circa ministerium sacerdotale dissipabit, sed et corda christifidelium in exspectationem huius «doni» aperiet, et condicione eo ipso disponet excitandis vocationibus aptiores. Tempus adest ut strenue de vita sacerdotali sic loquamur ut ipsa veluti inaestimabili apparat valor, necnon splendens ac peculiaris vitae christianae optio. Ne paveant ergo educatores, praeertim si sacerdotes ipsi sunt, explicit et fortiter vocationem ad presbyteratum proponere tanquam veram possibilitatem iis omnibus iunioribus oblatam, quos dona et dotes iuxta rei mensuram habere constiterit. Neve metu deterrearunte ne eorumde libertatem condicionibus ac limitibus adstringant, cum oppositum potius constet, posse liberirrimum et authenticum responsum tum maxime valere cum, plena sub luce, vera rerum condicio suo tempore deliberanti patuerit. Ceterum ipsa Ecclesiae historia, sicut illa etiam singularum vocationum sacerdotali etiam in tennerrima aetate enatarum, tutissima testimonia prostant quam providenter verba et vita sacerdotis, necnon ipsius saepe proximitas vel vicinitas, deliberationi pondus addiderit: quippe per concretum et alacre vitae testimonium, et etiam silenter, removendis saepe iuverit interrogationibus, lucem et voluntatem abunde suppeditando.
preaching of the Church, derive its very power and nature from Christ himself. One only can preach the Word if one has regular and sustained contact with the Word. 2) As a part of the Eucharistic liturgy, the homily invites and leads people deeper into the self-offering of Christ and the mission of the Church. 3) As a ministry of the ordained priest, the homily is done by Christ himself sacramentally present in the liturgy.

On 23 November 2001, Pope John Paul II gave an address to the plenary session of the Congregation for the Clergy. In this address on the parish, the priest and the Eucharist, the Pope discussed the homily in the following:

4. Moreover, the parish is a privileged place to announce the Word of God. It includes a variety of forms and each of the faithful is called to take an active part, especially with the witness of a Christian life and the explicit proclamation of the Gospel to non-believers to lead them to the faith, or to believers to instruct them, confirm them and encourage them to a more fervent life. As for the priest, he “proclaims the word in his capacity as “minister”, as sharer in the prophetic authority of Christ and the Church” (Pastores dabo vobis, n. 26). To fulfill this ministry faithfully, corresponding to the gift received, he “ought first of all to develop a great personal familiarity with the Word of God” (ibid.). Even though he may be surpassed in the ability to speak by non-ordained members of the faithful, this would not reduce his being the sacramental representation of Christ the Head and Shepherd, and the effectiveness of his preaching derives from his identity. The parish community needs this kind of effectiveness, especially at the most characteristic moment of the proclamation of the Word by ordained ministers: for this reason the liturgical proclamation of the Gospel and the homily that follows it are both reserved to the priest.68  

68 John Paul II, Address to the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Clergy, 23 November 2001; original in Italian: 4. La parrocchia è inoltre luogo privilegiato dell’annuncio della Parola di Dio. Questo si articola in diverse forme e ciascun fedele è chiamato a prendervi parte attiva, specialmente con la testimonianza della vita cristiana e l’esplicita proclamazione del Vangelo, sia ai non credenti per condurli alla fede, sia a quanti sono già credenti per istruirli, confermarli ed indurli ad una vita più fervente. Quanto al sacerdote, egli «annuncia la Parola nella sua qualità di “ministro”, partecipe dell’autorità profetica di Cristo e della Chiesa» (Pastores dabo vobis, n. 26). E per assolvere fedelmente a questo ministero, corrispondendo al dono ricevuto, egli per «primo deve sviluppare una grande familiarità personale con la Parola di Dio» (ibid.). Quand’anche egli fosse superato da altri fedeli non ordinati nella facondia, ciò non cancellerebbe il suo essere ripresentazione sacramentale di Cristo Capo e Pastore, ed
In this address, the Pope further clarified two points: the nature of the homily and the rationale for its reservation to the clergy. As an announcement of the Word of God and an extension of the proclamation of the Gospel, the homily is meant to lead non-believers to faith and to instruct, confirm and encourage believers to a more fervent life of faith. We have seen this two-fold mission in various documents above. In regard to the reservation of the liturgical proclamation of the Gospel and the homily, the pope erroneously reserves them to the priest. In fact, as we have seen and will see below, the homily is reserved to the priest or deacon, and the deacon is the proper minister to proclaim the Gospel, but in his absence, it is done by a concelebrating priest or, lastly, the presider himself. If one understands the pope to be speaking about the typical parish Sunday Mass that involves a priest and the assembly, then the reason for this reservation becomes clear: the priest as the sacramental representation of Christ preaches the homily because of its intimate connection with the proclamation of the Gospel and with Christ’s multiple presences in the liturgy. Further, the Pope is stating that the focus of the liturgical homily is not upon the one preaching, but upon the whole liturgy and Christ who is both subject and object of the liturgy.
Finally, John Paul II issued the Apostolic Letter *Mane nobiscum Domine* for the Year of the Eucharist on 7 October 2004.\(^\text{69}\) This Apostolic Letter, the second to last of his papacy, inaugurated the Year of the Eucharist. In relation to the homily, the Pope said:

12. The Eucharist is light above all because at every Mass the liturgy of the Word of God precedes the liturgy of the Eucharist in the unity of the two “tables”, the table of the Word and the table of the Bread. This continuity is expressed in the Eucharistic discourse of Saint John's Gospel, where Jesus begins his teaching by speaking of the mystery of his person and then goes on to draw out its Eucharistic dimension: “My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed” (Jn 6:55). We know that this was troubling for most of his listeners, which led Peter to express the faith of the other Apostles and of the Church throughout history: “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68). In the account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Christ himself intervenes to show, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets”, how “all the Scriptures” point to the mystery of his person (cf. Lk 24:27). His words make the hearts of the disciples “burn” within them, drawing them out of the darkness of sorrow and despair, and awakening in them a desire to remain with him: “Stay with us, Lord” (cf. v. 29).\(^\text{70}\)

13. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, in the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, sought to make “the table of the word” offer the treasures of Scripture more fully to the faithful. Consequently they allowed the biblical readings of the liturgy to be proclaimed in a language understood by all. It is Christ himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church. The Council Fathers also urged the celebrant to treat the homily as part of the liturgy, aimed at explaining the word of God and drawing out its meaning for the Christian life.

\(^{69}\) John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mane nobiscum Domine* (For the Year of the Eucharist) 7 October 2004 [*AAS* 97 (2005), n. 4: 337-352; ET: (Washington: USCCB, 2005)].

opportunity for Christian communities to evaluate their progress in this area. It is not enough that the biblical passages are read in the vernacular, if they are not also proclaimed with the care, preparation, devout attention and meditative silence that enable the word of God to touch people's minds and hearts.  

Pope John Paul II once again returns to the theme of the two tables in this Apostolic Letter. He further illustrates it through the example of Jesus’ own preaching, from which one is able to conclude that the homily begins by speaking of the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ proclaimed in the Scriptures and then draws out the Eucharistic dimension of the mystery. He further clarifies that in accord with the conciliar teaching, the homily is meant to draw from the Scriptures the meaning of the Christian life.

John Paul II’s teachings on the liturgical homily were focused upon the image of the two “tables” of the Mass. He saw the homily as the continuation of the proclamation of the Gospel that seeks to place the truth of the Gospel within the contemporary context. In such a view, the Pope is careful to maintain the tradition of the homily belonging to the ministerial function of the priest (or deacon).

Pope Benedict XVI

71 Ibid., no. 13: Concilii Vaticani II Patres in Constitutione Sacrosanctum Concilium statuerunt ut «mensa Verbi» affatim fidelibus thesauros Scripturarum reseraret (Cfr n.51). Hac de causa consenserunt in Celebratione liturgica ut praesertim lecturae biblicae lingua omnibus intellegibili offerentur. Ecclesia enim Sacras legente Scripturas Christus loquitur ipse (Cfr ibid., 7). Eodem autem tempore celebranti homiliam commendaverunt ut eiisdem Liturgiae partem, eo spectantem ut Verbum Dei illuminaretur atque in vita christiana impleretur (Cfr ibid., 52). Quadragesimo post Concilium hoc anno, potest secum adferre Eucharistiae Annus opportunitatem praestantem ut de hac re se se interrogent christianae communitates. Non enim sufficit biblicos locos lingua intellegibili proclamari, si praedicatio non fit illa cura atque praevia praeparatione, illa auscultatione devota ac meditanti silentio, quae omnino necessaria sunt ut vitam hominum Verbum Dei tangat eamque collustret.
Pope Benedict XVI treated the liturgical homily explicitly in two of his post-synodal Apostolic Exhortations. Each Exhortation has had a specific paragraph devoted to the homily in relationship to the liturgy.

The eleventh ordinary general assembly of the Synod of Bishops met in Rome from 3 October to 23 October 2005 to discuss “The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church.” On 22 February 2007, Pope Benedict issued the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis on the Eucharist. In the section on the homily, the pope said:

The homily [Homilia]

46. Given the importance of the word of God, the quality of homilies [homiliae] needs to be improved. The homily [ipsa] is “part of the liturgical action,” and is meant to foster a deeper understanding of the word of God, so that it can bear fruit in the lives of the faithful. Hence ordained ministers must “prepare the homily [homiliam] carefully, based on an adequate knowledge of Sacred Scripture.”

Generic and abstract homilies [homiliae] should be avoided. In particular, I ask these ministers to preach in such a way that the homily [homilia] closely relates the proclamation of the word of God to the sacramental celebration and the life of the community, so that the word of God truly becomes the Church’s vital nourishment and support. The catechetical and paraenetic aim of the homily [homiliae] should not be forgotten. During the course of the liturgical year it is appropriate to offer the faithful, prudently and on the basis of the three-year lectionary, “thematic” homilies [homilias] treating the great themes of the Christian faith, on the basis of what has been authoritatively proposed by the Magisterium in the four “pillars” of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the recent Compendium, namely: the profession of faith, the celebration of the Christian mystery, life in Christ and Christian prayer.  

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73 Ibid.

Homilia

46. Cum Dei Verbum conspicuum obtineat locum, necessitas exsistit meliorem efficiendi homiliae qualitatem. Ipsa enim « est pars actionis liturgicae »; (139) minus habet fovendi pleniorem intellecum efficaciamque Verbi Dei
Pope Benedict continues what the Council, his predecessors and the Roman Congregations have said in the documents above about the homily while emphasizing its continued need for renewal. The homily is meant to help the faithful better understand God’s revelation so that it may be applied to their lives. This is both a catechetical and evangelical understanding of the homily. The pope also emphasizes the liturgical nature of the homily by iterating its connection to the celebration of the sacraments. He also weaves the metaphor of the Word as bread that nourishes the Church.

The twelfth ordinary general assembly of the Synod of Bishops met at the Vatican from 5 to 28 October 2008 on The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. In his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* issued on 30 September 2010, Pope Benedict wrote once again about the importance of the homily for the life of the Church.

**The importance of the homily [homiliae]**

59. Each member of the People of God “has different duties and responsibilities with respect to the word of God. Accordingly, the faithful listen to God’s word and meditate on it, but those who have the office of teaching by virtue of sacred ordination or have been entrusted with exercising that ministry,” namely, bishops, priests and deacons, “expound the word of God.” Hence we can understand the

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attention paid to the homily [homiliae] throughout the Synod. In the Apostolic Exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis, I pointed out that “given the importance of the word of God, the quality of homilies [homiliae] needs to be improved. The homily [homilia] ‘is part of the liturgical action’ and is meant to foster a deeper understanding of the word of God, so that it can bear fruit in the lives of the faithful.” The homily is a means of bringing the scriptural message to life in a way that helps the faithful to realize that God’s word is present and at work in their everyday lives. It should lead to an understanding of the mystery being celebrated, serve as a summons to mission, and prepare the assembly for the profession of faith, the universal prayer and the Eucharistic liturgy. Consequently, those who have been charged with preaching by virtue of a specific ministry ought to take this task to heart. Generic and abstract homilies [homiliae] which obscure the directness of God’s word should be avoided, as well as useless digressions which risk drawing greater attention to the preacher than to the heart of the Gospel message. The faithful should be able to perceive clearly that the preacher has a compelling desire to present Christ, who must stand at the center of every homily [homiliae]. For this reason preachers need to be in close and constant contact with the sacred text; they should prepare for the homily [homiliam] by meditation and prayer, so as to preach with conviction and passion. The synodal assembly asked that the following questions be kept in mind: “What are the Scriptures being proclaimed saying? What do they say to me personally? What should I say to the community in the light of its concrete situation? The preacher “should be the first to hear the word of God which he proclaims”, since, as Saint Augustine says: “He is undoubtedly barren who preaches outwardly the word of God without hearing it inwardly”. The homily [homilia] for Sundays and solemnities should be prepared carefully, without neglecting, whenever possible, to offer at weekday Masses cum populo brief and timely reflections [considerationes] which can help the faithful to welcome the word which was proclaimed and to let it bear fruit in their lives.\(^\text{75}\)

\(^{75}\) Ibid.

Momentum homiliae

59. «Varia etiam sunt officia et munera quae competunt cui- que quoad Verbum Dei, ita ut ipsum verbum fideles auscultent atque meditentur, illi vero soli exponant ad quos ex sacra ordinatione magisterii munus spectat, vel quibus idem ministerium committitur exercendum », id est episcopis, presbyteris et dia- conis. Unde intellegitur sollicitudo quam exhibuit Synodus de homiliae argumento. Iam in Adhortatione apostolica postsynodali Sacramentum caritatis rettulimus: «Cum Dei Verbum conspicuum obtineat locum, necessitas existit meliorem efficiendi homiliae qualitatem. Ipsa enim “est pars actionis liturgicae”; munus habet fovendi pleniorem intellectum efficaciamque Verbi Dei in vita fideli et sua. Reversa homilia nuntium Scripturae exsequitur, ita ut fideles inducantur ad praesentiam et efficaciam Verbi Dei hodierno propriae vitae tempore detegandam. Ipsa ad comprehensio mysterii quod celebratur conducere debet, ad missionem invitare, plebem praeparans ad fidei professionem, ad orationem universalem et ad liturgiam eucharisticam. Quapropter ii qui peculiare ob ministerium ad praedicationem deputantur, hoc munus in animo habeant. Vitentur oportet homiliae genericae et abstractae, quae Verbi Dei simplicitatem
In this Exhortation, Pope Benedict emphasizes the homily is a part of the Church’s ministry and as such it is entrusted to the ordained during the Eucharistic liturgy, alluding to a liturgical principle articulated in SC 28.\(^76\) He again highlights the nature of the homily to “foster a deeper understanding of the word of God” so that the Word may bear fruit in the Church. Most importantly, the pope places Christ as the center of the homily as He is the center of the Liturgy.

One must be cautious about making generalizations about comparing the papal teachings based solely upon these documents. While the papacy of Pope Paul VI focused heavily upon the implementation of the conciliar reforms, he wrote about the homily in one Exhortation. Pope John Paul II’s teachings are more extensive, and Pope Benedict XVI’s treatment of the homily is a bit more limited. Yet, throughout this examination of the development of the liturgical homily in papal teachings, we have seen a basic continuity. First, Popes Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI all utilize the term *homilia* throughout their writings. Papal documents no longer use *concio* or *sermo* to

\(^{76}\) SC 28: *In celebrationibus liturgicis quisque, sive minister sive fidelis, munere suo fungens, solum et totum id agat, quod ad ipsum ex rei natura et normis liturgicis pertinet.*
name this liturgical unit. Second, Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI have maintained the metaphor of nourishment from the Word of God through the homily. Third, all the popes recognize the different aims of preaching that are at work within the homily, from evangelical to catechetical to theological. Different modes take prominence on different occasions and for different communities. Fourth, the three popes recognize the integral nature of the homily to the liturgy, especially the Mass.

The role of the minister is the major difference that the popes expressed about the liturgical homily. In Pope Paul VI’s sole Exhortation, he speaks about the homily as an expression of the faith of the minister. In terms of evangelization, Paul VI emphasizes the witness value of the preacher to draw others to Christ. However, Pope Benedict cautions against a focus upon the preacher, but rather upon the Word of God and how it takes root in the life of the community.

2. The Homily in Curial Documents

We move now into the development of the liturgical homily in the post-conciliar Church by examining how it appears in the documents of the Roman Curia. The Curia itself does not have teaching authority, but is the extension of the papal magisterium. We will move through this next section chronologically, noting the various congregations and commissions that produced the particular documents.
The Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship issued *De Verbo Dei*, the Revised General Introduction to the Lectionary on 21 January 1981. Paragraphs twenty-four through twenty-seven and forty-one speak about the homily.

24. Through the course of the liturgical year the homily [*homilia*] sets forth the mysteries of faith and the standards of the Christian life on the basis of the sacred text. Beginning with the Constitution on the Liturgy, the homily [*homilia*] as part of the liturgy of the word has been repeatedly and strong recommended and in some cases it is obligatory. As a rule it is to be given by the one presiding. The purpose of the homily [*homilia*] at Mass is that the spoken word of God and the liturgy of the Eucharist may together become “a proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ.” Through the readings and homily [*homilia*] Christ’s paschal mystery is proclaimed; through the sacrifice of the Mass it becomes present. Moreover Christ himself is also always present and active in the preaching of the Church.

Whether the homily [*homilia*] explains the biblical word of God proclaimed in the readings or some other texts of the liturgy, it must always lead the community of the faithful to celebrate the eucharist wholeheartedly, “so that they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by faith.” From this living explanation, the word of God proclaimed in the readings and the Church’s celebration of the day’s liturgy will have greater impact. But this demands that the homily [*homilia*] be truly the fruit of meditation, carefully prepared, neither too long nor too short, and suited to all those present, even children and the uneducated.

At a concelebration, the celebrant or one of the concelebrants as a rule gives the homily [*homilia*].

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78 Ibid., no. 24: *Homilia, qua per annum lucturgici cursum ex textu sacro fidei mysteria et normae vitae christianae exponuntur, ut pars liturgiae verbi saepius et inde a Constituione liturgica Concilii Vaticani II potissimum est commendata, immo pro aliquibus casibus praebetur. Ab ipso qui praest de more habenda, homilia in Missae celebratione eo tendit ut nuntiatum Dei verbum una cum liturgia eucharistica fiat ‘quasi annuntiatio mirabilium Dei in historia salutis seu mystrio Christi’. Etenim mysterium paschale Christi quod lectionibus et homilia nuntiatur, per Missae sacrificium exercetur. Christus autem in Ecclesiae suae praedicatione prae sens semper adest et operatur.*

*Homilia igitur sive verbum Scripturae sive nuntiatum sive alium liturgicalum textum explicat, communitatem fidelium ad Eucharistiam actuosa celebrandam ducere debet, ut ‘vivendo teneant quod fide percepserunt’. Hac viva expositione Dei verbum quod legitur, et celebrationes Ecclesiae, quae peraguntur, maiorem, efficacitatem acquirere possunt, si homilia revera sit fructusmeditationis, aperte parata, non nimis prtracta nec nimis brevis, et si in ea ad omnes praesentes, etiam pueros et incultos, attendatur. In concelebratione homilia habet de more celebrans principalis, vel unus e concelebrantibus.*
25. On the prescribed days, that is, Sundays and holy days of obligation, there must be a homily [homilia] in all Masses celebrated with a congregation, even Masses on the preceding evening; the homily may not be omitted without a serious reason. There is also to be a homily [homilia] in Masses with children and with special groups.

A homily [homilia] is strongly recommended on the weekdays of Advent, Lent and the Easter season for the sake of the faithful who regularly take part in the celebration of Mass; also on other feasts and occasions when a large congregation is present.79

26. The priest celebrant gives the homily [homiliam] either at the chair, standing or sitting, or at the lectern.80

27. Any necessary announcements are to be kept completely separate from the homily [homilia]; they must take place following the prayer after communion.81

41. The one presiding exercises his proper office and the ministry of the word of God also as he preaches the homily [homiliam]. In this way he leads his brothers and sisters to an affective knowledge of holy Scripture. He opens their souls to gratitude for the wonderful works of God. He strengthens their faith in the word that in the celebration becomes a sacrament through the Holy Spirit. Finally, he prepares them for a fruitful reception of communion and invites them to embrace the demands of the Christian life.82

De Verbo Dei repeats much of what has already been examined above. There are two significant developments that it introduces. The first is the physical location in the church of the one giving the homily. We saw in IGRM 1970, no. 97 that the homily is given at the chair or the

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79 Ibid., no 25: Diebus praescriptis, dominicis nempe et festis de praecepto servandis, etiam in Missis quae vespere diei praecedentis celebrantur, homilia haberi debet in omnibus Missis, quae concurrente populo celebrantur. Etiam in Missis cum pueris et cum coetibus particularibus habenda est homilia. Homilia valde commendatur in feriis Adventus, Quadragesimae et temporis paschalis pro fidelibus qui modo regulae celebrationem Missae participant, necnon in aliis festis et occasionibus in quibus populus frequentor ad ecclesiam convenit.

80 Ibid., no. 26: Sacerdos celebrans homiliam profert ad sedem, stans vel sedens vel in ipso ambone.

81 Ibid., no. 27: Ab homilia sane secernendae sunt breves annuntiaciones populo forte faciendae, quae locum habere debent dicta oratione post communionem.

82 Ibid., no. 41: Munus proprium et ministerium verbi Dei praesidet etiam cum homiliam pronuntiat. Ipsa enim fratres suos ad sapidam intelligentiam Scripturae sacrae ducit, fidelium animos gratiarum actioni aperit circa Dei mirabilia, praesentium fidem cnca verbum quod in celebratione per Spiritum Sanctum fit sacramentum alit, eos denique ad communionem fructuosam praeparat, eosdem ad postulata vttae christianae assumenda invitat.
ambo. It was presumed that the homilist would be standing at either location. *DVD* continues to give pride of place to the chair (*ad sedem*) over the “lectern” (*ambone*). This is significant because it further emphasizes the relationship between the liturgical ministry of the one presiding and the liturgical homily as the chair is the location of the presider of the liturgy. The second development is this strengthening of this relationship. *DVD* in three places (#24, 26, and 41) reiterates that the priest celebrant preaches as an exercise of his office and ministry.

The same congregation (which was renamed earlier that year as Congregation for Divine Worship) promulgated the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* on 14 September 1984. The Ceremonial treats the preaching of the bishop in paragraphs fifteen through seventeen.

15. Among the principal duties of a bishop the preaching of the Gospel is preeminent. The bishop as herald of the faith leads new followers to Christ. As their authentic teacher, that is, one invested with the authority of Christ, he proclaims to the people entrusted to him the fruits of faith they are to believe and to live by. Under the light of the Holy Spirit the bishop explains the teachings of the faith, bring forth from the treasure-house of revelation new things and old. He works to make faith yield its harvest and, like the good shepherd, he is vigilant in protecting his people from the threat of error.

The liturgy is one of the ways in which the bishop discharges this responsibility: he preaches the homily [*homiliam*] at celebrations of the eucharist, celebrations of the word of God and, as occasion suggests, celebrations of morning and evening prayer; also when he imparts catechesis and in his introductions, invitations, or commentary during celebrations of the sacraments and sacramentals.

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84 Ibid., no. 15: Inter praecipua Episcopi munera eminet praedicatio Evangelii. Episcopus enim est fidei prreco, qui novas discipulos ad Christum adducit, et doctor authenticus seu auctoritate Christi prreditus, qui populio sibi commissa fidel credendam et moribus applicandam predicat, et sub lumine Sancti Spiritus illustrat, ex thesauro Revelationis nova et vetera preferens, earn fructificare facit erroresque gregi suo impendentes vigilanter arcet. Quod munus Episcopus etiam in sacra liturgia implet, cum homiliam facit intra Missam, in celebrationibus verbi Dei et, pro opportunitate, in Laudibus et Vesperis, necnon cum catechesim habet et admonitiones profert in sacramentorum et sacramentalia celebratione.
16. This preaching “should draw its content mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources, being a proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ, ever present and active within us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy.”

17. Since the office of preaching is proper to the bishop, so that other ordained ministers fulfill this office only in his name, he should preach the homily [homiliam] himself whenever he presides at a celebration of the liturgy. Unless he decides that some other way is preferable, the bishop should preach while seated at the chair, wearing his miter and holding the pastoral staff.

The first two paragraphs reiterate the teachings of the Council, but the Ceremonial furthers the theological nature of why the homily is preached by the one presiding. First, the homily as both a liturgical unit and as a part of the preaching office belongs properly to the bishop. The Ceremonial furthers this by connecting the presiding at Eucharist to the representation of the bishop at the liturgy by the priest.

Pope John Paul II reorganized the Roman Curia in June 1988 with the Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus, including the reintegration of the Congregation for Divine Worship with the Congregation for the Sacraments into the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. A year later on 29 June 1989 the CDWDS promulgated the editio typica altera of De ordinatione episcopi, presbyterorum et diaconorum. One immediately notes that the second edition of the Rite changed the order of the rites. Using once again the Ritus de ordinatione diaconorum to illustrate the development of the liturgical homily, the Rite includes:

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85 Ibid., no. 16: Haec predicatio « imprimis ex fonte Sacre Scripturre et liturgiae hauriatur, quasi annuntiatio mirabilium Dei in historia salutis seu mysterio Christi, quod in nobis praesens semper adest atque operatur, praesertim in celebrationibus liturgicis ».
86 Ibid., no. 17: Cum praedicatio ita proprium munus sit Episcopi, ut nonnisi vice sua ali ministri sacri illud exerceant, est Episcopi praeidentis actioni liturgiæ per se ipsum homiliam facere. Episcopus praedicet sedens in cathedra cum mitra et bacula, nisi ipsi aliter videatur.
199. Then the Bishop, while all are seated, gives the homily. Taking his theme from the biblical readings just proclaimed in the Liturgy of the Word, he addresses the people and the elect on the office of deacon. In his homily he should take into consideration whether those to be ordained are both married and unmarried, or only unmarried, or only married. He may use these or similar words…

This treatment of the homily is more robust in the revised Rite of Ordination. The homily, while still focused upon the sacrament to be conferred in the Mass, is drawn from the Scriptural readings and is relevant to those being ordained to the office.

The Pontifical Biblical Commission issued *L'interprétation de la Bible dans l'Église* on 15 April 1993. In Part III, the Commission addressed the homily in its third subsection, “The Uses of the Bible,” in the fourth section on the “Interpretation of the Bible in the Life of the Church.”

1. In the Liturgy

From the earliest days of the Church, the reading of Scripture has been an integral part of the Christian liturgy, an inheritance to some extent from the liturgy of the Synagogue. Today, too, it is above all through the liturgy that Christians come into contact with Scripture, particularly above all the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist.

87 Ibid., 199: Tunc Episcopus, omnibus sedentibus, homiliam habet, in qua, initium sumens e textu lectionum quae in liturgia verbi lectae sunt, populum atque electos de munere diaconorum alloquitur, rationem habendo etiam de ordinandorum condicione, utrum nempe agatur de electis uxoratis, vel de electis non uxoratis tantum, vel de electis uxoratis tantum. De tali munere autem loqui potest his vel similibus verbis…


89 Ibid.

4.C.1. Dans la liturgie

Dès les débuts de l’Église, la lecture des Écritures a fait partie intégrante de la liturgie chrétienne, héritière pour une part de la liturgie synagogale. Aujourd’hui encore, c’est surtout par la liturgie que les chrétiens entrent en contact avec les Écritures, en particulier lors de la célébration eucharistique du dimanche.
In principle, the liturgy, and especially the sacramental liturgy, the high-
point of which is the Eucharistic celebration, brings about the most perfect
actualization of the biblical texts, for the liturgy places the proclamation in the
midst of the community of believers, gathered around Christ so as to draw near to
God. Christ is then, “present in his word, because it is he himself who speaks
when Sacred Scripture is read in the church” (SC, 7). Written text thus becomes
living word.  

The liturgical reform initiated by the Second Vatican Council sought to
provide Catholics with rich sustenance from the Bible. The triple cycle of Sunday
readings gives a privileged place to the Gospels, in such a way as to shed light on
the mystery of Christ as principle of our salvation. By regularly associating a text
of the Old Testament with the Gospel, the cycle often suggests a scriptural
interpretation moving in the direction of typology. But, of course, such is not the
only kind of interpretation possible.  

The homily [L’homélie], which seeks to actualize more explicitly the
Word of God, is an integral part of the liturgy. We will speak of it later, when we
treat of [sic] the pastoral ministry.  

The lectionary, issued at the direction of the Council (SC, 35), is meant to
allow for a reading of Sacred Scripture that is “more abundant, more varied and
more suitable.” In its present state, it only partially fulfills this goal.
Nevertheless, even as it stands, it has had positive ecumenical results. In certain
countries it also has served to indicate the lack of familiarity with Scripture on the
part of many Catholics.
The liturgy of the Word is a crucial element in the celebration of each of the Sacraments of the Church; it does not consist simply in a series of readings one after another; it ought to involve as well periods of silence and of prayer. This liturgy, in particular the Liturgy of the Hours, makes selections from the book of Psalms to help the Christian community pray. Hymns and prayers are all filled with the language of the Bible and the symbolism it contains. How necessary it is, therefore, that participation in the liturgy be prepared for and accompanied by the practice of reading Scripture.94

If in the readings “God addresses the word to His people” (Roman Missal, n. 33), the liturgy of the Word requires that great care be taken both in the proclamation of the readings and in their interpretation. It is therefore desirable that the formation of those who are to preside at the assembly and of those who serve with them take full account of what is required from a liturgy of the Word of God that is fully renewed. Thus, through a combined effort, the Church will carry on the mission entrusted to it, “to take the bread of life from the table both of the Word of God and of the Body of Christ and offer it to the faithful” (Dei Verbum, 21).95

3. In Pastoral Ministry

The frequent recourse to the Bible in pastoral ministry, as recommended by Dei Verbum (24), takes on various forms depending on the kind of interpretation that is useful to pastors and helpful for the understanding of the faithful. Three principal situations can be distinguished: catechesis, preaching and the biblical apostolate. Many factors are involved, relating to the general level of Christian life. The explanation of the Word of God in catechesis (SC, 35; Gen. Catech. Direct., 1971, 16) has Sacred Scripture as first source. Explained in the context of the Tradition, Scripture provides the starting point, foundation and norm of catechetical teaching. One of the goals of catechesis should be to initiate

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94 Ibid.

La liturgie de la Parole, est un élément décisif dans la célébration de chacun des sacrements de l’Église ; elle ne consiste pas en une simple succession de lectures, car elle doit comporter également des temps de silence et de prière. Cette liturgie, en particulier la liturgie des Heures, puise dans le livre des Psaumes pour faire prier la communauté chrétienne. Hymnes et prières sont toutes imprégnées du -langage biblique et de sa symbolique. C’est dire combien il est nécessaire que la participation à la liturgie soit préparée et accompagnée par une pratique de la lecture de l’Écriture.

95 Ibid.

Si dans les lectures « Dieu adresse la parole à son peuple » (Missel romain, n. 33), la liturgie de la Parole exige un grand soin tant pour la proclamation des lectures que pour leur interprétation. Il est donc souhaitable que la formation des futurs présidents d’assemblées et de ceux qui les entourent tienne compte des exigences d’une liturgie de la Parole de Dieu fortement renouvelée. Ainsi, grâce aux efforts de tous, l’Église poursuivra la mission qui lui a été confiée « de prendre le pain de vie sur la table de la Parole de Dieu comme sur celle du Corps du Christ pour l’offrir aux fidèles » (Dei Verbum, 21).
a person in a correct understanding and fruitful reading of the Bible. This will bring about the discovery of the divine truth it contains and evoke as generous a response as is possible to the message God addresses through his word to whole human race.  

Catechesis should proceed from the historical context of divine revelation so as to present persons and events of the Old and New Testaments in the light of God's overall plan.

To move from the biblical text to its salvific meaning for the present time various hermeneutic procedures are employed. These will give rise to different kinds of commentary. The effectiveness of the catechesis depends on the value of the hermeneutic employed. There is the danger of resting content with a superficial commentary, one which remains simply a chronological presentation of the sequence of persons and events in the Bible.

Clearly, catechesis can avail itself of only a small part of the full range of biblical texts. Generally speaking, it will make particular use of stories both those of the New Testament and those of the Old. It will single out the Decalogue. It should also see that it makes use of the prophetic oracles, the wisdom teaching and the great discourses in the Gospels such as the Sermon on the Mount.

The presentation of the Gospels should be done in such a way as to elicit an encounter with Christ, who provides the key to the whole biblical revelation.

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96 Ibid.

4.C.3. Dans le ministère pastoral

Recommandé par Dei Verbum (n. 24), le recours fréquent à la Bible dans le ministère pastoral prend diverses formes suivant le genre d’herméneutique dont se servent les pasteurs et que peuvent comprendre les fidèles. On peut distinguer trois situations principales : la catéchèse, la prédication et l’apostolat biblique. De nombreux facteurs interviennent, en rapport avec le niveau général de vie chrétienne.

97 Ibid.

L’explication de la Parole de Dieu dans la catéchèse, – Sacros. Conc., 35 ; Direct. catéch. gén., 1971, 16, – a comme première source l’Écriture Sainte, qui, expliquée dans le contexte de la Tradition, fournit le point de départ, le fondement et la norme de l’enseignement catéchétique. Un des buts de la catéchèse devrait être d’introduire à une juste compréhension de la Bible et à sa lecture fructueuse, qui permette de découvrir la vérité divine qu’elle contient et qui suscite une réponse, la plus généreuse possible, au message que Dieu adresse par sa parole à l’humanité. La catéchèse doit partir du contexte historique de la révélation divine pour présenter personnages et événements de l’Ancien Testament et du Nouveau Testament à la lumière du dessein de Dieu.

98 Ibid.

Pour passer du texte biblique à sa signification de salut pour le temps présent, on utilise des herméneutiques variées, qui inspirent divers genres de commentaires. La fécondité de la catéchèse dépend de la valeur de l’herméneutique employée. Le danger existe de se contenter d’un commentaire superficiel, qui en reste à une considération chronologique de la succession des événements et des personnages de la Bible.

99 Ibid.

and communicates the call of God that summons each one to respond. The word of the prophets and that of the “ministers of the Word” (Luke 1:2) ought to appear as something addressed to Christians now.\footnote{Ibid.}

Analogous remarks apply to the ministry of preaching, which should draw from the ancient texts spiritual sustenance adapted to the present needs of the Christian community.\footnote{Ibid.}

Today, this ministry is exercised especially at the close of the first part of the Eucharistic celebration, through the homily \([l’homélie]\) which follows the proclamation of the Word of God.\footnote{Ibid.}

The explanation of the biblical texts given in the course of the homily \([l’homélie]\) cannot enter into great detail. It is, accordingly, fitting to explain the central contribution of texts, that which is most enlightening for faith and most stimulating for the progress of the Christian life, both on the community and individual level. Presenting this central contribution means striving to achieve its actualization and inculturation, in accordance with what has been said above. Good hermeneutical principles are necessary to attain this end. Want of preparation in this area leads to the temptation to avoid plumbing the depths of the biblical readings and to being content simply to moralize or to speak of contemporary issues in a way that fail to shed upon them the light of God’s Word.\footnote{Ibid.}

In some countries exegetes have helped produce publication designed to assist pastors in their responsibility to interpret correctly the biblical texts of the liturgy and make them properly meaningful for today. It is desirable that such efforts be repeated on a wider scale.\footnote{Ibid.}

\begin{footnotesize}
\bibitem{100}
La présentation des évangiles doit se faire de façon à provoquer une rencontre avec le Christ, qui donne la clé de toute la révélation biblique et transmet l’appel de Dieu, auquel chacun doit répondre. La parole des prophètes et celle des « serviteurs de la Parole » (Lc 1, 2) doivent apparaître comme adressées maintenant aux chrétiens.\footnote{Ibid.}

\bibitem{101}
Des remarques analogues s’appliquent au ministère de la prédication, qui doit tirer des textes anciens une nourriture spirituelle adaptée aux besoins actuels de la communauté chrétienne.\footnote{Ibid.}

\bibitem{102}
Actuellement, ce ministère s’exerce surtout à la fin de la première partie de la célébration eucharistique, par l’homélie qui suit la proclamation de la Parole de Dieu.\footnote{Ibid.}

\bibitem{103}
L’explication qu’on donne des textes bibliques au cours de l’homélie ne peut entrer dans beaucoup de détails. Il convient donc de mettre en lumière les apports principaux de ces textes, ceux qui sont les plus éclairants pour la foi et les plus stimulants pour le progrès de la vie chrétienne, communautaire ou personnelle. En présentant ces apports, il faut faire oeuvre d’actualisation et d’inculturation, selon ce qui a été dit plus haut. A cet effet, des principes herméneutiques valables sont nécessaires. Un manque de préparation en ce domaine a pour conséquence qu’on est tenté de renoncer à approfondir les lectures bibliques et qu’on se contente de moraliser ou de parler de questions actuelles, sans les éclairer par la Parole de Dieu.\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{footnotesize}
Preachers should certainly avoid insisting in a one-sided way on the obligations incumbent upon believers. The biblical message must preserve its principal characteristic of being the good news of salvation freely offered by God. Preaching will perform a task more useful and more conformed to the Bible if it helps the faithful above all to “know the gift of God” (John 4:10) as it has been revealed in Scripture; they will then understand in a positive light the obligations that flow from it.  

Given the nature of this document, it is not surprising that the Pontifical Biblical Commission directly connects the homily with preaching. But its language is stronger than has been previously encountered in the conciliar, papal and earlier curial documents.

It says that the goal of the homily is to “more explicitly actualize the Word of God.”

Further, the PBC continues the conciliar metaphor of the Word, nourishing the assembly through the homily. The PBC also makes the Scriptures a primary way through which the Church encounters Christ and both receives and nourishes faith.

On 15 August 1997, the Congregation for the Clergy, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Congregation for Bishops, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and Pontifical

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En divers pays, des publications ont été réalisées, avec l’aide d’exégètes, pour aider les responsables pastoraux à interpréter correctement les lectures bibliques de la liturgie et à les actualiser de façon valable. Il est souhaitable que de semblables efforts se généralisent.  

Ibid.

Une insistance unilatérale sur les obligations qui s’imposent aux croyants est assurément à éviter. Le message biblique doit conserver son caractère principal de bonne nouvelle du salut offert par Dieu. La prédication fera œuvre plus utile et plus conforme à la Bible si elle aide d’abord les fidèles à « connaître le don de Dieu » (Jn 4, 10), tel qu’il est révélé dans l’Écriture, et à comprendre de façon positive les exigences qui en découlent.
Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts jointly issued *Ecclesiae de Mysterio*,106 an instruction on certain questions regarding collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of the priest.107 Relevant to the exploration of the homily, the Instruction devotes article three to the question of who may preach during the Mass.

3. The Homily [*De homilia*]

§ 1. The homily, being an eminent form of preaching, *qua per anni liturgici cursum ex textu sacro fidei mysteria et normae vitae christianae exponuntia*, also forms part of the liturgy.

The homily, therefore, during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, must be reserved to the sacred minister, Priest or Deacon to the exclusion of the non-ordained faithful, even if these should have responsibilities as “pastoral assistants” or catechists in whatever type of community or group. This exclusion is not based on the preaching ability of sacred ministers nor their theological preparation, but on that function which is reserved to them in virtue of having received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. For the same reason the diocesan Bishop cannot validly dispense from the canonical norm since this is not merely a disciplinary law but one which touches upon the closely connected functions of teaching and sanctifying.

For the same reason, the practice, on some occasions, of entrusting the preaching of the homily to seminarians or theology students who are not clerics is not permitted. Indeed, the homily should not be regarded as a training for some future ministry.

All previous norms which may have admitted the non-ordained faithful to preaching the homily during the Holy Eucharist are to be considered abrogated by canon 767, § 1.

§ 2. A form of instruction designed to promote a greater understanding of the liturgy, including personal testimonies, or the celebration of eucharistic liturgies on special occasions (e.g. day of the Seminary, day of the sick etc.) is lawful, of in harmony with liturgical norms, should such be considered objectively opportune as a means of explicating the regular homily [*homiliae*] preached by the celebrant priest. Nonetheless, these testimonies or explanations may not be such so as to assume a character which could be confused with the homily [*homilia*].

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107 The language of the “collaboration in the sacred ministry of the priest” created a controversy since many theologians would argue that ministry is derived not from ordination but from baptism.
§ 3. As an expositional aide and providing it does not delegate the duty of preaching to others, the celebrant minister may make prudent use of “dialogue” in the homily [homilia], in accord with the liturgical norms.

§ 4. Homilies [homilia] in non-eucharistic liturgies may be preached by the non-ordained faithful only when expressly permitted by law and when its prescriptions for doing so are observed.

§ 5. In no instance may the homily [homilia] be entrusted to priests or deacons who have lost the clerical state or who have abandoned the sacred ministry.108

The Instruction definitively explains the essential connection between the liturgical function of the clergy and the homily. One of the repeated principles of Sacrosanctum Concilium is number 28: “In liturgical celebrations each one, minister or layperson, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to that office by the nature

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108 Ibid.

Articulus 3 De homilia

§ 1. Homilia, eminens praedicationis forma « qua per anni liturgici cursorum ex textu sacro fidei mysteria et normae vitae christianae exponuntur », ipsius liturgiae partem constituit.

Quapropter homilia extra Eucharisticam celebrationem sacro reservatur ministro, vel presbytero vel diacono. Excluduntur fideles non ordinati, nisi illud impleant munus quod esse dicitur « assistentium pastoralium » vel catechistarum apud quomlibet genus communitatis vel associationis. Etenim non agitur de maiore speciali ingenio ad rem exponendam vel praeparatione theologica, sed de munere reservato illi qui sacramento Ordinis est insignitus, circa quod ne Episcopus quidem facultate gaudet dispensatione ad normam iuris, ex eo quod non agitur de lege tantum disciplinan, sed de lege quae munera respicit docendi et sanctificandi stricte inter se conexa.

Admitti nequit ipsius ille agenti modus, certis in casibus iam usurpatus, cuius vi homiletica praedicatio committitur disciplinae theologicae auditoribus, nondum ordinatis. Homilia enim minime haberi potest uti exercitatio quaedam ad futurum ministerium.

Abrogata censeatur ad praescriptum canonis 767, § 1 quaelibet praecedens norma quae fideles non ordinatos admissit ad homiliam habendam in Eucharistica celebratione.

§ 2. Licet quidem quandam brevem instructionem praemittere, cujus sit maiorem comprehensionem liturgiae celebrandae forere, pariterque testimonium quoddam « per occasionem » ad modum exceptionis, dummodo normis liturgicis aptum sit atque exhibitum intra liturgias eucharisticas quae peculiarius diebus celebrantur (uti diebus sive Seminario sive aegroto dicitis, etc.), si censetur vere congruens, instar explanationis homiliae quam regulariter presbyter celebrans pronuntiat. Haec instructiones et testimonia minime habeant sensum ut cum homilia confundi possint.

§ 3. Facultas « dialogum » instituendi in homilia aliquando a ministro celebrante adhiberi potest, prudenti cum iudicio, uti instrumentum expositionis, quo tamen praedicationis munus aliis non delegatur.

§ 4. Homilia extra Eucharisticam celebrationem a Christifideli non ordinato haberi potest ad normam iuris vel ad normas liturgicas, dummodo serventur condiciones quae in isdem continentur.

§ 5. Homilia nullo pacto concredi potest presbyteris vel diaconis qui dimissi sunt a statu clericali vel sacri ministerii exercitium reliquerunt.
As an integral element of the Mass, the homily is assigned to particular ministers, namely the priest or deacon, and is not able to be assumed by other ministers.

The Instruction distinguishes the homily from “instruction” and “personal testimony” in § 2. In § 4, the Instruction broadens the definition of homilia when it makes the distinction between homilies during the Mass and elsewhere.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued *Liturgiam Authenticam*, the Fifth Instruction on the Proper Implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, on 28 March 2001. The Instruction mentions the homily twice, in paragraphs 29 and 108. But only the first paragraph is germane to this exploration:

29. It is the task of the homily [*homiliae*] and of catechesis to set forth the meaning of the liturgical texts, illuminating with precision the mind of the church regarding the members of particular Churches or ecclesial communities separated from full communion with the Catholic Church and those of Jewish communities, as well as adherents of other religions—and likewise, her understanding of the dignity and equality of all men. Similarly it is the task of catechists or of the homilist [*illius, qui homiliam habet*] to transmit the right interpretation of the texts that includes any prejudice or unjust discrimination on the basis of persons, gender, social condition, race or other criteria which has no foundation at all in the texts of the Sacred Liturgy. Although considerations such as these may sometimes help one in choosing among various translations of a certain expression, nevertheless they are not to be considered reasons for altering either a biblical text or a liturgical text that has been duly promulgated.}

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109 *SC* 28: In celebrationibus liturgicis quisque, sive minister sive fidelis, munere suo fungens, solum et to tum id agat, quod ad ipsum ex rei natura et normis liturgicis pertinet.


111 Ibid., no. 29: Homiliae et catechesis est textuum liturgicorum significationem exponere, quae mentem Ecclesiae in lucem accurate ponat, quod spectat ad sodales Ecclesiarum particularium vel communitatum ecclesialium a plena communione cum Ecclesia Catholica seiuotarum, communitatum Iudaearum aut ad sectatores aliarum religionum, necnon ad veram dignitatem et aequalitatatem omnium hominum. Similiter est catechistarum vel illius, qui homiliam
The Instruction is clearly not attempting to define the nature of the homily, but is addressing other concerns about the liturgy. While using the term *homilia* throughout, it restricts the purpose of the homily: “to set forth the meaning of the liturgical texts, illuminating with precision the mind of the church…” and “to transmit the right interpretation of the texts…. This restricted aim of the liturgical homily has not occurred in previous writings that we have seen above.

The same Congregation promulgated the *editio typica tertia* of the *IGRM* on 17 March 2002. The *IGRM* 2002 included new introductory material which altered the numbering of the paragraphs. The corresponding paragraphs to the *IGRM* 1970 are below. (NB: Paragraph 171 has no predecessor in the previous editions of the *IGRM*.)

29. When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his word, proclaims the Gospel. Therefore, the readings from the Word of God are to be listened to reverently by everyone, for they are an element of the greatest importance in the Liturgy. Although in the readings from Sacred Scripture the Word of God is addressed to all people of whatever era and is understandable to them, a fuller understanding and a greater efficaciousness of the word is nevertheless fostered by a living commentary on the word, that is, by the Homily [*homilia*], as part of the liturgical action.\(^{113}\)


\(^{113}\) Ibid., no. 29 (emphasis added in English translation and original text): Cum sacrae Scripturae in Ecclesia legitur, Deus ipse ad populum suum loquitur et Christus, praeens in verbo suo, Evangelium annuntiat. Ideoque lectiones verbi Dei, quae elementum maximí momentí Liturgiae praebent, cum veneratione ab omnibus sunt audientiae. Quamvis autem verbum divinum in lectionibus sacrae Scripturae ad omnes homines cuiusque temporis dirigatur isque intellegibile sit, eius *tamen plenior intellegentia et* efficacitas expositione viva, id est homilia, utpote parte actionis liturgicae, *fovetur*.
55. The main part of the Liturgy of the Word is made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. As for the Homily, the Profession of Faith, and the Universal Prayer, they develop and conclude it. For in the readings, as explained by the Homily, God speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and offering spiritual nourishment; and Christ himself is present through his word in the midst of the faithful. By silence and by singing, the people make this divine word their own, and affirm their adherence to it by means of the Profession of Faith; finally, having been nourished by the divine word, the people pour out their petitions by means of the Universal Prayer for the needs of the whole Church and for the salvation of the whole world.¹¹⁴

65. The Homily is part of the Liturgy and is highly recommended, for it is necessary for the nurturing of the Christian life. It should be an explanation of some aspect of the readings from Sacred Scripture or of another text from the Ordinary or the Proper of the Mass of the day and should take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the particular needs of the listeners.¹¹⁵

66. The Homily should ordinarily be given by the Priest Celebrant himself or be entrusted by him to a concelebrating Priest, or from time to time and, if appropriate, to the Deacon, but never to a lay person. In particular cases and for a just cause, the Homily may even be given by a Bishop or a Priest who is present at the celebration but cannot concelebrate.

On Sundays and Holydays of Obligation there is to be a Homily at every Mass that is celebrated with the people attending, and it may not be omitted without a grave reason. On other days it is recommended, especially on the weekdays of Advent, Lent, and Easter Time, as well as on other festive days and occasions when the people come to church in greater numbers.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., no. 55: Partem praecipuam liturgiae verbi constituunt lectiones e sacra Scriptura desumptae cum cantibus inter eas occurritibus; homilia autem, professio fidei et oratio universalis seu oratio fidelium illum evolvunt et concludunt. Nam in lectionibus, quas homilia exponit, Deus populum suum alloquitur, mysterium redemptionis et salutis patefacit, atque nutrimentum spirituale offert; et ipse Christus per verbum suum in medio fidelium praesens adest. Hoc verbum divinum populus suum facit silentio et cantibus, atque ipsi adhaeret professione fidei; eo autem nutritus, oratione universali pro necessitatibus totius Ecclesiae et pro totius mundi salute preces fundit.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., no. 65: Homilia est pars Liturgiae et valde commendatur: est enim ad nutrimentum vitae christianaee necessaria. Sit oportet explicatio aut alicuius aspectus lectionum sacrae Scripturae aut alterius textus ex Ordinario vel Proprio Missae diei, ratione habita sive mysterii, quod celebratur, sive peculiarii necessitatum auditorum.
It is appropriate for a brief period of silence to be observed after the Homily.\textsuperscript{116}

136. The Priest, standing at the chair or at the ambo itself or, if appropriate, in another worthy place, gives the Homily. When the Homily is over, a period of silence may be observed.\textsuperscript{117}

171.* When he is present at the celebration of the Eucharist, a Deacon should exercise his ministry, wearing sacred vestments. In fact, the Deacon:

\begin{itemize}
\item c) proclaims the Gospel and may, at the direction of the Priest Celebrant, give the Homily (cf. no. 66);\textsuperscript{118}
\end{itemize}

213. The Homily is usually given by the principal celebrant or by one of the concelebrants.\textsuperscript{119}

382. At Funeral Masses there should usually be a short Homily, but to the exclusion of a funeral eulogy of any kind. \textsuperscript{120}

The Congregation of Bishops promulgated on 22 February 2004 \textit{Apostolorum Successores}, the successor to the 1973 Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops. The

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, no. 66: \textit{Homilia de more ab ipso sacerdote celebrante habetur vel ab eo committatur sacerdoti concelebranti, vel quandoque, pro opportunitate, etiam diacono, numquam vero laico. In casibus peculiariibus iustaque de causa homilia haber potest etiam ab Episcopo vel presbytero qui celebrationi interest quin concelebrare possit.}

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid, no. 136: \textit{Sacerdos, stans ad sedem vel in ipso ambone, vel, pro opportunitate, in alio loco idoneo, profert homiliam; qua finita, spatio silentii servari potest.}

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid, no. 171: \textit{Quando celebrationi eucharisticae interest, diaconus, sacris vestibus indutus, suo ministerio fungatur. Ipsa enim:}

\begin{itemize}
\item c. Evangelium proclamat et potest, de mandato sacerdotis celebrantis, homiliam habere (cf. n. 66);\textsuperscript{121}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., no. 213: \textit{Homiliam habet de more celebrans principalis, vel unus e concelebrantibus.}

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., no. 382: \textit{In Missis exsequialibus habeatur de more brevis homilia, secluso tamen quovis genere laudationis funebris. …}

\textsuperscript{121} Congregation of Bishops, Directory \textit{Apostolorum Successores}, 22 February 2004. Original in Italian.
new directory, like its predecessor, discusses the preaching office in the ministry of the bishop in paragraphs 122 through 125.

122. Forms of Preaching

a) The Homily. As an integral part of the liturgy, which is the source and summit of the Church’s entire life, the homily is the most excellent and, in a certain sense, the sum of all forms of preaching. The Bishop should seek to expound Catholic truth in its fullness, in simple, familiar language, suited to the capacities of his hearers, focusing – unless particular pastoral reasons suggest otherwise – on the texts of the day’s liturgy. He should plan his homilies so as to elucidate the whole of Catholic truth.

b) Pastoral letters. …

c) Other forms of preaching. The Bishop should never miss an opportunity to communicate the doctrine of salvation, making full use of the possibilities offered by the mass media: newspaper articles, television and radio broadcasts, conferences or lectures on religious topics, particularly when he is addressing those responsible for disseminating ideas in the professional worlds of education and information.122

II. THE BISHOP, MODERATOR OF THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

123. The Bishop’s Duty of Vigilance over Doctrinal Integrity.

The Bishop is not only responsible for personally proclaiming the Gospel, but also for presiding over the entire ministry of preaching in the diocese. He needs

122 Ibid., no. 122: Modalità di predicazione
a) L’omelia. Per essere parte della liturgia, culmine e fonte di tutta la vita della Chiesa, l’omelia eccelle fra tutte le forme di predicazione e in un certo senso le riassume. Il Vescovo procura di esporre la verità cattolica nella sua integrità, con linguaggio piano, familiare e adatto alle capacità di tutti gli ascoltatori, basandosi — salvo particolari ragioni pastorali — sugli stessi testi della liturgia del giorno. Attraverso un proprio piano annuale farà in modo di esporre tutte le verità cattoliche.
b) Le lettere pastorali. …
c) Altre forme di predicazione. Il Vescovo non trascuri alcuna possibilità di trasmettere la dottrina salvifica, anche attraverso i diversi mezzi di comunicazione sociale: articoli sui giornali, trasmissioni televisive e radiofoniche, incontri o conferenze su temi religiosi, in special modo rivolti ai responsabili della diffusione delle idee, come sono i professionisti dell’educazione e dell’informazione.
to be especially vigilant over the doctrinal integrity of his flock and over the
diligent observance of the canonical norms in this area.123


By virtue of the sacrament of orders, the ministry of preaching belongs properly
to priests – predominantly parish priests and those entrusted with the care of souls
– and also to deacons, in communion with the Bishop and his presbyterium. The
Bishop has a duty to monitor the suitability of ministers of the Word, and he has
the faculty to impose certain conditions on the exercise of preaching. He will
ensure that, during their seminary years and through their ongoing formation, they
receive a specific and thorough training that will include technical aspects such as
rhetoric, elocution and the art of communication.

Where priests and deacons are in short supply, and where the norms issued by the
Episcopal Conference permit, the Bishop may invite other members of the faithful
– especially religious and members of societies of apostolic life, but also
exemplary laypersons with the appropriate training – to collaborate in the ministry
of preaching. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the homily is always
reserved exclusively to the priest or deacon. Laypersons with the necessary
qualities may also receive from ecclesiastical authority the mandate required in
order to teach the sacred sciences at every level.

It is a primary responsibility of the Bishop to monitor the orthodoxy and integrity
of the teaching of Christian doctrine, without hesitating to exert his authority
when required. He should be swift to admonish those who presume to propose
doctrines at variance with the faith, and if they persist, he should remove their
faculties for preaching or teaching.124

123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., no. 124: I collaboratori del Vescovo nel ministero della Parola. In virtù del sacramento dell’Ordine, il
ministero della predicazione è proprio dei presbiteri — principalmente dei parroci e degli altri sacerdoti a cui è
affidata la cura delle anime — e anche dei diaconi, in comunione con il Vescovo e il presbiterio. Al Vescovo
compete vigilare sull’idoneità dei ministri della parola, e ha la facoltà di imporre condizioni particolari per
l’esercizio della predicazione. Si preoccuperà che, già negli anni del seminario e poi tramite i mezzi di formazione
permanente, ricevano una preparazione specifica estesa anche agli aspetti formalì, come la sacra eloquenza, la
fonetica, l’arte della comunicazione, ecc.
125. The General Program of the Ministry of the Word.

The Bishop should promote, organize and regulate preaching in the churches of the diocese which are open to the public, including those entrusted to religious. Making use of any resources provided by the agencies of the Episcopal Conference and taking advice from experts in theology and catechetics, the diocesan authorities should consider drawing up an overall program of preaching and catechesis, remembering especially the following:

a) The Homily must never be omitted during public Mass on Sundays and holydays of obligation, at nuptial Masses or other ritual Masses celebrated according to the rubrics. At least a brief homily is recommended on weekdays in Advent, Lent and Eastertide, so that the Paschal Mystery of Christ, signified and made present in the Eucharist, may always be celebrated with living faith and devotion.

b) Catechesis, both in specific sacramental preparation and in more general systematic instruction, as outlined in Section III below.

c) Special forms of preaching, adapted to the needs of the faithful, such as retreats and parish missions.

d) Ways of bringing the Word of God to those who, for different reasons, do not have access to sufficient common and ordinary pastoral care.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., no. 125: L’ordinamento generale del ministero della Parola. Il Vescovo promuova, organizzi e regoli la predicazione nelle chiese della diocesi aperte al pubblico, non escluse quelle dei religiosi. Con gli eventuali sussidi degli organismi della Conferenza Episcopale e servendosi del consiglio di esperti in teologia e catechetica, la sua diocesi studierà l’opportunità di preparare un programma generale di predicazione e di catechesi, tenendo specialmente conto che:

a) L’omelia, non si deve mai tralasciare nelle Messe con partecipazione di popolo nelle domeniche e feste di precetto, nella Messa del Matrimonio e nelle altre Messe rituali secondo le rubriche. La predicazione è
The Directory affirms much of what has been previously written about the homily: “As an integral part of the liturgy…the homily is the most excellent, and in a certain sense, the sum of all forms of preaching.” The homily should utilize “simple, familiar language, suited to the capacities of [the] hearers, focusing…on the texts of the day’s liturgy.” The homily is to be given by a priest or deacon “by virtue of the sacrament of orders.” It should not be omitted on Sundays and holy days, and is recommended for the seasons of Advent, Lent and Easter.

Yet, this Directory differs not only from its predecessor but also from previous curial documents in its articulation of the purposes of the liturgical homily. Like *Liturgiam Authenticam*, the Directory continues to narrow the aim of liturgical preaching to “expounding Catholic truth in its fullness, in simple, familiar language … focusing … on the texts of the day’s liturgy.” The Directory sees the homily as a means of teaching doctrine rather than proclaiming the Gospel as seen in earlier documents.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued the Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* on certain matters to be observed or avoided regarding
the Most Holy Eucharist on 23 April 2004. Paragraphs sixty-four through sixty-eight and seventy-four treat the liturgical homily.

[64.] The homily, which is given in the course of the celebration of Holy Mass and is a part of the Liturgy itself, “should ordinarily be given by the Priest celebrant himself. He may entrust it to a concelebrating Priest or occasionally, according to circumstances, to a Deacon, but never to a layperson. In particular cases and for a just cause, the homily may even be given by a Bishop or a Priest who is present at the celebration but cannot concelebrate”. 127

[65.] It should be borne in mind that any previous norm that may have admitted non-ordained faithful to give the homily during the eucharistic celebration is to be considered abrogated by the norm of canon 767 §1. This practice is reprobated, so that it cannot be permitted to attain the force of custom. 128

[66.] The prohibition of the admission of laypersons to preach within the Mass applies also to seminarians, students of theological disciplines, and those who have assumed the function of those known as “pastoral assistants”; nor is there to be any exception for any other kind of layperson, or group, or community, or association. 129

[67.] Particular care is to be taken so that the homily is firmly based upon the mysteries of salvation, expounding the mysteries of the Faith and the norms of Christian life from the biblical readings and liturgical texts throughout the course of the liturgical year and providing commentary on the texts of the Ordinary or the Proper of the Mass, or of some other rite of the Church. It is clear that all interpretations of Sacred Scripture are to be referred back to Christ himself as the one upon whom the entire economy of salvation hinges, though this should be done in light of the specific context of the liturgical celebration. In the homily to be given, care is to be taken so that the light of Christ may shine upon life’s

127 Ibid, no. 64: Homilia, quae decursu celebrationis sanctae Missae tenetur et pars est ipsius liturgiae,«de more ab ipso Sacerdote celebrante habeatur vel ab eo committatur Sacerdoti concelebranti, vel quandoque, pro opportunitate, etiam Diacono, numquam vero laico. In casibus peculiaribus iustaque de causa homilia haberent etiam ab Episcope vel Presbytero qui celebrationi interest quin concelebrare possit».
128 Ibid, no. 65: Memorandum est quod abrogata censetur ad praescriptum canonis 767, § 1, quaelibet praecedens norma quae fideles non ordinatos admissent ad homiliam habendam in eucharistica celebratione. Quae admissio reprobatur, ita ut vi nullius consuetudinis permitti possit.
129 Ibid, no. 66: Prohibito admissionis laicorum ad praedicationem intra Missae celebrationem valet etiam de seminariorum alumnis, de discipline theologicae auditoribus et de illis, qui officium «assistentium pastoralium», ut aiunt, acceperint, neque ullaum aliud laicorum genus vel coetus vel communitas vel associatio excipiatur.
events. Even so, this is to be done so as not to obscure the true and unadulterated word of God: for instance, treating only of politics or profane subjects, or drawing upon notions derived from contemporary pseudo-religious currents as a source.\textsuperscript{130}

[68.] The diocesan Bishop must diligently oversee the preaching of the homily, also publishing norms and distributing guidelines and auxiliary tools to the sacred ministers, and promoting meetings and other projects for this purpose so that they may have the opportunity to consider the nature of the homily more precisely and find help in its preparation.\textsuperscript{131}

[74.] If the need arises for the gathered faithful to be given instruction or testimony by a layperson in a Church concerning the Christian life, it is altogether preferable that this be done outside Mass. Nevertheless, for serious reasons it is permissible that this type of instruction or testimony be given after the Priest has proclaimed the Prayer after Communion. This should not become a regular practice, however. Furthermore, these instructions and testimony should not be of such a nature that they could be confused with the homily, nor is it permissible to dispense with the homily on their account.\textsuperscript{132}

The Instruction summarizes very neatly the direction of curial documents concerning the homily. It stresses the integral nature of the homily to the liturgy and its proper role within the liturgy through the discussion of the proper minister who gives the homily. There is also a concern for oversight by the Bishop since the office of preaching properly belongs to him and

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., no. 67: Omnino praesertim curandum est, ut homilia mysteriis salutis stricte innitatur, per anni liturgici cursum ex lectionibus biblicis textibusque liturgicis fidei mysteria et normas vitae christianae exponens atque commentarium praebens textuum ex Ordinario vel Proprio Missae aut alius ritus Ecclesiae. Patet omnes sacræ Scripturæ interpretationes ad Christum reducendas esse, utpote ad cardinem supremæ oeconomiae salutis, sed hoc fiat perspecto contextu specifico liturgicae celebrationis. In homilia habenda lucem Christi super eventus vitae pandere curetur. Quod autem ita fiat, ne sensus verus ac sincerus verbi Dei vanus evadat, v. gr. tantum de re politica vel profana agendo aut e notionibus a nostrae aetatis motibus pseudo-religiosis uti e fonte attingendo.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid, no. 68: Episcopus dioecesanus sedulo de homilia vigilet, etiam normas, lineamenta et subsidia inter ministros sacros diffundens atque conventus aliaque incepta ad hoc promovens, ut saepe occasionem habeant ipsi de natura homiliae presius considerandi neconon auxilium quoad eius praeparationem inveniant.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., no. 74: Si necessitas oriatur, qua instructiones vel testimonium quoddam circa vitam christianam in ecclesia apud christifideles congregatos a laico praebeantur, omnino praeferendum est hoc extra Missae celebrationem fieri. Ob graves tamen causas licet huiusmodi instructiones vel testimonia praeberi postquam Sacerdos orationem post Communionem protulerit. Ne tamen hic usus consuetus fiat. Quae insuper instructiones et testimonia minime talem habeant sensum, ut cum homilia confundi possint, nec licet earum causa homiliam omnino supprimere.
priests, deacons and laity authorized to preach at non-Eucharistic liturgical celebrations share in his office. The Instruction also demonstrates the tension that develops in curial documents in the post-conciliar era of the nature of the homily: it sees the aim as both the safe-guarding of Catholic doctrine handed down from the Apostles and the living proclamation of the Gospel. It maintains the homily’s tie to the Scriptures while allowing other liturgical texts to also be its focus.

This brief overview of curial documents that relate to the liturgical homily\textsuperscript{133} demonstrates that in the post-conciliar era the term \textit{homilia} has become standard. Likewise, it emphasizes that the homily as an integral element of the liturgy is a given. The questions that have arisen in this time regard the proper minister of the homily and its objective within the liturgy.

3. The Homily in Documents of the United States’ Episcopal Conference

Finally, we turn to the post-conciliar reflections on the homily by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.\textsuperscript{134} The Conference has issued two substantial reflections on

\textsuperscript{133} The above is by no means every curial document that relates to the liturgical homily. The editio altera of every rite is not presented, nor are speeches or minor documents of the Roman curia. The above contains an overview of the important developments that have occurred since 1975.

\textsuperscript{134} The USCCB was originally founded as the National Catholic War Council in 1917. In 1919, the Bishops re-organized the institution and formed the National Catholic Welfare Council. The name changed in 1922 to the National Catholic Welfare Conference. In 1966, following Vatican Council II, the bishops reorganized the NCWC into the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) and the United States Catholic Conference (USCC). In 2001, the Bishops combined the NCCB and the USCC to form the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. More details can be found at http://old.usccb.org/comm/source/history.shtml (accessed January 2013).
preaching the liturgical homily. Unlike the previous Magisterial documents which treated the homily within the greater context of the liturgy or other subjects, both documents from the US Bishops’ Conference reflect solely on preaching the Sunday homily. Thus, in this next section we will elucidate the teaching of the US Bishops on the homily according to each document.

*Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly*¹³⁵

In 1979, the Bishops of the United States through the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) approved a planning document that authorized the Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry (BCPLM) “to address the question of preaching with respect to the Sunday homily. A draft was reviewed by the Administrative Committee of the NCCB in March 1981.”¹³⁶ The chair of the Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry approved the text and the General Secretary authorized the document’s publication in April 1982. Thus, this document, while holding importance as the first statement coming from a committee of the Bishops’ Conference on the subject of preaching, does not carry with it the full endorsement of the Conference of Bishops.

In the Introduction, the BCPLM articulates the intention of *FIYH*: “This intimate link between preaching and the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Sunday Eucharist, is

¹³⁵ *The Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, “Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly,”* (Washington, DC: USCC, 1982); hereafter *FIYH*. The paragraphs of the document are not numbered; thus page numbers will be given.

¹³⁶ *FIYH*, credit page.
what we intend to address in this document on preaching.”\(^{137}\) They continue: “The focus of this document, therefore, will be the Sunday homily, and even more specifically, the homily preached by the bishop or priest who presides at the celebration of the Eucharist.”\(^{138}\)

The BCPLM begins \textit{FYIH} with the recounting of the beginning of Jesus’ ministry with his attendance at the synagogue in Nazareth. From this biblical periscope, they conclude: “The three major elements of liturgical preaching are all here: the preacher, the word drawn from the Scriptures, and the gathered community. Each element is essential and each must be considered carefully if we are to understand the challenge and the possibilities of liturgical preaching.”

From the beginning of the document, \textit{FYIH} signals a new manner of addressing the homily. The reflection on the homily begins as follows: “We believe it is appropriate, indeed essential, to begin this treatment of the Sunday homily with the assembly rather than with the preacher or the homily, and this for two principal reasons. First of all we can point to the great emphasis which communication theorists place on an accurate understanding of the audience if communication is to be effective.”\(^{139}\) \textit{FYIH} continues: “Contemporary ecclesiology provides a second and even more fundamental reason for beginning with the assembly rather with than the preacher or the homily. The \textit{Dogmatic Constitution on the Church} describes the church as the mystery of God’s saving will, given concrete historical expression in the people with whom he has entered into a covenant. This church is the visible sacrament of the saving unity to which

\(^{137}\) Ibid., 1.
\(^{138}\) Ibid., 2.
\(^{139}\) Ibid., 4.
God calls all people.”¹⁴⁰ Later, it states: “…the homily is preached in order that a community of believers who have gathered to celebrate the liturgy may do so more deeply and more fully—more faithfully—and thus be formed for Christian witnesses in the world.”¹⁴¹

Other magisterial documents treated above certainly refer to the assembly and making the homily relevant to the needs of the particular community. _FIYH_, relying upon contemporary communications theory and ecclesiology, takes this category for the liturgical homily in a new direction.

First, the BCPLM addresses the question of who should preach the homily. “Again, we recognize that there are occasions when the homily may be preached by someone other than the presider, by a deacon serving in the parish or a guest priest preacher, for example. Yet, in terms of common practice and of liturgical norm, the preaching of the homily belongs to the presiding minister. (See _The General Instruction of the Roman Missal_, #42: ‘The Homily should ordinarily be given by the celebrant.’) The unity of Word and Sacrament is thus symbolized in the person of the presiding minister of the Eucharist.”¹⁴² Even before the _CIC_ 1983 settled the question, _FIYH_ recognizes preaching as normally a presidential task.

The majority of the document is addressed to the question of the task of the preacher and what his preaching should accomplish. For example, the BCPLM says, “The Sunday Eucharist is a privileged point of encounter between a local Christian community and its priest. Within this Eucharistic celebration, the homily is a moment when this encounter can be especially

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.
¹⁴¹ Ibid., 18.
¹⁴² Ibid., 2.
intense and personal.”\textsuperscript{143} Just prior to this, in the section on the assembly, \textit{FIYH} calls the preacher, “the mediator of meaning.”\textsuperscript{144} As we will see below, \textit{FIYH} will often fluctuate between speaking about the homily and about the preacher.

This focus on both the assembly and the preacher thus influences \textit{FIYH}’s approach to defining the liturgical homily. \textit{FIYH}’s first definition is this: “This understanding of the homily that is central to this document [is] a scriptural interpretation of human existence which enables a community to recognize God’s active presence, to respond to that presence in faith through liturgical word and gesture, and beyond the liturgical assembly, through a life lived in conformity with the Gospel.”\textsuperscript{145} \textit{FIYH}’s working definition of the homily subtly redirects and narrows the role of Scriptures in the homily from a focus upon the Scriptural proclamation to solely an interpretation of human life. In a section on the Lectionary, \textit{FIYH} summarizes this understanding: “The homily is not so much \textit{on} the Scriptures as \textit{from} and \textit{through} them.”\textsuperscript{146} The BCPLM argues for this more strongly when it posits: “If the homily must be faithful to the Scriptures for it to be the living Word of God, it must also be faithful to the congregation to whom this living Word is addressed. The homily will be effective in enabling a community to worship God with praise and thanksgiving only if individuals in that community recognize there a word that responds to the implicit or explicit questions of their lives.”\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 17.  
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 7.  
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 9.  
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 20  
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 22.
“Fulfilled in Your Hearing” addresses, like many of the magisterial documents above, the question of the mode of preaching. It says:

Like all preaching, the homily is directed to faith. … The homily is preaching of another kind. It may well include evangelization, catechesis and exhortation, but its primary purpose is to be found in the fact that it is, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, ‘a part of the liturgy itself’ (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, #52). The very meaning and function of the homily is determined by its relation to the liturgical action of which it is a part. It flows from the Scriptures which are read at the liturgical celebration, or, more broadly, from the Scriptures which undergird its prayers and actions, and it enables the congregation to participate in the celebration with faith.”

FIYH argues for this balance of different modes of preaching in the liturgical homily for two reasons:

First of all, social science research contends that the oral presentation of a single person is not a particularly effective way to impart new information or to bring about a change in attitude or behavior. It is, however, well suited to make explicit or to reinforce attitudes or knowledge previously held. The homily, therefore, will be less effective as a means of instruction and/or exhortation than of interpretation—that is, as a means of enabling people to recognize the implications, in liturgy and life, of the faith that is already theirs.

The second point to be made is that the liturgical homily, which draws on the Scriptures to interpret peoples’ lives in such a way that they can recognize the saving presence of God and turn to him with praise and thanksgiving, does not exclude doctrinal instruction and moral exhortation. Such instruction and exhortation, however, are here situated in a broader context, namely, in the recognition of God’s active presence in the lives of the people and the praise and thanksgiving that this response elicits.”

It summarizes this by stating: “The homily can complement all these forms of preaching by attending more specifically to what it is to accomplish. Such would be to show how and where the mystery of our faith, focused upon by that day’s Scripture readings, is occurring in our lives.

148 Ibid.
149 Ibid., 26.
This would bring the hearers to a more explicit and deepened faith, to an expression of that faith in the liturgical celebration and, following the celebration, in their life and work.”

The 1982 Bishops’ Committee’s statement on the homily is both traditional and innovative in its treatment of the liturgical homily. It affirms the homily’s integral placement within the liturgy. It reasserts the homily as properly done by the presider of the liturgy. It also maintains the notion of the homily as a bridge between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. But it gives new prominence to both the assembly and preacher in ways that had not been previously articulated by the papal and curial documents. Further it gives the needs of modern life priority over the revelatory nature of the Scriptures.

Preaching the Mystery of Faith: The Sunday Homily

During the November 2012 General Assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Bishops approved the statement on the homily, Preaching the Mystery of Faith: The Sunday Homily, written by the Secretariat for Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. This statement was prepared following the Synod on the Word and Pope Benedict’s Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini and as a follow-up to “Fulfilled in Your Hearing.”

The Bishops’ statement reiterates much of what we have examined above in Pope Benedict’s writings. It also recognizes the contributions made by FIYH while taking the liturgical

\[150\] Ibid., 27.
\[151\] USCCB, Preaching the Mystery of Faith: The Sunday Homily, (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2013); hereafter PMF.

One of the primary defining elements of *Preaching the Mystery of Faith (PMF)* is its assessment of the assembly.

Yet the homilist today must realize that he is addressing a congregation that is more culturally diverse, one that is profoundly affected by the surrounding secular agenda and, in many cases, inadequately catechized. The Church’s rich theological, doctrinal, and catechetical tradition must therefore properly inform the preaching task in its liturgical setting, for Jesus Christ must be proclaimed in a new way and with new urgency, and the Sunday liturgy remains the basic setting in which most adult Catholics encounter Christ and their Catholic faith.¹⁵²

This assessment will guide the document in its approach and tone. The Bishops are clearly addressing a different need than the BCPLM did thirty years before.

In the Introduction, the Bishops identify the aims of the homily. “More than ever, therefore, an increasingly important objective of the Sunday homily in our day is to stir the hearts of our people, to deepen their knowledge of the faith, and to renew their living the faith in the world and participation in the Church and her sacraments.”¹⁵³ This is similar to the aim of the homily in *FIYH*, but at the same time *PMF* adds a new dimension: “to deepen their knowledge of the faith.” Knowledge of faith, and the means to it, will be addressed below. Elsewhere, the aims of the homily which the Bishops identify is closer to what has been seen

¹⁵² Ibid., 6.
¹⁵³ Ibid., 4.
above: “The goal of the homily is to lead the hearer into the deep inner connection between God’s Word and the actual circumstances of one’s everyday life.”154

This connection between the Scriptures and the lives of the people comes from a different vantage point. In *FIYH*, the aim was to interpret the lives of the assembly from and through the Scriptures. *PMF* sees the homily as more creating a conversation between the two. “The homily is intended to establish a ‘dialogue’ between the sacred biblical text and the Christian life of the hearer. The homily in its most effective form enables the hearer to understand the meaning of the Scriptures in a new way and, in turn, helps the message, proclaimed in the context of the liturgy, to illumine the experience of the hearer. Thus the homily brings together both the biblical message and the contemporary experience of those to whom the homily is offered.”155 The Bishops here have restored the Scriptures as a proper focus of the homily while maintaining the need for the homily to connect to the lives of the people.

One of the most striking elements that *PMF* recaptures from the conciliar and implementation of the Council documents is the Christological dimension of the homily. Several times the statement reiterates the centrality of Jesus Christ to the homily. “Ultimately the Lord’s Paschal Mystery becomes the basis of all preaching.”156 And, a little later: “Christian preaching derives from the Risen Lord and finds its voice and force through the gift of the Holy Spirit.”157

One of the strongest statements about the Christocentric nature of the homily is:

154 Ibid., 33.
155 Ibid., 34.
156 Ibid., 9.
157 Ibid.
All effective homilies have this sense of urgency and freshness, revealing the startling beauty and promise of the Kingdom of God and of the Jesus who embodies it and brings it to reality through his Death and Resurrection. The message of the Gospel is truly a matter of “life and death” for us; there is nothing routine or trivial about it. If a homilist conveys merely some example of proverbial wisdom or good manners, or only some insight gained from his personal experience, he may have spoken accurately and even helpfully, but he has not yet spoken the Gospel, which ultimately must focus on the person of Jesus and the dynamic power of his mission to the world.\textsuperscript{158}

*PMF* bases this Christocentric focus of the homily on the homily’s liturgical nature.

Every homily, because it is an intrinsic part of the Sunday Eucharist, must therefore be about the dying and rising of Jesus Christ and his sacrificial passage through suffering to new and eternal life for us. By means of that pattern, the People of God can understand their own lives properly and be able to see their own experience in the light of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. In light of the encounter on the road to Emmaus, an essential element of all good preaching is evident: reflecting on our personal and collective experience in the light of the Paschal Mystery.\textsuperscript{159}

This allows the Bishops to offer a theological reason for the reservation of preaching the homily to an ordained minister. They state:

As part of the entire liturgical act, the homily is meant to set hearts on fire with praise and thanksgiving. It is to be a feature of the intense and privileged encounter with Jesus Christ that takes place in the liturgy. One might even say that the homilist connects the two parts of the Eucharistic liturgy as he looks back at the Scripture readings and looks forward to the sacrificial meal. This is why it is preferable that the celebrant of the Eucharistic liturgy also be the homilist.\textsuperscript{160}

But the Bishops also use this Christocentric focus of the homily to explicitly name another important dimension of the liturgical nature of the homily. In addition to bridging the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Bishops strongly argue that the homily

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 20.
prepares the assembly to participate in the Church’s mission. “Our encounter with Jesus inevitably leads to mission; our love for Jesus translates into our love for others. This is why the homily, which participates in the power of Christ’s Word, ought to inspire a sense of mission for those who hear it, making them doers and proclaimers of that same Word in the world. A homily that does not lead to mission is, therefore, incomplete.”\textsuperscript{161}

The Christocentric focus of the homily allows the Bishops also to draw from the examples of Jesus’ preaching at the synagogue in Nazareth and the Emmaus encounter the need to emphasize the catechetical dimensions of the homily. “The full scope of Jesus’ preaching reminds us that when we have the privilege of preaching the homily to a congregation at the Sunday Eucharist, we also have an invaluable opportunity to advance the Church’s catechetical ministry.”\textsuperscript{162} The Bishops do contextualize, like the papal and curial statements examined above, what this means:

Certainly, doctrine is not meant to be propounded in a homily the way that it might unfold in a theology classroom or a lecture for an academic audience or even a catechism lesson. The homily should fit that context. Yet catechesis in its broadest sense involves the effective communication of the full scope of the Church’s teaching and formation, from initiation into the Sacrament of Baptism through the moral requirements of a faithful Christian life. As the \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church} notes, “Catechesis is \textit{an education in the faith} of children, young people, and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.”\textsuperscript{163}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 23. Reference to c. 1074: “[The liturgy] is therefore the privileged place for catechizing the People of God.”
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 26-27; citation of \textit{CCC}, no. 5.
\end{flushright}
The Bishops do make a distinction among the various modes of preaching, and see the liturgical homily as having its own proper characteristics. *PMF* further clarifies how this catechetical mode of preaching fits with the liturgical homily.

Over time the homilist, while respecting the unique form and spirit of the Sunday homily, should communicate the full scope of this rich catechetical teaching to his congregation. During the course of the liturgical year it is appropriate to offer the faithful, prudently and on the basis of the three-year Lectionary, “‘thematic’ homilies treating the great themes of the Christian faith.”

Therefore a wedge should not be driven between the proper content and style of the Sunday homily and the teaching of the Church’s doctrine. To encounter the living presence of the Risen Christ in the Word of the Scriptures and in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood is not incompatible with effective communication of what faith in Christ means for our lives.\(^\text{164}\)

However, the Bishops then make several unprecedented moves expand the understanding of the liturgical homily not merely to utilize catechetical preaching methods, but to focus more explicitly upon the doctrines and teachings of the Church. In the section on the use of Scripture, the Bishops suggest that the subject of the homily be not solely the Scriptural readings of the day but also the other Scripturally-based liturgical texts as well as “to Church teaching found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or other Church documents.”\(^\text{165}\) Magisterial documents become source material for preaching. *PMF* later provides a basis for this position: “The doctrines of the Church should direct the homilist and ensure that he arrives at and preaches about what is in fact the deepest meaning of Scripture and sacrament for Christian life. For doctrines simply formulate with accuracy what the Church, prompted by the gift of the Spirit, has come to know through the Scriptures proclaimed in the believing assembly and through the

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\(^{164}\) Ibid., 27–28; citation of *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 46.

\(^{165}\) Ibid., 20.
sacraments that are celebrated on the foundation of the Scriptures.”\textsuperscript{166} One could argue here that the Bishops are modifying Prosper of Aquitaine’s axiom to \textit{lex credendi legem praedicandi statuat}.\textsuperscript{167}

The statement recognizes that this formulation could be taken to be a return to the old-style sermons of the pre-Vatican Council II era. The bishops conclude the second section with these cautionary words: “Fidelity to the Church’s Magisterium does not mean, however, that the homily should be an abstract affirmation of doctrine. The purpose and spirit of the homily is to inspire and move those who hear it, to enable them to understand in heart and mind what the mysteries of our redemption mean for our lives and how they might call us to repentance and change.”\textsuperscript{168} While the Bishops have expanded the source material and narrowed the meaning of the Mass, they still affirm the objectives of the homily that have developed since Vatican II.

The Bishops also add one more new explicitly named element that has been in the undercurrent of the statements that have been examined above: the homily is an act of the Church. “We should also note that the preaching of a homily, since it occurs in the context of the Church’s liturgy, is by definition a profound ecclesial act, one that should be in evident communion with the Church’s Magisterium and with the consciousness that one stands in the midst of a community of faith.”\textsuperscript{169} They summarize their understanding of the liturgical homily as

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{167} The original axiom is \textit{Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi}, and is attributed to Propser of Aquitaine (c. AD 440), meaning that the law of praying (the Liturgy) grounds the law of believing (the formulation of the doctrine) for the Church.
\textsuperscript{168} \textit{PMF}, 35.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 34.
follows: “It is a sacred ecclesial act meant to lead from the biblical word to the Eucharistic action and thereby to nourish faith and build up the Body of Christ gathered in prayer.”

The final sections of the PMF do not explicitly treat the liturgical homily itself but focus upon the preacher and the assembly, and discuss methods of preparation for the homily. These are all-important topics in themselves, but go beyond the scope of this present chapter.

**Conclusion: Relationship of the Concept of the Liturgical Homily between Robert Waznak’s Writings and those of the Magisterium**

Through the course of this present investigation, we have seen the notion of what a liturgical homily is evolve in Magisterial teaching. While the term ‘liturgical homily” itself is used throughout the twentieth century, its meaning has developed from a Patristic term that was synonymous with “sermon” to an integral liturgical element that bridges the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, relates to the life of the assembled community, and leads to further mission. The Magisterial teachings also refined the homily to be a liturgical element whose proper minister is the one presiding at the liturgy.

Waznak characterized the homily as biblical, liturgical, kerygmatic, relevant, conversational and prophetic. We have seen many of Waznak’s elements in the documents covered above. But a few of his elements do not have basis in the magisterial definitions of the homily.

\(^{170}\) Ibid., 35.
His first characteristic is “biblical.” Without any disagreements, the Magisterial documents have repeatedly defined the homily as being drawn from Scriptural sources. Even the 2012 US Bishops’ statement on preaching which broadened this to include the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does so because it argues that much of the Church’s dogma and doctrine are scripturally based. But the Magisterial definitions have all seen the homily as drawn from the biblical texts of the readings, orations, and hymns that are proclaimed at the liturgy itself.

Waznak’s second characteristic, “liturgical,” is explicitly named in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and is carried through every post-Vatican Council II teaching that relates to the homily. Under this heading, Waznak refined the characteristic to mean “doxological, anamnetic, epicletic, eschatological and ecclesial.” The later magisterial documents, especially those from the US Bishops, emphasize the doxological nature of the homily: it is meant to lead to the praise and worship of God. *Preaching the Mystery of Faith* highlighted the eschatological nature of the homily with its emphasis on the proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Likewise, *PMF* articulated the ecclesial nature of the homily in a way that had not been explicitly done in the previous documents, but was present in the underlying arguments of the teachings.

The anamnetic and epicletic characteristics are nowhere named or discussed as relating to the homily. While one could argue that the anamnetic character of the homily is undergirding the position of Christ’s presence in the Word as it is proclaimed, the epicletic nature of the homily is largely ignored in the teachings. If the Holy Spirit is mentioned, it is in relation to the preparation of the homily, but not as a dimension of the homily itself.
PMF likewise picks up Waznak’s third characteristic of the homily after it disappeared from the Magisterial teaching. The kerygmatic nature of the homily centers upon the proclamation of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. This, too, is behind every liturgical act and, thus, every homily.

The Magisterium extensively has reflected upon Waznak’s fourth characteristic of “relevant.” The Council, the Popes and curia, as well as the US Bishops’ Conference, recognize that for the homily to be ministerially effective in the Church it needs to speak to the needs and the times of the assembled community.

Waznak’s fifth characteristic, “conversational,” deals more with homily delivery and preparation of the language of the text rather than with the intrinsic nature of the homily. There is not a clear agreement on the most effective style of delivery in the Magisterial teaching on the homily.

Waznak’s final characteristic, “prophetic,” which he did not develop extensively, is not found with much regularity within the Magisterial teachings. One wonders if this is because the term itself is problematic in its current usage.

We can then conclude from the teachings of the Church, then, that the homily is an essential element of the Church’s liturgy, which seeks to praise the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and sanctify the People of God, given by the one presiding. The homily builds upon the Scriptural texts proclaimed in the midst of the gathered community to nourish the community in order to allow the community to recognize God’s continuing presence and to foster their sense of communion and mission as the Body of Christ.
Chapter Four: Narrative Preaching: Beyond Using Stories in the Liturgical Homily

Review of Robert Waznak’s theory of Narrative Preaching

James Wallace, C.SS.R., posits that one of Robert Waznak’s contributions to the discipline of homiletics was his writing about narrative preaching.¹ Mel Blanchette, SS, recounts Waznak’s love for the story that stemmed from his childhood and grew as he matured. “Bob was a great storyteller” is a phrase that is used by most people who knew him. It is fitting then that in this next chapter we turn to an exploration of narrative preaching and the theology of story as a tool to develop a theology of the homily.

In 1991, Waznak wrote an article for the New Theology Review about the then-current status of narrative preaching. He wrote, “While Catholic theologians have written extensively on the subject of narrative theology in recent years, it should be noted that most of the homileticians mentioned in this article (both those who advocate and those who question narrative preaching) are Protestant. There has been precious little written on the subject by Catholic homileticians.”² He was one of these who had written on the subject, as we saw in Sunday after Sunday.³

Waznak grounded the “why” of narrative preaching in the belief that story is not “the key that opens up the answers to the ultimate questions of life but is the primary way in which life’s meaning is revealed”⁴ because “human experience is inherently narrative in form.”⁵ Using the

¹ Interview with James Wallace, C.SS.R.
² Waznak, “Like a story,” 93–94.
³ See pages 23ff. above in chapter two.
⁴ “Like a story,” 94.
works of Craddock, Steimle and his colleagues, and the then-recently published collection of essays *Journeys Toward Narrative Preaching* edited by Wayne Bradley Robinson, Waznak illustrates the “how” and “lingering questions” of narrative preaching.\(^6\)

Since Waznak’s article appeared, narrative preaching has fallen out of favor in some contemporary homiletic circles.\(^7\) However, an historical overview of its development and fundamental insights and questions addressed by both Protestant and Catholic homileticians will provide both a means to appreciate Waznak’s contributions and develop a theology of the liturgical homily.

**Protestant Scholars on Narrative Preaching**

**Fred Craddock: *As One Without Authority* (1971); *Preaching* (1985)**

We begin this exploration of Narrative Preaching with Fred Craddock’s seminal work *As One Without Authority*. Homileticians point to this work as the beginning of the New Homiletic.\(^8\) Craddock’s tome critiques the homiletic style of previous generations through establishing a theological foundation of the Word, and applying this theology to preaching and advocating for the use of an inductive form of preaching.

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\(^5\) Ibid.

\(^6\) See pages 23ff. in chapter two above for a more detailed exploration of Waznak’s treatment of narrative preaching.


Craddock begins his theological foundation of the Word with an acknowledgement of the contemporary situation. “That there is in our time a language crisis, a general experience of the loss of the power of words, is all too evident. Needless to say, this means a crisis in preaching. The starting point for the study of homiletics has been radically shifted. All considerations of structure, unity, movement, use of text, etc., must wait upon the prior consideration of what words are and what they do.”

He succinctly summarizes the importance of the focus on words when he wrote: “Saying words can belong to the deepest level of human relationships. While there are those who hesitate to preach because preaching is ‘only words,’ there are others who hesitate because preaching is words.”

Words are foundational for Craddock because they are the essence of Christian faith and communication. The history of the Sacred Scriptures begins with oral communication and written documents come later. For Craddock, this has immense consequences for preaching: “In a way unequalled by any of the other senses, the ear receives the temporal sequence of sensations appropriate to the communication of activity and the unfolding of the history of a people. One has to raise the question whether there is involved here something so fundamental to the Christian faith that, television to the contrary, the oral must remain in the center of Christian proclamation.”

Craddock also recognized the changing culture in which most American preachers found themselves (and still do today).

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10 Ibid., 16.
11 Ibid., 9.
An examination of great evangelistic sermons of the past makes it clear that the speaker assumed at the outset that the hearers were part of a culture that was Christian and the appeal to them was simply not to be “holdouts.” This condition is rapidly disappearing and the claim of the Gospel must be presented on its own terms with the understanding that the hearers stand amid several alternatives. In this respect, the fall of Christendom is to be welcomed on the part of the preacher, for when assumptions give way, faith can be born.¹²

Likewise, Craddock recognized that assemblies want the preacher to preach in a way that is relevant to their lives. “Relevant sermons we all want and need, but what is painfully lacking is a mode of proclamation that is relevant to the present speaker-hearer relationship.”¹³ For the contemporary assembly this means a change in the manner in which a preacher presents the sermon. “Without question, preaching increases in power when it is dialogical, when speaker and listener share in the proclamation of the Word.”¹⁴

Craddock maintains that sermons are not meant to interpret the Scriptures, but rather, as a proclamation of the Word, their task is more fundamental: “Here we meet the primary concern not of understanding language but understanding through language. One does not begin with the idea that we have in the New Testament verbal statements that are obscure into which we must introduce the light of understanding; rather, one listens to the Word hopeful that it will shed light on our own situation which is obscure. The Word of God is not interpreted; it interprets.”¹⁵ Thus for Craddock sermons are meant to be the interpretation of lives through the Scriptures.

¹² Ibid., 14–15.
¹³ Ibid., 19.
¹⁴ Ibid., 19.
¹⁵ Ibid., 42.
Craddock spells out several important implications for this understanding of the role of the words and language in his approach to preaching. “First, if God addresses man through the text, the Word of God must, by its very nature, be spoken. The church is compelled by its own understanding of a God revealing himself through words to share its message through the personal contacts affected most basically by the spoken word.”\(^{16}\) He continues:

The second implication for the preacher from what has been said about hermeneutics is that he sees himself first of all as a listener of the Word of God. … Paul outlined the plan of world evangelization, beginning not with the preaching but with the listening. “Faith comes from what is heard” (Rom. 10: 17). Robert Funk has succinctly expressed it: “He who aspires to the enunciation of the word must first learn to hear it; and he who hears the word will have found the means to articulate it.”\(^{17}\)

The third implication is theological. “From the beginning oral speech has not only had a primal role in the spread of the Gospel; it had a theological significance as well. In contrast to writing, speaking is direct, personal, engaging, and demanding. In addition, speaking, unlike writing, is committed to the time being, existing only in the present.”\(^{18}\) More applicable to the Catholic understanding:

There seems to be at present a tendency to speak of preaching as sacramental in the sense that Christ is present speaking his Word, but not a sacrament in the sense of \textit{ex opere operato}. Preaching lies very near the sacrament and is to be understood as opening mind and heart in faith to receive the sacrament. But since the Word is effective in itself, the function of preaching is not merely preparatory. Unlike the sacrament, the contingencies related to the speaker and the hearer assume greater significance in defining what takes place. … The Word of God comes in the ordinary vernacular; hence the priest is responsible for choosing words and preparing carefully his sermon. This view of preaching is

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 42.  
\(^{18}\) Ibid., 44.
incarnational: as The Word came in the flesh, so the Word comes in the form of human speech.\textsuperscript{19}

Craddock furthers these theological implications to inform how a sermon is preached. He says, “When the preacher comes really to believe in the incarnation, that God comes to us in the ordinary, that God’s Word comes in the usual patterns of the vernacular, he will trust that God can use the local idiom.”\textsuperscript{20} He further explains: “Rather than being distilled for their content, the parable communicates as parable; it is the method that effects the experience. The method is the message. So is it with all preaching: how one preaches is to a large extent what one preaches.”\textsuperscript{21}

Marshall McLuhan’s “the medium is the message,” then, is taken to a theological level. “The theological issues involved in method are innumerable. How one communicates is a theological commentary on the minister’s view of the ministry, the church, the Word of God, sin, salvation, faith, works, love, and hope. And it is probably a clearer and more honest expression of his theology than is the content of his sermons.”\textsuperscript{22}

Craddock exhorts his readers to use an inductive method of preaching that begins with concrete experiences and allows the assembly to arrive at the point(s) of the sermon. He says, …it is theologically basic to the inductive method that, even in missionary preaching, the listener not be viewed as totally alien to God and devoid of Godwardness. This is not to forget that man is a sinner contradicting and resisting the Word of God nor to approach every man as though he had a religious faculty to be developed. But neither are we to forget ‘the light enlightening every man,’ ‘the law written on the heart,’ or the imago dei, however distorted it may be.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 52–53.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 61.
He continues, “The experienced and experienceable material is not to be regarded simply as illustrative any more than a man’s life is to be lightly handled as an illustration of something. This is the stuff of the sermon and its reality lies in its specificity. This is a biblically sound procedure. … The incarnation itself is the inductive method.”

Craddock summarizes his theological foundation for the New Homiletic as follows: “…it would be meaningless to ask if the Word is to be located at the mouth or the ear; Word belongs to communication and communication is listening-speaking-listening. It is in the sharing that the Word has its existence, and to catch it in flight in order to ascertain which part is of the speaker and which of the hearer is impossible nonsense. Let the words be spoken and let them go, trusting God who gave not only the Word but the gift of hearing and speaking.”


Edmund Steimle and his students Morris Niedenthal and Charles Rice published their textbook, *Preaching the Story*, in 1980. Like other books published at this time, it establishes the practice and theory for narrative preaching. As O.C. Edwards, Jr., in his *A History of Preaching*
comments, “The significance of this seminal volume lies in the way that it named and thus raised an issue and set others clamoring to answer it.”

In regard to this present study, one sees immediately in the outline of the Table of Contents of this work the framework for Waznak’s development of narrative preaching: part One of the work is entitled, “The Preacher,” part two, “The Listeners,” part three, “The Churchly Context,” part four, “The Message,” and part five, “Learning to Preach.”

Steimle and his students provide the language for Waznak’s framework of “the story of the preacher,” “the story of the listeners,” and the “the story of God.” In a chapter on by what authority one preaches, Steimle wrote:

So we return to the image of the preacher, Bible in uplifted hand, as the image of the preacher’s authority—so long as we recall that there are three stories implicit in that image: (1) The biblical story, apart from which there would be no preaching; (2) the preacher’s own individual story, through which the biblical story is filtered and which adds the preacher’s own individual witness that the biblical story has in fact become the preacher’s story; (3) the story of the listeners, the community of believers, who have provided the place and occasion for preaching and who have called the preacher to do on their behalf what the preacher has been trained by them to do—so to interpret the biblical story that light is shed on all three stories.

The story of God is the starting point of the sermon for the authors. They see narrative preaching as a form of biblical preaching. As Steimle notes:

So biblical preaching today, along with all the other facets of the church’s life, of course, will keep bringing us back to The Story [which tells me who I am, who God is, and what’s to become of both of us] in the light of our stories and the

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28 Steimle, “By What Authority?” in Preaching the Story, 41.
story of our times. It will expose the acedia in us for the evil that it is; but even more it will prod our hope in the faithfulness of God to his promises as that faithfulness comes to light in the biblical story.\textsuperscript{30}

This does not mean that narrative preaching is not relevant to the times and life of the community. Rice explains how the story of God relates to relevant sermons.

[Frederick] Buecher distinguishes clearly between the common human struggle for survival and success on the one hand, and one the other the struggle whose terms are those of the gospel and whose consummation is the kingdom of God. What is important for preachers, in distinguishing one battle from the others, is to see that there are stresses within the culture itself which may become the openings through which the gospel can enter and transform our common life. The story of our times is not altogether cohesive, and it is at the point where ‘things fall apart and the center cannot hold’ that we wait for the advent of the Word of God.\textsuperscript{31}

Like Craddock before them, they see the biblical story as the starting point for preaching.

As Craddock did, Steimle, Niedenthal and Rice also discussed the role of language within the preaching event.

John Crossan has said that the paradox is to language as eschaton is to world: the straining of language and history point beyond themselves. In paradoxes and stresses in our common story, and in the cracks and gaps which are opening in our creed regarding our foundational realities as they respond to the shocks and stresses of the story we are living, we may learn more about the present-but coming kingdom and find language in which to witness to the hope of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{32}

The language of the preacher is not just any language. Rice notes, “Our culture may be moving beyond the positivistic reductionism which actually inhibits science, morality, economics, and

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 139.
even politics, moving toward a more poetic sense of the world. The church has a very large
stake in the movement, for, as Nathan Scott has said, our allies in the preaching of the gospel are
not the positivists—those who have it all sewn up—but the open-eyed, awestruck poets.”

In addition to the language of story and narrative, Preaching the Story shines light on the
role of the assembly within the preaching event. Steimle wrote:

...we need to pay more attention than we usually do to the vital place of the
community of believers in the authority of the preacher. The office of preaching
belongs ultimately to the community of believers, the congregation, not to the
person of the preacher. The act of ordination, along with the examining process
which normally accompanies it, is testimony to the fact that the office of
preaching belongs to the community of believers. Indeed, the vestments we
wear...bear witness to the fact that what is going on here is more than just one
individual’s own personal act, no matter how committed or personally sincere the
individual may be.

This discussion leads to the summary that narrative preaching, the preaching of the three
stories, allows the assembly to take part in the preaching event. Steimle, in the summary of the
book, concludes: “So the fabric of the sermon, by reflecting more faithfully the fabric of the
biblical source of its message in its secularity, its dialogical character, its dramatic story-form in
the indicative mood, and its lean and spare style, may speak to the person come of age in terms
which will give the gospel hearing at least, even if in their freedom some persons may well reject
it.”

34 Steimle, “By What Authority?” in Preaching the Story, 39.

One figure whom Waznak did not mention in his 1991 article, but who is influential in the development of the narrative homily is Eugene L. Lowry. In the same year that *Preaching the Story* was published, Lowry published his first work on the same subject, a textbook titled *The Homiletic Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. Rooted in the work of Craddock, Lowry puts the inductive principles into concrete form by arguing that a sermon is a narrative art.

Craddock described his foundation principle for narrative preaching: “For over thirty years now I have been trying to suggest to people that a sermon should move from an itch to a scratch. As I stated in *The Homiletic Plot*, the most crucial issue with regard to preaching is a sense of discrepancy. No discrepancy, no movement from itch to scratch, probably a muted message!” In order to share this discrepancy with the assembly, Lowry describes the movement of the sermon in terms of plot. He highlights two types of plots (out of many) that are popular in American culture: the movie plot where the end is unknown and the audience engages with it as it unfolds, and the television plot where the audience knows the protagonists will survive to the next week but the middle process captures their attention. Sermons can follow these plot sequences.

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Sermons tend to involve the second kind of plot [which involves an unknown middle process]. The congregation has gathered to worship God. Symbols of all kinds have already made the central affirmation to the incarnation before the sermon begins. The congregation expects the gospel to be proclaimed one way or another, and for Jesus Christ to emerge as Savior and Lord—the answer to the sermonic bind. But how? In what way? For what purposes? This unknown middle ground provides the context for sermonic tension.\(^{37}\)

*The Homiletic Plot* then is a way for preachers to develop their homilies according to plot sequences. “In that first book, I designed a narrative shape that could imagine such a movement, involving five steps: upsetting the equilibrium, analyzing a discrepancy, disclosing the clue to resolution, experiencing the gospel, and anticipating the consequences.”\(^{38}\) Lowry acknowledges that his terminology and his plot sequence has inherent deficiencies, but maintains that it provides a fundamental structure to design a homily.\(^{39}\)

Lowry published *Doing Time in the Pulpit: The Relationship between Narrative and Preaching* in 1985. “My principle [sic] concern in [*Doing Time in the Pulpit*] was to say that a sermon is not an object in space but an event in time. … Whereas I hoped *Plot* would help people know how to shape a narrative sermon, *Doing Time* was an attempt to explain why the narrative principle is far more effective in preaching work. *The key principle is that of a plot that involves a strategic delay in the preacher’s sermonic meaning.* Other writers have captured the narrative principle in their emphasis upon movement, juxtaposition, conflict, anticipation, phenomenological moves, and telos.”\(^{40}\)


\(^{38}\) Lowry, “Narrative Renewed,” 82.

\(^{39}\) See Lowry, “Narrative Renewed,” 82.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
Lowry’s great contribution to the field is addressing the shape of a homily through narrative; he demonstrates the Gospel roots of preaching. In *The Homiletic Plot*, he states his idea clearly: “My conclusion is that a sermon ought not be a collection of parts constructed by a preacher, regardless of how we have been taught to think so. The sermon has its roots in the truth of the gospel which indeed has a life of its own. …Our task in preaching is to facilitate the homiletic birth and development of such an idea rooted in the gospel.”


In his 1991 article, Waznak pointed to the work edited by Robinson as a modern contribution to narrative preaching. The collection of essays by Lowry and others give a state of narrative preaching in the late twentieth century.

This work is significant in two respects for this discussion. First, Robinson and Lowry both provide a definition of the significant terms “narrative” and “story.” Robinson, in the Introduction wrote:

I agree, however, with Eugene Lowry that we would be best served by keeping the terms *story* and *narrative* separate and defining them differently for the purpose of their use in homiletics. He says: “The term *story*—as I am suggesting here—is quite restricted in breadth. It refers to a tale drawn from any number of numerous literary forms: myth, parable, saga, etc. By the term *narrative* I mean a particular shape that discourse might take. Although other models are possible, in my writings I have concentrated on one which bears a close resemblance to Aristotle’s ideas expressed in *Poetics*. By *narrative sermon* I mean an event-in-

time which moves from opening disequilibrium (or conflict) through escalation (complication) to surprising reversal (*peripetia*) into closing denouement.”

The second major contribution of the collection is that it names a major problem with defining narrative preaching: “…it is still true that in the field of narrative preaching at this time there is no fixed understanding of what is and what is not narrative. For some, narrative does indeed mean the same things as story as we have defined it here. For others, it is a much broader and more elastic category.” This remains true, even twenty years after this volume was published.

Catholic Scholars on Narrative Preaching

As Waznak noted in the 1991 *NTR* article, Catholic theologians have written extensively about narrative theology, but Catholic homileticians have not related narrative theology to preaching. In this section, we will look at two examples of how Catholic scholars have treated a theology of story, and then look at how a contemporary theologian has incorporated the concept of narrative preaching into the Catholic view of the homily.

44 Fr. James T. Bretzke, SJ, has compiled in May 2011 a sixteen-page bibliography of Narrative Theology that is available at https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/NarrativeBibliography.pdf.


During the 1970’s when Waznak was finishing his doctoral dissertation and beginning his teaching career, Catholic scholars were beginning to publish on the subject of story and narrative from a Catholic perspective. One of the early proponents of the use of story in theology was John Dominic Crossan. While his training and interest was in biblical studies, he published a short work with the subtitle, “towards a theology of story.”

The main contribution of this work for a theology of the liturgical homily is Crossan’s articulation of the types of story and their purpose. Crossan summarizes that there are five main types of story: myth, apologue, action, satire and parable. The myth “establishes world”, the apologue “defends world,” the action story “investigates world,” the satire “attacks world,” and the parable “subverts world.”

The myth and parable are opposites, as are the apologue and the satire. But each type of story is important to understand the world.

Crossan argues for the importance of the parable in Christian theology. “It is clear that parable is really a story event and not just story. One can tell oneself stories but not parables. One cannot really do so just as one cannot really beat oneself at chess or fool oneself completely with a riddle one has just invented. It takes two to parable.” Parables and parabolic stories aim at conversion within community.

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46 Crossan, 69.

Fathers Navone and Cooper are not directly addressing the issue of narrative preaching in their 1981 book; instead they too are developing a systematic theology of story based upon Lonergarian principles. They do so in two parts: (1) “a threefold propaedeutic to the theology of story;” and (2) “nine moments in the theology of story.” These nine moments are subdivided into “a phenomenology of storytelling” and “the universal story of God told in the life story of Jesus.” Through the exploration of 120 theses clustered under these nine moments, the authors stimulate the discussion of a theology of story.

Like narrative preaching in the world of homileticians, narrative theology has experienced a rather difficult reception. The work of Navone and Cooper is important for this study because it was one of the first Catholic systematic approaches to the concept of narrative and from it theological principles for narrative preaching can be derived. Navone and Cooper argue, “The theology of story is a theology about the human and divine subjects who speak, tell stories, spin yarns, and relate to one another through the ceaseless babble and chatter that make up the world in which they live.”

It is thus about divine and human communication. They summarize their approach:

We have chosen to write a theology of storytelling because we are convinced that all stories are implicitly meant to communicate interpersonal relationships that ultimately are embraced by the value and mystery of God. All stories are meant to be ‘theological.’ Humankind needs theological stories because human beings are fundamentally interpersonal and because, if the Christian God’s promise is true, then humankind is fundamentally related to God as person. Since story is

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the only means by which the interpersonal reality of humankind can be expressed in its cognitive and affective fullness and since our relationship to God is fundamentally interpersonal, it follows that storytelling and storylistening provide the most appropriate means of enabling us to live this relationship.\textsuperscript{48}

Navone and Cooper provide with this theology of story two theological principles from which a more comprehensive theology of the liturgical homily will be built. First, they reiterate the Incarnational principle of preaching. Because the Gospel story is the universal story of God, it becomes the foundation for all human stories.

The Jesus story reveals God as the one who gives his very Self to that which is wholly other (humankind), a Self that in its inmost nature is constitutive of the Other and constituted by the Other. The Jesus story reveals God as the dynamism that underlies all our questioning and all our desiring. God is the question that lies beyond all our particular loves. Every human life story is, to a greater or lesser degree, explicitly or implicitly, a raising of questions and complacent ecstasy in the other. Every human story intends God, the loveliness of transcendent being and value. And because God is a truth that transcends human questioning and a value that transcends human desires and satisfaction, he transcends all that humankind can imagine.\textsuperscript{49}

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and all that follows in his life, characterizes the human story. To tell any human story is to participate in the story of God. To tell any human story becomes a sacramental event. The biblical story, then, becomes the primary story to be told.

Second, Navone and Cooper develop a theology of the act of communication. They state,

Communication, as its etymology implies, is a making of the many into one, a communion, many members being made one body. All communication is a sharing of the communicator’s life, ideals, dreams, values, aims, purposes, and understanding with those to whom he or she addresses herself or himself. To communicate is to act both cognitively and affectively. I must understand what I wish to communicate; I must love what I communicate and those to whom I

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., xvi—xvii.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 97–98.
address myself. I must understand my audience, their desires, fears, longings, aims, cognitive development, if I am to speak effectively to their condition.  

With this insight into communication as an act of communion, Navone and Cooper demonstrate the biblical manifestation of this insight.

In the first of his letters, the disciple John tells his readers that he is telling the story of the Word so that they may enter into communion with him (cf. 1 Jn. 1:1–3). John’s telling of the story founds the community. Later in his letter he goes on to warn his readers about false storytellers: those who ‘speak the language [story] of the world’ must be rejected (cf. 1 Jn. 4:1–60. The communion between overseers and their elders, and between the overseers of one church and another, is a communion of storytellers. It is in his capacity as the chief storyteller of his Church that each overseer can acknowledge or refuse to acknowledge other storytellers as being part of his community.

But the communication of ideas is not the only purpose of the storytelling, or the proclamation of the Gospel. The storyteller and the storylisteners, as a community, also discern together the meaning of story. This interpretation, as Navone and Cooper show, is an act of the community that has been formed.

Discernment of the true meaning of the Good News, the judgment phase of our cognitional process, is greatly facilitated when it is done in a community striving to find life through the Gospel. The Christian community provides a corrective and supportive matrix for our authentic hearing of the story of Jesus. Occasionally the judgment of the community is wrong, and one’s personal judgment—assuming a conflict of interpretations—is right; still, the risk of solipsism that the isolated individual runs would seem to be a greater risk than when she or he is actively guided by the communal interpretation even she or he has some objective linguistic controls for interpreting the Good News. The community’s celebration of the Good News—particularly its liturgical celebration: lex orandi, lex credendi—appears to be a primary context for its authentic interpretation. The Good News is understood when it is celebrated.  

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50 Ibid., 250.
51 Ibid., 255–256.
52 Ibid., 258–259.
The preaching of the Church is a participation in the greater mission and constitution of the Church.

The Church is a communion that exists to bring all persons into communion (fellowship) with God and thereby to open them to communication with one another. Its tradition or life story, is both a communion and a communication. The community exists in order to communicate its message; and its message is that salvation is participation in its community. … The Church’s task is communication—communi-catio—the making or bringing into being of communion.⁵³


Father Guerric DeBona, OSB, published his first book on preaching in 2005.⁵⁴ In this work, DeBona sets out taking “a brief look at the history of preaching and its methods and tries to make sense of the evolution of the homily (or sermon) in its cultural context.”⁵⁵ He places the New Homiletic and *FIYH* in conversation with the preaching tradition of the Church and then addresses questions of the future of preaching and its response to the challenges of the times.

DeBona begins with the same Gospel pericope as *FIYH*. From the Lucan account, DeBona concludes that Christian preaching at its foundation moment is a communal meditational and interpretive event of the Word of God. Through the centuries of Church history, preaching has taken a variety of forms and styles.

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⁵³ Ibid., 262.
⁵⁴ We have seen above that prior to the publication of *Fulfilled in Our Hearing*, DeBona published a series of homilies in the three-volume work *Lift Up Your Hearts* with Wallace and Waznak.
In relation to this present study, DeBona exemplifies a Catholic scholar’s approach to the integration of the idea and tenets of narrative preaching into a Catholic theological framework. His second chapter, “The New Homiletic” covers in greater detail than this present study the history and contributions of Craddock, Lowry and David Buttrick to the development of the inductive preaching. He summarizes narrative preaching in the following way:

Preaching as a narrative, then, is notable for the way it engages the congregation in plot and intention; it is a happening: an oral, communicative event-in-time, which cannot be reduced to the stasis of writing. Inductive preaching is something like a contract between the preaching [sic] and the congregation, in which they agree to make meaning together; this making of meaning may or may not happen in the context of a narrative strategy. Narrative preaching follows the plot design of human experience that is always in motion, makes connections, and moves toward a final ending. … Craddock’s inductive, narrational method appears less concerned with textual coherence than with engaging the congregation in a primal level of religious experience; the sermon is supposed to be provocative, which may lead to a lack of internal structure. … As we will see later, Craddock’s students and successors will tighten up the narrational form in order to engage the congregation more directly with much more attention to the specific dynamics of plot and story.

DeBona then articulates the essential elements of inductive, narrative preaching: the teller and imaginative interpreter, the listener and the pastoral imperative. Reflection on these elements both argues for an inductive method to preaching, but also guides why one preaches in such a way.

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56 DeBona is not alone in this enterprise. See also James Wallace, C.SS.R., Preaching to the Hungers of the Heart (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002).
57 David Buttrick, who is not treated in this chapter on narrative preaching, wrote a seminal work on an alternative way to approach the development of the sermon. See Buttrick, Homiletic: Moves and Structures (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).
58 DeBona, 35–36.
In chapter three, “Liturgical Preaching,” DeBona demonstrates a Catholic approach to inductive, narrative preaching. After an historical overview of preaching in a liturgical context, DeBona argues that the Liturgical Movement’s promotion of active participation and the Council’s recovery of the concept of homilia are two major factors which contributed to the shift in liturgical preaching in Roman Catholicism.59

This shift in best reflected in the 1982 statement from the US Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*. *FIYH* appropriates the tenets of Craddock’s inductive method. DeBona states, "*FIYH* recognizes that the work of sanctification is to be accomplished not so much by the will of individual participants or the one who preaches to them, but by the grace-filled encounter among preacher, text and the people of God. In a word, it is not just preaching but the entire liturgy that is meant to sanctify, since is a remembering of God’s activity in Christ in human history."60 DeBona identifies three important themes of *FIYH*, all of which are derived from the New Homiletic: “Preacher as Interpreter,” “Through the Scriptures,” and “The Role of the Hearer.”

*FIYH* recognizes the changing context of preaching and seeks to root the homilist within the new context. DeBona points out: “The document is at pains to point out the kind of fluid relationship that exists between the preacher and hearer; they are clearly acknowledged as persons who are participating in a homily as an event-in-time.”61 DeBona also posits that “*FIYH* says that homilies ought to engage in a personal style, ‘more like personal conversation,’ which

59 Cf. Ibid., 87–90.
60 Ibid., 91.
61 Ibid., 92.
finds its origins in the New Testament use of the homily… *FIYH* expands on the work set forth in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the homily, but it goes further, recommending the inductive method as a way of preaching and deliberately contrasting it with deductive structure."\(^{62}\) He continues: “It would seem unlikely that after the teaching of the Second Vatican Council authentic liturgical preaching could ever be deductive in twenty-first-century American culture, since, as we have seen, that method of argument tends to eclipse not only the listening assembly but the scriptures themselves. In honoring the assembly *FIYH* says that the homily should be more informal, even on matters of utmost importance, rather than ‘a speech or a classroom lecture.’"\(^{63}\)

The role of the listener in *FIYH* is the key connection between the New Homiletic and Catholic theology. DeBona again argues: “As I have already implied, the revision of the way in which the hearer is engaged in listening to the Word and in the speech-act in *FIYH* owes a lot not only to the council and the theology that supported it, but ‘the new language’ of the homily and the new image of the preacher as formally initiated by Fred Craddock. Indeed, *FIYH* powerfully claims the ‘how’ that remains so much a part of Craddock’s own homiletic…”\(^{64}\)

**Conclusion: Waznak and Narrative Preaching**

Robert Waznak’s first two books were heavily influenced by the ideas sketched out in this chapter. The development of Catholic teaching on the liturgical homily, likewise, was

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 94–95.
\(^{63}\) Ibid., 95; citation of *FIYH*, 24.
\(^{64}\) Ibid., 96.
deeply influenced by the fruits of the New Homiletic that began in Protestant circles. The influence of the pioneers of the New Homiletic on the very evolution of the homily cannot be understated.

Yet, in the theological discussions centered on narrative preaching, the Protestant roots point to a lacuna in the sacramental and liturgical celebration’s role and influence on the homily. The preaching event itself becomes the central focus and must accomplish the whole of the liturgical celebration. As we saw above, there is a recognition of the Catholic contribution to narrative preaching, but more needs to be done with how the narrative homily interacts with the liturgical celebration.

With this acknowledgement of the limitations of narrative preaching, Waznak’s utilization of narrative preaching is important in several ways. First, narrative preaching highlights that the liturgical homily is not a written text but an event due to its nature as both an act of preaching and a part of the liturgy. Second, as an event, it is an interaction between the Scriptural texts, the homilist and the gathered assembly. The proclamation of God’s wonderful works must take into account not only the biblical and doctrinal truths, but those who will listen in order to effectively proclaim Jesus Christ. Third, narrative preaching has solid theological foundations of an incarnational principle in sacramental theology. Craddock, Lowry and others root this type of inductive preaching in how the Father communicates His Love through the mystery of the Incarnation. This includes an understanding of the mediation that necessarily takes place within the event. Finally, the principles of narrative preaching articulate an understanding of the specific ecclesial nature of the event. As narrative, it is always a communication between people, especially believers. The language of the homily, the style of
presentation and the content is firmly rooted in the Church’s ministry of the proclamation of Jesus Christ.
Chapter Five: Focus on the Homilist

Introduction: Robert Waznak and the Images of the Homilist

Robert Waznak’s debut of the images of the homilist in the second chapter of his 1998 *An Introduction to the Homily* was discussed in chapter two of this present work. The concept of using “images” or “models” of the preacher was inspired by his reading of Avery Dulles, SJ,’s *Models of the Church*, although the Dulles models themselves do not appear in his images. Instead, Waznak drew from other sources to develop his four images of herald, teacher, interpreter and witness.¹

However, this 1998 articulation was not Waznak’s first articulation of “images of the homilist.” In his early writing, especially when speaking about the language of the homily, he spoke of the preacher as a poet, drawing from an article by Karl Rahner, SJ. Waznak also spoke of the preacher as a herald in his writing about the New Testament *kerygma* that began in his dissertation and continued through his early works. Much of this writing drew from his rhetorical training and the writings of the New Homiletic.


This present chapter will examine these three sources of Waznak’s images for the homilist to further distill a theology of the liturgical homily based upon Waznak’s writings and

¹ See pages 58-67 above for a more detailed exploration of Waznak’s treatment of the models of preaching.
thought. Like the previous chapter, we will examine the source material as it appeared chronologically, we will summarize the original author’s positions that are relative to this present study and then articulate the contributions and challenges this position has for our theology of the liturgical homily.

**Images of the Homilist**

**Karl Rahner, SJ: Preacher as Poet**

Fr. Karl Rahner, SJ, argues for the possibility of the priest and poet becoming one in his essay “Priest and Poet,” published in the 1964 collection *The Word: Readings in Theology,* which was compiled at The Canisianum in Innsbruck, Austria. He does this with a five part argument: (1) “To the poet is entrusted the word”; (2) the essence of the priestly office is characterized in Scripture “as the service of the Word”; (3) priest and poet are not synonymous; (4) “The priest calls to the poet”; and (5) “The poet calls to the priest.” Clearly from this outline alone, we can see that Rahner was saying more than that a priest simply needs to have a poet’s heart or use poetic words. Rahner is presenting a theological argument for the priest’s ministry of proclamation of the Word.

In the first part of his argument, “To the poet is entrusted the word,” Rahner discusses the importance of words. He states there are two basic kinds of words: “Countless words, according to the use man makes of them, rise up to the one type, the great words, or slide down—which

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unfortunately happens most commonly—to the other type, the useful words. … The great words are precisely the words which one cannot define. One cannot eviscerate them only by killing them.”

For Rahner, the great words are the words of proclamation. He argues based upon his belief “that the great words reflect man in his insoluble unity of spirit and flesh, of transcendence and phenomenon, of metaphysics and history. It means that great words exist because everything that is, is interwoven with everything else and because thus every genuine living word has roots which reach down far into the infinite depths.”

Theologically the great words are important for Rahner. He expounds this idea:

There is one aspect of these great words which we ought to try to consider more expressly: that the great word is in a real sense a presentation of its object. It is not merely a sign for something else, the relation of which to the hearer is in no way affected. I do not mean here simply a word ‘about’ the relationship of the thing to the hearer. The great word brings here the reality it expresses; it makes the reality present, it brings it among us and puts it here. Naturally the modes of this presentation can be of the most diverse character—different according to the nature of the reality conjured up and the power of the conjuring word. But always when one of these great words is said, something happens: the object itself confronts the listeners.

These great words are the sacramental elements of proclamation. This is an important element of the theology of preaching.

Ultimately Rahner arrives at the point of this first part of his argument. He wrote,

To the poet is entrusted the word. He is a man who can utter the great words pregnantly (verdichtet). Every man speaks great words—as long as he has not

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4 Ibid., 7.
5 Ibid., 8.
sunk into spiritual death. Everyone calls things by their names and in so doing, continues the work of Adam his father. But the poet has the vocation and the gift of saying such great words pregnantly. He may say them in such a way that through his words, the things—as though set free—enter into the light of others who hear the word of the poet.⁶

He continues,

But of all the expressions of man the word alone has a characteristic which it shares with no other human creation: the word lives in transcendence. Were it not to sound simply negative, and therefore deadening, one could say: in the words alone lives negation. The word alone is the gesture that transcends reference beyond everything imaginable or imagined to the infinite. The word alone can redeem that which constitutes for all unexpressed realities their ultimate imprisonment: the dumbness of their reference to God. Thus the great word is, above all, the expression of the primordial sacrament of reality. The poet, however, is the administrator of the sacrament. To him is given the word by and in which realities come out of obscure hiding place and step into the light of man to bless and fulfill him.⁷

After this consideration of the poet and the word, the second part of Rahner’s argument seeks to understand the priest and the word. He stated,

The priest’s word does not set free (in the sense we used earlier) the things of the world from their blind, musty darkness and lead them into the light of man. The word of the priest is God’s Word[, which “is God’s eternal Logos, who became flesh and therefore could become and became the word of man”⁸]. It was spoken by God in the infinite katabasis of this self-revelation and it brings the inner and innermost light of God into the darkness of man. It illumines the man who comes into the world and allows God Himself through the faith which it produces, to be present in man.⁹

The Word of God comes through the mouths of priests according to Rahner. He further argued: “If the word cannot be spoken by Christ Himself until the end of time, then it must be

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⁶ Ibid., 9.
⁷ Ibid., 10–11.
⁸ Ibid.
⁹ Ibid., 11.
carried on by others. The ‘others’ cannot take on this word by their own powers, as one ‘can comprehend’ a theory heard once and then, on one’s own account and at one’s own risk, carry it further.”

He continued,

The ambassador and herald of the word of God we call the priest. Thus what he says is an announcement, a *kerygma*, neither primarily nor ultimately a doctrine. He extends a message. His word—in so far as it is his—is but a pointing-toward the word which Another speaks. The priest must vanish and disappear behind the message which has been handed over to him. As a priest he is not a theologian but a preacher. And because there is the proclamation of the message, therefore there is theology—not vice versa.

Rahner, in a paragraph referring to the consecration of the Mass, continued, “[i]t is with a real consolation that we may maintain that the priest is he to whom the effective Word of God is entrusted. One could also say: the priest is he to whom the great Word of God into the world is so entrusted that he can speak this great word in its absolute pregnancy.” Thus, the priest speaks the pregnant word while the poet speaks the word pregnantly.

The third part of Rahner’s argument about the relationship among the poet, the priest and the word is summarized by his conclusion: “We mean that both ways of life call out to each other. The priesthood releases and sets free the poetic nature to its ultimate sense. Yet at the same time the priesthood finds in the grace of the poet’s richness a charism for its own perfection. Why the union of priesthood and the poetic vocation would be meaningful and happy, we shall now attempt to clarify still further.”

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10 Ibid., 13.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 16.
13 Ibid., 18.
Rahner’s fourth part of the argument is that the “priest calls to the poet.” He began with an important observation that sheds light on the relationship: “The real bearer of the message of the word is the Church. It is always the holy Church. With this holiness it stands unable to reject the grace of God, which leaves freedom inviolate and which indeed alone really unfetters freedom. The word of the Church, however, is the invitation to love: it is the truth of the free, utterly and entirely self-communicating love of God.”

Given this observation, Rahner characterizes the first side of the conversation between the priest and poet as follows: “One thing remains true; where the word of God says what is most sublime and plunges this most deeply into man’s heart, there is also to be found a pregnant word of human poetry. The priest calls to the poet so that the poet’s great words may become the consecrated vessels of the divine word—with which the priest may effectively proclaim the word of God.”

Rahner’s fifth, and final, part of his argument is the flip side of the conversation between the priest and poet. He wrote: “Thus he [the poet] speaks words of longing even when he talks of flowers and the love of two human hearts. His words of longing stretch themselves out toward an unsurpassable perfection, toward perfect human love, toward the final glorification of all reality. His word thus calls to another word: to the word which gives answer to his own. It calls to an effective word which satisfies longing: to the word of God.”

14 Ibid., 20.
15 Ibid., 24.
16 Ibid., 25.
Rahner then concluded: “And, on the other hand, theology means the hymn-like
discussion of God. The poetic word therefore calls to God's word; the poet, to the priest. Let us
pursue the thought further: they can meet one another in this, that one of them speaks out the
pregnant poetic question, and the other, the divine answer. Question and answer, poet and priest,
thus would they live from one another.”¹⁷

In this article, Rahner is arguing for something more than imaging the preacher as a poet
who uses specific and concrete words. He has presented us with a clear grounding for a theology
of the Word of God proclaimed by the preacher as a poet and a priest, which we will turn to in
the next chapter. Like the Scriptures themselves, the words of the preacher both bear and evoke
the presence of Christ within them. These words penetrate the hearts of the gathered Church to
bring forth Christ within and among them, and to be brought forth into the world.

**Fred Craddock: Preacher as Listener of the Word of God**

Fred Craddock, in his influential 1971 volume *As One Without Authority*, did not write so
much about the images of a preacher, but about the act of preaching and the importance of
words. In regard to an image of the preacher, Craddock gives one simple model, which is the
foundation of all preaching: “…he must see himself first of all as a listener to the Word of
God.”¹⁸ As a listener to the Word of God, Craddock argues for the preacher, as one who uses the

¹⁷ Ibid.
¹⁸ Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 43.
inductive methods outlined in the previous chapter, to convey what he hears and experiences from his encounter with the Word of God.

The other authors of the New Homiletic, including Eugene Lowry and David Buttrick, did not devote much space to the preacher per se, but all focused on the act of preaching and the sermon, especially its structure. The major exception to this is in the area treated in the previous chapter on the story of the preacher, where the preacher himself takes on greater prominence in the field of homiletics.

### Thomas Long: The Preacher as Herald, Pastor, Storyteller and Witness

The focus upon the preacher definitively shows up in Thomas G. Long’s 1989 textbook, *The Witness of Preaching*. In the first chapter of the book, Long reflects on the images of the homilist. He then reflects on the Bible as witness, and the final eight chapters develop Long’s method of homiletic preparation, which are beyond the scope of this investigation.

Long identifies four primary images for the homilist: the herald, the pastor, the storyteller and the witness. For each of the images, he identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the image, and then ultimately will argue for the witness as the governing image for preachers.

The herald is the frequently image used by homileticians prior to the New Homiletic. Long explains, “The image is a biblical one, derived from one of the several Greek terms used in the New Testament to describe preaching (*kerusso*). The herald metaphor received its modern homiletical impetus not merely because it is a biblical term but also because of the prominence
given to it by the neo-orthodox theological movement, especially among those who sought to be followers of Karl Barth.”¹⁹ He continues, “Obviously, the herald image contains a very high theological view of preaching since it implies that, though the preacher is the one who speaks the words of the sermon, God is actually doing the proclaiming.”²⁰

Long continues, “What becomes truly important about preaching, viewed as an act of ministry, is the message, the news the herald proclaims. A herald has but two responsibilities: to get the message straight and to speak it plainly.”²¹ He offers the caveat, however, that “[t]he herald image does not rest on the claim that the preacher, by repeating or explicating the words of the Bible, actually speaks God’s word. God’s word is not a set of words; it is an event, the very presence of God in Christ addressing the hearers. The claim of the herald image is rather that God has promised to be present as we faithfully proclaim the scripture in preaching.”²²

Long summarizes the strengths of this image in three points. First, he says, “It reinforces preaching that possesses a vigorous biblical and theological character, over against the thin gruel of moralisms, popular wisdom, bits and pieces of advice for creative living, and encouragements to positive thinking derived from culture, which are founds in all too many sermons.”²³ Second, he argues, “the herald image refuses to allow the vain paradings of preachers who substitute

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²⁰ Ibid., 25.
²² Ibid., 27.
²³ Ibid., 28.
charm and style for the substance of the gospel.”24 Finally, he believes “[t]he main value of the herald image, though, lies in its insistence upon the transcendent dimension of preaching.”25

He also notes that the image of herald presents five weaknesses or challenges. First, he says, “To begin with, [the herald’s] disdain for matters of rhetorical form and communication runs counter to what we now know, through literary approaches to biblical interpretation, about the character of the scriptures themselves. Much of the Bible was in oral form before it was scripture.”26 The herald image often fails to allow the literary forms of the Scriptures to be a part of the message. Second, he notes that “the biblical writers were about the business of creating effects with words, and they were doing so not as ornament or merely to create interest but because these effects were extensions of the impact of the Gospel itself.”27 Following the previous observation, Long notes that the herald does pay attention to the intentions of the original writers and the way that meaning happens by the interplay of words. Third, Long notes that “[t]he herald image so stresses that preaching is something which God does, insists so firmly that preaching is divine activity rather than human effort, that the role of the preacher is almost driven from sight.”28 He explained this earlier in the chapter: “If the herald image emphasizes the importance of the message, it correspondingly deemphasizes the personality of the preacher. Heralding is a derivative activity. The task of the herald is not to be somebody, but to do
something on another’s behalf and under another’s authority.” Fourth, he notes, “the herald image fails to take adequate account of the context of preaching. Preaching does not occur in thin air but always happens on a specific occasion and with particular people in a given cultural setting. These circumstances necessarily affect both the content and style of preaching…. Long is referring to what others have termed “relevancy.” And finally, he also notes, “the personal character of the preacher and the quality of the relationship between the preacher and the hearers are factors of more importance than the task-oriented herald image normally allows.” Earlier, he described this as follows:

The herald preacher has a paradoxical relationship to the congregation, to the church. One [sic] the one hand, a herald comes to the people with news from the king. The herald preacher proclaims the biblical message, which always comes to the hearers as a word from beyond them, a word from God. On the other hand, those who hear this word from God in faith and obedience constitute the church, and God entrusts to the church the ongoing ministry of preaching. Preaching is one of the ministries of the church, and the preacher is called to preach both by God and the church.

Long summarizes this image of the preacher as herald in this way: “Thus the herald metaphor underscores the conviction that the primary movement of preaching is from God through the herald to the hearers.” From this image, he moves into one that “corrects” it: the pastor. The pastor image characterizes preaching which “seeks to enable some beneficial change in the hearers, attempts to help them make sense of their lives, and strives to be a catalyst for more

29 Ibid., 27.
30 Ibid., 29.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 27.
33 Ibid., 28.
responsible living on the part of those who hear. In short, the pastor wants something good to happen to and for the hearers as a result of the sermon.”\(^3\)\(^4\)

For the pastor-preacher to facilitate this change, he must know the assembly and their needs. “The preacher discerns these needs, we may even say diagnoses these needs, and then strives to be of help by intervening with the gospel, by speaking a word that clarifies and restores.”\(^3\)\(^5\)

This intervention of the Gospel is not a recital of biblical verses, but it is a knowledge of how the Scriptures speak to the assembly. Long also maintains that “the pastoral preacher must know more than a set of messages; the pastoral preacher must know people and how they listen to messages.”\(^3\)\(^6\)

Long identifies two major implications for the pastor model of preaching. First, by contrasting this model with that of the herald, Long notes, “For the herald, the most important dimension of preaching is the message. For the pastor, the crucial dimension of preaching is an event, something that happens insider the hearer.”\(^3\)\(^7\) This then reflects how both types of preacher use the Scriptures: “The herald starts with the Bible as source; the pastor starts with human dilemma as experienced by the hearer and turns to the Bible as resource.”\(^3\)\(^8\) Second, Long observes that “If the herald image deemphasized the person and presence of the preacher, the pastor image implies that the preacher’s relationship to the hearers—in terms of style,
personality, character, previous experiences, and so on—is a crucial dimension of the pastoral and therapeutic process.”

Again, for Long, this impacts how the Scriptures are viewed in the preaching model: “The pastoral image also contains a more historically based understanding of the scripture as the record of the interaction of the gospel with the concrete realities of human situations.”

While Long sees the preacher as pastor as a necessary correction to the herald image, this notion is not without weaknesses. First he notes that the pastor-preacher tends to view the assembly as individuals and their needs. He wrote: “The public, corporate, and systemic dimensions of the gospel are often downplayed in favor of more personalistic themes.”

Further, he notes that the more difficult dimensions of life are highlighted in this model. “More, pastorally oriented sermons tend to focus upon those situations in human life where people are hurting and need help. What can be forgotten in all this is that people bring their strengths as well as their weaknesses to church. … Pastoral preaching, to be sure, is not by definition compelled to ignore people’s strengths, but as a matter of practice it usually does.”

Second, he notes that other dimensions of theology are neglected by this fixation of the present lives of members of the assembly.

Another related difficulty with the pastor image is its tendency to overwork the notion of relevance. … Preaching, like the gospel to which it seeks to be faithful, has a past tense and a future tense as well as a present tense. … In addition to facing the challenges of the present, the task of preaching is to evoke the

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., 33.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
memories of where we have been and to articulate the vision of where we are going. … Here the herald image corrects the pastoral one. The gospel message contains elements that must be proclaimed, even though, for the moment, they do not fully connect to present possibilities and therefore must be held in trust.  

Finally, Long notes that by overcorrecting the herald image, God can be lost in preaching.

The herald image also corrects the pastoral image in another way. The message of the herald is primarily news about what God in Christ has done, is doing, and will do on our behalf. The pastor runs the risk of reducing theology to anthropology by presenting the gospel merely as a resource for human growth. If the herald image created a one-directional model of preaching, the pastoral preacher is tempted to reverse the flow by moving from the experience of the hearer toward the gospel, with a resulting constriction of the gospel agenda.

He further observes that this has implications for how Scripture is viewed. “All this calls into question the way pastoral preaching typically uses the Bible. The critical question is whether preachers are supposed to help ‘find their stories in the Bible’ or are supposed to call the hearers, as George Lindbeck has suggested, to ‘make the story of the Bible their story.’”

From the herald and the pastor models, then, Long arrives at his third image for the preacher: the storyteller. This image differs from herald and pastor because “it tells us who the preacher is by describing how the preacher preaches: by telling stories.” He continues, “Proponents of this image, however, would counter that the storyteller preacher actually blends the best traits of both the herald and the pastor without bringing along most of their most serious faults. The storyteller, they would say, can be just as attuned to the biblical message as the

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43 Ibid., 34.
44 Ibid., 35.
46 Ibid., 36.
herald and, at the same time, be just as sensitive to the human situation as the pastor." This claim is based on the claim that “[t]heologically narrative is superior because, at its base, the gospel itself is a narrative.” We have seen this claim in the previous chapter. Long explains it further:

The Bible itself, when taken as a whole, can be described as a story, ‘a vast, loosely-structured, non-fiction novel.’ What about those parts of the Bible that are clearly not narrative…? This material fits, the argument goes, into a larger and primary narrative framework of the Bible. In fact, the non-narrative material grows out of this larger narrative, making little sense apart from the overarching biblical story that frames it.

This image of preaching has four implications which Long elucidates. First, he notes that the storyteller values and appreciates the rhetorical form of Scripture. He wrote: “The herald seeks to discover the content of the gospel; the storyteller refuses to divorce that content from the rhetorical form in which it is found.” He continued, “For the storyteller, then, narrative is not merely one way to proclaim the gospel, it is the normative way. The gospel is essentially narrative in shape and, consequently, so is the expression of the church’s faith in that gospel.” Second, building upon this appreciation for the form, the storyteller creates a forum for involvement of the assembly. Long observed,

Stories that are well told both enable and demand a high level of involvement on the part of those who hear them. Stories ‘create a world’ and invite the listeners to enter into that world and participate in it. In a sense, the storytelling image establishes a middle ground and a meeting ground between the concerns of the

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 37.
50 Ibid., 38.
51 Ibid., 39.
herald and the pastor, since the storyteller can both honor the integrity of the gospel message and take full cognizance of the life story of the hearer.\textsuperscript{52}

This participation is not limited to the assembly. The storyteller model allows a great personal presence of the preacher. Long explains, “while the herald would be reluctant to employ a personal anecdote in a sermon, the storyteller is convinced that the preacher’s own life story is an indispensable resource for preaching. The preacher does not stand outside the community of hearers but in the middle of it—indeed, as a member of it.”\textsuperscript{53} Fourth, this model brings in one of the strengths of the previous model. “The storyteller image, like that of the pastor, places a premium upon the experiential dimensions of the faith. The goal of the storyteller is for something eventful to happen to the hearer in a sermon.”\textsuperscript{54} This brings with it the implications from the pastor model of the “event” nature of preaching.

In many ways, the storyteller model is a middle ground between the herald and pastor. It combines many of their strengths. Long notes,

The storyteller image thus possesses many strengths. It balances the concern for objective truth of the gospel with a passion for religious experience. By weaving the stories of human experience into the biblical narrative, and by naming the theological dimension of those experiences, the storyteller announces, ‘Today this scripture passage has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ In addition, the storyteller image is attentive to the rhetorical craft of preaching without forcing the gospel into an alien rhetorical mold.\textsuperscript{55}

He continues, “The capacity of narrative to create a common world allows the storyteller to go a long way toward overcoming the dichotomy between individual and community in

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{52}{Ibid.}
\footnotetext{53}{Ibid.}
\footnotetext{54}{Ibid.}
\footnotetext{55}{Ibid., 40.}
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preaching. … The church is not only gathered by the story, it participates actively in the telling and finishing of the story.”

However, like the previous two models, the storyteller image carries with it two inherent weaknesses. First, Long notes that it downplays other genres in Scripture and limits preaching to a single method.

The biblical writers do not always tell stories, because the communication of some aspects of the faith is best done in a poetic or didactic or proverbial voice and not always through narrative. Even if the basic narrative shape of the gospel is always standing in the background, there comes a time when preaching must speak in another voice, drawing out concepts, singing songs, speaking of the logical character of belief, talking about practical ethics, and so on.

And second, he notes that “[t]here is a deep theological danger in measuring preaching by its capacity to generate religious experience.” In comparing the experience of the ancient Israelites to the present assembly, he explains, “One could always count on Baal for a religious experience, but not so Yahweh. Yahweh tended, on many occasions, to have a hidden face, to be absent in those times when the people yearned for a more readily available God. In sum, God does not always move us when we desire to be moved, and everything that moves us deeply is not God.”

Long provides a good summary comparison of this model. He explains,

The storytelling preacher … recounts both God’s story and our stories, seeking to weave our stories, the narratives of contemporary life, into the framework of God’s story. The result can be a powerful interplay between the Bible and life, but

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56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., 41.
we must admit that it can also produce simply a confusion of stories. … Ideally, the Christian story serves as the normative center of this narrative universe, critically informing all lesser stories. The danger, of course, is that this process gets reversed and the lesser story erodes or replaces the gospel story.\textsuperscript{60}

This leads to Long’s preferred model of the preacher: the preacher as witness. He begins the section on “Preaching as Bearing Witness” with the text of Isaiah 43: 8–13. He noted:

Paul Ricoeur identified four claims about the witness made by this text:
The witness is not a volunteer, not just anyone who comes forward to give testimony, but only the one who is \textit{sent} to testify.
The testimony of the witness is not about the global meaning of human experience but about God’s claim upon life. It is Yahweh who is witnessed to in the testimony.
The purpose of this testimony is proclamation to all peoples. It is on behalf of the people, for their belief and understanding, that the testimony is made.
The testimony is not merely one of words but rather demands a total engagement of speech and action. The whole life of the witness is bound up in the testimony.\textsuperscript{61}

Long begins his explanation of the witness using the legal metaphor of a witness in court. He makes the parallel between the court’s witness in the stand and the Church’s witness in the pulpit. He states:

Now this witness is in every way one of the people, but he or she is placed on the stand because of two credentials: the witness has seen something, and the witness is willing to tell the truth about it—the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In one sense, the personal characteristics of the witness do not matter. The court is interested in the truth and in justice, not in the witness per se. In another sense, however, the character of the witness is crucial. If the witness lies—bears false witness—the ability of the people to discover the truth will suffer a grievous blow.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., 43.
He continues: “The court has access to the truth only through the witness. It seeks the truth, but it must look for it in testimony of the witness. The very life of the witness, then, is bound up into the testimony.” Likewise, the Church has access to the truth through the testimony of witnesses.

Long identifies five implications for preaching of the witness model. First, he notes that the preacher comes to the pulpit as one who has seen and heard the Lord Jesus.

When the preacher prepares a sermon by wrestling with a biblical text, the preacher is not merely gathering information about that text. The preacher is listening for a voice, looking for a presence, hoping for the claim of God to be encountered through the text. Until this happens, there is nothing for the preacher to say. When it happens, the preacher becomes a witness to what has been seen and heard through the scriptures, and the preacher’s authority grows out of this seeing and hearing.

He continues:

There may well be many in the congregation whose faith is richer, more mature, and more tested than the preacher’s. In addition, there will probably be people in the congregation who have more education or more common sense, who have a firmer grasp of human nature, or maybe even know more Bible and theology than does the preacher. To call the preacher an authority does not mean that the preacher is wiser than others. What it does mean is that the preacher is the one whom the congregation sends on their behalf, week after week, to the scripture. The church knows that its life depends upon hearing the truth of God’s promise and claim through the scripture, and it has set the preacher apart for the crucial activity of going to the scripture to listen for that truth. The authority of the preacher, then, is the authority of ordination, the authority of being identified by the faithful community as the one called to preach and the one who has been prayerfully set apart for this ministry, the authority that comes from being ‘sworn in’ as a witness.

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63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 44.
65 Ibid.
The preacher as witness comes to the pulpit through the fact of being a Christian who shares his experiences. Second, Long notes that since the preacher goes to the Scriptures on behalf of the assembly, he brings their needs and the needs of the world. “Whatever needs of church and world have been brought to the text by the preacher, when the claims of God through the scripture are seen and heard, the preacher turns back toward those who wait—and tells the truth.” 66 The preacher brings the truth of the Gospel to the people. Third, Long notes that there is not a single rhetorical form of preaching, but that the preacher as witness allows the Scriptures to give a shape to the message. “One can even say that the truth to which the witness testifies seeks its own verbal form, and the responsibility of the witness is to allow that form to emerge.” 67 Fourth, the witness will always be relevant due to the very nature of the witness. “Effective preaching has an invested local flavor because the preacher as witness participates in the mission of a specific community of faith, goes to the scripture on behalf of that community, and hears a particular word for them on this day and in this place.” 68 Finally, Long notes that the context of the assembly is theologically vital for the witness. He notes, “The witness image also underscores the ecclesiastical and liturgical setting of preaching. Though it is not always apparent, the worship of the church is a dramatic enactment of a great and cosmic trial in which the justice of God is poised against all the powers that spoil creation and enslave human life. In this trial Christ is the one true and faithful witness.” 69

66 Ibid., 45.
67 Ibid., 46.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
Since the witness is Long’s preferred model, he does not give weaknesses of the model. He sees this model as overcoming the weaknesses of the other models.

Long concludes the chapter with a final section on “Preaching and Worship.” For this present discussion, there are two points that especially relevant. First, Long notes, “Christian preaching bears witness to Christ both in the church and through the church to the world.” There are always multiple levels of witness that happens with every preaching event. Second, Long states,

For most of us, the majority of preaching will occur in the context of the community of faith at worship. This means, in part, that preaching becomes woven into the dramatic structure of the larger service of worship, which itself is a witness to the gospel. This has many practical implications, of course, regarding the relationship between the sermon and the other parts of worship. More basically, however, it indicates that preaching is not merely a deed performed by an individual preacher but rather the faithful action of the whole church.

We will carry this final observation by Long into the final chapter. There are many practical and theological implications for the relationship between what happens during the Liturgy of the Word at the time of the homily and the other parts of the liturgy.

### Conclusion: Shift from “Liturgical Homily” to “Homilist” Loses Liturgical Identity of the Homily

Robert Waznak clearly saw a great value in a focus upon the one preaching. His reflections primarily drawn both from the work of the NCCB’s Committee on Priestly Life and

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70 Ibid., 47.
71 Ibid.
Ministry’s “Fulfilled in Your Hearing” and Thomas Long’s *The Witness of Preaching* give us valuable insight into the ministry of preaching. Viewing the homilist as a herald, teacher, interpreter, storyteller, pastor and/or witness gives us a sense of the tasks that one must do when stepping to the ambo Sunday after Sunday. It allows the preacher to come to this part of the liturgy with integrity and confidence.

But Long’s final observation that we looked at above and Rahner’s hope for the poet and priest becoming one are lost when the focus is solely upon the one doing the action and what his role is. In Long’s words, the liturgy “itself is a witness to the gospel.” Ultimately, then, the one coming to the ambo is the same person who is coming to the altar. The one who listens to the Word in the midst of the assembly is the same who collects their gifts and presents them to God on the assembly’s behalf and presents God’s gifts to the assembly.

In essence, what has been lost in this discussion, and in the focus on the role of the homilist in these writings is a reflection upon the relationship between the homily and other parts of the liturgy. From the Catholic perspective, one needs to have this firmly rooted in order to talk about the minister.

Thus, before our articulation of this relationship in chapter seven, we will examine one final aspect of Waznak’s thought: his call for a contemporary theology of proclamation.

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72 See chapter 3 for a more in-depth coverage of this document.
73 Long, 47.
Chapter Six: Theology of Proclamation

Introduction: Robert Waznak’s Call for a Theology of Proclamation

Throughout his career, Robert Waznak expressed the need for a theology of proclamation that would govern modern homiletics. In his final work, Waznak approaches the subject in his chapter on the characteristics of the homily. In writing about the homily as prophetic, Waznak observes:

The history of preaching points to the many forces that robbed the homily of its prophetic quality: the reading of the sermons of “experts” from the past; dogmatism and moralism; preference for the Liturgy of the Eucharist over the Liturgy of the Word; lack of an integrated theology of proclamation; the loss of spiritual vision. The lessons of history are a reminder for us to detect and resist similar forces in our time that threaten the prophetic characteristic of the homily.¹

However, he did not articulate his own integrated theology of proclamation. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, he heavily relied upon the foundation established by his contemporaries in the field of homiletics and by prominent theologians to build his own theory and theology of the liturgical homily.

In these final two chapters, then, we will move away from examining the source materials upon which Waznak relied, and attempt to answer Waznak’s call for an integrated theology of proclamation. In this present chapter we will examine several contemporary theologies of proclamation in order to formulate a theology of the liturgical homily in the next, and final, chapter of this study. For each of the five contemporary writers, we will first present an

¹ Waznak, An Introduction to the Homily, 26.
overview of their own theology of proclamation, and then will identify the strengths of their theology in order to formulate a working theology that will guide the final chapter.

Contemporary Theologies of Proclamation

The scholars of the liturgical movement and the pre-conciliar era worked tirelessly at advancing the theological foundations of the liturgy. One of the areas that many of them treated was developing a theology of proclamation. As we have seen Karl Rahner, SJ, Josef Jungmann, SJ, Edward Schillebeeckx, OP, Domenico DeGrasso, SJ, and Joseph Ratzinger all wrote about preaching. In this chapter, we will turn to six contemporary authors who build theologies of proclamation based on the work of their predecessors in the post-Conciliar period.2

We will use the term “theology of proclamation” to describe how the proclamation of the Word of God helps the Church delve into the divine mystery. This differs from biblical scholarship, which attempts to understand the Word as it has been handed down in written form in the Scriptures. A theology of proclamation in this chapter, then, is about the role of the Word of God, either defined narrowly as Scriptural texts or more broadly as the Liturgy of the Word, within the liturgical setting. Each of our authors will use this or similar terms to describe this pursuit of understanding how proclamation and divine mystery interact in the liturgy. The overviews that follow will be presented in varying degrees of detail. Two of the authors, Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, and Paul Janowiak, SJ, wrote monographs on the theology of

2 This is by no means an exhaustive study of the theology of proclamation, which could be a dissertation on its own. Rather, the five authors were selected as examples of substantial contemporary iterations of a theology of proclamation, and represent various viewpoints and approaches.
proclamation that have been examined and summarized in other forums. However, other theologies of proclamation have not received the same critical attention. The work of Elizabeth McKeown, CSJ, is an unpublished dissertation; the treatment of the theology of proclamation by Kevin Irwin and Guerric DeBona, OSB, is a part of their larger works and has not received attention in their own rights; and Peter Cameron’s book is relatively recent and has not received much attention by homileticians and liturgical scholars. Therefore, I will present these works in chronological order of the first work of each author, summarizing Hilkert and Janowiak’s works while presenting a fuller systematic outline of the other scholars.


In her 1984 doctoral dissertation at the Catholic University of America under the guidance of Fr. William J. Hill, OP, Sister Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, wrote one of the first contemporary theologies of proclamation based upon the works of Edward Schillebeeckx, OP. Hilkert’s work is important for both the date of the study, but also the treatment and incorporation of one of the leading scholars who bridged the conciliar eras: the Liturgical Movement, the Council and the period of implementation of conciliar reforms. Hilkert published

her dissertation with modifications in 1997 with the revised title of *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*.  

Robert Waznak, in a review of her work in 1998 wrote:

A few years before Vatican II Karl Rahner complained, "Alas . . . there is no theology of the word! Why has no one yet begun, like an Ezechiel [sic], to collect the limbs strewn about upon the fields of philosophy and theology, and then to speak the word of the spirit over them so that they rise up a living body?"

Even since her 1984 doctoral dissertation, Hilkert has been collecting those limbs strewn about especially upon the theologies of imagination of Edward Schillebeeckx and Karl Rahner. Her book breathes a new word of the spirit upon the contributions made to a theology of proclamation not only by these two representatives of the sacramental imagination but also by the contemporary insights of liberationists, feminists, and ecological theologians. H[ilkert] proposes that preachers should draw upon human experience with an ear for "an echo of the gospel." Her work also includes the wisdom of the critique of the dialectical imagination where "the story of Jesus as preserved in the biblical texts also challenges and confronts contemporary experience" (55).

Hilkert begins her work with the insight that every preacher has a theology of preaching—whether implicit or explicit. She then proceeds to develop hers by, in Waznak’s terms, "collecting those limbs strewn about" by Schillebeeckx, Rahner, Barth, and liberation theologians.

She begins her work by exploring the difference between the “dialectic imagination” of Protestant theologians and the “sacramental imagination.” Hilkert believes that the dialectic imagination can be characterized by placing a distance between God and humanity, stressing the hiddenness and absence of God as well as the sinfulness of human beings, focusing upon the

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paradox of the cross, naming the need for grace as redemption and reconciliation, and seeing the not-yet character of the reign of God. In contrast, the sacramental imagination stresses a God who is self-communicating love, sees human beings created in the image of God, names grace as divinizing and forgiving, highlights the mediating role of the Church as sacrament of salvation in the world, and sees the foretaste of the reign of God present in human community. Hilkert then turns to explore a relationship between the power of the word (dialectic imagination) and grace-enfleshed in word and action (sacramental imagination) with the key players of: Karl Barth, Rudolph Bultman, Ernst Fuchs, Gerhard Ebling, Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, and “liberation theologians.”

For Hilkert, the theology of preaching is based on how the presence of the Spirit is mediated through creation and human experience. She believes that preachers must listen to the human experience with an ear for the echo of the Gospel. The preacher is sent to the poor to be among the poor to hear the good news they experience when they listen to the Scriptures from the context of their lives and struggles. Further, she asserts that preachers must admit and name the absence of God’s reign in suffering, as well as the joy and fulfillment of finding the divine in what people experience. The theological grounds for narrative preaching found in the manner which the sacramental imagination stresses the role of grace as discovered and discoverable in human experience. Thus, theologically informed and scripturally based homilies are intended to reveal, cause and name the reality of divine activity for specific assemblies here and now.

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6 Hilkert, Naming Grace, 20–26.
7 Ibid., 31–43.
8 Ibid., 44–57.
Hilkert explores the insights of theologians in relationship to preaching. She begins with Paul Tillich and his method of correlation, which premises that there is a need for dialogue among theology, religion and culture. Hilkert concludes that preaching, like theology, begins with an analysis of the human situation.

She also probes the thought of Karl Rahner and his position that reality is structured symbolically. He believes that the signs of grace are found everywhere if one has “eyes to see.” He also believes that human beings are fundamentally graced. From the accounts of creation in Genesis, human beings are structured as listeners of the Word. Hilkert concludes based upon her reading of Rahner that sin affects but does not destroy the image of God in humanity.

Rahner believes that the Word announces the grace already present in the depths of the person and in the midst of human history and creation. This is based upon his distinction between human words (information giving) and depth words (expressing profundity). Words have the potential to become sacraments of divine love. The depth words embody a deeper spiritual reality from which they emerge.

Ultimately, preaching and sacraments function as the Church’s self-expression through a process of naming, celebrating and proclaiming the mystery of God’s salvific self-offering of love in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. The preacher brings this self-expression through the interpretation of human existence in light of Scripture, liturgy and Christian tradition.

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9 Ibid., 27–29.
10 Ibid., 31–34.
11 Ibid., 58–70.
Hilkert studies the work of Edward Schillebeeckx, OP, who posits that revelation takes place within human experience—specifically in human history. History always involves interpreted experience. It has a narrative structure and is shared. The narrative offers the possibility to interpret our history in a new way. Certain experiences provide a shift, which allows recognition of a deeper dimension of the self and reality.\(^\text{12}\) Further, Hilkert argues based upon Schillebeeckx and liberation theologians that God is present to the majority of the world’s population in the way He was present to Christ on the Cross—as the source of endurance and hope.\(^\text{13}\)

For Hilkert, then, based upon her reading of Schillebeeckx, there are several implications for preaching. The preacher names the creative presence of God to be found in the fragments of salvation and in the hidden revelation. Hope is grounded in the resurrection of Christ. The preacher is “listening for the echo of the Gospel.” Because Hilkert says that human experience is an interpretation of events through various filters (culture, language, etc.), faith recognizes a depth to human experience and provides a language for it. Then there is interplay between revelation and faith: human experience can disclose new truths of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ can disclose new truths about human experience.\(^\text{14}\)

Hilkert provides several implications for a theology of preaching. First, akin to Waznak’s category of the preacher as a prophet, Hilkert believes that the prophetic task is to point to the continued working of the Spirit of God is our midst. Christianity is an experience of

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 34–38.
\(^{13}\) Ibid., 50–51.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 89–107.
faith that becomes a message. It is not merely announcing the past events but pointing to the present. Fundamentally, then, this provides an alternate view of the world to the assembly because the meaning of the text lies in the world in front of them, not in the past. The liturgical word is an already and a not-yet of the Kingdom—it is both soteriological and eschatological.

Ultimately, the art of preaching for Hilkert is to know how to tell the human story in such a way that it becomes clear that God is at work in human life by making the connection between the reality of human life and Scripture. The human story is the context where salvation continues to occur.

**Eileen McKeown, SSJ: “A Theology of Preaching Based on Karl Rahner’s Theology of the Word” (1989)**

In her 1989 doctoral dissertation at Fordham University, Sister Eileen McKeown, SSJ, wrote one of the first contemporary theologies of proclamation under the direction of Fr. William V. Dych, SJ. As the title suggests, her work is based upon the works of Karl Rahner, SJ. Like Hilkert’s dissertation, McKeown’s dissertation is important not only because of the early date of her work, but also because of the depth of incorporation of the thought of another of the leading scholars who bridges the conciliar eras. While her work has not been published, it a formidable treatment of the subject that cannot be overlooked.
McKeown intended to undertake a “systematic reflection on the nature and function of preaching within the Roman Catholic tradition”\textsuperscript{15} utilizing “an interpretative analysis of [Karl] Rahner’s work insofar as his theological positions shed light on critical questions in preaching, and indeed offer a framework from which to develop a more adequate approach to the understanding of preaching as a constitutive element of the Church’s self-understanding.”\textsuperscript{16} She does so in six chapters: (1) “a perspective on a theology of preaching;” (2) “philosophical foundations for a theology of preaching;” (3) “anthropological and theological foundations for preaching;” (4) “Christological foundations for a theology of preaching;” (5) Ecclesiological foundations for a theology of preaching;” and (6) “Conclusion: the foundations of a theology of preaching.”\textsuperscript{17}

In the first chapter, McKeown roots theology in a search for meaning by asking the question: “Who is God?” She proposes, “Throughout the ages theologians and preachers have attempted to respond to the question of God from their particular historical, cultural and social context. All other questions in theology and proclamation serve the question of the mystery of God.”\textsuperscript{18} She continues later, “For Rahner God is the answer to the depth of human questioning but the answer is experienced precisely as incomprehensible mystery with human beings caught up in this mystery by God’s free self-gift.”\textsuperscript{19} She concludes that every question about the human person is then a question about God because “Christianity’s basic message is that the human

\textsuperscript{15} McKeown, “A Theology of Preaching Based On Karl Rahner’s Theology of the Word” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fordham University, 1989), 1.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., ii–iv.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 9.
person is related to the holy Mystery, and the gospel expresses the fact that this Mystery has drawn close to us as forgiving love.”

A proper understanding of the category of “mystery” is crucial to an understanding of Rahner’s theology. McKeown offers a Rahnerian definition of “mystery”:

Mystery is, paradoxically, not that which we cannot know but precisely that which we know as always incomprehensible. Mystery always exceeds our attempts at explanation or definition. In this sense human beings encounter yet never exhaust the meaning of mystery. Whether or not men and women name their experience in this way, for Rahner mystery is that initial experience of the infinite expanse of reality grounded in God and dynamically ordered to God which constitutes the horizon of our existence.

Thus in relating “mystery” to preaching, McKeown posits the Rahnerian thought, “In each succeeding generation the Christian message must be reformulated, reflecting new historical situations to suggest an articulation and existential realization that is adequate to the self-understanding of contemporary men and women. Preaching, then, interprets the Christian message in order to name for contemporary men and women the religious significance of their lives.” She summarizes this thought with the recognition that preaching is a “summons to respond with human love to the divine love proclaimed in the gospel message.”

In a lengthy definition, McKeown describes preaching in the following way:

Preaching proclaims God’s presence in the profound depths of human experience by naming these experiences in the light of the rich symbols of the Christian tradition. Preaching captures in evocative and creative images the human experience of the religious [person] with a special intensity and introduces one

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20 Ibid., 9–10.
22 Ibid., 12–13.
23 Ibid., 15.
mystagogically to this personal and spiritual relationship between God and the human. Moreover, preaching is an invitation to conversion, a call to explore those depths of human existence where genuine religious experience takes place, and to enter into a new vision of reality through the proclamation of God’s living word. Correspondingly, the preacher is one who leads another into the mystery of God found at the heart of human existence.24

McKeown develops four elements of this definition to better understand the phenomena involved in a theology of preaching. First, she develops the notion of “proclamation.” She defines proclamation as “the expression of the word of God in the words of the preachers in the sense that it is not merely words about God but is God’s self-expression in human words.”25 She continues, “The word proclamation denotes both an act and a message and has been designated as call, address and summons. Proclamation, therefore, is a dynamic coming to pass, in the self-consciousness of both the preacher and hearer, of the saving message of God’s presence as both offer and challenge. In this way proclamation has an event character insofar as the words are filled with the proclaimed reality, that is, the self-presence of God as saving reality.”26

This “event character” of proclamation has ramifications for the language that is used, which must speak to the present assembly while being attentive to the fullness of the mystery present in the message. For Rahner, according to McKeown, “[b]oth the past and future are constitutive of the proclamation as present saving event. Proclamation is always anamnesis and promise at once. …As eschatological, proclamation looks back and forward remembering the

24 Ibid., 32–33.
25 Ibid., 33.
26 Ibid., 33–34.
past and calling forward the future. It interprets the future’s possibilities in light of past events.”

Language itself is theological.

This leads into McKeown’s second element of the definition of proclamation: “God’s presence in word.” She states rather precisely: “preaching is an expression of the Word of God.”

Quoting Rahner, McKeown further explains,

This word “which is entrusted to the priest is the efficacious word of God himself.” The Word of God is the eternal Logos who in becoming flesh became the word of man. Accordingly, the words of the preacher make effectively present this profound outpouring of God into the human. The preacher does not bring God’s word to where it is not present, but rather illumines what is always and already offered by God to men and women and is already realized in the incarnate Logos.

The Word, as a word, both reveals and conceals the presence of God in the world, and preaching shares this quality of the Word.

McKeown’s third element, “the depth dimension of human experiences,” captures the dynamic and dialogical nature of proclamation, especially preaching. McKeown believes that preaching “summons forth the depth dimension of human experience. Because God’s self-gift is truly offered in all human existence, the preached word can penetrate to the depths of ordinary human experience and point to God’s presence in everyday things. Preaching is grounded in the most basic religious hope: the universal salvific will of God.”

Because this happens, the

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27 Ibid., 35.
28 Ibid., 35–36.
30 Ibid., 38.
members of the assembly are able to connect their life’s experiences with the Mystery that is contained and concealed within their depths.\textsuperscript{31}

The final element that McKeown develops from the definition of proclamation is that it “names these experiences in the light of the rich symbols of the Christian tradition.” For McKeown this means that “[p]reaching involves the art of translation. The task of the preacher is to interpret the ordinary experiences of men and women in their depth dimension in such a way that the listener connects his or her experience with its normative expression in the Christian tradition.”\textsuperscript{32} This task of translation and interpretation that takes place seeks
to put people in touch with the mystery of their existence, which is the absolute mystery of God. Through religious images the preacher strives to express the radical depth of human existence, to initiate others into its real meaning. Such preaching avoids the merely superficial or sentimental expressions of a secular or pietistic interpretation of life, and grounds human striving for understanding in the question that human existence is, and in the response that Christianity offers to that question. It orders all religious expressions to their one center, the mystery of God in relationship to human beings.\textsuperscript{33}

This naming leads the assembly not simply to insight or profound understanding, but to action. McKeown posits that this interpretation makes a demand on how we then live in this new light.

McKeown next moves into the foundational principles for her theology of proclamation. She begins with a look at a Rahnerian understanding of words. She makes the distinction between “primordial” and “technical” words: “Primordial words are those words which by their very nature illuminate a reality which can never be captured or exhausted by an essential

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{31}{Ibid., 40.}
\footnotetext{32}{Ibid.}
\footnotetext{33}{Ibid., 41.}
\end{footnotes}
definition. ... Technical words, by contrast, are those words which men and women construct in order to name things whose meaning is exhausted by the definition.”³⁴ The primordial words, or “great words”³⁵ as we called them in chapter 5, are the words of proclamation because they both “disclose the presence of God for men and women, and evoke a response from them.”³⁶

This discussion of primordial words leads into an exploration of Rahner’s understanding of the function of these words in his ontology of symbol. McKeown summarizes Rahner’s thought as follows:

Words, then, particularly primordial words, are authentic symbols of the whole person, of spiritual realities, of the mysterious source and ground of all reality, Absolute Being. This symbolic function of the word, that is, its capacity to make present the reality of which it speaks is discovered to be a sacramental presentation of reality. A theology of preaching which reflects on the power of the word to reveal the hidden depths of existence to men and women must deal with symbolic reality. The word is the symbolic expression of genuine human existence grounded in the source of all existence, Absolute Being, God.³⁷

Primordial words, then, allow proclamation “to capture this experience of transcendence insofar as they evoke precisely the power of the human person to go beyond the symbol to the symbolized, that is, its meaning. In other words, in order to grasp the symbolic meaning of the word or sensible object, the human knower reaches beyond the finite symbol to an absolute being as the necessary horizon.”³⁸

McKeown summarizes the philosophical foundation of preaching by concluding:

³⁴ Ibid., 60.
³⁵ See page V.2–5 for a discussion on Rahner’s “great words.”
³⁶ McKeown, 68.
³⁷ Ibid., 80.
³⁸ Ibid., 125.
Preaching, then, in speaking of the human condition proclaims most profoundly the source and sustaining ground of every creature’s existence. The human person, moreover, is the potential symbol of God. The more the preached word expresses the depths of human existence the more God’s presence is expressed. Images of the human evoke the mysterious presence of God as the ground and source of all human existence. It is only when the word captures authentic human hopes, suffering, love, faith and fidelity that it mirrors for its hearers the infinite and sustaining presence of all existence. Accordingly, the hearer enters into the reality created by the word as his or her own reality, and names for himself or herself the ever-sustaining ground of that reality, God.39

McKeown next identifies the anthropological and theological foundations from Rahner’s thought for the theology of preaching. She begins with Rahner’s claim “that all theology and proclamation are essentially anthropological” which “suggests a starting point for an investigation of the theological dimensions of preaching.”40 She reasons that “[p]reaching speaks to a human subject in a particular historical context, and, therefore, needs a hermeneutic which allows the understanding of an existential realization of the Christian message to make sense in new situations.”41 She then turns to preaching “as a hermeneutic of the human subject,” because preaching is “the express awakening of what is already present in the depths of one’s being …by grace.”42 Through an exploration of the experiences of human longing, and human contingency and freedom, and the human capacity to love in relationship to preaching, McKeown concludes that since “God can only be known through the mediation of finite things,”43 “God’s revelation takes place in symbolic words and actions.”44 She continues:

39 Ibid., 133–134.
40 Ibid., 137; reference to Rahner, Opportunities of Faith, 81.
41 Ibid.
43 McKeown, 176
44 Ibid., 177.
This understanding has a twofold implication for the functioning of preaching. Not only must the one who preaches plumb the depths of the human experience of the community, but he or she must also enter the experience of mystery which is the source of his or her own being. … Because preaching is a finite expression of God’s self-presence in men and women, it has degrees of correspondence to the unfathomable depths of God’s abiding presence.”

McKeown reiterates this thought in incarnational terms a little later: “The preached word, then, is an event in human history which speaks to the deep presence of God in the heart of humankind so that this word becomes enfleshed in the world.”

McKeown builds upon these ideas as she explores the results of the preached Word in the Church. She says:

Finally, just as the prophetic word forms community so too preaching forms community. One’s self-interpretation always takes place within community. From the great figures of the past and of the present, the community forms a structure of symbols and images that bind individuals together through a common understanding of their communal roots and experiences of God’s presence. Each time these symbols and images are spoken to evoke a response in faith, a new word of revelation is proclaimed in the community. This appropriating by the community of the roots of their religious tradition enfleshes the word of God anew within the community.

Yet McKeown goes to great lengths to establish this theology in terms of Rahner’s Christology. “The preached word, when it is rooted in the meaning of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, uncovers human experience in such a way that the significance of these experiences is revealed in the light of the saving mystery of Jesus.” She continues in a later section that preaching “is an attempt to express the significance of Jesus’ life in order to evoke faith, hope

46 Ibid., 184.
47 Ibid., 186.
48 Ibid., 190.
and love in all those who hear this word. Faith is the hermeneutic key which allows the experience of the past to become the present experience.”

The Christological, soteriological and anamnetic qualities have practical implications for preaching in Rahnerian thought. McKeown observes:

The first implication has already been addressed, that is that the preacher find in the lives of those to whom he or she preaches the signs of God’s graceful presence and point to these events for them. Second, it suggests that the goal of preaching is the existential shaping of human lives so that men and women are challenged to choose to be free rather than enmeshed in sin, to hope rather than despair, to love rather than to ignore or hate. Third, it anchors preaching in the concrete, historical events of human life which cannot be substituted for by interior dispositions or abstract moral principles. Fourth, it demands that the preached word speak to the word which resides in the mind and heart of each individual in the concrete experiences of human living. Finally, it understands that who Jesus is, or the question of Christology, is the unique expression of the question of the human person, and in fact, in Jesus is found the answer.

In Rahnerian thought, all of this is grounded in ecclesiology. McKeown asserts that “[o]nly when preaching is grounded in the nature and mission of the church, can an adequate understanding of preaching’s goals and function be addressed.” She bases this upon Rahner’s position that “[p]recisely because the church is the sacrament of salvation, a theological understanding of preaching is both possible and necessary.” She continues,

The word which the church proclaims flows from the nature of the church as sacrament of the world’s salvation and constitutes the church precisely as that effective sign of God’s presence in the world. Accordingly, the church is “…the mighty proclamation of the grace which has been already given for the world, and of the victory of this grace in the world.”

49 Ibid., 196.
50 Ibid., 239.
51 Ibid., 242.
52 Ibid., 242–243.
This understanding of the church and its relationship to proclamation sets the stage for discussing the function of preaching. It undermines any temptation to superficial conformity or to an easy confirmation of religious triumphalism when one preaches in the name of the church [sic]. Rather the essence of the church demands that God’s will for all be proclaimed as that mystery of God’s love which escapes full human comprehension, which penetrates the hearts and minds of men and women, which calls all people to fullness of life.\(^53\)

Further, McKeown links Rahner’s sacramental theology with his theology of proclamation. She observes:

The sacraments proclaim God’s presence and can rightly be seen as the highest expression of the Church’s ministry of the word. Sacraments, however, are not inconceivable without preaching. Not only must the Gospel first be preached before people are brought to the fullness of the sacrament, but also preaching is essential to the sacramental celebration itself, as a mystagogy, a leading of the people into the fullness of the celebration particularly in its meaning for them. Yet, there is an even closer union between word and sacrament. Words continue the form of the sacraments. Words are the decisive elements in the sacraments.\(^54\)

She notes that “Rahner vigorously asserts the primacy of the word, ‘the sacrament is understood as one quite specific word-event within a theology of the word.’”\(^55\) She summarizes this connection between preaching and sacraments by asserting, “The word is a salvific event when it is proclaimed in the name of the church. This word brings about what it proclaims, it ‘renders the grace of God present.’ This word is the presence of God to men and women. The word, then, is salvific action and the sacrament is saving word. Word is the comprehensive symbol for God’s presence to humankind.”\(^56\)

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\(^{54}\) Ibid., 268–269.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 269; quotation of Rahner, “What is a Sacrament?,” *Theological Investigations* 14, 139.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 270; quotation of Rahner, “Word and Eucharist,” *Theological Investigations* 4, 260.
The celebration of the Mass, then, as the source and summit of the Christian life, has a special significance in Rahnerian thought:

In the eucharist, “the absolute proclamation of the whole mystery of salvation takes place.” Rahner emphasizes that the eucharist is to be understood in terms of the words that constitute the sacrament as well as the elements of bread and wine. In fact, Rahner always points to the words of the sacrament as the formal element of the sacrament. In the eucharist, therefore, the words of consecration and anamnesis, which combine with the material elements to constitute the sacrament, remain as a constitutive element even after they have been spoken. 57

In the eucharistic celebration, moreover, the preaching of the word reaches the fullness of service to the God of mystery in every word that draws men and women into the self-offering which the sacrament calls forth. As the preeminent instance of liturgical preaching, the homily at eucharist has a three-fold function. First, the preached word gives praise and thanks to God through its promulgation of the great gifts God has given to humankind in the history of salvation, in the life of each individual, and in the life of the gathered community. It is in the word proclaimed, then, that the faithfulness of God is set firmly before us. Second, the homily at eucharist touches with nourishment the lives of those gathered in the assembly to assuage the hungers that the community is actually experiencing. Third, the liturgical homily challenges those gathered for the eucharist to recognize that God is calling us here, today, at this celebration. It is here that God’s self-gift is given, here that the mystery of God’s love for us is unfolding. 58

Again, McKeown recognizes the foundational role of ecclesiology in Rahner’s theology of proclamation in relationship to the Eucharist. “According to Rahner, ‘the real bearer of the proclamation of the word is the Church.’ This is so because the church is the sacrament of Jesus Christ, the word of God. Preachers ought to proclaim the word of God with their whole existence because the church must do this as first hearer and believer of the word.” 59

58 Ibid., 280–281.
She brings the discussion full circle when she notes that “[t]here is no ritual to accompany preaching as there is in the celebration of the sacraments. Rather, the preachers’ texts are the scriptures, the tradition of the church, the liturgical celebration and the life of the community for whom the words are preached. This demands of the preacher a creative engagement of the sources of preaching to proclaim the word of God in its full richness for those present to hear these words.”

She continues, “the preacher’s commitment to the word and to the service of the word in the proclamation event determines in large measure the effectiveness of the word. … The words which the preacher speaks are the outward, expressive symbol of the self-presence of God. …[The preacher is one] ‘whose word is not merely a talking about the word of God, but a person in whose word the saving word of God itself makes contact with humankind.’”

McKeown has given us a strong theology of the proclamation that is based in three primary elements. Following Rahner, she develops a theology of words rooted in a Christological understanding of the Incarnation of the Word. She also has argued for a strong ecclesiological underpinning for this theology. Finally, she roots the act of preaching in the continuing revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. These three elements will be developed by other theologians as well.

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60 Ibid., 287–288.
Kevin Irwin: Context and Text (1994)

Waznak in his 1998 work pointed to Father Kevin Irwin’s 1994 work, Context and Text, as grounding a theological reflection of the homily in liturgical theology. In the second part of Irwin’s work, his thesis of “context is text” is applied to the “Theology of Liturgy.” In chapter 3, the first of part two, Irwin turns his attention to “Word” where the thesis “is applied to the liturgical proclamation of the Scriptures” to provide us with his theology of proclamation. He begins with the treatment of Word before the treatments of symbol, euchology and the arts because the Word “has traditionally been and remains a foundational element experienced in all liturgy.” But he observes that “[i]n the liturgy both Word and objects/elements used in worship are intrinsically dialogical, both are best interpreted in relation to each other.” Thus he considers the Word in the context of the liturgy in which it is performed.

Irwin begins his reflection on the Word noting: “Liturgists rightly emphasize the theological and liturgical value of the proclaimed Word as that which reveals the mystery of salvation, and in revealing it makes that mystery operative for contemporary communities that hear it in the liturgical assembly.”

The liturgical assembly and the liturgy itself, by providing the context for the proclamation, also give the proclamation inherent foundations. Irwin suggests that the ritual action of hearing the Word presupposes the relationship of faith between speaker and hearers. The act of liturgical proclaiming and hearing the Scripture

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63 Ibid., 85.
64 Ibid., 85–86.
invites an assembly into a relationship of ever deepening faith in God. This faith relationship is necessary in order for the religious language of the Bible to function as mediating meaning for the ritual hearing of the Word to have its effect of deepening the faith of those who share in the event of speaking and hearing the Word. The twofold movement is from God to the community of believers at worship to God. In light of our argument in chapter 2 this is to say that liturgical proclamation is intrinsically soteriological and ecclesiological.  

He defines these soteriological and ecclesiological nature of liturgical proclamation as: “The action of proclaiming the Word invites and effects conversion for willing hearers; it invites and effects a deepened relationship with God in faith for the already converted.”

We saw above that Irwin defines the liturgical proclamation as dialogical, an act of address between the assembly and the proclaimer. He further clarifies this when he states,

As an act of address, the Word demands a response. As an act of communication it demands a dialogue partner. To engage in liturgy is to enact a word and to remember a relationship. In the liturgy the Bible is proclaimed as address for the assembly in the act of which it is enacted, it is made real as an event of salvation. Its genre as properly liturgical proclamation requires that it be spoken again and again to a community gathered for its hearing and who have become more God’s own assembly because of this proclamation.

Irwin sees the liturgy, and proclamation within it, as a formation of communion with God.

The Scriptures are central to the act of proclamation within the liturgy. Recalling their nature as proclaimed texts that have been handed down within the Church, Irwin notes their theological importance to the liturgy: “The whole biblical corpus is constituted above all as a function of proclamation and communal listening leading to a response and deepened communal conversion. The ecclesial nature of the Word is paramount for it to be interpreted accurately.

66 Ibid., 86.
67 Ibid., 87.
The true point of departure for interpreting a biblical text proclaimed at liturgy is the celebrating assembly in its present experience of hearing that Word.”

He adds, “The purpose of the scriptural Word at liturgy is to place in relationship, to encounter another (the Other and others) and to reunite relationships forged and to deepen them.” Further, Irwin asserts, “the written Word of the Bible returns to its native genre when it is proclaimed liturgically in the hearing of believers. When the medium of the message of sacred speech is unleashed in new Christian liturgical settings, the fullness of Christ’s saving grace is experienced and actualized anew among the gathered assembly. It is a ‘rehearsed’ and yet ever new event of salvation.”

The very act of proclamation is then vital to the liturgy. “Since the proclaimed Word constitutes and actualizes the Church, the liturgical proclamation of the Word has priority over any devotional reading or meditation. By its very nature the Word proclaimed in the liturgy both invites and structures a faith response to that word. The act of liturgy also preserves the essentially communal nature of hearing and responding to the Scriptures.”

Irwin links his liturgical theology in the work of Rahner. The same principles that we have seen above in McKeown and Hilkert’s works is at work in Irwin’s thought as well.

The proclamation of the Word also leads to effecting the Word in sacraments. In our understanding Karl Rahner’s assertion that a theology of the Word can “serve as a very adequate basis for a sacramental theology in which the sacrament is

69 Ibid., 87–88.
71 Ibid., 89; “See, Dalmais, “La bible vivant dans l’Église,” 7, who argues that the entire function of the Bible is for the proclamation of the Word and for communal listening to the Word. Thus the Bible is the book of the assembly/synagogue/church that is convoked; the Word is normative for the hearing and identity of the faith community.” (120)
72 Ibid., 90.
conceived as the highest human and ecclesial expression of the word spoken in the church…” is important within Roman Catholicism for the integrity of liturgical celebration and for developing systematic theologies of sacraments…. It is an important foundational principle for our understanding of the theological meaning of liturgy and (sacramental) theology derived from liturgy.\footnote{Ibid., 91; reference to Karl Rahner, “What is a Sacrament?” \textit{Worship} 47 (May 1973): 275–76}

Yet, Irwin makes important distinctions not found in the above works.

That the Word culminates in the sacramental sign is a given in much contemporary writing and magisterial statements on the theological value of the Word. However, the conventional distinction which asserts that Word leads to sacrament needs to be nuanced since in effect the Word and sacrament are so essentially joined that they form one act of worship (see, Liturgy Constitution n. 56). The recent restoration of the Liturgy of the Word as constitutive of the sacramental act is an important ground for theologizing about the proclaimed Word. The famous dictum of St. Augustine “one joins the word to the material element and behold the sacrament, that is, a kind of visible word” has recently been revived as an example of the profound unity between word and sacrament.\footnote{Ibid.}

He continues, utilizing an important contemporary liturgical theologian:

Louis-Marie Chauvet comments that the use of the term “word” in this Augustinian text is three-fold since it can mean Christ himself, the proclaimed Scriptures and the sacramental formula, with the last two meanings as experienced in sacramental liturgy immediately from the first. Thus the efficacy of the sacraments can only be understood as means of communication of the Word Incarnate through the Scriptural Word. This is to suggest an anamnetic understanding of the Word and sacrament in liturgy through which salvation events are operative for contemporary believers.\footnote{Ibid., 91–92.; reference to Chauvet, \textit{Symbol et Sacrement}, 227.}

Ultimately, he wants “to argue that the \textit{liturgical context} affects the interpretation of scriptural texts and that the proclamation of the same scriptural text in differing contemporary contexts
requires interpreting that text in light of the different liturgical settings in which it is used.”

But Irwin does caution that

the interpretation of Scripture as used liturgically ought not veer from the intention of the Scriptures as a whole or from meaning uncovered through exegesis. At the same time the liturgical context in which Scriptures readings are proclaimed needs to be factored into their interpretation and application to contemporary liturgical assemblies, in particular through the homily. Such an approach leads to enhanced emphasis on the relationship between the proclaimed Word and the liturgical community as well as between Word and sacrament.

Irwin further argues that context is always involved in proclamation and its interpretation based upon the principle that “Christian ritual is never the same although it is repeated.” This continues to impact the ecclesial act that is taking place. “Hence texts taken ‘out of context’ now become texts in a new context, namely the communal act of memory that is liturgy. Here the Bible is the instrument of the memoria Christi. The proclamation of the Word continues to establish the foundation of the Church.”

Irwin notes that this proclamation is more than reading and hearing the Scriptures in a church. The experiences of the assembly and individuals within it affect how the Scriptures are heard and interpreted.

Given the varying settings for the proclamation of the Word and the variety of ways of interpreting that Word, it is important also to note that personal and communal histories inform how we hear and appropriate scriptural texts. That is to say that the Scriptures impact on us the term of these histories. They form part of a continuity in the life of faith. They are not discrete and distinct experiences in themselves. The repertoire of liturgical experiences is thus put in juxtaposition

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76 Ibid., 94.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 97.
79 Ibid., 98; reference to Tullio Citrini, “Come e dove si ascolta Dio che parla. Problemi dell’ermeneutica,” in La Bibbia nella Liturgia, 33.
with the element of personal and communal history to form the tapestry that is
faith experienced and deepened through the scriptural Word. It is into that
context of the vicissitudes of the faith journey of individuals and communities that
the assignment of scriptural texts in the Lectionary needs to be placed.\textsuperscript{80}

Within this broader definition of proclamation, the homily and the act of preaching have a
special role. Irwin posits,

\begin{quote}
Both the preacher and the homily are crucial if the Liturgy of the Word is to be
the kind of experience of salvation presumed here. Through the homily the
preacher articulates aspects of salvation enacted in the Word proclaimed that day
as these relate to the given liturgical and ecclesial context in which the Scriptures
are heard. … The two-edged sword of the Word can both cut through well worn
habits of vice and foster new habits of virtue. At all times, however, the Liturgy
of the Word is an experience of salvation for the contemporary Church since
through it Christ once more accomplishes salvation “for us and for our
salvation.”\textsuperscript{81}
\end{quote}

It is important to note in his observation that Irwin involves both the ecclesial and liturgical
contexts for the act of preaching. The homily cannot be isolated from its larger contexts.

Irwin summarizes his argument and his presentation of how liturgical theology interacts
with proclamation in three concise paragraphs:

\begin{quote}
A key factor in explicating a focus for the many shades of meaning inherent in
such texts is the homily. While repeatedly insisted upon as a constitutive element
of the liturgy, the homily should be considered as a part of the word itself. This is
to suggest that the homily is not delivered after the proclamation of the Word. It
is part of the proclamation itself. It serves to enable the Bible to come to rebirth
anew in the liturgical assembly. Preaching is literally a sacramental act in the
sense that it actualizes the Word and explores the implications of that proclaimed
Word for the believing Church. The homily is a continued reactualization of the
Lord who explained the Scriptures on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27) and of
the anointed one of God who affirmed that the scriptural word of Isaiah is fulfilled
in their hearing (Luke 4:16ff). Scriptural exegesis provides important background
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 98–99.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 99.
for the preacher as does a study of saving history. This leads to an understanding of the text’s central importance as a theological event here and now in the Church as well as for what these texts “say” to contemporary situations in human life. Here both the preacher and liturgical community are transformed because through the proclaimed (and preached word) each comes to new possibilities of existence now and of appropriate responsibilities for the future.\textsuperscript{82}

He continues a little later:

To our way of thinking, there is no single theology of preaching. Rather theologies of preaching that facilitate the naming of grace and of the holy in human life (as derived from theologians such as Edward Schillebeeckx) and that facilitate the reception of grace through the Word (as derived from Karl Barth, among others) are most helpful in appreciating the central importance of preaching. To our way of thinking, the homily continues the act of liturgical hearing in that it focuses on an aspect of the proclaimed texts for the appropriation of a given congregation. The homily is an interpretation of the Scriptures in order that their anamnetic character can be unleashed in contemporary ecclesial settings. The homily is intrinsic to the Word event because through it the Word of God becomes the mystery of salvation enacted in the particularity of diverse celebrations.\textsuperscript{83}

Finally, he states:

The homily also serves primarily as worship. Gerard Sloyan states:

“the homily…is primarily worship or praise which is also thanksgiving and petition, like the total liturgical act. Commentary on the word does not stand apart from the remainder of the divine service; it is not different from it in kind. The eucharistic act praises God for the deed done on our behalf in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The homily must do that as much as the biblical readings, the eucharistic prayer … and the communion rite.”\textsuperscript{84}

In addition it serves as an important link between what is enacted through the Scriptures and what is enacted in what follows their proclamation in the given liturgy, especially when thus [\textit{sic}] includes a sacrament. Since all liturgy is the

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 104–105.
\textsuperscript{84} Gerard Sloyan, “Is Church Teaching Neglected When the Lectionary Is Preached?” \textit{Worship} 61 (March 1987): 131.
actualization of the work of our redemption, *opus nostrae redemptionis*, the Word stands as an intrinsic part of that actualization. It also leads to the community’s response in intercessions and/or the celebration of sacraments. The move from Word to sacrament is established theologically and liturgically as more of a bridge than a leap because of their similarity as disclosive of the paschal mystery.\(^\text{85}\)

Irwin is the first to give us a liturgical theology of proclamation. Like Hilkert and McKeown, he has a strong Christological foundation of the Word, especially in the context of the Mass. In developing his ecclesiological understanding of this proclamation, he uses the image of the act of communication requiring active participation by the assembly to listen and enact the Word spoken, in Scripture and in homily. By emphasizing the communal nature of the liturgy, Irwin further grounds and highlights the importance of proclamation within the context of the Mass. His insistence that context is text shapes how the Scriptures are interpreted for the liturgical assembly. We will return to his contributions in the final chapter.


In his 1995 doctoral dissertation at the Graduate Theological Union under the direction of Fr. Kenan Osborne, OFM, Father Paul Janowiak, SJ, wrote “A Presence ‘Fulfilled in our Hearing’: Proclamation as a Sacramental Act in Roman Catholic Worship.” Like Hilkert, he later published his dissertation with a revised title, *The Holy Preaching: The Sacramentality of the Word in the Liturgical Assembly*, in 2000. In his work, he builds upon the works of Rahner, Schillebeeckx and Otto Semmelroth, SJ.

Janowiak’s primary thesis is that the sacraments are actions where the Church encounters God in a holy meeting. Preaching shares in the characteristics of the sacraments because of its intrinsic relationship to them, which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* affirmed. Janowiak, commenting on the methodology of his investigation into the works of the three theologians, notes:

The distinctive lens employed in the investigation of these three theologians is their emphasis on the sacramentality of the word and the liturgical implications that accompany their ecclesial understanding of sacraments. To imagine Christ present in the word, “when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church” (CSL 7), transforms the paradigm: proclamation is no longer an objective text, but an event. …[P]roclaiming the Scriptures and breaking open the word to reveal the presence of Christ in the midst of the gathered assembly was understood by Semmelroth, Rahner, and Schillebeeckx as a sacramental act. …To affirm that Christ is truly present in the word and to appreciate how that presence is expressed in the liturgy are the theological issues that draw us back to their work to look for untapped veins of rich treasure.86

Janowiak begins his investigation by summarizing the work of Semmelroth’s works *Church and Sacrament* (1960) and *The Preaching Word: On the Theology of Proclamation* (1962). He concludes that the proclamation of the Word and sacramental actions are a single work that effect grace; and because of this, they cannot be separated. Janowiak, following Semmelroth, writes: “In liturgical proclamation, that unity is present in both the content and in the act of proclamation. Sacred text and ritual action are conjoined in a multilayered act of preaching. As a liturgical act, the biblical word proclaimed in the gathered assembly plays a pivotal role in the two-fold dialogue of Word and Sacrament that images the totality of Christ’s

86 Janowiak, 20.
redemptive activity, his incarnation and saving death.”

He concludes the section on Semmelroth’s theology by observing:

The sacramentality of the liturgical action, therefore, is an image of the *totus Christus*, and this action of Christ is Trinitarian in nature and ecclesial in its manifestation. Even more, the whole liturgical celebration—Word and Sacrament together—becomes the sign of the redemptive event made present in the worshipping assembly and the empowering grace at work in the life of the Church. The assembly and the one who presides, the Scriptures read and the bread and wine shared in grateful memory cooperate in this sacramental proclamation, a dialogue whose word and answer shape the identity of the People of God into the body of Christ, broken and poured out for the world.

He then applies Karl Rahner’s notions that Christ is the sacrament of God, that Christ is in the Word proclaimed, and that the Church is a fundamental sacrament of Christ’s grace. Janowiak argues, “The notion that Jesus Christ is the sacrament of God is of importance to Rahner’s sacramentality because it effectively unites the saving mystery of God to the concrete historical reality of this world.” He continues, “The communal action of the Church, gathered in holy assembly to hear the Scriptures proclaimed in its midst, distinguishes this ‘sacramental word’ from other efficacious words. Without a clear understanding of this ecclesial and communal context, the grace of the sacrament imparted to an individual remains abstract and disconnected from the assembly’s actions of hearing the ‘sacramental word’…” Janowiak summarizes Rahner by noting that Rahner “maintained a ‘reciprocal relationship between the efficacious word of God and the effective hearing effected by God himself,’ and that relationship

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87 Ibid., 22.
88 Ibid., 27.
89 Ibid., 30.
90 Ibid., 35–36.
is necessary and absolute, so that ‘if one does not exist, the other could not exist, that, be what it is.’”

Janowiak then brings in Edward Schillebeeckx’s sacramental theology which is founded in the “historicity of God’s redeeming acts in Jesus.” Janowiak considers four points of Schillebeeckx’s thought: 1) Because Christ came in history, “sacramentality must deal with the recognizable, concrete world and refuse a focus that is solely interior or mystical,” 2) because of the incarnation, “the mode of presence…is always an encounter between living persons. In fact, the sacraments of the Church are ‘this very encounter itself’ and includes our personal and ecclesial participation in its fruitfulness”;

3) “the redemptive act of Christ and its sacramental expression in the Church…bestows [sic] the grace and is the gift itself”; and 4) Christ is present in the preaching and sacraments of the Church because the Church is a visible presence of God’s grace. He notes that “[r]ich consequences for the sacramentality of the word and the role of liturgical proclamation emerge from this perspective: liturgical preaching and proclamation now possesses a two-fold source of revelation, in both the sacred word proclaimed and in the life situations out of which they are heard and lived. Proclamation is not therefore ‘about God’ but

92 Ibid., 46.
93 Ibid., 45.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
reveals God.⁹⁷ Janowiak argues that Christ is revealed and present in the proclamation of the word and the life situation out of which the word is heard and lived. This revelation and presence of Christ participates in the Trinitarian nature of God, and gives shape to the ecclesial reality of the mystery of worship.⁹⁸ He summarizes Schillebeeckx’s contribution by stating:

The anthropological approach of Schillebeeckx, the importance he placed on the historical locus of revelation, and the distinction in the manner of Christ’s presence in the proclaimed word as an invitation to faith underline how that presence is neither static nor individual. Christ acts in this dynamic word in an ecclesial context, in which the visible act of proclaiming and preaching is as important as the text itself. The result is a sacramentality of the word which is theologically congruent with the Roman Catholic sacramental and liturgical tradition emerging at this time.⁹⁹

He then summarizes the contributions of the three conciliar theologians for his developing theology of proclamation:

The theological framework for a sacramental presence of Christ in the word has taken shape around three complementary understandings of the Church and her sacramental worship: (1) an ecclesial participation in the redemptive dialogue of Christ, as Otto Semmelroth envisioned; (2) an uttered word of grace, part of a single proclamation of God’s victory in Christ, as explored by Karl Rahner; and (3) a dynamic encounter between God and humankind, in which the revelatory word is heard and appropriated at both ambo and table, as Schillebeeckx declared.¹⁰⁰

Janowiak then explores literary criticism. He takes the principle that in literary texts meanings emerge from the interplay between texts, context and the dynamic encounter which takes place between them. He applies this to preaching, with the conclusion that meaning

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⁹⁸ Ibid., 51–53.
⁹⁹ Ibid., 63.
¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 63–64.
likewise emerges from the interaction of text, context and the event quality of the proclamation of the word. He concludes that in the Liturgy of the Word there is a dynamic and corporate action that manifests the presence of God in our midst because of the biblical texts, the lives of the gathered assembly and the interactive energy that is produced from them.

His contribution to the theology of proclamation is centered on two key components that have not been highlighted to this point. First, Janowiak names preaching as an encounter between God and the assembly, the “holy meeting.” This encounter highlights a dynamic relationship that unites many of the other theological contributions already examined. Second, he also highlights the notion of sacramentality, and further helps to explore how Christ is present in the proclamation of the Scripture.

**Guerric DeBona, OSB: Fulfilled in Our Hearing (2005); Preaching Effectively, Revitalizing Your Church (2009)**

Father Guerric DeBona, OSB, in his 2005 work *Fulfilled in Our Hearing: History and Method of Christian Preaching* draws from the history of preaching to develop a contemporary theology which addresses the challenges of the modern world, especially with its technological focus, the rise of the “-ism’s” and postmodern culture. In his 2009 book, *Preaching Effectively, Revitalizing Your Church: The Seven-Step Ladder toward Successful Homilies*, DeBona develops this theology and applies it to the art of preaching.

In the third chapter of his first book on preaching, DeBona addresses the theology of preaching in his discussion of liturgical preaching. He begins, “David M. Greenhaw has
suggested that the theology of preaching is linked to an expectation of what the church is doing when it preaches: ‘Although the range is broad, generally expectations for preaching fall into two major groupings: those that expect preaching principally to play a role in sanctification of the people of faith and those that expect it principally to play a role in the justification of human beings before God.’”

Taking this as his starting point in order to present a contemporary theology of preaching, DeBona sets out to illustrate what the Church has done as it preaches throughout the centuries. After exploring the Patristic era, the Middle Ages, the era of the Reformation and the Council of Trent, he enters into the modern era of the movements. He summarizes the general movement of preaching as follows: “Generally speaking, although the homily was an ancient practice in the early church—with its roots in Jewish liturgical tradition—until fairly recently most preaching in the Catholic Church was doctrinal, usually drawing in a central theme, perhaps from scripture.”

DeBona argues that in this doctrinal preaching the Church saw itself as sanctifying the people, particularly in the post-Tridentine Church. “There are numerous instances when the noble work of sanctification (read: persuasion) of souls was the clear purpose; these are evidenced not only in numerous Ars Praedicandi, but well inscribed in the constitutions of the major religious orders of the Counter-Reformation.”

He then concludes, based upon the mission preaching of these post-Tridentine orders: “The entire process of the preached mission suggested that the beginning and end of preaching was purification and


102 See previous chapter for more detail about his history of preaching.

103 DeBona, 79.

104 Ibid., 81.
sanctification. In the context of a mission for sanctification, then, the eucharistic liturgy functioned as a kind of reward for those who received the grace of purification. Historically, confessions and eucharistic adoration are close allies to the moralistic sermon, strengthening the ties that preaching as sanctification has with sacraments.”

This not only influenced how preaching was done, but how preachers utilized the Scriptures within the act of preaching. “In preaching for sanctification, holy scripture tended to be used as a rhetorical device rather than as an experience of faith to be explicated and understood. Preaching for sanctification typically used scripture as a vehicle for an exhortation on moral behavior.” The reforms of the followers of Luther and Calvin were in direct response to these aims; their preaching focused upon the justification of the Church during the Reformation Period.

During the twentieth century, the leaders of the liturgical movement reimagined liturgical preaching. DeBona notes that “[t]he invigoration of Catholic liturgical preaching at the Eucharist began with a different perspective on the laity and its function as the gathered liturgical assembly.” He continues,

We might say that one of the most obvious reasons for the shift in thinking about the homily in Roman Catholic tradition in the mid-twentieth century occurred not over any particular doctrine, but because of the reconsideration of the hearer at the eucharistic assembly. Also, the council clearly adjudicated among the kinds of preaching and gave special attention to the liturgical homily, which ultimately has precedence over pastoral and catechetical forms; it is an act of worship, integral to the liturgy itself, and accomplished in community together with the

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105 Ibid., 81–82.
106 Ibid., 82.
107 Ibid., 85.
people of God (SC, nos. 35, 52). The liturgical homily finds itself quite separate from other forms of preaching because it lives in the “how” of Christian faith; “it is not about doctrines defended but saving acts announced.”

DeBona draws from Domenico Grasso, SJ, one of the conciliar era theologians who wrote about the theology of proclamation in his 1965 work, Proclaiming God’s Message: A Study in the Theology of Preaching: “What is transmitted and what one seeks to have accepted is a person. And the goal to be obtained is adherence to a person. … The object of preaching is Christ in His role as Savior of man or, what amounts to the same thing, Christ in the history of salvation.” He concludes that active participation is the aim of the reform, but this participation is not limited to ritual participation, but it goes to the very root of the mysteries celebrated and is a participation in a person—Christ Himself who is multivalently present in the Church’s liturgy.

DeBona then draws from the conciliar documents and their teachings on the homily. He wrote, “In its revisionist expression of the character of the Word of God and how it is to be understood, Sacrosanctum Concilium, like Dei Verbum, reaffirmed the place of the homily in Catholic Christian worship as an experience of grace enabling faith to be ignited in the context of worship…” He expanded this a little later in the book:

Sacrosanctum Concilium predicates the importance of the homily on the mystery of the Eucharist itself, in which “the treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s word. In this way a more representative portion of the holy Scriptures will

111 Ibid., 87–88.
be read to the people over a set of cycle of years’ (SC, no. 51). The recommendations of the council on proclaiming the Word of God emphasize the divine activity in the world, which occurs in the context of the church’s prayer of thanksgiving, the Eucharist.¹¹²

Next DeBona turns to the US Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life’s statement on preaching, “Fulfilled In Your Hearing,” which he sees as having “expanded the ecclesial statements previous to its publication and offers us further insight into the homily as a world of grace, a faith experience encountered by a listener in the liturgical assembly.”¹¹³

He notes that “Fulfilled in Your Hearing” explores the relationship of the liturgical homily to the Mass:

*FIYH* recognizes the work of sanctification is to be accomplished not so much by the will of the individual participants or the one who preaches to them, but by the grace-filled encounter among preacher, text, and the people of God. In a word, it is not just preaching but the *entire liturgy* that is meant to sanctify, since it is a remembering of God’s activity in Christ in human history. If the homily establishes itself as an integrated part of the sacred mysteries, then the work of preaching also participates in sanctification.¹¹⁴

DeBona also observes that *FIYH* seeks to clarify the relationship between the preacher and the assembly by calling the preacher to be a mediator of meaning, which is a shift from the images of teacher or herald. “The document is at pains to point out the fluid relationship that exists between the preacher and hearer; they are clearly acknowledged as persons who are participating in a homily as an event-in-time. The preacher is not there to solve problems or purify the congregation, but to engage in the mystery of God’s saving works, whether rationally

¹¹² Ibid., 90.
¹¹³ Ibid., 91.
¹¹⁴ Ibid., 91.
understood or not."\textsuperscript{115} Thus, he observes that \textit{FIYH} sees the homilist as having a primarily pastoral relationship to the hearers, but also has a prophetic role “to read the signs of the times…. As the interpreter of culture, the preacher stands in a special position, a mediator for the people he or she serves.”\textsuperscript{116}

DeBona also highlights the influence of the homiletics of the New Homiletic\textsuperscript{117} in the importance of the inductive method in preaching found throughout the document and the articulation that the lives of the assembly are to be approached “through the Scriptures,” rather than interpreting the Scriptures in order to apply it to the realities of life. He notes, \textit{FIYH} helped to initiate us into a vital understanding of the homily that it calls “central” to the document: “a scriptural interpretation of human existence which enables a community to recognize God’s active presence, to respond to that presence in faith through liturgical word and gesture, and beyond the liturgical assembly, through a life lived in conformity with the Gospel.”\textsuperscript{118}

Foundational to this approach is the belief that \textit{FIYH} articulates regarding the assembly: “Grace has been disclosed historically and definitively in the person of Jesus, yet it continues to be revealed in the depths of the human subject.”\textsuperscript{119} He further reflects, “Such recognition of the Holy in the context of the world in which we live surely recalls the active engagement of the assembly, precisely of those who hear the Word of God and keep it. The reality of concrete

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{117} See \textit{FIOH} Chapter 2, pages 28—77. DeBona in this chapter summarizes what we explored above in chapter four on narrative preaching. In particular, DeBona highlights the influence of Fred Craddock and Eugene Lowry on the authors of \textit{FIYH}.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 98; quotation of \textit{FIYH}, 29.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
human existence becomes the locus of transformation, as God has become Incarnate Word, even in the midst of suffering.”

He concludes by observing: “When a preacher engages a congregation authentically, an unwritten story emerges, a faith journey is witnessed.” This witness to the faith journey happens because of the context of the homily. DeBona observes: “We know that the liturgical assembly comes to faith by hearing, but also because of the very nature of the liturgy as a social event.” This social event allows the encounter to happen between God, the preacher and the faith community; this encounter brings the divine activity into a “dialogue with contemporary culture.”

In his second book on preaching, *Preaching Effectively, Revitalizing Your Church*, DeBona begins by positing what a homily is: “The Sunday homily is not only the ten minutes or so that occur during the liturgy; it is the forum for Christian witness, the platform by which the minister of the Gospel interprets Scripture and Tradition in the context of Sacrament.”

He begins with the starting point of “Fulfilled in Your Hearing,” the story of Jesus’ preaching at the synagogue in Nazareth. DeBona believes the passage in Luke 4:16–21 contains the blueprint for christological preaching: the gifted discovery of God’s saving work within human language. Christ’s witness at the synagogue in Nazareth is a fusion of the message proclaimed, the one who preaches the Word, and those who hear it in its fullness. In his proclamation of the Word, which is his very self, Jesus makes God present for

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120 Ibid., 99.
121 Ibid., 101.
122 Ibid., 108.
123 Ibid., 206.
those who will hear the Word of freedom and liberation he has come to proclaim.\textsuperscript{125}

He stresses this connection with Christ, the Word, by stating: “It would be difficult to imagine a theology or spirituality of preaching that does not include a profound urgency to make the Word visible and active in God’s people.”\textsuperscript{126} He continues: “Christian preaching exists for the sake of mission to God’s people. Moreover, the very nature of liturgical preaching is necessarily linked to Christ’s saving work on earth. As the \textit{Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy} tells us:


\begin{quote}
Just as Christ was sent by the Father, so also He sent the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit. This he does so that, by preaching the gospel to every creature (cf. Mk. 16:15), they might proclaim that the Son of God, by His death and resurrection, has freed us from the power of Satan (cf. Acts 16:18) and from death, and brought us into the kingdom of His Father. His purpose was also that they might exercise the work of salvation which they were proclaiming, by means of sacrifice and sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life revolves.\textsuperscript{127}
\end{quote}

Thus, the homily, according to DeBona, participates in this Paschal Mystery of Christ.

He next turns to examining the relationship of the homily with the assembly. “A listener-centered spirituality of preaching recognizes the God-given mission to strengthen the faith of the assembly.”\textsuperscript{128} He bases this assertion on the writings of the Church Fathers. He observes, “For Maximus the Confessor, the Word of God came not only once at the Incarnation, but was made manifest in the hearts of the believers who listened to the Word proclaimed and desired to be even more present to that Word.”\textsuperscript{129} From this DeBona asserts, “Based on Church tradition, we

\begin{footnotes}
\item[125] Ibid., 14–15.
\item[126] Ibid.
\item[127] Ibid., 17; quotation of SC 6.
\item[128] Ibid., 17.
\item[129] Ibid., 18.
\end{footnotes}
can claim that the goal of preaching is nothing less than the transformation of the baptized, the Christian assembly, whose faith longs for a Word from God in order to be sustained.”

DeBona then connects these two ideas by noting, “if Christ is to be taken as the paradigm for the preacher, then the focal point of our prayerful encounter with the Word of God will always be other-centered. [John Henry Cardinal] Newman makes the shrewd point that the spirituality of the preacher is a grace resulting from the charity rendered to the care of those who hear. The interior growth in spirituality in preaching occurs to the extent that the preacher sacrifices his own self-cultivation for the sake of the congregation.”

This turn to the listener grounds the theology of the homily. DeBona continues,

God’s self-communication is given a new hearing. Sacrosanctum Concilium reclaimed the long tradition of recognizing the assembly—together with the minister, the Word, and the sacramental elements—as a manifestation of Christ himself in the Eucharistic liturgy. Unified in gesture, the reception of God’s Word would gather the baptized, strengthening their mystical relationship as the Body of Christ. Therefore the homily is to be seen as “part of the liturgy itself” and, as we are reminded in the General Instruction on [sic] the Roman Missal (2002), addressed to the “particular needs of the listeners.”

He further elucidates the ramifications of this understanding of how this divine communication works. Rooting his thought in Sacrosanctum Concilium, Dei Verbum 21, and Fulfilled in Your Hearing, DeBona states, “Through Christian biblical preaching, sacred anamnesis transforms the community as the past speaks to the present in a new way.”

130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., 20. DeBona quotes extensively from Newman’s work in his chapter because of Newman’s emphasis on the preacher being “self-forgetful.”
132 Ibid., 22; reference to SC 7 and GIRM 65
133 Ibid., 34.
further clarifies this by saying, “Ultimately, our preaching is about the Word made flesh, the historical reality that is part of salvation history.”

This leads DeBona to stress the connection between preaching and sacrament, and the implications this has for developing a theology of preaching. He observes, “No less important for the homilist than preaching the whole Gospel is an attitude that recognizes the power of the liturgy—its language, its tradition, its great feasts. The integral relationship between Word and Sacrament cannot be emphasized enough as a foundation for liturgical celebration and preaching. The preacher makes connections between the language of scripture and our faith response in the celebration of the Eucharist.” These connections have important ecclesiological implications: “The liturgy offers up a sacrifice through the One who offered himself up as a servant for all so that the many might be made whole. It is not an exaggeration to say that if the culture of postmodernity fragments, it will be the Church’s scriptural texts and liturgy that unify because it is in sacred Word and Worship that Christ gathers his people. It should come as no surprise, then, that the Constitution on the Liturgy insists that the homily itself is part of the liturgy.”

DeBona, in the course of the book, after encouraging his readers to develop a personal theology or spirituality of preaching, explores how to make the theological principles work in a liturgical celebration.

Like the previous authors, DeBona provides a solid foundation for a theology of proclamation. He incorporates a greater sense of the historical movements within his treatment

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134 Ibid., 37.
135 Ibid., 47.
136 Ibid., 48–49.
of the theology of proclamation, and provides a larger ecclesial context for understanding how
the homily relates to the divine mystery. His emphasis on encounter and the liturgical setting
provide a basis to formulate a contemporary theology that responds to postmodern culture.

**Peter John Cameron, OP: *Why Preach* (2009)**

Finally, we turn to Father Peter John Cameron, OP’s, 2009 work *Why Preach: Encountering Christ in God’s Word*. Cameron, like DeBona, is addressing the situation of the Church in the twenty-first century. He also is addressing mainly priests and seminarians, and provides another contemporary vision for the theology of proclamation.

He begins his work with his premise about the power of the Word and aim of preaching:

> The living and effective razor of God’s Word confided to the preacher penetrates our impenetrability (the root of all immorality), pierces our nihilism that suffocates us like a shroud, and slices through our debilitating sorrow, severing whatever ensnares us in desolation. By his faithful preaching of the Gospel, the preacher reveals people’s hearts to themselves, gives them the power to make judgments that liberate them, and imbues them with the certainty, confidence and gladness before which hell itself cowers.

This is why there is preaching in the Church.  

Like other theologies that we have seen above, Cameron describes the act of preaching in relational terms: “According to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope [Emeritus] Benedict XVI), the aim of preaching ‘is to tell man who he is and what he must do to be himself. Its intention is

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to disclose to himself the truth about himself, that is, what he can base his life on and what he can die for.’ And that disclosure is not discourse; it is an *encounter.*”

He continues to describe the basis for the encounter in preaching. The encounter is rooted in experience, which when “best understood refers to what is most universal, what is most commonly shared and innate to every human being. Experience is our basic, our original, condition. It is the criterion that has been put in our hearts for acknowledging the truth.” He continues:

> Experience, then, must be the starting point for preaching if it is to be effective. That is to say, the preacher must be aware of his own profound need for truth, beauty, love, goodness, justice, and happiness, and he must be attentive to this condition in his hearers. Recognizing and respecting this fact about the human heart is imperative for preaching. Any *answer* that a preacher intends to offer his people must be in response to a *question.*

> “Even more, our experience reveals to us that to be human is *to be* a question. At the same time, experience makes it clear that the Answer we require is not inside us. We are always longing for something more. We constantly are searching for Something within something. If we cannot come to terms with the ultimate reasonableness of reality, then existence actually seems threatening to us, reality seems menacing.”

This is so because he believes “[w]e live without a meaning because we live enmeshed in the effects of original sin. Original sin distorts our reason so that we contrive to contort our reality to conform to our own ideas, our whims, our will. The sabotage of original sin dupes us

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139 Ibid., 17.
140 Ibid., 20.
141 Ibid., 21.
into measuring reality according to some prefabricated standard of our own concoction.”\textsuperscript{142} He continues, “This dilemma of original sin constitutes one of the most formidable obstacles that a preacher will ever have to face. For how do you preach about God to people who have decided to depose him and put themselves in his place?”\textsuperscript{143}

The solution to this dilemma that he has articulated is quite simple for Cameron. “It is the preacher’s vocation to give people back their hearts.”\textsuperscript{144} The preacher returns the heart by confronting the world through truth and experience. “Once we have confronted reality in this radical way—and it has become patently clear to us that we are always looking for something more…that we don’t own a measure by which to make sense of everything…that all reality points back to a beyond which we long to be part of—\textit{and} once we have decided that reality is something we want to stick around for, then we have arrived at what Monsignor Luigi Giussani calls \textit{the religious sense}.”\textsuperscript{145}

Cameron then draws the conclusion: “\textit{One of the chief purposes of preaching is to animate and educate people’s religious sense.}”\textsuperscript{146} He elucidates this further: “The preacher’s intention is to invite people back to attentive, tender, and impassioned awareness of their own selves that in turn makes them open to Something More.”\textsuperscript{147} The preacher does this in a process of reconciling the assembly, but not in the conventional sense of the term. He posits, “Preaching

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 21–22.  \\
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 22.  \\
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 33; reference to Luigi Giussani, \textit{The Religious Sense} (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).  \\
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 36, 39.  \\
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 39. 
\end{flushright}
is about reconciliation, and the first thing that has to be reunited is the hearer with his elementary experience.”

This proposal is based upon the real questions of the experience of the assembly. He writes,

The preacher must offer his hearers a proposal—a proposal that is an appropriate response to a lived question in the hearers. For if the preacher has been successful in breaking through the subterfuge of original sin, if he has managed to move people to embrace the truth of their I and to approach reality starting from the perspective of their elementary experience, then people will require at that moment a concrete Gospel proposal that they can compare with their hearts—something that excited, edified, and enlarges them. Preaching is not indoctrination; it solicits the freedom of the I of the hearer.

He further notes, “Preaching that does not proceed from experience by posing a lived question will be promptly dismissed as abstract, irrelevant, annoying, forgettable, infuriating, and, ultimately, insulting.”

This leads Cameron to explore the role of the Scriptures in the preaching task. He suggests,

To equip the preacher in this task, God has provided his Church with Sacred Scripture. As the preacher begins the process of preparing to preach by way of the irreplaceable step of praying over the Scriptures, his lectio divina leads him to ask certain key questions of this text: How does this Scripture respond to the elementary needs of those who will hear it? What does it reveal that leads to a deeper understanding of the I? In what way does it provoke the religious sense? What concretely does it propose as an answer to the urgent questions of the heart? The genius of Sacred Scripture is that it offers not simply a message but rather a divine and life-giving Presence. In other words, the preacher looks for the

148 Ibid.
149 Ibid., 40.
150 Ibid., 41.
correspondence between what the Scripture offers and what the human heart is begging for.  

The life-giving presence of which Cameron speaks is the core of the encounter. He reminds those who preach that “[i]t is important for the preacher to realize, even before opening his mouth to speak, that his presence represents the offer of a loving hand, which the fearful can grasp and follow. The preacher’s presence as alter Christus offers the loving fellowship of a You. Before all else, preaching is Christ’s nearness.”  

He argues that “this is the seminal role of the preacher as it is rooted in the very preaching of Christ. ‘Jesus’ proclamation’, then-Cardinal Ratzinger asserts, ‘was never mere preaching, mere words; it was “sacramental”, in the sense that his words were and are inseparable from his “I”—from his “flesh”.’”  

He continues, “The presence that we expect in preaching, then, is ‘real’—it is efficacious. … And that presence is made available to us by way of an encounter.”  

This is significant for Cameron, because “as Monsignor Romano Guardini pointed out almost one hundred years ago, the essence of Christianity is not an idea, but a Person. Encounter is God’s very method of salvation.”  

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151 Ibid., 41.
152 Ibid., 50. Cameron does not explain his use of the term “alter Christus.” The term is not found in the documents of either the Council of Trent of Vatican Council II. It is a term that is most often found in pietistic literature to explain the relationship of the priest to Christ. Theologically, the fathers of Vatican Council II used in persona Christi capitis ecclesiae to more precisely define this relationship (cf. Lumen Gentium 28, 29).
153 Ibid., 51.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid., 52.
This is significant because the liturgy “is a way of re-presenting the event of that saving encounter so that the reality of that Divine Presence will take effect and become normative in our lives.” From this, Cameron is able to assert:

Preaching is about re-presenting What Happened. It is an event. By “event” we mean something new and unforeseen that occurs, provoking surprise and wonder. An event awakens us and makes us alert. We can’t resist it—an event stays with us. … It impinges upon … life in every conceivable way. An event is the introduction of something new that keeps on making things new. The reason why we woke up this morning believing in God today is because of an Event that has taken hold of us and kept us faithful. Preaching is an event that mediates The Event. The encounter that is Gospel preaching proceeds from the preacher’s own first encounter with the Event who is Jesus Christ as well as from the daily encounters that renew that first Event and amplify it.

Cameron’s theology of encounter is perhaps the most specific to the theological anthropological considerations to preaching. He illustrates the how and why of the encounter with Christ in the proclamation of the Scriptures and their interpretation in the homily.

Conclusion: An Integrated Theology of Proclamation?

Waznak noted in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter that the lack of an integrated theology of proclamation is one of the historical forces that has robbed preaching of its prophetic character. The above theologies of proclamation all approach this central mission of the Church developed around the theses of leading theologians. In the spirit of Waznak’s critique, these theologies do provide some challenges and insights into an integrated theology of proclamation.

156 Cameron, 53.
157 Ibid., 56.
We saw in the course of this chapter five different contemporary authors struggle with creating an integrated theology of proclamation. These theologies of proclamation aid us in better understanding the liturgical homily theologically. These theologies all have some common characteristics that will lead us into the final chapter on our own formulation of a theological understanding of the liturgical homily.

First, every writer in this chapter dealt with the question of who is Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God. Through the thought of the conciliar era theologians and contemporary theologians, each theology of proclamation provides a Christological foundation for the Word.

Second, the ecclesial context of the liturgical homily must be involved in the articulation of the theology. Whether one speaks of active participation, a focus on the assembly, encounter or similar topics, the Word is spoken aloud in the context of a worshiping faith community.

Third, there are eschatological and soteriological implications for the theology of proclamation. Each of the authors in one form or another wrote about hope, salvation and mission that comes about from the proclamation of the Word.

With these three elements in mind, we will now turn to the final part of this study, a contemporary understanding of the liturgical homily that arises from the writings of Robert Waznak, SS, and his source material.
Chapter Seven: Toward a Theology of the Homily Built on the Foundation of Robert Waznak’s Works

In this final chapter, we honor the lasting contribution of Robert Paul Waznak, SS, to the field of homiletics.

In honoring Waznak, we first note two of his strong contributions to this field: his inclusive definition of *liturgical homily*, and his incorporation of the New Homiletic, especially narrative preaching, into Catholic homiletics. Waznak did not develop his own theology of proclamation, although he realized the need for an inclusive theology of proclamation to guide the field. But he did leave us seeds for this unified theology of proclamation.

In this study, we began in chapters one and two with a premise of his 1974 dissertation: The liturgical homily is a valuable tool that draws the assembly into union with God and the Church.

In chapters three through six we articulated theological principles that create a framework for theologies of the liturgical homily. In recent times, the Magisterium and many contemporary theologians have identified the principle of *communion*\(^1\) as a unifying theological principle of Vatican II—a principle that is founded upon the divine nature of God. *Communion* both founds and forms the Church, as well as sends the Church to proclaim the Word.

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\(^1\) We will see that some theologians have argued that the key to understanding the theology of Vatican Council II is *communion*. While theologians will disagree on what the theology of *communion* is, there seems to be remarkable agreement about *communion* as a principle theological concept. With this in mind, *communion* then is a key to understanding the post-conciliar liturgy, of which the restoration of the liturgical homily is significant.
This ecclesiological principle of *communion* is a key to understanding the post-conciliar liturgy; the restoration of the liturgical homily is a significant part of post-conciliar liturgical reforms. In an effort to understand better the theological principle of *communion*, we will explore the writings of synodal fathers of the Second Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, Pope John Paul II, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ. We will them demonstrate how prominent Vatican II theologians such as Yves Congar, OP, Joseph Ratzinger, and Avery Dulles, SJ, as well as fundamental and liturgical theologians Ghislain La Font, OSB, Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, and Kevin Irwin relate *communion* to liturgical theology. From this foundation, we will present our conclusion that demonstrates how the whole liturgy is an act of *communion*, and how the liturgical homily as a part of the liturgy contributes to this act of *communion*.

**The Three-fold Contribution of Robert Waznak**

**Understanding of the “Liturgical Homily”**

We saw in chapter two that Waznak began his career by exploring the characteristics of the liturgical homily. He described the homily as “kerygmatic, liturgical, scriptural and relevant.” Over the course of his career, he developed these descriptors and modified them into

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2 A common-sense principle of liturgical theology is that one must understand individual liturgical units and how they relate to the whole liturgy. Likewise our theology of the whole liturgy impacts how we understand individual liturgical units.
3 See chapter three above.
4 See Waznak, “A Descriptive and Evaluative Study…”, 71–82.
“biblical, liturgical, kerygmatic, conversational and prophetic." He also further clarified the category “liturgical” to include “doxological, anamnetic, epicletic, eschatological and ecclesial” qualities.

In the previous chapter, we saw these descriptors (which Waznak identified as characteristic of the Vatican II homily) appear in other homileticians and theologians’ theologies of proclamation. One of his primary contributions to the field is this identification of these essential qualities of the homily.

**Narrative Preaching**

Waznak also recognized the contribution that Protestant homileticians could offer to a theological understanding of the homily, especially in the work on narrative preaching in the New Homiletic. While the particular field of narrative preaching has been in flux over the past forty years, it highlights the importance of the liturgical context in which the homily is given and received by the assembly. The emphasis on the assembly allows for a more relational framework to develop within homiletics.

We saw in chapter three that narrative preaching is built upon the premise that one must attend to the needs and aptitudes of those receiving the message in addition to the message or the preacher. Narrative is a style of structuring the homily that takes into account how the assembly

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5 See *An Introduction to the Homily*, 16–27.
6 See *An Introduction to the Homily*, 20–22.
7 See chapter four above.
receives the information. Narrative preaching comes from a desire to foster the participation of
the assembly within the proclamation event of the Word and invites them to make the
connections to their lives so they may truly lift up their hearts in the celebration of the Eucharist.

**Call for a Unified Theology of Proclamation**

Waznak recognized that one of the greatest needs for the field of homiletics is a unified
theology of proclamation. We have seen through the course of this present study that Waznak
avidly read the works of his colleagues and theologians in related fields. He certainly recognized
the power of the proclaimed word, but he relied upon the conclusions of others to support his
theories and thought without ever articulating his own theology of proclamation. He focused on
the details of aspects of an overarching theology rather than articulating the theology itself.

It is this lacuna that this final chapter will attempt to fill by extracting relevant principles
from *communion ecclesiology* to reinforce the framework that Waznak articulated in his
defining characteristics of the homily. After summarizing the theological principles of
*communion ecclesiology* and how they relate to the liturgy, we will apply these principles to a
cohesive understanding of the homily, thus providing a theological lens to appreciate the
contribution of Robert Waznak.

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8 See chapter six above.
9 Some theologians also refer to this as “Eucharistic ecclesiology.”
In using this theological principle, the present author is keenly aware that many developments have been made since the time of Waznak’s death in December 2002. However, as we have seen throughout his work, a current of communion can be detected, sometimes rather strongly, and sometimes only in echoes.

A Theology of Communion and the Liturgical Homily

In order to see how the principle of communion can be appropriated for this study on the liturgical homily and the work of Robert Waznak, we will begin by looking at how we have encountered it in our study thus far. We saw in the second chapter that Waznak in his 1973 dissertation wanted to build a critique of homily services through an articulation of the philosophy of Vatican Council II. Thus, we can then follow Waznak’s path by exploring one of the “keys” to the interpretation of the theology of Vatican Council II: communion ecclesiology. Extracting from this theology, we will observe how liturgical theologians have utilized these principles in relation to the liturgy itself. Finally, we will apply these general observations to the liturgical homily itself.

On the Road to Communion: Communication as an act of “Communion”

In previous chapters of this study we have seen Waznak and other authors, especially those who argue for narrative preaching, link the preaching activity with the notions of

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10 Waznak died in December 2002. In the area of the theology of communion, many of the sources were published either slightly before his death or after his death.
communication and communion when they argued for the need to pay attention not only to the message but to the needs of the hearers. Most clearly in the work of Navone and Cooper we saw an argument that follows this line of thought: the homily is a form of oral and aural communication (as opposed to written or visual) involving the preacher and the assembly. As a form of communication, it seeks to deliver a message that is the proclamation of the Gospel. Communication is a communicatio, “a making or bringing into being of a communion.”

Navone and Cooper argue that all communication has as a goal to produce a communion, which is a common bond of meaning, between sender and receiver. The homily, then, as religious communication, strives to create that common bond between God and the Christian community, and among the members of the Christian community.

While these notions of communication and communion differ from how contemporary scholars will use the terms, they demonstrate a step toward a contemporary theological understanding of the homily in relationship to the whole liturgy. Now we turn to see how the theology of communion developed and can be applied to our thesis.

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11 Waznak and other authors define these terms differently than contemporary scholars who use the term communio.
12 See pages 179-182 above.
13 Navone and Cooper, 250, 262.
14 Waznak, An Introduction, 22. He refers to FIYH, 6-7: “Through words drawn from the Scriptures, from the church’s theological tradition, and from the personal appropriation of that tradition through study and prayer, the preacher joins himself and congregation in a common vision. We can say, therefore, that the homily is a unifying moment in the celebration of the liturgy, deepening and giving expression to the unity that is already present in the sacrament of baptism.”
Theology of Communion

In his 1973 dissertation, Waznak pointed to the influence of Pope John XXIII's “philosophical” view of aggiornamento, which Waznak viewed as the foundation for the reintroduction of the vernacular in the liturgy, the turning of the altar and the presider to face the people, and an emphasis on active participation. While not naming it directly, he argued for the principle of ressourcement, a return to the patristic sources that animated much of the scholarship of the biblical and liturgical movements of the pre-conciliar and conciliar era, by seeking to restore “the homiletic ideal of the primitive church.”

Communion is a theological principle that has been developed since the Council. We turn now to argue for a renewed understanding of the liturgical homily from this theological viewpoint. We will see how popes, curial congregations, synods and theologians have defined it and argued that this concept is the key to understanding the theology of the Council. At the present time, a theological whirlwind surrounds communion. The intention of this study is not to enter into the theological debate itself but to illustrate how the homily could be understand in the broadest theological understanding of the term. We will attempt to sketch the primary arguments of the debate by examining the magisterial sources of the modern application of the theology of communion found in the Second Extraordinary Synod of Bishops and the writings of Pope John Paul II and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and then a contemporary scholarly overview of the topic provided by Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ.

15 See Waznak, “A Descriptive and Evaluative Study…” 60-62.
1. Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: *A Message to the People of God; The Final Report* (1985)

In 1985, Pope John Paul II called the Second Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the closing of the Vatican Council II. The Synod Fathers issued two documents upon the conclusion of the gathering of bishops and theologians to summarize the gathering. In addition to these synodal documents, bishops’ conferences and bishops published their discourses given at the Synod to share the fruits of the Synod.

The Synod gives us a theological interpretation of the Council by stressing the importance of *communion* as the theological principle of Vatican Council II. In the Synod’s *A Message to the People of God*, the synodal fathers wrote: “Through the church which is his body, Christ is ever present in the midst of humanity. We are all called, through faith and the sacraments, to live fully communion with God. Inasmuch as she is communion with the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the church is, in Christ, the ‘mystery’ of the love of God present in the history of mankind.”

The fathers continue, “Through this church God offers an anticipation and a promise of the communion to which he calls all mankind.” The synodal fathers are distinguishing this communion as Trinitarian, eschatological and ecclesial: God invites the Church in the liturgy that makes both the past and future present to communion through faith and the sacraments.

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In *The Final Report* the synodal fathers explain,

The primary mission of the church, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, is to preach and to witness to the good and joyful news of the election, the mercy and the charity of God which manifest themselves in salvation history, which through Jesus Christ reach their culmination in the fullness of time and communicate and offer salvation to man by virtue of the Holy Spirit. ...In this way, the church is sacrament, that is, sign and instrument of communion with God and also of communion and reconciliation of men with one another. The message of the church, as described in the Second Vatican Council, is Trinitarian and Christocentric.  

Thus, the synodal fathers argue that this Trinitarian and Christocentric mission of the Church is the means to bring about both communion and reconciliation.

The synodal fathers also explicitly say *communion* is “the central and fundamental idea of the council's documents.” They define the theological concept of *communion*:

Fundamentally it is a matter of communion with God through Jesus Christ in the sacraments. Baptism is the door and the foundation of communion in the church. The eucharist is the source and culmination of the whole Christian life (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 11). The communion of the eucharistic body of Christ signifies and produces, that is, builds up, the intimate communion of all the faithful in the body of Christ which is the church (1 Cor. 10:16).  

In their definition of *communion*, the synodal fathers align this ecclesiological concept of the fundamental union with God with the celebration of the sacraments. In particular, even without

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19 Ibid., 448 (II. C. 1.)
a direct reference to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the fathers incorporate the theological principles of the liturgical constitution into their understanding of this theological principle.


In his Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Seventh Ordinary General Assembly Synod of Bishops on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and the World held in October 1987, Pope John Paul II makes a connection between *communion* and the mission of the Church. Drawing from the decrees of the Vatican Council II, the pope argues that *communion* is not just an internal component of the life of the Church, but it is a missiological one that always points outward to others. John Paul II reiterates an earlier statement of Paul VI that “the Church is a communion of saints,” emphasizing that this *communion* is participation in both the life of Christ and that of the Church. The defining characteristics of the previous synod are carried through in this Apostolic Exhortation.

The pope addresses several important implications of *communion*. First, he speaks about the role of the Church’s pastors, both bishops and priests, to foster *communion* by “gather[ing] her in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Sacraments.” The pastors of local churches,

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20 See *SC* 2: “The liturgy daily builds up those who are in the Church, making of them a holy temple of the Lord, a dwelling-place for God in the Spirit, to the measure of the fullness of Christ”; 10: “The liturgy, in its turn, moves the faithful filled with ‘the paschal sacraments’ to be ‘one in holiness’”.


22 Ibid., no. 22.
and the priests assigned to particular assemblies, are charged with being ministers of *communion* since they represent Christ as head in the community.

Second, the pope shows how *communion* relates to the mission of the Church. He writes, “Communion and mission are profoundly connected to each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other to the point that *communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion.*”

This is so because *communion* is “likened to a mission on behalf of communion.”

Further, Pope John Paul II recognizes that the *communion* comes from the Church’s participation in the Eucharist. He quotes from *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Vatican Council II’s Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, to emphasize this connection:

> Strengthened by their active participation in the liturgical life of their community, they are eager to do their share in apostolic works of that community. They lead to the Church people who are perhaps far removed from it; they earnestly cooperate in presenting the Word of God, especially by means of catechetical instruction; and offer their special skills to make the care of souls and the administration of the temporal goods of the Church more efficient.

Pope John Paul II makes several important theological points about a theology of *communion* in this Exhortation. He connects *communion* with the role of the ordained, with the mission of the Church to present the Word of God, and with Vatican II’s liturgical principle of active participation. *Communion* is not only a sociological reality, but a deep theological reality as well.

23 Ibid., no. 32.
24 Ibid.

Following the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, theologians began to discuss in earnest the theological notion of communion. In response, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued in 1992 a letter to the Bishops of the world to clarify what communion means. The CDF wrote:

It is essential to the Christian understanding of communion that it be recognized above all as a gift from God, as a fruit of God’s initiative carried out in the paschal mystery. The new relationship between man and God, that has been established in Christ and is communicated through the sacraments, also extends to a new relationship among human beings. As a result, the concept of communion should be such as to express the sacramental nature of the Church while “we are away from the Lord,” and also the particular unity which makes the faithful into members of one and the same Body, the Mystical Body of Christ, an organically structure community, “a people brought into one by the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” and endowed with the suitable means for its visible and social union.26

Ultimately, the CDF roots communion ecclesiology in the Eucharist: “The Eucharist is the creative force and source of communion among the members of the Church, precisely because it unites each one of them with Christ himself: ‘Really sharing in the body of the Lord in the breaking of the eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one

26 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter, “To the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church as Understood as Communion” (28 May 1992), no. 3
another. “Because the bread is one, we, though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:17).’ "27 We will return to these ideas in the next section.


Our final word on defining communion goes to Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ. In a seminal article on how ecclesiology has developed since the Council he reminds us that Vatican Council II never calls the Church a communion but rather describes the Church as a sacrament. He concludes: “In other words, the Church is a sacrament of communion. Thus an ecclesiology of communion in conformity with Vatican II would hold that the church as sacrament signifies and brings about spiritual communion among human beings and between them and God. This communion preeminently includes the members of the Church.”29 Cardinal Dulles demonstrates through this notion of the Church as a sacrament of communion that communion is applicable to other areas beyond ecclesiology. This provides us with a transition into how communion can be used in liturgical theology.

Dulles provides a concise and comprehensive overview of the issues involved in the theological conversation about communion ecclesiology: namely the Church, as a sacrament of communion, brings about a union with God and herself through the celebration of the sacraments which lead to a mission to proclaim the Gospel.

27 Ibid., no. 5; quotation from Lumen Gentium, no. 7b.
29 Ibid., 2.
The Liturgy as an Act of Communion

Thus we see that the theological notion of *communion* clearly is related to the Mass and the celebration of the sacraments. The Church, “the sacrament of communion,” celebrates the sacraments in the liturgy. This next section will explore how the liturgy as a whole could be understood as an act of *communion*. We will proceed chronologically through the work of several prominent theologians who have discussed the topic of relating liturgical theology and ecclesiology: Yves Congar, OP, Joseph Ratzinger, Avery Dulles, SJ, Ghislain LaFont, OSB, and Jeremy Driscoll, OSB. We will conclude with Kevin Irwin by looking to his *Context and Text*, which will serve as a bridge to the final sections of this chapter.


Yves Congar, OP, both describes the Church as a *communion* and equates the Church with *communion*. The liturgy, according to Congar, is vital in making communion. He observes:

The liturgy, however, is “the authentic method instituted by the Church to unite souls to Jesus.” The sort of Christian produced by an enlightened and docile participation in the liturgy is a man of peace and unified in every fiber of his human nature, by the secret and powerful penetration of faith and love in his life, throughout a period of prayer and worship, during which he learned, at his mother’s knee and without effort, *the Church’s language*: her language of faith,

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love, hope and fidelity. There is not better way of acquiring “the mind of the Church” in the widest and most interior interpretation of this expression; it is something quite different from an instinctive obedience. It concerns the delicate inner feeling that unites us to the thought and feelings of Christ’s Bride.³¹

Congar further attributes the source of this *communion* and transmission of Tradition to the divine agent. He says that Christianity “is borne by living men who succeed one another, and at the same time it is borne within them by a subject who transcends them: the Holy Spirit, the principle of communion, who effects the Church’s unity throughout time as well as space.”³² Thus, the very nature of the Church and its mission is intimately connected to the notion of *communion* in the thought of Congar. The liturgy is the particular locus of *communion* where the divine and the things of and from this earth join together. Congar highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in creation of this *communion*.


Joseph Ratzinger, then-Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, spoke at a regional church conference in Foggio, Italy on 21 October 1985 while the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops was meeting in Rome. In his conference, he spoke about the Church as *communion*. Then-Cardinal Ratzinger relates the celebration of the Mass and “a eucharistic ecclesiology which is often called the ecclesiology ‘of communion’”³³:

> [T]he eucharist binds men to one another and not only to one another, but to Christ too and makes them church in that fashion. At the same time the

³² Ibid., 157.
fundamental constitution of the church is imparted with it: The church lives in its eucharistic community. The Mass is its constitution, because the latter is in its very essence, the Mass, service to God and therefore service to humanity and serve to the transformation of the world.\(^{34}\)

The celebration of the Church’s liturgy is more than a locus of communion for Ratzinger; the Eucharist, and its celebration, is the source and summit of the Church’s communion. Eucharistic ecclesiology is fundamental because the Church is constituted by the very celebration of the Eucharist as well as finds its fullness in its celebration.


Avery Dulles, SJ, influenced theologians beyond the field of ecclesiology, and we saw that Waznak himself was influenced by Dulles’ ideas. In 1987, he expanded his seminal work, *Models of the Church*, with an additional (final) chapter and model: “The Church: Community of Disciples.” This model, like all his other models, has inherent weaknesses yet nevertheless provides a synthesis of how to describe the Church in the post-Vatican II era.

In describing the Church as a community of disciples, Dulles argues that the liturgy, especially in the sacraments, is where the community interacts with the Lord Jesus with social and ecclesial dimensions.\(^ {35}\) Of these, the Eucharist is a special sign because it is where Christ addresses the disciples, past, present and future, and gives Himself under sacramental signs which enables the Church to have an encounter with the crucified and risen Christ.\(^ {36}\)

\(^ {34}\) Ibid.


\(^ {36}\) Ibid., 216.
Dulles also argues for the model of “community of disciples” based upon a sacramental understanding of the Church. He says that the presence of Christ is dynamic and effective, always transforming disciples into His own image, “claiming their lives for his service, empowering them for mission, and causing their labors to bear fruit (Mt. 28:20; Jn. 15:8). Thus the two models of the Church, while resting on differing analogies, express much the same reality.” He continues, “The Church mediates the call of Christ and makes available the word of God and the sacraments, without which discipleship would scarcely be possible. Thus the community of disciples is in some sense prior to its own members.”


Ghislain LaFont, OSB, approaches the topic of communion from a different perspective than we have seen. He connects the proclamation of the Word with the principle of communion.

In a chapter on the charisms of presiding, La Font argues that the Spirit is involved within the celebration in maintaining truth. He argues, “the question first of all is to know if the liturgy continues to constitute the community, if the word of God is being read and reflected on there, if the language of witness and reflection flows naturally among brothers and sisters in the community, if their commitment to one another and their service to the world around them is

37 Ibid., 223–224.
38 Ibid., 226.
strong—all are signs showing that the Spirit is alive in the Church.\textsuperscript{40} The effects of the liturgy make known \textit{communion}, even if it is not apparent during the celebration.

In his conclusion, LaFont reiterates his thought about how the liturgy fosters and maintains \textit{communion}:

In the meanwhile, the Church is the community of men and women who keep the \textit{memory} of Jesus Christ, \textit{give thanks} for the salvation already given and whose completion they await, and finally live \textit{according to the Spirit} they have received. It is a ‘eucharistic’ community if it is true that the memory is kept alive by story…., and which gives rise to a spirit of gratitude and spiritual offering. (After all, isn’t self-giving the expression of gratitude?) As eucharistic, the Church is also a ‘scriptural’ community, since in the Scriptures it preserves the document that must be interpreted again and again by its memory of Jesus Christ. Finally, it is a ‘pneumatic’ community since it lives concretely from the Spirit of Christ who is its interior life, helps it understand the Scriptures, and gives power and efficacy to its Eucharist.\textsuperscript{41}

LaFont sees this \textit{communion} then as Eucharistic, scriptural and pneumatic, which are some of the characteristics we have seen in Waznak’s writings.

5. Jeremy Driscoll, OSB: \textit{Theology at the Eucharistic Table} (2003) \textsuperscript{42}

Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, relying upon his foundation of patristic theology, explores how liturgical theology provides a foundation for a deeper understanding of the Eucharist. While not explicitly proposing a theology of \textit{communion}, Driscoll develops LaFont’s ideas by expounding

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 195.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 209.
\textsuperscript{42} Jeremy Driscoll, OSB, \textit{Theology at the Eucharistic Table: Major Themes in the Theological Tradition}, (Herefordshire, UK: Gracewing Publishing, 2005).
upon the importance of the Liturgy of the Word to show the meaning of communion within the Eucharistic celebration.

Driscoll explores how the Paschal Mystery and history illumine Christian faith. He argues for a different view of “story” and its use. For him, there is one “story” of the liturgy: the Paschal Mystery, the story of Jesus Christ that requires a public act of assent by the community. For Driscoll, this is so because of how the “story” is told. He writes, “At any rate, nothing in the word (or song) implies the specific and unique Christian understanding of what in fact happens when the death and resurrection of Christ is remembered in a believing assembly. Scripture and Tradition have a word for this; namely, memorial or anamnesis.” Driscoll’s thought parallels the insights we have seen in narrative theology. The liturgy brings us into communion with each other and God because of the anamnetic quality it possesses.

Driscoll also develops a principle for communion based upon liturgical theology. As a fundamental theologian he also is arguing for a primacy of a Logos theology that provides a basis for all theological reflection. Based upon the work of Salvatore Marsili, OSB, an Italian fundamental theologian, he offers, “A key to [Salvatore Marsili’s] thought is his stress on the event character of liturgy. Liturgy is always the Word of God known in the reality which it acquires in the symbolic rite. ...But it is from this fundamental role of the Word of God that

43 Ibid., 39.
44 Ibid., 39–40.
45 A bibliography for Marsili’s major works can be found in Kevin Irwin, Liturgical Theology: A Primer, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990) 76.
Marsili argues that liturgy is the source of all theology precisely because it is an event in which the Word of God is actualized.”

In addition to that of LaFont, Driscoll mines the thought of Salvatore Marsili, OSB, Rino Fisichella, and Hans Urs von Balthasar to establish a framework for Fundamental Theology and Liturgical Theology to dialogue. He summarizes his thought by concluding:

The place of this transformation is the narrative of Resurrection celebrated within the Church of the Apostles in the liturgical feast, as Lafont has so carefully explained. The narrative celebrated founds a history and a world, as Lafont would say, because, as von Balthasar would say, from within the mystery of the Resurrection, applied anew through the liturgy to every age and individual, the mission of the Church and of the individual is created by the Spirit whom the Father sent to raise Jesus from the dead.

Driscoll unites these various approaches by arguing for the liturgical context of the Mass as the event where the community encounters the living God. In a section on the principles of Word and Sacrament in this relationship between Fundamental and Liturgical Theologies, Driscoll writes,

[Marsili's] claim [that the Word of God is the liturgical category per eccelenza because it summarizes everything] can be made because liturgy is actualization of the Word in the very assembly where it is proclaimed, and yet this Word cannot be actualized unless it achieves its sacramental dimensions. The Word as word proclaims all that Christ was and did in his earthly existence. That Word is seen as a sacramental phenomenon when the event which the words proclaim converges with the sacramental rite that represents it, thus becoming event of salvation in the midst of the celebrating community.

46 Ibid., 101–102.
47 Ibid., 127.
48 Ibid., 133.
Driscoll does not limit the notion of *communion* to the present moment. In addition to the connection to the past in the anamnetic mode of the Word, there is also an eschatological communion that occurs in the celebration of the liturgy as well.\(^{49}\)

Ultimately, for Driscoll “[t]his ecclesial life has a liturgical face. Indeed, in the sacraments, and especially in the eucharist, the Church comes into being as a communion.”\(^{50}\) He continues, “A deep unity is established among the Christian faithful at the table of the word and the eucharist, a unity whose origin and depth are within the unity of the Father and the Son. This unity, this visible unity—it must be visible!—is envisioned as that which will provoke belief in others and thus, by implication, require their catechesis.”\(^{51}\)

Driscoll is able to name the various theological dimensions of *communion* present in the liturgy. He says, “Put in summary fashion, it could be said that the eucharist establishes in communion with Jesus (the christological dimension). Such communion unfolds as communion with the one whom he calls Father, and this is both accomplished and grasped in the power of the Holy Spirit (the trinitarian dimension). Entering into this communion is the Church, ‘a people gather together in the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the ecclesial dimension).’”\(^{52}\)


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\(^{49}\) Cf. Ibid., 177.  
\(^{50}\) Ibid., 198.  
\(^{51}\) Ibid. 200.  
\(^{52}\) Ibid., 208.
In the previous chapter, we saw how Kevin Irwin argues the thesis “context is text” as it relates to the Word. We now return to Irwin to see how the Eucharistic liturgy is the source and summit of communion. He proposes that

the ritual action of hearing the Word presupposes the relationship of faith between speaker and hearers. The act of liturgical proclaiming and hearing the Scripture invites an assembly into a relationship of ever deepening faith in God. This faith relationship is necessary in order for the religious language of the Bible to function as mediating meaning for the ritual hearing of the Word to have its effect of deepening the faith of those who share in the event of speaking and hearing the Word. The twofold movement is from God to the community of believers at worship to God. In light of our argument in chapter 2 this is to say that liturgical proclamation is intrinsically soteriological and ecclesiological.53

We saw that Irwin defines the liturgical proclamation as dialogical, an act of address between the assembly and the proclaimer, which requires a response because participation in the liturgy is “to enact a word and to remember a relationship.”54 He further notes that “Its genre as properly liturgical proclamation requires that it be spoken again and again to a community gathered for its hearing and who have become more God’s own assembly because of this proclamation.”55

Irwin sees the liturgy, and proclamation within it, as an event of salvation that forms communion with God. This dialogical act of communication specifically in the Liturgy of the Word continues in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The whole eucharistic celebration is where the gathered community become more God’s own assembly because of what God does throughout the liturgical action and the assembly’s response to it.

53 Irwin, 86.
55 Ibid..
It is this theological view of the Eucharist, especially the Liturgy of the Word, that is intended in this chapter to describe a unifying theology. This theology incorporates the various elements that Waznak offers in his definition of the liturgical homily. Irwin and the other theologians above incorporate all of the theological components of communion ecclesiology without the technical and debated issues associated with it. More importantly for this present study, they also intimately link communion and the celebration of the Eucharist, and include the various theological dimensions that are needed to understand both: missiology, pneumatology, eschatology, trinitarian theology and ecclesiology.

**Liturical Preaching as an Act of Communion**

The homily, as a part of the liturgy, seeks to lead the assembly into communion with the Church, and with God. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit constitutes the Church at both the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist. At the table of the Word, this is done when the Church proclaims Christ who is present in the Scriptures, and then leads the community into the celebration at the table of the Eucharist where the Spirit is explicitly called down upon the gifts offered and the people assembled to transform them into the Body of Christ. Further, since *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 35 and 54 explicitly name the homily as an integral part of the Mass, we are able to posit that the Holy Spirit constitutes the Church through the liturgical homily because it has done so in the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

We have seen that Robert Waznak describes the homily as “biblical, liturgical, kerygmatic, conversational and prophetic.” He describes the liturgical qualities of the homily as “doxological, anamnetic, epicletic, eschatological and ecclesial.” If we take seriously the
contributions of the theological perspectives of the aspects of *communion* ecclesiology which relate to the Mass, and to the homily in particular, we could argue that his theology of proclamation is nascent in his writings, but we need to make one correction to Waznak’s categories and argue that the *liturgical* homily establishes *communion* with God and the Church because of its “biblical, kerygmatic, doxological, anamnetic, epicletic, eschatological, ecclesial, prophetic,” missiological and pneumatological nature. This rearrangement is necessary because “liturgical” is not accidental to the homily, but is part of the homily’s very substance. If the celebration of the Eucharist is the source and summit, not only of the Christian life, but also of the Church itself, *communion* becomes the lens through which we must look at the homily.

Further, any theology of the liturgical homily needs to incorporate the multiple characteristics of the liturgy and demonstrate how the homily contributes to the Church’s ongoing mission to call, create and form Christian disciples. Each characteristic must be attended to, though not equally, in relationship to the others. To attend to a characteristic of the liturgical homily in isolation becomes an exercise in nuance. In order to demonstrate this, let us look at Waznak’s characteristics of the liturgical homily as *biblical* and *doxological*.

The *biblical* nature of the liturgical homily constitutes the “event” quality of the homily that we saw in the writings of Irwin, LaFont and Driscoll. The latter two theologians brought in the work of Marsili, who sees the event character of the liturgical proclamation of Scripture, where the “wonderful works of God in the history of salvation”\textsuperscript{56} are not only remembered, but also proclaimed and realized in the assembly. This *biblical* proclamation is anamnetic because

\textsuperscript{56} SC 35.2
of its event quality that makes God’s wonderful works present in the gathered Church. Likewise it is *epicletic* because as the Church gathers and proclaims the presence of Christ, his Holy Spirit is brought forth on the assembly through the homily. The very proclamation of the homily constitutes its *kerygmatic* nature since it also is rooted in the proclamation of God’s wonderful works. As Driscoll demonstrates in his work, the Christian story is not a mere sociological one, but a story of God’s Good News. It is this announcement that both draws and sustains disciples.

The *doxological* nature of the homily depends upon the *ecclesial* context. A homily does not exist outside of the *communal* context of the Church’s liturgy—it takes a priest or deacon who proclaims the Word in the homily and the members of the assembly who receive the proclamation. The homily, like the whole of the liturgy, is the Church’s praise of the Father for what He has done for us and will do for us through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the *eschatological* and *Trinitarian* dimensions that all of theologians in this study have emphasized in the theology of communion.

Dulles’ “community of disciples” model adds to Waznak’s descriptors in that it points not only to the eschatological hope of the Church, but it also actively describes the participatory nature of the Church in the liturgy as baptized members who have received a vocation to follow the Lord Jesus, in the totality of what discipleship means. This includes the prophetic witness about which Waznak wrote, but it also includes the missiological thrust of the Church. Disciples are those who are called by the Lord Jesus, who learn from his teachings and put them into practice, and then share what they have received with others.

The homily forms the community in the one faith and facilitates the incorporation into the one body. The homily gives the community of disciples the “mind of Christ.” This is the
Tradition element that Congar and Driscoll emphasized in their writings on *communion*. It is not simply personal belief or faith where Christ is acknowledged as present, but it is in the teachings of the Apostles that are handed down in the life of the Church.

**Conclusion**

In his *An Introduction to the Homily*, Robert Waznak began to answer his own call for a unified theology of the homily with his reformulation of the characteristics of the homily and with his integration of the New Homiletic material in his discussion of images for the preacher. In this book he began to formulate an integrated theology of proclamation. As we saw in chapter three rather than summarize and conclude in his final chapter with a theology of proclamation, he left his readers on the edge of the theological cliff and gave them instead answers to very practical questions.

In this chapter, we have explored how the theological category of *communion* could complete Waznak’s work by providing a synthesis of his qualities of the liturgical homily in this solidly Vatican II theological principle. *Communion* brings together Waznak’s contributions while providing a theological lens to view the homily.

Furthermore, *communion* provides direction and clarity to some of the problems we have encountered in this study. Without this unified theology of preaching the homily can be isolated from the Eucharistic context in which the conciliar fathers restored it. Waznak and every homiletician we have seen recognize that the restoration of the homily in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was a good and necessary reform. The conciliar fathers saw an integral and intimate
link between the homily and the other elements of the Mass. The theology of *communion*
implies this essential liturgical context.

The unified theology also prevents an overemphasis on a single element of the liturgy. The message, the sender and the receiver are all attended to within the greater action of bringing the local community into communion with the Church and with God. The liturgical homily, as an act of communion, is always the three acting together.

Finally, *communion* also allows for growth in our understanding of the liturgical homily. We have seen that this concept of *communion* is both ancient and new, just like the homily. As theologians delve deeper into the principles of *communion* and the liturgy, we will discover more of the inexhaustible mystery of God.
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