



Fr. Daniel's Corner

Mass Moment: Part 15

THE HOMILY:

The Homily is required 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.

Being called together is at the heart of being Church. So now comes the part of the Mass that is often the most loved and the most hated moment. Preaching consistently well can prove to be a challenge for priests (and deacons) who often live very busy lives and are called to preach all week long at weekday masses, funerals and weddings, in addition to being thoroughly prepared to deliver “a barn-burner” every weekend. No excuses here, just explanations. The homily is obviously a critical moment in the Mass and there are high expectations that the people of God will be edified and instructed.

Preaching and explaining God's word has been a source of faith growth since New Testament times. On this, St. Paul says: “how can they call on him on who they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’ (Rom 10:14-15). To bring His message, Christ also makes use of the word of the priest who, after the Gospel, gives the homily. Therefore, the homily is necessary for the nurturing of the Christian life (GIRM #65). It should be an explanation of some aspect of the readings from Sacred Scripture from the Proper of the Mass of the day and should take into account the mysteries of Christ, the particular celebration at hand (Advent, Lent, Easter, Christmas, Solemnities, Feasts, Memorials, Ordinary Time) and the daily lives of the people. The dialogue between God and his people should find fulfillment in our lives by listening to the homily. Just like the Word was made flesh and lived and worked among us, so is the word of the homily expected to become flesh in us and translated into works. And so, the homily helps the Lord's Word to enter into our ears, reach our heart and go to the hands to do good works.

The one who gives a homily- the bishop, priest, or deacon- offers a real service to the congregation, who in turn must do their part. First of all, being attentive by having the right interior disposition, knowing that every preacher has merits and limitations. Sometimes prejudice becomes an obstacle. And the one who gives a homily must be conscious that he's not doing something of his own; he is preaching, giving voice to Jesus (the principal content of every preaching), and thus ought to be well prepared with prayer, scriptural studies and brief synthesis. The preacher must be capable of explaining, proclaiming, and lifting the community's minds and hearts up to the Lord.

Furthermore, the homily must signal and to some extent explain the link between the Liturgy of the Word, which is now concluding, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which is about to begin. The words proclaimed in the liturgy become sacrament; that is, the ritual actions and words performed around the community's gifts of bread and wine proclaim in their own way, at an even deeper level, the one and only event of salvation: The Lord's death and Resurrection. Finally, it is important to observe a moment of silence after the homily to enable the seed received in the spirit to settle in us, as each person thinks about what he/she has heard.