

Series on the Mass, Part 20: The Homily

March 8, 2020

The priest, having read the Gospel or heard it sung by the deacon, will then give an explanation of the sacred texts or address some relevant topic dealing with faith or morals. The homily or sermon is required on Sundays and Feast Days, though it can be given any day of the year.

There is usually a small ceremony before the homily that involves the removal of the maniple. The maniple is only worn during the celebration of the Mass and not for any other liturgical function. Therefore, when the priest leaves the altar to go to the pulpit, he removes the maniple and places it on the missal or gives it to the deacon to place on the sedilia while the homily is given. The reason for removing the maniple is that the homily is an instruction or commentary of the priest and not an official text of the Church. This does not mean that what is taught during the homily is contrary to Church teaching, but only that it is not an official text being read from the missal.

During the homily, the language shifts from the Latin used for the Mass to the vernacular understood more easily by the faithful. This is also the time when announcements, which are clearly not part of the liturgy, are often given. Technically the announcements should be given before or after Mass begins, but for practical reasons, they are given before the homily.

On certain special occasions, the liturgical books recommend that the homily be given before the celebration of the Mass, such as at weddings, where the homily would be given before the couple pronounce their vows, which takes place before Mass, or at funerals, where it could be before Mass so as not to interrupt the prayers for the deceased. The present practice, however, is that a homily be given after the Gospel. Once the homily is finished, the priest returns to the altar, puts on the maniple and continues with the ceremonies of the Mass in Latin.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Charles Van Vliet, FSSP

Pastor, Regina Caeli Parish