

PREACHING THE HOLY EUCHARIST

- The Connection between the Word of God and the Word Made Flesh as seen in Emmaus
 - To live the Mystery placed in a priest's hands, and to help others live that Mystery, is the purpose of our priestly life.
 - Among the means, one of the most important is to become Men of the Word of God who are able better to recognize the Word made Flesh and do the same for others.
 - The connection between encounter Christ in the word and then in the Word made flesh we see as well in the scene of Emmaus.
 - VD 54 Luke's account of the disciples on the way to Emmaus enables us to reflect further on this link between the hearing of the word and the breaking of the bread (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35). Jesus approached the disciples on the day after the Sabbath, listened as they spoke of their dashed hopes, and, joining them on their journey, "interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (24:27). The two disciples began to look at the Scriptures in a new way in the company of this traveller who seemed so surprisingly familiar with their lives. What had taken place in those days no longer appeared to them as failure, but as fulfilment and a new beginning. And yet, apparently not even these words were enough for the two disciples. The *Gospel of Luke* relates that "their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (24:31) only when Jesus took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them, whereas earlier "their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (24:16). The presence of Jesus, first with his words and then with the act of breaking bread, made it possible for the disciples to recognize him. Now they were able to appreciate in a new way all that they had previously experienced with him: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (24:32).
 - Jesus continually wishes to make our hearts burn. He wants to explain to us along the journey of our life what the Scriptures mean. This is one of the central parts of all Christian prayer.
 - This is absolutely key to the new evangelization.
 - The best example of this I've heard is what Pope Francis explained to the Bishops of CELAM after World Youth Day in Rio (July 27, 2013). He did it on a profound exegesis of the scene of Emmaus.
 - Let us read once again, in this light, the story of Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24:13-15). The two disciples have left Jerusalem. They are leaving behind the "nakedness" of God. They are scandalized by the failure of the Messiah in whom they had hoped and who now appeared utterly vanquished, humiliated, even after the third day (vv. 17-21). Here we have to face the difficult mystery of those people who leave the Church, who, under the illusion of alternative ideas, now think that the Church – their Jerusalem – can no longer offer them anything meaningful and important. So they set off on the road alone, with their disappointment. Perhaps the Church appeared too weak, perhaps too distant from their needs, perhaps too poor to respond to their concerns, perhaps too cold, perhaps too caught up with itself, perhaps a prisoner of its own rigid formulas, perhaps the world seems to have made the Church a relic of the past, unfit for new questions; perhaps the Church could speak to people in their infancy but not to those come of age. It is a fact that nowadays there are many people like the two disciples of Emmaus; not only those looking for answers in the new religious groups that are sprouting up, but also those who already seem godless, both in theory and in practice.
 - Faced with this situation, what are we to do? We need a Church unafraid of going forth into their night. We need a Church capable of meeting them on their way. We need a Church capable of entering into their conversation. We need a Church able to dialogue with those

disciples who, having left Jerusalem behind, are wandering aimlessly, alone, with their own disappointment, disillusioned by a Christianity now considered barren, fruitless soil, incapable of generating meaning...

- Since there is no one to accompany them or to show them with his or her own life the true way, many have sought shortcuts, because the standards set by Mother Church seem to be asking too much. There are also those who recognize the ideal of man and of life as proposed by the Church, but they do not have the audacity to embrace it. They think that this ideal is too lofty for them, that it is beyond their abilities, and that the goal the Church sets is unattainable. Nonetheless they cannot live without having at least something, even a poor imitation of what seems too grand and distant. With disappointed hearts, they then go off in search of something that will lead them even further astray, or which brings them to a partial belonging that, ultimately, does not fulfill their lives.
- From this point of view, we need a Church capable of walking at people's side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a Church which accompanies them on their journey; a Church able to make sense of the "night" contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a Church which realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return. But we need to know how to interpret, **with courage**, the larger picture. Jesus warmed the hearts of the disciples of Emmaus. I would like all of us to ask ourselves today: are we still a Church capable of warming hearts? A Church capable of leading people back to Jerusalem? Of bringing them home? Jerusalem is where our roots are: Scripture, catechesis, sacraments, community, friendship with the Lord, Mary and the apostles... Are we still able to speak of these roots in a way that will revive a sense of wonder at their beauty?
- Let us recover the calm to be able to walk at the same pace as our pilgrims, keeping alongside them, remaining close to them, enabling them to speak of the disappointments present in their hearts and to let us address them. They want to forget Jerusalem, where they have their roots, but eventually they will experience thirst. We need a Church capable of accompanying them on the road back to Jerusalem! ... We need a Church that kindles hearts and warms them. We need a Church capable of restoring citizenship to her many children who are journeying, as it were, in an exodus.
- Learning from St. Jerome
 - But we have to take the word of God ever more seriously, to know it, so as to proclaim it with fire.
 - I've always found it helpful to turn to Saint Jerome, who taught us very powerfully about this connection.
 - VD: The sacramentality of the word can thus be understood by analogy with the real presence of Christ under the appearances of the consecrated bread and wine. By approaching the altar and partaking in the Eucharistic banquet we truly share in the body and blood of Christ. The proclamation of God's word at the celebration entails an acknowledgment that Christ himself is present, that he speaks to us, and that he wishes to be heard. Saint Jerome speaks of the way we ought to approach both the Eucharist and the word of God: "We are reading the sacred Scriptures. For me, the Gospel is the Body of Christ; for me, the holy Scriptures are his teaching. And when he says: *whoever does not eat my flesh and drink my blood (Jn 6:53)*, even though these words can also be understood of the [Eucharistic] Mystery, Christ's body and blood are really the word of Scripture, God's teaching. **When we approach the [Eucharistic] Mystery, if a crumb falls to the ground we are troubled. Yet when we are listening to the word of God, and God's Word and Christ's flesh and blood are being poured into our ears yet we pay no heed, what great peril should we not feel?"**
 - He famously taught, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." It is therefore important that every Christian **live in contact and in personal dialogue with the Word of God given to us in Sacred Scripture.**
 - This was a lesson the Lord taught him in a very memorable way. Jesus appeared in a dream to Jerome as a young man and shocked him by telling him that he was a Ciceronian, not a Christian. He

knew the ancient Roman rhetorician's words far better than he knew Christ's words, than God's words. It changed everything.

- In a catechesis on him, B16 said:

- Truly "in love" with the Word of God, he asked himself: "How could one live without the knowledge of Scripture, through which one learns to know Christ himself, who is the life of believers?" (*Ep.* 30, 7). The Bible, an instrument "by which God speaks every day to the faithful" (*Ep.* 133, 13), thus becomes a stimulus and source of Christian life for all situations and for each person. **To read Scripture is to converse with God: "If you pray", he writes to a young Roman noblewoman, "you speak with the Spouse; if you read, it is he who speaks to you"** (*Ep.* 22, 25). The study of and meditation on Scripture renders man wise and serene (cf. *In Eph.*, Prol.). Certainly, to penetrate the Word of God ever more profoundly, a constant and progressive application is needed. Hence, Jerome recommends to the priest Nepotian: "Read the divine Scriptures frequently; rather, may your hands never set the Holy Book down. Learn here what you must teach" (*Ep.* 52, 7). To the Roman matron Leta he gave this counsel for the Christian education of her daughter: "Ensure that each day she studies some Scripture passage.... After prayer, reading should follow, and after reading, prayer.... Instead of jewels and silk clothing, may she love the divine Books" (*Ep.* 107, 9, 12). Through meditation on and knowledge of the Scriptures, one "maintains the equilibrium of the soul" (*Ad Eph.*, Prol.). Only a profound spirit of prayer and the Holy Spirit's help can introduce us to understanding the Bible: "In the interpretation of Sacred Scripture we always need the help of the Holy Spirit" (*In Mich.* 1, 1, 10, 15). **A passionate love for Scripture therefore pervaded Jerome's whole life, a love that he always sought to deepen in the faithful, too.** He recommends to one of his spiritual daughters: "Love Sacred Scripture and wisdom will love you; love it tenderly, and it will protect you; honour it and you will receive its caresses. May it be for you as your necklaces and your earrings" (*Ep.* 130, 20).

- The crisis of faith in the Word of God in practice

- Many Catholics have little appreciation for the Word of God.

- 2008 international survey of Catholic use of Sacred Scripture said that across the globe, of those who come to Mass each Sunday, only 3 percent have any contact with the Sacred Scriptures during the rest of the week.
- There's a huge Biblical illiteracy, even, sadly, among priests, deacons and religious.
- It's one of the reasons homilies are so banal in many places, because Sacred Scripture has not made the priests hearts burn. There's a minimalism. People don't really want to know the Word of God, they don't really think they need to learn the Word of God.
- In some places, in yesteryear, Catholics were even encouraged not to read Sacred Scripture.

- There's another way.

- Bishop Anton Justs of Jelgava Latvia, in one very moving intervention during the 2008 Synod on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, talked about the treasure of the Word of God and the joy of being able receive it.
- "In my presentation," Bishop Justs began in simple, straightforward English, "I would like to talk about the martyrs of twenty century and in particular those in my country Latvia These are the priests, men and women who died for proclaiming the Word of God.
- " I remember one Latvian priest, Viktors, who during the Soviet regime in Latvia was arrested for possessing the Holy Bible. In the eyes of the Soviet agents the Holy Scriptures were an anti-revolutionary book. The agents threw the Holy Scriptures on the floor and ordered the priest to step on it. The priest refused and instead knelt down and kissed the book. For this gesture the priest was condemned to ten years of hard labor in Siberia.
- "Ten years later, when the priest returned to his parish and celebrated the Holy Mass, he read the Gospel. Then he lifted up the lectionary and said: "The Word of God!" The people cried and thanked God."
- The Word of God, they knew, was a treasure worth suffering for, even the tortures of a decade in a brutal Siberian labor camp. It was worth getting down on one's knees to kiss. It contained

within the open secrets of a true and definitive revolution. Fr. Viktors clearly knew the value of the Word of God and became a living witness to its inestimable value.

- He was not alone in this testimony. “In Latvia, during the Soviet era,” Bishop Justs continued, “no religious books, no Holy Scriptures, no catechisms were allowed to be printed. The reasoning was: if there is no printed Word of God, there will be no religion. So our Latvian people did what the first century Christians did: they learnt the passages of the Holy Scriptures by heart.
 - Still today in Latvia there is an oral tradition alive. We stand on the shoulders of our martyrs to proclaim the Word of God. Our grandchildren remember their grandfathers and grandmothers, who died for their faith; they want to be, in their turn, heroes of faith. In Latvia we proclaim the living Word of God! We go in the processions and on the pilgrimages, we sing songs and we pray and say: ‘This is the Word of God,’ for which our grandparents died.”
 - A people learning Sacred Scripture by heart, taking the Bible on Pilgrimages, proudly proclaiming the Word of God, and seeking to be heroes in witness to it — this is what the Catholic Church is meant to be. As these faithful Latvians demonstrate, the Bible is not a dead document but a “living word,” since the Word of God is not principally a book or a series of books but a Person, an incarnate Word, whom we encounter through the Bible’s sacred words.
- A Big change happened in me at an airport.
- About a decade ago, I happened to meet a priest from Cleveland at Green Airport in Providence. I invited him to lunch. When the cashier asked if there would be one check or two, I said one and gave my credit card. Fr. Bob immediately interjected, “Sirach says we should go Dutch!” I stared at him quizzically, but retorted, “Jesus calls us to love one another as he loves us and the Last Supper wasn’t Dutch. I’m paying!” When we got to the table, immediately after grace, I asked whether he had invented the quotation from Sirach. “Not at all,” he enthusiastically replied, as he pulled a worn Bible from his backpack and amazingly opened it to the exact page in the Book of Sirach where it says not to be ashamed to “share the expenses of a business or journey” (Sir 42:3). Blown away, and frankly filled with holy envy by his command of Scripture, I asked how he had come to know the Word of God so well. He told me he had made a promise the day of his diaconal ordination to read the entire Bible once a year and that he had been faithful to that promise. “After 24 years,” he said with a smile, “You get know what Sirach says about restaurant bills!” I asked him how long it takes to read the whole Bible in a year. He replied that it takes cumulatively only 75 hours, or 12-15 minutes a day. Since that encounter, I’ve tried to emulate Fr. Bob’s commitment to reading the Bible each year and have encouraged many others to join us. 12-15 minutes a day can change your life. There are so many books and smart phone applications that make reading the Bible in a year easier, intelligently varying the passages to help one understand it better than if one just read from cover to cover. There are so many superb resources to understanding the Bible given to us by Scott Hahn, John Bergsma, Michael Barber, Brant Pitrie, Tim Gray, Jeff Cavins and others through the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, through Ascension Press, through the Augustine Institute and other great free resources.
 - But we need to make the effort. I remember one young woman preparing for marriage who attended something I did in the Catskills for young adults in 2003. As we were hiking, she asked what should be on her Catholic bucket list. The first thing I told her was “read the Bible at least once.” She called me three weeks later, saying she had read the whole thing, and had started a second time, convinced that the best gift she could give her future husband was the gift of God. In June I was in Chicago giving a retreat day for the Catholic Medical Association to medical students. There I mentioned that as Catholics they should know the Bible just as well as doctors know anatomy. I was really moved that 15 of them afterward created a WhatsApp group to read the Bible in a year and share their reflections each day with each other. They completed it.
- The Commitment priests make
 - Ordination Rite

- Diaconal: “Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe and practice what you teach.”
- Priestly:
 - Homily of the Rite: You will exercise the sacred duty of teaching in the name of Christ the Teacher. Impart to everyone the word of God that you have received with joy. Meditating on the law of the Lord, see that you believe what you read, that you teach what you believe and that you practice what you teach. In this way, let what you teach be nourishment for the people of God. Let the holiness of your lives be a delightful fragrance to Christ’s faithful, so that by word and example you may build up the house that is God’s Church.
 - Promises: Do you resolve to exercise the ministry of the word wisely, preaching the Gospel and teaching the faith?
 - Prayer of Consecration: May they be worthy co-workers with our Order, so that by their preaching and through the grace of the Holy Spirit, the words of the Gospel may bear fruit in human hearts and reach even to the ends of the earth.
- Preaching the Eucharist
 - When?
 - We will have John 6 in Cycle B during the Summer every three years during the summer
 - We have that same cycle for daily Mass goes every Easter season
 - First Communion Mass.
 - Holy Thursday.
 - But that’s not enough. We must preach about the Eucharist always!
 - Fr. Peter John Cameron. Finish every homily referring to Jesus in the Eucharist. If we’re preaching Jesus, we can. It helps people to recognize him.
 - The documents of the Church on the Eucharist, mention Sacred Preaching a lot.
 - Preaching well
 - SC 46. Given the importance of the word of God [to bring about faith in the Eucharist], the quality of homilies needs to be improved. **The homily is "part of the liturgical action"** (139), 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 carefully, based on an adequate knowledge of Sacred Scripture" (140). Generic and abstract homilies should be avoided. In particular, **I ask these ministers to preach in such a way that the homily 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 (142).
 - From pedagogy to mystagogy
 - SC 71. 77. Significantly, the Synod Fathers stated that **"the Christian faithful need a fuller understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist and their daily lives. Eucharistic spirituality is not just participation in Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. It embraces the whole of life."** (216) This observation is particularly insightful, given our situation today. **It must be acknowledged that one of the most serious effects of the secularization just mentioned is that it has relegated the Christian faith to the margins of life as if it were irrelevant to everyday affairs. The futility of this way of living – "as if God did not exist" – is now evident to everyone.** Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence **the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived "according to the Spirit"** (*Rom* 8:4ff.; cf. *Gal* 5:16, 25). It is significant that Saint Paul, in the passage of the *Letter to the Romans* where he invites his hearers to offer the

new spiritual worship, also speaks of the need for a change in their way of living and thinking: "Do not be conformed to this world but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2). In this way the Apostle of the Gentiles emphasizes the link between true spiritual worship and the need for a new way of understanding and living one's life. **An integral part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life is a new way of thinking**, "so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (*Eph* 4:14).

- 64. Given the vital importance of this personal and conscious *participatio*, what methods of formation are needed? The Synod Fathers unanimously indicated, in this regard, a **mystagogical approach to catechesis**, which would lead the faithful to understand more deeply the mysteries being celebrated. (186) In particular, **given the close relationship between the *ars celebrandi* and an *actuosa participatio*, it must first be said that "the best catechesis on the Eucharist is the Eucharist itself, celebrated well."** (187) **By its nature, the liturgy can be pedagogically effective in helping the faithful to enter more deeply into the mystery being celebrated.** That is why, in the Church's most ancient tradition, **the process of Christian formation always had an experiential character.** While not neglecting a systematic understanding of the content of the faith, it centred on a vital and convincing encounter with Christ, as proclaimed by authentic witnesses. It is first and foremost the witness who introduces others to the mysteries.
- SC 65. **A convincing indication of the effectiveness of eucharistic catechesis is surely an increased sense of the mystery of God present among us. This can be expressed in concrete outward signs of reverence for the Eucharist which the process of mystagogy should inculcate in the faithful.**
 - Preaching Christ
 - SC 23. I consider it important to recall several important points about the relationship between the sacrament of the Eucharist and Holy Orders. ... **Priests should be conscious of the fact that in their ministry they must never put themselves or their personal opinions in first place, but Jesus Christ. Any attempt to make themselves the centre of the liturgical action contradicts their very identity as priests.** The priest is above all a servant of others, and **he must continually work at being a sign pointing to Christ, a docile instrument in the Lord's hands.** This is seen particularly in his humility in leading the liturgical assembly, in obedience to the rite, uniting himself to it in mind and heart, and avoiding anything that might give the impression of an inordinate emphasis on his own personality. **I encourage the clergy always to see their eucharistic ministry as a humble service offered to Christ and his Church.**
- Primer on preaching from Pope Francis
 - In its document on the priesthood (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*), the Second Vatican Council said the **"primary duty" of priests was "proclaiming the Gospel to all"** (PO 4). The first responsibility of priests is to preach the Good News, since no one can be saved who first doesn't hear the Word of God and respond to it in faith. Therefore, as you in prayerful discernment seek to confirm that God is calling you to serve him as priests, one of the things for which you'll be preparing is to preach. And just like the preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage has three different phases — remote preparation, proximate preparation and immediate preparation — you are now in remote or proximate preparation, but what you do now can make a big difference as to whether you become a good preacher or a poor one, whether you will be able to fulfill as a good and faithful servant what God will be asking of you.
 - The Church — both the people of God as well as the hierarchy! — has long been saying that preaching in general needs a lot of improvement:

- EG 135: Let us now look at preaching within the liturgy, which calls for serious consideration by pastors. I will dwell in particular, and even somewhat meticulously, on the homily and its preparation, since so many concerns have been expressed about this important ministry and we cannot simply ignore them. The homily is the touchstone for judging a pastor’s closeness and ability to communicate to his people. We know that the faithful attach great importance to it, and that both they and their ordained ministers suffer because of homilies: the laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them! It is sad that this is the case.
 - SC 46: Given the importance of the word of God, the quality of homilies needs to be improved. The homily 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. (2006).
 - He repeated this verbatim in VD 49 four years later.
 - US Bishops in 2012 *Preaching the Mystery of Faith* said, “We are also aware that in survey after survey over the past years, the People of God have called for more powerful and inspiring preaching. A steady diet of tepid or poorly prepared homilies is often cited as a cause for discouragement on the part of laity and even leading some to turn away from the Church.”
- So during this retreat, I want to ponder in depth what Pope Francis says about sacred preaching in his new apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. The missionary transformation of the Church that he announced in that apostolic exhortation, which is to become a paradigm and a program for all aspects of the Church life, he says, cannot happen without a thorough reform of preaching within the Church, both preaching “proper,” — what bishops, priests and deacons do — as well as preaching in general, the type of sharing and teaching of the faith that all of us are called to do.
- **Already now, you’re being called on to respond to questions about the hope you carry within you. Already now, as you probably experienced with relatives and friends at home during the Christmas season, you’re being given plenty of informal pulpits in which to be able to share the faith.** What Pope Francis said in the section on preaching in his apostolic exhortation is very useful for all that you are doing already as catechism teachers, what you are doing already in emails, comment boxes, posts and tweets, promoting and defending the truth of the Gospel.
- So I’d like you to hear what Pope Francis says with regard to both contexts, the normal words and witness all of us give to others in our day-to-day life and then the specific application to preaching in Church, so that you may profit more from the homilies given throughout your years in seminary and then be enriched to share much more later with those to whom the Lord may send you in his name and person.
- So I’d like to ponder together with you in the presence of the Lord Jesus some of what his earthly vicar is exhorting us to do. **He wrote this section, he said, to “renew confidence” in sacred preaching through which God reaches out to his people and because he knows many priests find preaching a burden and, because of that, often spread that burden to their people.** There are so many good insights that come from Pope Francis’ 44 years of priestly experience.
- To make things simple and hopefully a little more easily memorable, I’ve re-organized the most “meticulous” papal primer on preaching in Church history into four points focusing on the purpose of liturgical preaching, the messenger, the message and the style.
- The point and purpose of liturgical preaching
 - Pope Francis first indicates what preaching is *not* supposed to be:
 - It’s not, he says, a “form of entertainment.”
 - Neither is it supposed to be a weekly commentary on current events.
 - He says we shouldn’t speak about the latest news to awaken people’s interests.
 - These commentaries on current affairs listened to more informatively than performatively, leaving listeners “without being challenged or changed.”
 - It’s not a lecture or speech on biblical exegesis
 - It’s not meant to be a catechetical session or even a meditation.
 - This is a development of the Church’s understanding of the point of a homily:

- What it's supposed to be is a bridge to a heart-to-heart dialogue between God and his people.
 - PO 4, in a paragraph in which it says that priests "have the primary duty of proclaiming the Gospel of God to all," says, "Whether by entering into profitable dialogue they bring people to the worship of God, whether by openly preaching they proclaim the mystery of Christ, or whether in the light of Christ they treat contemporary problems, they are relying not on their own wisdom for it is the word of Christ they teach, and it is to conversion and holiness that they exhort all men."
 - VD 59: 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
 - A liturgical homily promotes a **heart-to-heart dialogue between God and his people**, proclaiming the deeds of salvation and restating the demands of the covenant.
 - It takes up the dialogue God has already established and leads to sacramental communion.
 - **This dialogue is more than the communication of truth. It's an expression of love for each other, of an exchange of persons, through the medium of words.**
 - **The preacher's task is to join loving hearts of the Lord and his people, strengthening covenant and bond of charity. The hearts of believers allow God to speak, with the preacher as an instrument to express God's word and the people's own feelings so that afterward they can continue the conversation.** The word is a mediator, bringing God, faithful and intermediary together.
 - **It should guide the assembly and preacher to a life-changing communion with Christ in the Eucharist.**
 - **For this reason, the preacher needs to keep his ear to the people and find what they need to hear. He must contemplate his people, their habits, aspirations, limitations, worldviews, learning their language, so that he can link it to their human situation that needs God's word.**
 - This double-contemplation will lead to a "synthesis" between the Gospel and culture.
- **The homily is part of the offering made to the Father** and a mediation of the grace that Christ pours out.
- It's quasi-sacramental, since faith comes from what is heard.
- The homily is meant to help form a people
 - The Church is a pilgrim people advancing toward God.
 - We're not meant to remain a group of individuals, but a family.
 - Magi came together to cross the desert. Shepherds came together to adore Jesus. It's a mutual journey.
 - Francis insists that Jesus didn't call apostles to form an exclusive or elite group.
 - Everyone is meant to be "welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel."
- And the homily is meant to call and help form people to be evangelized evangelizers
 - Evangelization is not the task of professionals while others are "passive recipients." The entire people of God is meant to proclaim the Gospel
 - We're not supposed to be "disciples *and* missionaries," but rather "missionary disciples."

- Preaching flourishes in the service to the mission of evangelization, helping others to take up their own mission. Missionary disciples accompany missionary disciples.
 - Just as the first disciples immediately told others about the salvation they had found, so we should do the same.
 - Life is simple not the same with Jesus as without him. In one of the most moving passages in the exhortation, Francis says, **“It is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, not the same thing to walk with him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear his word as not to know it, and not the same thing to contemplate him, to worship him, to find our peace in him, as not to. It is not the same thing to try to build the world with his Gospel as to try to do so by our own lights. We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything. This is why we evangelize.”**(266)
- The Messenger
- Francis says several things about the one preaching the word so that people will have ears to hear the word he seeks to proclaim for God.
 - Francis says that people today thirst for **authenticity, for credible witnesses, for preachers who speak of a God they know and for a minister who communicates he’s at least striving to treat them the way they believe God treats them and wants them to be treated.**
 - First, the preacher should be:
 - close
 - approachable
 - welcoming
 - warm
 - joyful
 - unpretentious
 - ready for dialogue
 - patient
 - The Pope says he should be striving for holiness, stating the obvious truth that **“The greater or lesser holiness of the minister does impact his proclamation.”**
 - He should enjoy passing on the faith to others.
 - Jesus enjoyed talking with people, Francis says. The preacher should strive to communicate that same enjoyment.
 - To do so, like Jesus, he must get beyond others’ weaknesses and failings to see what Jesus sees and loves in them.
 - He must also strive to know those whom he addresses.
 - The preacher must know the heart of his community, where its desire for God is alive and ardent, and where the once loving dialogue has become barren.”
- Message
- The message, Pope Francis says quoting Blessed John Paul II, is the **“joyful, patient, progressive preaching” of the incarnation, birth, life, saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.** Jesus has got to be the center and hero of the homily, not the minister, and we should seek to bring the “fragrance” of Christ’s closeness and personal gaze.
 - Pope Francis has been giving a lot of attention since his election on the “progressive and patient” aspects of that proclamation. He says our preaching must **begin and emphasize above all the kerygma**, so that we make sure that the secondary issues of the faith don’t triumph over the primary, so that the various “no’s” of living the Gospel don’t drown out the fundamental “yes.”
 - He says the kerygma is first not just because it should be at the beginning, but also because it’s principal.

- In a previous section of the exhortation, he said, “It needs to be said that in preaching the Gospel a fitting sense of proportion has to be maintained. **This would be seen in the frequency with which certain themes are brought up and in the emphasis given to them in preaching.** For example, if in the course of the liturgical year a parish priest speaks about temperance ten times but only mentions charity or justice two or three times, an imbalance results, and precisely those virtues which ought to be most present in preaching and catechesis are overlooked. The same thing happens when we speak more about law than about grace, more about the Church than about Christ, more about the Pope than about God’s word.” (38)
 - If instead of kerygmatic preaching the people receive a purely moralistic or doctrinaire preaching, or a lecture on biblical exegesis, it will detract from the heart-to-heart communication that is the point of preaching.
 - He’s phrased the kerygma himself in a few different places in the exhortation:
 - **“The personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship.” (128)**
 - **“Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.” (164)**
 - For the preacher to preach the kerygma, he says, he must believe it. The preacher must know that God loves him, that Jesus has saved him, that his love has the last word.
 - Even though the preacher begins and proportionately emphasizes the kerygma, Pope Francis stresses that his missionary preaching involves more than the kerygma.
 - Jesus, Francis reminds us, calls us to teach others to observe all that he commanded us on how to respond to his love with the love of neighbor. This points to ongoing formation, maturation and growth. Evangelizing preaching is meant to stimulate the desire for growth until Christ lives us.
 - Formation involves entering more deeply into the kerygma.
 - We need a pedagogy and mystagogy that can help people step by step to enter into the mystery, one virtue at a time, patiently leading them to maturity, freedom and responsibility
- The Style
 - The fourth and last part schematic part would be about the style of preaching, about which Pope Francis said the most. He said that good preaching means not just knowing what to say but how to say it. (156)
 - He laments that preachers often haven’t taken the trouble to find the proper way to proclaim the message. The method is also a profoundly spiritual concern.
 - **He said it’s a great act of love of neighbor to refuse to offer a product of poor quality.** Do we love our neighbor enough to refuse giving a poor quality homily?
 - What are the elements of a high quality homily?
 - First, it’s well-prepared
 - Preparation is so important, Pope Francis writes, that a “prolonged time of study, prayer, reflection and pastoral creativity should be devoted to it.”
 - For pastors who don’t have enough time, he asks a shift in priorities, even if less time will be given to other important activities.
 - The Holy Spirit, he said, demands our active and creative cooperation.
 - A preacher who doesn’t prepare is not “spiritual” but dishonest and irresponsible with his gifts.
 - This type of preparation, he said, isn’t quick, easy and immediate, but patient. In order to carry out this type of persevering remote, proximate and immediate preparation, it requires love for the God of whom we’re preparing to speak and who speaks to us, and love for the people to whom we’re going to speak.
 - Second, it’s prayerful. It begins, Francis says, with calling on the Holy Spirit in prayer.

- Next, it's Scriptural
 - The biblical text has to be the foundation of our preaching, Pope Francis indicates, and we need to give it our full attention. This involves both careful study as well as prayerful reading, in which we say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."
 - The homily and all evangelization is based on the word of God, listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to, especially through the Eucharist
 - The preacher must develop great personal familiarity with the word of God. Exegetical and linguistic aspects not enough, but docile and prayerful heart needed. We should examine whether we've grown in love for the word we preach
 - If we have a lively desire to hear the word, we'll communicate it to God's people. Words must resonate in heart of pastor before they'll do so in the faithful.
 - Word must become incarnate in preacher's daily life, to communicate to others his contemplation. Must be penetrated by the word before we think about what to say to others. If the word hasn't really touched his life through prayer, he will be a false prophet, a fraud, a shallow impostor.
 - Preparation begins with reverence for the truth of the word of God. We take the time to study it and to speak to God about it lest we distort it.
 - We must understand meaning of the words we read, not just exegetical details but its principal message. If the preacher doesn't make this effort, his preaching won't have unity or order, but it will just be an accumulation of disjointed ideas incapable of inspiring others. A common defect in tedious and ineffectual preaching, he said, is the inability to transmit the intrinsic power of the text.
 - He must also consider the effect the author wanted to produce. A consoling text shouldn't be used to correct errors; an exhortation to teach doctrine; a summons to mission to talk about the latest news.
 - Prayerful reading of the Bible is not separate from study; it should begin with study and go on to discern how that same message speaks to his own life. We should ask, "Lord, what does this text say to me?" How is my life to change? What troubles me about this text, or attracts me and why? What temptations arise? We should apply it to our own life, to avoid excuses for watering down the meaning of the text. We should not be afraid of the demanding aspect of the text, which can rob us of the pleasure.
 - It's not enough for the preacher to have a personal familiarity, but he should try to preach in a way to inspire his listeners to hunger for a similar familiarity. Sacred Scripture, he says, must be a door opened to every believer. Evangelization demands familiarity with God's word, which means parishes, dioceses and associations must provide for serious, ongoing study of the Bible.
- In liturgical homilies, the preacher **should be on fire** based on his preparation with Sacred Scripture.
 - They should be words that set hearts on fire.
 - To speak from the heart means our hearts are not just on fire but enlightened by the fullness of revelation and historical path of God's word in heart of Church.
- He should be **humble**
 - He has to recognize his poverty and abandon himself to Christ, whose message must penetrate the preacher's entire being, not just mind. When this happens, the Holy Spirit can place on his lips the words he couldn't find himself
- He should be **simple**

- Simplicity shows itself with the language we use, so that people can understand it.
- The greatest risk for a preacher is to become so accustomed to his own language that he thinks everyone else understands and uses it.
- To adapt language to the people, we need to share their lives and pay loving attention to them.
- He should be clear.
 - Simplicity and clarity are different. Our language can be simple and still not clear because of disorganization.
 - There's a need for thematic unity so that people can easily grasp his line of argument.
- He should be **practical**
 - One is to use familiar, practical, every-day images, to appreciate and accept the message we're communicating.
 - It can help people to savor the message, awaken desire and move the will.
- He should be **positive**
 - His own heart and the hearts of listeners should be able to sense that each word of Scripture is a gift before a demand
 - He should point out not what shouldn't be done, but rather what we can do better. It should indicate the positive and attractive value, filling listeners with hope, liberating them from negativity.
 - In moral catechesis, Francis says, we should show the attractiveness of a life of wisdom, self-fulfillment and enrichment, which can help people better understand the rejection of evil that endanger life.
 - We should behave as and be joyful messengers of challenging proposals, guardians of goodness and beauty of a life of fidelity rather than experts in dire predictions and dour judges
 - He even says priests, deacons and the laity should gather periodically to discover resources to make preaching more attractive and positive. That brings us to the next point.
- His preaching should aim to be **beautiful**
 - The preacher must attend to the "way of beauty." Proclaiming Christ is not just showing something to be true but beautiful, capable of filling life with joy even in difficulties. Preaching is not about communicating abstract truths. The beauty of the images used by the Lord can encourage the practice of good.
 - Beauty can be a path leading to an encounter with Jesus.
 - Preachers and the whole Church need to have a renewed esteem for beauty as a means to touch the human heart and enable the truth and goodness of Christ to radiate within it. We only love what is beautiful.
 - Formation in the way of beauty ought to be part of our effort to pass on the faith.
- His preaching should be **eschatological**
 - It should make us desire the embrace of the Father who awaits us in glory.
 - The preacher should try to help people to feel that they live in the midst of the baptismal embrace and the eternal one
- His preaching should be **brief**
 - **The homily must not become more important than the celebration of faith, or violate its balance or rhythm**, Francis says.
 - He adds elsewhere the wisdom of Sirach, who teaches, "Speak concisely. Say much in few words."

- He doesn't define what he means by "brief," but if he practices what he himself recommends, he's probably thinking about 15 minutes, which is the average length of his homilies on Sundays and solemnities.
- His preaching should be modeled on a mother's conversation with her children.
 - The Church preaches, Francis says, like a mother, evangelizing her family, loving her children, teaching them what is for their benefit, counting on their trust.
 - A Mother listens to concerns and learns from children.
 - A spirit of love guides conversations and corrections.
 - Preaching is better understood when it is taught in the "mother tongue" because heart is better disposed. In that circumstance, the preaching becomes like a style of music inspiring encouragement, strength and enthusiasm.
 - The fact that he learned the faith primarily from his grandmother obviously influences this metaphor. If the inspirational heroes in his life had been male coaches or spiritual fathers, he likely would have accentuated the necessary paternal side to preaching, challenging sons and daughters courageously to strive beyond their comfort zones. We see both the paternal and maternal sides in Jesus' preaching.
 - Mary's preaching:
 - Pope Francis concludes *Evangelii Gaudium* by focusing our attention anew on maternal preaching by helping us ponder and pray to the Mother Jesus gave us from the Cross to help to evangelize us and the entire Church to become more like her first born Son.
 - She teaches us how to ponder things in our heart, to contemplate the mystery of God in the world, in history and in daily life. She sets out in haste to serve others as a model of contemplation and evangelization. She shows us the type of remote preparation needed so that our entire life, like hers, might become a *Magnificat*, sharing with others all that the Almighty in his goodness has gone for us in our lowliness and how we want all of us to receive the fulfillment of the promises he made to Abraham and all his spiritual sons and daughters forever!
 - She teaches us to live and to preach the mystery priests hold not just in our hands but within contemplative hearts.