



Newsletter

Issue 9, November 2020

IN THIS ISSUE:

Liturgy spotlight:
Preaching as an imaginative act

Sharing good practice:
Advice for good preaching

News and recent events

UPCOMING:

Online public lecture series: Rev Msgr Kevin W. Irwin, Professor of Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology at The Catholic University of America and author of *Pope Francis and the Liturgy* will speak as part of the ACU Centre for Liturgy's new online public lecture series in May 2021. Watch for further details in the new year.

New Liturgy Unit at ACU: Dr Jason McFarland, Lecturer in Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology at ACU, will teach the new intensive face-to-face postgraduate unit Ritual Studies (May 1-2 and 22-23, 2021) at ACU's Strathfield campus. Register as part of your Master's Degree or Graduate Certificate. Contact ftp.pg@acu.edu.au for more information.

Please email us for more information, or to register to hear about upcoming events.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

While the COVID-19 pandemic has seen many endure a months-long enforced fast from in-person liturgical celebrations, a wider-than-usual range of televised and online liturgies has been available for viewing and virtual participation. The varying quality of these liturgies has spotlighted some excellent liturgical praxis and some areas in need of further work. The homily is one of the most-commented-upon areas of the liturgy and one where the wisdom of experienced practitioners and educator-coaches can provide valuable insights and strategies for improvement. Those professionals who practise the art and craft of preaching must consistently review and refresh their approach to this aspect of liturgical service because the homily is, "necessary for nurturing the Christian life" (GIRM #65) and the homilist's task is "to proclaim how God's word is being fulfilled here and now" (*Homiletic Directory*, 2014, #6).

FROM OUR BOARD OF ADVISORS

Good preaching is like gold: it bears the weight of God's comforting and challenging presence as it enlightens our hearts and lives. Staff at the Centre are very willing to provide professional in-service training for those blessed with the responsibility of preaching God's word, a central component of the Church's mission.

One way is via formation in the parish context. Already, staff have been invited by willing members of the clergy to visit parishes with a view to providing preachers with constructive feedback on the liturgy, including the homily. For there is certainly wisdom in the saying that "to see and hear ourselves as others do" can be one of the greatest of teachers!

The Centre can also recommend printed and web-based commentaries and reflections from the Holy See (e.g., the *Homiletic Directory*), episcopal

In this newsletter, preaching educator Sr Janet Schlichting OP describes the essential boundaries within which creativity can flourish in homily-writing and Rev Dr Richard Leonard SJ shares practical insights gained over almost thirty years of preaching to highlight how to make the Word of God central to the homilist's life and relevant to the lives and cultures of those to whom he preaches. *Venite audite!*



Professor Clare V. Johnson
Director, ACU Centre for Liturgy
Professor of Liturgical Studies & Sacramental Theology, Faculty of Theology & Philosophy

conferences (e.g., the USCCB's *Fulfilled in Your Hearing*) and local and international scholars such as Mark Coleridge, Brendan Byrne SJ, Richard Leonard SJ, Michelle Connolly RSJ, Michael Casey OCSO, Mary Catherine Hilbert OP and Walter Burghardt SJ.

Like any great art form (including music, painting and sport), preaching requires regular practice, feedback and discernment, for it is *good practice* that makes *permanent!*



Dr Paul Taylor, MA Liturgy (UND), MMus, PhD (ACU) is Executive Secretary of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and of the National Liturgical Council.



Endorsed by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

NEWS AND RECENT EVENTS

Over 300 join online public lecture

On October 12, 2020 the ACU Centre for Liturgy presented an online public lecture to over 300 people from around the world. Liturgist and public health expert Sr Prof Julia Upton RSM of St. John's University, New York spoke on 'Liturgy, Prayer, Pastoral Care and Pandemics', exploring the impact of COVID-19 on the provision of pastoral care for the sick and dying, and how Christians can continue to express faith without gathering in person. Prof Upton reflected on the importance of domestic rituals that

help us to maintain our Christian identities when we cannot gather together, noted what the pandemic has taught us so far, and considered what liturgical celebration and pastoral care might look like going forward. A recording of this very well-received public lecture is available on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mRqQil_DFs.

Celebrating the Lectionary Year B

Celebrating the Lectionary Year B (Garratt Publishing, 2020) is the second volume of a rich resource of Lectionary-based catechesis designed especially for use in schools

and parishes celebrating Children's Liturgy of the Word. Collaborating with authors from the USA, Professor Clare V. Johnson has prepared this text for use with students in years 5-8 in conjunction with the Year of Grace Calendar for 2021. Exploring the Gospel for Sundays, solemnities, feasts and holydays (according to the Australian Lectionary and liturgical calendar) through proclamation, reflection and engaging classroom activities, this attractive book will help young people to link each Gospel text with their Catholic faith and everyday lives. For more information see: www.garrattpublishing.com.au.

LITURGY SPOTLIGHT

Preaching as an imaginative act

I started my professional life as an art teacher, and early on I found that to get the best work from my students I needed to create problems for them, to limit their methods or materials or subject matter. 'You may only tear the paper, you must use this or that medium, and only these colours...' My principle became 'creativity flourishes within limits' for imagination thrives as it bumps against boundaries.

This principle holds true for preaching. There are absolute givens: The Word of God, the preacher, and the congregation. There are other variables – the rite celebrated, desired length, the liturgical season—that also act as necessary limits for liturgical preaching, but I'll discuss the three basics to be honoured in preparation for a homily graced with what I'll call 'inSpirited imagination'.

Imagination is our active capacity for meaning-making and operates in all areas of human endeavour. The way it functions goes far beyond the idea of whimsy, or 'It's just your imagination'. The definition from which modern considerations start is 'seeing as'—seeing something as something else. You can think of or look at something this way, or another way, and your new view provides a leap of insight, a deeper or broader meaning. Imagination brings newness.

Humanity is created as *Imago Dei*, made to share in God's love and to participate in God's self-revelation to the world. The preacher brings the Word of God to life by offering new ways of imagining, coming to fresh meaning and new namings of God and ourselves. We attempt an alternative



translation, shine a new light on God's presence in our lives, offer new insight through 'Gospel-tinted lenses'. Good preaching is born of inSpirited imagining, and we are always being formed and re-formed into believers, witnesses, and communities of faith. We allow the Word of God to dwell in us, so we may speak out of revelation infused by and carried by the Holy Spirit. And as Augustine spoke of Eucharist, 'We become what we receive'. In our hearing and proclaiming, we grow into the Word we preach, becoming Living Words of Gospel in our world.

So: how do we imagine a homily where the essential boundaries – or gates, perhaps – are Word, preacher, and congregation?

In the beginning is the Word. And then the preacher. We read, ponder, pray,

becoming aware of the phrases that stand out, or have staying power with us. We let the Word walk in us, expose our neediness, examine our deeper selves, allow memories and feelings and associations to arise. We ask for a word of meaning.

We ponder our listeners. How will they hear and respond to this word? What message do they long to hear? How do their lives, their daily concerns, their sorrows and their fears, reverberate in you? What common experience do you share? Is there a Word for them that is also a Word that has captured you? Will it be a word of life for them, a glimpse of freedom, a call to conversion, a moment of hope, Alleluia and Amen? In light of all you've pondered, what is the Living Word the Spirit moving you to speak?

As you prepare, your imagination is working to shape the Word that is becoming your message. Here it contributes in ways unique to you and your gifts. You may imagine *empathically* for your community, alive to their feelings and stories. You may find yourself *resistant* to the message, wrestling with God over hard sayings and impossible-seeming tasks, allowing the congregation its freedom to complain, or you may resist the conventional imagination's interpretation of the message. You may imagine *poetically* with words and images, new phraseology, a reoccurring line, a unifying metaphor. You may find yourself imagining *prophetically*, called to re-examine the demands of truth and justice, and the attitudes and actions that follow, rattling

foundations, and pushing beyond the cherished past into God's future. You may imagine *playfully*, noting with humility and humour your own contradictions and the general bumbblings of an unfinished humanity and God's tenderness and mercy in continuing to pursue us. And in *liturgical* imagining, you listen for what the scriptures of the day reveal as the meaning and dimensions of the rites we are celebrating.

Then you will rise, and bring Word and Spirit to voice, witnessing from and to a power that you know is so much more than you, a reliable offer of Newness. And, please God, somebody who needs it will hear it, or (inevitably) hear something you didn't think you said, and it will make a difference.



Sr Janet Schlichting, OP, BS Art Education, MA Liturgy (UND), DMin (Aquinas Institute)
Janet is a Dominican Sister

of Peace living in Akron, Ohio. She has served on the summer faculty at Loyola University's (Chicago) Pastoral Institute, as Director of the Graduate Ministry Program at Ursuline College (Cleveland), and as Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Aquinas Institute (St Louis).

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Advice for good preaching



Every major survey about homilies reveals similar complaints that they are: too long; pitched over the heads of the congregation; don't intersect with the assembly's daily lives; and, more recently, that the accent of the homilist is hard to comprehend.

The General Instruction on the Roman Missal says that preaching should be a 'living commentary on the word' (#9). Vatican II's Sacrosanctum Concilium said that a homily moves from the scriptural texts 'to establishing mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life' (#35).

I have been listening to homilies for 57 years and formally preaching for 28 years. From my experience of listening and speaking here are my recommendations and advice for good preaching.

On the positive side, rather than trying to preach on three Sunday readings, choose one reading or one unifying theme.

Inspire both the hearts and intellects of the faithful and prompt a concrete action to do, or think about, during the week.

Preach no longer than eight minutes, or 800 words, the time between ad breaks on commercial television.

Don't get stuck in a single pattern of presentation, starting every homily with 'In the readings today my dear people', or 'The other day I ...', or always beginning with a story.

Try and avoid: attacking secularism for all the evils in the world and in the Church; always mentioning abortion; always quoting from the writings of the Holy Father; telling a joke every time; and giving a commentary on the football.

Remember that the preacher needs to be seen to be equally challenged by the Word so replace 'you' and 'you must' with 'we' and 'we might'.

Invite different sorts of people to give constructive and honest feedback about our preaching.

Finally, our homilies will never be judged by their style or craft as much as if we practise what we preach.



Rev Dr Richard Leonard, SJ, BA (Qld), GradDipEd (Melb), MTheol (MCD), DipATFM (LFS), PhD (Melb)
Richard directed the Office for Film and Broadcasting

for the ACBC for 22 years, was an Honorary Fellow of ACU (2009-16), and has been a visiting scholar within the School of Theatre, Film and Television at UCLA as well as a Visiting Professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He has served on juries at the Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Warsaw, Hong Kong, Montreal, Brisbane and Melbourne International Film Festivals. Richard is a regular columnist with *The Tablet* and author of ten books including *Preaching to the Converted*.

Engage our expertise

Improve liturgical celebration in your parish

The ACU Centre for Liturgy provides specialised training and formation workshops for parish ministers and liturgical musicians on a variety of topics.

Help your teachers and religious education leaders to deepen their understanding of the liturgy

We tailor workshops and professional development sessions to the specific needs of schools and Catholic education offices.

Develop your skills as a presider at liturgy

Clergy can engage in our specialised professional development sessions on a range of topics from presidential singing to the art of presiding at worship, and the craft of preaching.

Bring our experts to you

Our academics and specialists are available to deliver keynote addresses, public lectures, and conference workshops tailored to meet the needs of your organisation or event.

Study liturgy and sacramental theology

You can study academic courses or undertake higher degree research in liturgical studies and sacramental theology through ACU's Faculty of Theology and Philosophy. Contact us for further information.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: parish workshop

Serving as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) and bringing Communion to the sick requires faith, knowledge, and commitment. This three-hour workshop introduces the scriptural, theological, liturgical and spiritual foundations of the Eucharist, and emphasises the necessary practical components of this important part of parish liturgy. To bring this workshop to your parish, go to: www.acu.edu.au/EOI_EMHC.

Contact us

ACU Centre for Liturgy

25A Barker Rd, Strathfield, NSW 2135

Phone: +61 2 9701 4751

Website: acu.edu.au/centreforliturgy

Email: CentreforLiturgy@acu.edu.au

Centre for Liturgy Staff:

Professor Clare V. Johnson, Director

Dr Jason McFarland, Assistant Director

Ms Sharon Boyd, Professional Specialist – Liturgy Education

Ms Maryanne Hemsley, Administrative Officer



The Liturgy Nexus and Liturgy Nexus for Schools

Are you a post-graduate qualified liturgist or do you work in a liturgy-related profession (e.g., liturgical architecture, art or music)? Consider joining the Liturgy Nexus, an online subscription-based closed network for conversation on liturgical issues, resource sharing and problem solving.

Does your work in Catholic schools involve preparing liturgies? The Liturgy Nexus for Schools is where you can ask questions and develop your expertise in preparing engaging and prayerful liturgical celebrations for school communities.

To join the Liturgy Nexus or Liturgy Nexus for Schools, apply on the ACU Centre for Liturgy website. Membership is granted to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria. The membership fee is \$30.00 per year (not pro-rated), renewable on or before March 1 each year.

Support our work in rural and low-income parishes

You can support the crucial work of the ACU Centre for Liturgy by making a donation through the **Give Now** portal on our website. ACU is a not-for-profit institution, and all gifts of \$2 or more to the ACU Centre for Liturgy are tax-deductible. 100 per cent of your gift will be utilised to provide essential formative education in liturgy and sacraments in areas of need. Endowments, pledges, bequests and gifts in kind are welcome.

Board of Advisors:

Archbishop Patrick O'Regan, Archbishop of Adelaide

Bishop Paul Bird CSsR, Bishop of Ballarat

Rev Prof John F Baldovin SJ, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, USA

Fr Anthony Casamento csma, Vice President, ACU

Assoc Prof Stephen Downs, National Head of School, Theology, ACU

Br Prof David Hall fms, Dean, LaSalle Academy for Religious Education and Faith Formation, ACU

Prof Clare Johnson, Director, ACU Centre for Liturgy (ex officio)

Ms Josie Ryan, Liturgy Coordinator, Loreto Kirribili

Dr Paul Taylor, Executive Secretary, Bishops' Commission for Liturgy

Sr Prof Julia A Upton rsm, St John's University, New York

Very Rev Peter Williams, Vicar General, Diocese of Parramatta

ACU CENTRE FOR LITURGY

CRICOS registered provider: 00004G

Disclaimer (November 2020): Information correct at time of printing. The University reserves the right to amend, cancel or otherwise modify the content without notice.