

2.2.3 HOMILETICS INSTRUCTION

(School of Diaconal Formation)

last updated on June 26, 2019

The Leadership of Homiletics Instruction in Formation

The responsibility for designing curriculum and program for homiletics instruction comes from the Dean of the School of Diaconal Formation along with the lead professor of homiletics at the seminary. That lead professor serves as the instructor of record for all sections of homiletics in the diaconal formation program and who, with the dean, designates other teachers as adjuncts to instruct the various year level classes.

The dean selects a member of the Formation Team to act as coordinator of schedules and rosters and to communicate with the dean, the lead professor, the instructors and candidates regularly on matters related to curriculum, syllabi, attendance, assessment by and of candidates and collection of reports for filing and collegial inspection.

Selection and Ongoing Professional Development of Instructors

Deacons and priests who have demonstrated excellence in preaching apply for the positions of adjunct instructors for the School of Diaconal Formation. Consideration is given by the dean and by the lead professor who then appoint these instructors with the permission of the seminary rector, and with the approval of the diocesan archbishop.

Instructors are led annually in professional development to assure continuous progress in their teaching skills and homiletics knowledge, and by regular exposure to Focus and Didactic talks given by the lead professor as part of a term's schedule. The dean reviews a report each year submitted by candidates on their instructor, the contents of which, among other data, may guide his decision to retain or replace an individual instructor. There may at the dean's discretion be an honorarium given to an instructor at the conclusion of a term.

Duties and Requirements of Instructors

Instructors are charged with meeting with their class sections eight times per semester during which time they would follow a set curriculum formulated by the lead professor.

The general procedure of each class is, starting with the 2015-2016 academic year, to hold a lecture discussion with the candidates at the start of class on a topic from the homiletics curriculum. The core activity of each class is to have candidates practice preach a homily they composed on a gospel selected by the instructor that fosters development of skills in various topics covered in the lecture and in knowledge of the gospels and other scripture.

The instructor himself and the other class members, guided by him, then give constructive criticism to the candidate who preached. *Primary critical assessment attention is given to the preaching of the gospel message*, then to content, structure, style and delivery. Each candidate should be expected to give a practice homily each class session to promote competency, which in turn is formed by the criticism given by the instructor

and fellow classmates. At times selected by the instructor, others may be invited to listen to and evaluate practice homilies.

The instructor has several assessment tools and reports based on those assessments which he is required to use and submit to the dean. He makes primary written remarks on a sheet during the delivery, which he uses after delivery to make verbal remarks to the preacher and to foster remarks from other class members. He then uses these and other remarks to write comments on a running record which is kept throughout the term. This report is eventually stored in the school's office files after the dean reads them. They are also to be available to subsequent teachers of any candidate as a preview for planning strategic instruction and criticism of any candidate. Both the in-class remarks and the running record remarks may be shared with the candidate as a basis for conferences. There is also a final report on each candidate which is submitted, to be read and stored by the dean. Ultimately, the content of this report's summary remarks is transferred by the dean to a larger general progress report on each candidate and shared by the dean with the rector, and with the archbishop as needed.

Classroom instructors are asked to give their opinion on this report, with data to support it, on the potential for each candidate's continuing successfully in formation specific to homiletics training and instruction.

The Instructional Program in Homiletics Within Formation

Historical basis

Instruction and training in homiletics have been a key part of the formation process in the formation program from its inception and continue to be in the current era. The time allotted to this effort has increased over the years since the inception of the program. Now, under the guidance of the Graduate School of Theology and as a credited component of the professional master's degree in theology, time spent on the efforts of classroom instruction, candidates' practice, assessment of progress and curriculum development has increased exponentially.

Not only due to the increased academic requirements has this attention grown, but also due to the historical place preaching has had in ministry in the past and its evolution into the important ministerial place it occupies in the Church today.

Theological basis

Both the Old and New Testaments show us that those filled with the Holy Spirit have opened up God's word over time to those who sought to hear it and needed to hear it. Prophets and heralds are identified throughout the scriptures, from those who expressed God's desire to form a covenant with His people, to those who presaged the coming of a Savior and up to the presence of Christ himself, who fulfilled those promises, the Word made flesh among us.

The ordained ministers of God's word, deacons among them, are true prophets charged by God's calling to continue to expose the word to those who seek to hear it, need to hear it and be converted by it.

Liturgical basis

Preachers are to make this word flesh in a manner similar to the priests' consecration of bread and wine, to nourish the faithful with God's word in the proper liturgical setting through the homily as an organic component of the Mass, by which grace is conferred by the Spirit, in the person of the preacher who stands in the person of Christ the servant.

Scriptural basis

Not only are preachers evident and effective prophets throughout the scriptures, but also the scriptures themselves form the basis for the role of a preacher. All the scriptures point to God's love for His people and his desire for a plan for their salvation, then to the fulfillment of that plan in Jesus Christ.

God's loving plan is expressed in how He speaks with His people and to the prophets he chooses. These prophets have, over time, used words written before them and inspired by God to express these timeless truths. They in turn have left us words and visions, inspired by the Spirit, that communicate what they received. Indeed, those evangelists who witnessed the ministry of Christ, and other disciples who taught and explained it, have left us the gospels and letters which, along with words written before Christ, now form the basis for continuous opening of them to the people of God through preaching.

Practical basis

Scriptural Knowledge

Candidates in homiletic instruction are taught courses early in their formation that are based in the study of the scriptures themselves. This acquired essential knowledge forms a solid foundation from which the homily emerges. Praying with the scriptures formally through Lectio Divina is introduced in the Pre-Practicum course in Year One.

Interpretation, Catechesis, and Exegesis

Formal interpretation, through the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Revelation and Tradition, Church documents and scholarly texts are all introduced in homiletics instruction. There is no replacement for these dependable sources which pervade formation coursework in theology throughout the middle and final years of formation.

Learning to listen to and express the message that is timeless and timely in the study of the gospels and readings, and which is authentic Church teaching, is critical to forming the 'pearl,' or central core message, in a homily. This skill is so important, so that the faithful are never misled or badly taught but given authentic teaching, that learning to accomplish and practice it effectively is the primary goal of homiletics instruction.

Proclamation

Formal practice in reading the word of God in the Lectionary and Book of Gospels occurs continuously throughout homiletics instruction. Particular attention is given in Year 2 during which time a candidate is installed as a Lector. Proclamation reflects the role of the herald in history, and in the scriptures themselves.

Oration and Composition

These skills are important to the effectiveness of preaching and are taught not only in homiletics but also in formation coursework as part of classroom presentations, papers, and oral and written examinations.

Overall in homiletics instruction, the most emphasis in preaching is placed on stating the gospel message clearly, concisely and correctly. Content, structure, delivery and style of the homily are equally important and each forms modules for instruction during class.

Much of delivery and style are based in a candidate's personality and innate talents and become evident quickly in practice. Whatever behavior increases the homily's effectiveness is to be honored and developed, while others that do not contribute can be improved or extinguished over time with practice and criticism. Competency also is supported by consistent practice and exposure to proclamation in regular formation liturgies as lector and acolyte.
