

2.2.4 HOMILETICS CURRICULUM (School of Diaconal Formation)

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Content ... The content of the Homiletics Course Curriculum is organized around six divisions:

- Magisterial Documents
- History of Preaching: Engagement of Time, Place, Circumstances
- Effective Oral Communication
- Theology of Preaching
- Contemporary Homiletic Structures
- Preaching in Special Circumstances

Scope & Sequence ... The entire content of the Homiletics Curriculum is organized across eight semesters and consists of Focus Talks, Didactic Talks and the Practicum classes.

Focus Talks:

These talks present the Six Elements of the Homiletics Curriculum in a cyclical rotation. They are delivered at the start of each semester to the entire Candidate Community studying Homiletics, currently by Rev. James Olson, as one audience, and are designed to give the candidates a survey of the history, philosophy and theology of preaching the homily.

The schedule of Focus Talks includes:

- Fall 1 - Overview of the entire homiletics curriculum
- Spring 1 - Various topics for each class
- Fall 2 - Overview of Homiletics Directory, Magisterial Documents, Writing Orally
- Spring 2 - Preaching in a World of Grace
- Fall 3 - The Deacon and Prophetic Preaching
- Spring 3 - From Athens to Overbrook: Rhetoric
- Fall 4 - Preaching to Be Heard: Editing
- Spring 4 - The Path from Dogma to Preaching
- Fall 5 - Finding the Word to Preaching / Preaching the Ten Commandments
- Spring 5 - Keeping the Silence and Breaking the Silence
- Fall 6 - Bernard of Clairvaux & Preaching Conversion
- Spring 6 - When Bad Things Happen to Good Homilies

Didactic Talks:

These talks cover content that is concerned with practical aspects of preaching: the rhetorical skills, the structure of the homily, the exegesis of the Gospels and special audience and circumstances in which to preach a homily, and a review of a bibliography of preaching materials. They are delivered to specific groups of candidates over their eight semesters, or 'modules,' of homiletics instruction and are designed to strengthen and broaden their skills in composing and delivering their practicum homilies.

The schedule of Didactic Talks includes:

- Year I Spring - What Does Preaching the Word Mean
- Year II Fall - How to Take a Deeper Dive: Text and Context
- Year II Spring - The Homiletic Highway to Sermon Unity
- Year III Fall - History of Preaching Overview
- Year III Spring - Saint Augustine and St. Vincent De Paul
- Year IV Fall - Basic homiletic structures
- Year IV Spring - Advanced homiletic structures
- Year V Fall – How to be polished / Preach like Paul
- Year V Spring – The Silent Prayers of the Liturgy

Instructional Delivery

The Pre-Practicum:

During this first semester module, Spring of Year One, candidates are introduced to many topics concerning the theology and nature of the homily in the liturgy. The candidates are exposed to various Magisterial Documents and material focused on the sacramental nature of the preacher and preaching itself, and the liturgical and Eucharistic nature of the homily. Candidates are introduced to basic homiletic structure and composition. During the term, they put together an ‘elegantly simple’ homily, a section at a time each class session, which they deliver the final class night to family and friends.

YEAR I	Module 1 (Spring semester only)
Synopsis	<p>The <i>aim</i> of this introductory course is to deepen the candidates’ knowledge of the act of ‘Liturgical preaching’ and to prepare them for proclaiming and preaching homilies. Therefore, candidates will not prepare and preach homilies on a regular basis until the following semesters.</p> <p>During this first year of homiletics, <i>most of the meeting time will be devoted to theological content and didactic presentation.</i> Candidates will have read assigned texts (Magisterial Documents) and materials (books and other homiletic sources) and will participate with the instructor in a lecture-discussion format.</p> <p>Candidates in Year 1 <i>will also learn to pray with the Scriptures in Lectio Divina.</i> Each will be assigned passages from Scripture, mainly gospel passages, and will present in an oral public Lectio Divina format to the class. The process involved in Lectio Divina: <i>Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio</i> can help candidates begin to listen to how God speaks to us through the Scriptures and then how they, as future heralds, and prophets of the word, can begin to form homilies as conversations with God, with our response as prayer and worship and receiving the Eucharist.</p>
Key Documents	<p>The core document for this course will be the <u>Homiletic Directory</u>, [Congregation for Divine Worship, 2014, Vatican City], Part One: The Homily and Its Liturgical Setting.</p>

	<p>The most critical texts and documents referred to in that work, excerpts of which will be read and discussed in the course, are: <i>Dei Verbum, Fulfilled in Your Hearing, Preaching the Mystery of Faith: The Sunday Homily, Verbum Domini and Evangelii Gaudium, Presbyterorum Ordinis, Sacrosanctum Concilium, Evangelii Nuntiandi, and Lumen Gentium.</i></p>
<p>Lecture Topics</p>	<p>From <u>Homiletic Directory</u>: Part One: The Homily and Its Liturgical Setting.</p> <p>A. The Homily</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Definitions of a homily •Distinction between a homily and a sermon •Definition of preaching •What is a liturgical action? •What makes a homily a liturgical action? <p>B. Interpreting the Word of God in the Liturgy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Catechesis, exegesis, Tradition, Scripture •The living tradition of the whole Church •The analogy of faith <p>C. Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The essential nature of prayer in preparation •The essential nature of study in preparation •Lectio Divina <p>From Fr. Olson’s talks and presentations:</p> <p>D. Understanding the biblical notion of “Word”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •DABAR and Logos •The relationship between the preached word, the Word of God as handed down in the Scriptures and the Logos <p>E. Preaching as an activity unique to Christianity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Preaching and the formation of community •Preaching as Priest, Prophet and King <p>F. The modes of preaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Evangelization •Catechesis •Didascalia

The Practicum:

During the next seven semester modules, candidates will compose and deliver a practice homily for each of the six class sessions. The role of the instructor is to listen and offer constructive criticism and to guide the other students in doing the same while their classmates preach.

This part of the curriculum delivery is the heart of the homiletic preparation, offering the candidate forty-two (42) opportunities over seven semester modules to practice preaching in front of his fellow candidates and, at times, selected parishioners of the church to which the instructor or the candidates belong and where the classes can be conducted. The critical commentary, of the instructor, classmates, and other audiences, rich in both quality and quantity, is THE key component that should allow the candidate to grow in skill and confidence.

The Practicum Homily prepared and delivered each class session forms the main source of instruction for the candidate in conjunction with his instructor

Having learned the techniques of prayerful reading of the Lectionary texts, the gospel before and after the selected Lectionary text, Mass prayers, and having learned basic homiletic structure and delivery techniques, he delivers from his heart standing before his classmates and teacher with his homily

From the critical comments he receives, he can re-form the homily as needed, or move on with assurance that what he has done was correct, or a mixture of the two. He *learns by experience* in the typical practicum classroom: *the 'art' of preaching*

Therefore, the most important part of the 'laboratory' experience of the practicum classroom will be the candidate homilist's careful listening and absorbing the recommendations coming from his instructor and his classmates or fellow parishioners. Class sizes should be small enough that, in the two hours allotted, the candidate homilist is given enough time to deliver his homily and to receive unhurried, deliberate reflections from those in attendance who heard his homily

While no one would recommend a haphazard approach to preparing and delivering a homily, knowing there is the built-in 'safety net' of the practicum experience and time to re-form the work, there should be enough room allowed for learning by mistakes, if those mistakes are errors of commission and not omission. The goal of *progress toward the excellent* should be the hallmark of success in the homiletics practicum, with progress occurring in increments not only over many semesters but also certainly after ordination, with the emphasis on opportunities to preach

The 'matter' on which the biweekly practicum homily is to be prepared is left to the individual instructor, in order of preference: the Sunday gospel; weekday gospel; gospels for holy day, solemnity, feast, memorial; Ash Wednesday; Triduum; sacramental celebration [baptism, funeral, wedding]; parish holy hour, forty hours, benediction, Liturgy of the Hours, funeral home and graveside committals

The 'type' of homily structure should generally be the 'One Point' homily, with practice in other forms given as the candidate moves along in his mastery of the basics

The length of the homily should be left to the discretion of the instructor, provided he considers the type of audience and the needs of the faithful

The essential critical element of the homily must be the 'message,' or 'main point.' The rest of the homily must revolve around the homilist's having successfully identified and clearly stated this point, the clear message Jesus wants us to hear, gleaned from careful study and prayer over the readings assigned. Content and delivery; opening; development; and conclusion all stem from the main message and are, while important, subservient to the development and statement of that message

Whether a candidate reads from a text, notes, or without; from the ambo or from the sanctuary floor, is also a matter of discretion for the instructor. He should always consider the faith community's needs

The instructor gives the candidate homilist verbal and written criticism and assessment. Some of it is available immediately in class; other types will be shared later. Some assessment information is collected and filed for reference in the Office of the School of Diaconal Formation

Formal assessment documents used by the instructor, the class members and audience to record comments, and those used by the instructor to record weekly and semester progress and to make a final statement of achievement

Basic and Intermediate Practica (Years Two and Three)

The first two full years of practicum instruction and presentation focuses on building and refining homily composition skills. The aim is to help the candidate preacher look at the Sunday homily in the liturgy as the preeminent action of evangelizing, followed by the daily Mass homily.

Emphasis should be on basic steps in preparation of a homily.

- The candidate would be encouraged to read the Mass readings carefully and thoroughly. He would see something that attracted his attention and focus his direction on that. He would carefully discern the lesson within the gospel, supported by the other readings and responsorial psalm, and expert commentary, as ‘What did Jesus want to teach in this gospel to those people at that time?’
- The answer to that question begins the crossover to the next question: “What does Jesus want to teach us now, what is His lesson for us, today, and why is it Good News?”
- The focus needs to be on Jesus’ salvific work for us through hearing the gospel and the other readings, helping the listeners anticipate the reception of the Eucharist as the summit and source of our help in working with Jesus to attain that salvation.

Advanced Practica (Years Four and Five)

The final years of homiletics practicum will feature preparation for preaching in varied liturgical and sacramental circumstances not previously covered in previous semesters because the candidate will not have had advanced coursework in the sacraments and other theological topics by then. These circumstances may include, among others:

- Preaching on Solemnities and Feasts [Immaculate Conception; for example] that require deeper doctrinal edification.
- Preaching on gospels that require deeper exegesis [certain parables of Jesus or certain gospels that are challenging to understand];
- Preaching in special circumstances that surround marriages, baptisms and funerals, committal rites and vigil rites, and
- Circumstances particular to a certain community of faith [local tragedies or difficulties, for example] that call for a sensitivity to that time, place and people, similar events that radically affect faith life in a country or the world

- A feature that continues from the practicum model in Years Two to Three is the strengthening of the critical skills of the candidates, so that they learn to focus more strongly on evidence and data in the homily that supports their critical remarks, such that the practicum homilist is both consoled and directed in more practical ways to continue or improve his presentation in: message/content; effectiveness; delivery and presence/style
- Generally, then, the concept of understanding the place of oral preaching begun in YR 1 is extended and strengthened into advanced practicum so that oral preaching in a liturgical setting is one type of event within a whole sense of ‘evangelizing.’
- *Any place or time in which we evangelize should be an occasion to deliver ‘good news’ and to lead the listeners into an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ where we can enjoy an ongoing listening conversation with Him and where He can convert our minds and hearts to His message and to make us His disciples*
