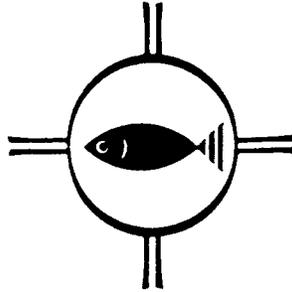


THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF STUDIES



PRACTICE: PREACHING

PREACHING & HOMILETICS

The Reverends Tony Washington, Willem Wils & The Rt. Rev. Allan Bradley

080.001-1

PREACHING & HOMILETICS

By
The Revv. Tony Washington, Willem Wils & Bishop Allan Bradley

CONTENTS

- CHAPTER I:** TOWARDS EFFECTIVE SERMONS
Some fundamental ground-rules on preparation and delivery. General: Starting with a sermon; storing ideas; Introduction; structure; conclusion; things to avoid.
- CHAPTER II:** SPEECH TECHNIQUES & DEVELOPMENT
From "Speech in the Ministry" by the Rt. Rev. Allan Bradley
- CHAPTER III:** PREACHING THE SERMON AT THE EUCHARIST
Specific points pertaining to the Sermon at the Eucharist. General: types of preaching; length of sermon..
- CHAPTER IV:** THE SHORT INFORMAL SERMON OR HOMILY
Specific points pertaining to the sermon at the evening & other services. General: preaching at evening services; preaching in the daytime, other than the Eucharist.
- CHAPTER V:** PREACHING AT OCCASIONAL SERVICES
Specific points re: Special services & occasions. General: What to preach; where to preach; how to preach.
- CHAPTER VI:** MISCELLANEOUS
Pointers on reading and announcing; Poise; Posture; Eye Contact.

REFERENCES:

How to Speak Effectively. G.E. Peabody, John Wiley & Sons Inc., N.Y.
Effective Preaching. Thomas V. Liske STD. MacMillan & Co., New York, N.Y.
Letters on Preaching. Rt. Rev. Wand.
Speech at Work. Bullard and Lindsay-Lohmans.
The Fine Art of Preaching. A.W. Blackwood

© The Liberal Catholic Institute of Studies, 1978
All rights reserved

Preaching & Homiletics

080.001-I

CHAPTER 1

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE SERMONS

GENERAL

What do we mean by an effective sermon? Sermons are remembered because the message was brought in an effective way and were clearly understood. Men known for their ability to speak well had the talent to bring the message in an orderly and concise form. I believe that the sermons, which are given by such men as Wedgwood, Leadbeater, Cooper and others, were effective because they held the interest and attention for a number of reasons, while at the same time, the congregation had a clear idea of the subject.

In the earlier centuries of the Church, only bishops had the right to preach. Later however, they extended this power to certain of their priests. The Bishop of Rome clung to this privilege most zealously. (R.J. Defarrari – Am. Journal of Philology Vol. XLIII, 2. 1922).

It is well known that with sufficient practice and under good supervision and a certain amount of attention paid to a few simple rules, anyone of average intelligence and education can become an effective speaker. There is one idea we should be aware of at the outset that the congregation is an active part of every sermon.

The difference between the speech and the sermon should be obvious. A speech is planned with the intent to communicate a statement or a fact or set of facts. A sermon is made to awaken the moral consciousness and to stir the listener into a nobler life.

Some speakers think that the only important thing in a speech or sermon, is what is said. But the counterpart of an address is what the listener receives. The substance of a sermon may be very profound and scholarly, but of what use is it if the listeners are able to grasp little or none of it? It is therefore necessary to consider not only what is said, but also how it is said.

The knowledge of how to make a good outline is necessary for effective speaking. It consists of an Introduction, a Body and a Conclusion. Or stated more simply. an outline consists of a body with a beginning (introduction) and an end (conclusion). The introduction should (a) get attention and (b) should give a clear idea of what the sermon is or will be about, without divulging the entire contents.

The best way to accomplish a good start, is to prepare the opening sentences, so that you will catch the attention and interest of the congregation. This, of course, must always be in keeping with the spirit of the occasion. The idea so developed should relate to the subject matter of the speech.

What is a good procedure to compose the “body” of an address or sermon? With plenty of paper at hand, we begin to list ideas as they come to our mind and which we wish to touch upon. There may be only a few of the subjects, but little by little a pattern will begin to emerge. At this critical stage, the speaker must realise he is not finished. Some

will erroneously speak from such a long list. The result is: too long and too involved. Even if all such points were logically arranged and related to their objective, it would be an unusual audience that could keep a dozen different things in mind. Once a reasonable number of points have been listed and arranged and the goal or objective has been determined, we must continue with an analysis as to the material to be selected, related to the goal. Now we may take the ideas and sort them out and group them if necessary. The ones that do relate to the subject can usually be gathered into groups around *two* or *three* basic ideas. These two or three points should then be the main headings for the body of the address. This method is sometimes referred to as the “clothesline” method.

Another simple method is to take the goal and decide on the fundamental idea (seed thought) first, then amplifying such an idea later. This takes some training, but should be the goal of anyone who shall give sermons regularly. Divide the body of the sermon into two or three major points; this is important for two reasons:

The first reason is that the average congregation will not grasp and remember more than two or three, possibly four basic ideas.

In order that the ideas stay in the mind of the listener, they must be arranged in a logical order and with their relation to the objective clearly defined. The second reason is that you, as the speaker, want the congregation to be properly prepared for the second half of the Holy Eucharist, the Mass of Catechumen, while at the same time enable them to carry away a clear idea of your sermon.

You should not present a wide scope of information and data, in the hope that the congregation will get some of it, but you should try to help them understand your entire sermon or speech. A good idea of this technique may be obtained by listening to some of those 5-minute talks by an evangelical preacher. Not for the subject *per se*, but for the presentation technique used. See then if you can break this homily down into (a) Introduction, (b) Body and (c) Conclusion. Or otherwise determine how he arrived at his objective from where he began to where he ended within 5 to 10 minutes.

Be mindful that the invisible work is already in progress. The collective consciousness of the congregation should remain intact at the time the sermon takes place, and should not detract but rather contribute towards the building of the spiritual edifice.

Our next step is, what should the sermon contain? The speaker should know something about the subject he is going to speak of and have a personal interest in it. He should have made the subject a part of himself by living with it, reading about it as much as possible and thinking about it. He may draw from a variety of sources from every walk of life. Best of all is a firsthand experience with the subject.

The next consideration is a study of the probable makeup of the congregation. It may be a group of varying ages, experiences, and interests. In some cases, it may be a special interest group, but no matter how important the sermon topic, the measure of success of a sermon is determined by what the congregation is able to understand and retain.

A sensitive speaker will readily sense whether he is speaking to a receptive audience or whether he is not getting the “feed-back”, an invisible but sensitive reaction subtly perceptible through eye contact, attention, facial expressions, sound, etc.

Many young clergy fail in the use of personal experience in their address. Frank reference to personal observation and experience is one of the best ways of gaining the confidence and interest of the listeners. If you are sincere and frank in your statements, what you have seen or experienced lends added weight to the force of your remarks, no matter how modest.¹

Whatever you use from other sources should be mastered and understood well enough to allow you to use it in your own words. All the while retaining the attention of your audience. Remember, the greatest obstacle you may have in addressing a congregation is divided attention, do not create such an obstacle.

Make it a habit to seek material that will make good comparisons or striking contrasts, and to which your congregations can relate. The element of contrast is an artistic device. It is used in music, creative writing, arts, architecture and dramatic arts. It is used also in the art of speaking and preaching. Contrast makes one element stand out against the other and the reading, hearing, sensing becomes much more definable and acute.

Everyone is interested in things if they show strong similarity or marked contrast with what we have done, seen, or heard or read. Such material adds interest to sermons. If you find some statement that will lend authority or what you think is particularly well stated, quote it if you like. This practice is used quite frequently by good speakers and is good if not overdone. Don't forget to mention the source. Keep it short. Be able to make the quote by heart if possible. Yet do not quote authorities from a past era unless it is a renowned philosopher or similar.²

The signs of a good sermon are by means of appropriate illustrations. The religion of the Christian world is based on the teachings of Christ. His teaching is not only an example of how important speaking can be, but also a beautiful example of the value of the story to make the point of an idea clear and lasting. We know that in speaking, it is more than the reactions via our eardrums, which are set into motion. Speaking is not purely physical, but arouses emotion as well.

THE GROUNDWORK FOR A SERMON

The idea that leads to a sermon may come to a priest in an unexpected moment. It may emerge during contact with others, but the main factor is that it comes to him who is distinctly aware, who senses the need of people and who can capture the nucleus of an idea in a given situation.

Many congregations want to hear a sermon as part of the Eucharistic Service. They want to learn something of the hidden side of an everyday experience, but also something familiar but remote from their daily experience. Philips Brooks, a famous preacher, never

¹ *“On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons”*, J. Broadus (Harper & Bros.)

² *“On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons”*, J. Broadus (Harper & Bros.)

ran out of something to preach upon, because he had formed the habit of letting sermons grow from seedlings. Our Liturgy already contains a storehouse full of such seed thoughts in the Intents noted for the many Sundays throughout the year. So does our hymnal. During three years at the seminary, the same Philips Brooks spent most of his time reading and seeing and thinking. "It is also said that the priest who would be a persuasive speaker must learn how to create the suggestive word. He must read literature, especially poetry, to see how the great word makers said it. He must learn how to create figurative language, especially the metaphor, which is the most powerful of all suggestive words". (*Letters on Preaching* by the Rt. Rev. Wand).

There are several progressive stages which one must go (inwardly), as well as mentally, before he reaches the point of completion, prior to the delivery of the sermon. There is no set sequence or order for such preparation, while much depends on ability and determination and on the desire to achieve results. Remember the handicap of Demosthenes, who had a speech deficiency and who would stand by the seashore with a pebble in his mouth to overcome the handicap!

Following are items to be considered. They may not necessarily be applied in the order shown:

Choose a text either from the Gospel, Epistle, or Collects of the day. Perhaps the Intent of the Sunday will be suitable. Sometimes an analogous text from the Bible may be used to strengthen the topic.

Determine what the conclusion shall be. Begin to think about the topic of the sermon, begin to think about verbal illustrations – remember to use contrast, start to assemble all sorts of material from a variety of sources, while at the same time allowing all information to settle. Meditate on the essential point of the sermon, let the *seed thought* develop in a subtler realm. Gradually arrange the materials according to aim and purpose. Write out the sermon as a whole in one continuous effort, if you can.

A day later, revise the manuscript and polish up the rough corners, read it aloud, perhaps using the tape recorder and play it back. After some additional polishing, prepare to deliver the sermon.

On Saturday afternoon or evening, or early Sunday morning, if time will permit, have another close look at it. Be at the church well in time to afford a quiet period before the activities of the Eucharist begin to take place. Sit quietly and with love for those for whom you have prepared this sermon, read it over reverently, recognising that it is now no longer entirely in your hands.

Try to have it imprinted in your mind if you are planning to speak without notes. If you need the assurance of the written notes, then use them in that way. You need not read them, but certainly preach with the force of God's love in your heart.

Do not be afraid to deviate slightly if the moment calls for it, but generally always stay at least on the main road. Whatever method of delivery you have selected, stick to it. Keep these several points in mind while preparing for the sermon, from the beginning.

After you have invoked His Name, stand with assurance that you are doing His work and forget about the preparation.

THE REPORTER'S APPROACH

Often in his private study, a young priest may run short of factual data for his sermon. He must therefore prepare for a homemade storehouse. He must learn how to dig and see suitable opportunities and ideas. Excerpts from reading in classical literature and current periodicals must be compiled, in addition to personal thoughts and observations.

You may recall how a reporter constantly looks around for that one story he does not want to miss! Likewise the priest looks around to see in the life around him the situations, which will be a useful lesson for his congregation and which may cast a helpful light upon their own life and circumstances.

The attentive priest observes life around him by seeing, sensing, hearing, observing and searching, in order to share with others. In a notebook, he jots down enough to use in his future sermons.

THE INTRODUCTION (of the Sermon)

Start with a good opening. Begin with interest and yet with deliberation. Avoid dullness. Keep the introduction short, but not abrupt.

An abrupt start may do more harm than good. Remember, the Holy Eucharist has already brought the minds and hearts of the congregation beyond the everyday level. Begin then at that level, which is something you will have to assess for yourself.

Make the introduction appropriate, but not commonplace and make the path of approach friendly but not effusive.

Do not apologise, for that will put the listener in a wrong frame of mind and the emphasis on *you* rather than that which you are speaking. Make your introduction clear, but do not divulge the whole plot. Unless a man uses care and skill, he may well tell too much at the start, for only an expert can hold attention after he has explained all that he plans to do in the sermon. Begin at the periphery of your subject and then take the listener towards the goal you have set.

Finally, vary your introduction from sermon to sermon. If possible, use a different opening each time.

When preaching is done wisely, it is with a thought in mind, that the sermon is full of life and warmth, yet with a keen awareness that the words fit suitably in relation to the Holy Eucharist.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SERMON

It is necessary to have some kind of structure. It is used in every form of creative work, in composing, painting and not the least, in the Eucharistic Service. The first mark of good structure is *simplicity*. The second is *order* or continuity. The third is *balance*, and the fourth of these rules is *progress*. By balance, we mean that no more time is spent for the introduction than for the main body of the sermon and vice versa. It means that we keep our examples relevant and in keeping with the occasion. Progress means that you take your audience towards a goal. Order means that there are³ no serious detours or faltering. There is a definite train-of-thought that can be felt.

There may be some of us who have occasion to preach more frequently than others. Preaching, in some cases, may be simply a short homily to a small group on a Sunday afternoon, or at a study class, or before an occasional gathering.

The real full sermon should always be given, whereby the Divine Spirit is the mover, the impetus and the guiding light, and all this is possible in a period of 10-15 minutes.

- A. The one idea sermon – this structure is especially suitable for the short sermon or homily. In fact one will seldom have time to introduce a second major idea.
- B. The two contrasting truths sermon – This structure may be explained with the use of the statement: “May you look forward with anticipation and back without regret”. “Preach about the positive – not the negative”. Such contrasts help to keep the sermon from being too long and make it easier to stress the positive.
- C. The conventional structure – The kind with the usual three-fold parts consisting of: Have something to say, say it – then quit.

There are others but they need not be part of this theme.

THE SERMON CONCLUSION

The conclusion is the most important part of a sermon. It also is often the most unprepared part of it!

In any speech, nothing is as obvious as the beginning and the end. This is especially noticeable in the homilies (short sermons) common in our Liberal Catholic Churches. How then should a sermon close?

There are several ways.

First of all the conclusion should be appropriate, simple and short; while the positive should be emphasised. Know precisely how. Have the ending well rehearsed. The conclusions should be personal if possible, in a general way; not too personal though.

If we explained something in our sermon, we might encourage the congregation to apply it in their everyday lives.

If a conviction was expressed, we might urge our congregation to search their heart in a similar spirit. The result should be action on the part of the hearer. Action based on conviction and confidence and hope.

Know then how you shall conclude. Be decisive; really end it.

ITEMS WHICH DO NOT BELONG IN A SERMON

- A. Never apologise. An apology is always bad and never worse than in a sermon.
- B. Avoid humour. No one can justify humour at the end of a sermon. Joy, yes, gladness, by all means. The purpose of the sermon is neither to divert nor to amuse. Only if you can capably use mild humour then do so, but execute great care and skill.
- C. Do not add anything new on impulse. When the end of the sermon draws near, you should concentrate on the inner life and with it, lift the hearts of the hearers. Let His spirit and love prevail. Draw from it and let it be expressed in your words.
- D. In any, but especially the latter part of the sermon, refrain from doing anything to distract. This means: do not pick up a book or paper, or look at your watch or start fidgeting with your hands!
- E. Bring variety in your sermon endings. Avoid getting into a rut. Make certain that you know by heart the invocation, which leads all attention back to the continuation of the Holy Eucharist (And now to God the Father etc.)
- F. Never betray your audience with "One more word and I am done...", followed by many hundreds of words.
- G. Avoid the "let us". This is weak in most cases.
- H. As in the beginning, do not apologise for your words at the end. Not even with body language: shrugging shoulders, waving the arms, etc.

End in confidence and that God has used you as His instrument.

ON WRITING THE SERMON

The young priest should make it a habit of writing for every sermon occasion. He sets a definite time apart, perhaps some evening. Assuming he knows that he wishes to preach and why, no amount of writing can compensate for a lack of clarity of thought.

He also should have within reach everything he will need. Then preferably without interruption, the sermon outline is written. Before he begins, he can stand and talk the sermon through as to an invisible congregation, and once the writing is begun, the spirit will begin to move in and the words will start to flow. As thoughts and feelings come to the fore, the intellectual output tends to surge and recede. The writing of sermons calls for skill in the use of words. In it, he may illustrate life, movement, warmth and colour, strength and beauty.

In the past, the success of some of the leaders in the Church was due to their ability to speak well. They had something to say and said it eloquently.

A popular effectiveness then depends on the ability to speak. The spiritual value comes mainly from the purpose and development of the speaker, his personal meditations and prayers, and the contents of the sermon or speech, but in the eyes of the laymen, nothing stands out as large as *the ability to speak effectively!*

ABOUT SERMON DELIVERY

It is suggested that, if the student really wishes to gain the ability to speak well, he should regularly devote sufficient time to the preparation of the sermon. It is important to make every thing clear to the average man and woman. An observer estimates that among the average churchgoer, about 2% of the sermon content is absorbed.

There are a number of ways in which a sermon may be delivered, be it during the Holy Eucharist or at an evening address or during a class.

Here are four of those methods:

Preaching without notes may be done in several forms. One method is to get a good mental grip of the sermon plan and memorising only a few key sentences. This method was commonly used by the late Bishop Vreede. Some speakers will commit only the first four and the last four sentences to memory. The rest wells up from the heart. It requires thorough preparation, often difficult. It calls for skill and courage and trust.

Preaching from memory - If the preacher has taught himself to speak in a natural manner, he may successfully deliver his sermon.

Preaching from a manuscript - This is done more frequently than you think! If you recall or have occasion to listen to speeches by the late Winston Churchill – they were usually read. The secret lies in that the reader must not lose himself in the manuscript and thus forget the listeners.

Preaching from notes - This way of preaching calls for less preparation and involves less nervous strain. Ideally, notes of the proper kind are no mental barrier between speaker and listeners. Notes of the right sort give a bird's eye view of the manuscript. Only the bony framework stands out boldly on two opposite pages of a loose-leaf notebook of about 5 x 7 inches. The two pages of sermon notes consist of *key words*, which the roving eye will catch at a glance and comprehend with ease because the "seer" has put the markers there. Rev. Geoffrey Hodson showed me this method when I enquired of him how he prepared for his lectures.

CAUTION

Preaching without notes can never become foolproof. Some of the weakest speakers ramble without notes. Nor do they study books about preaching or attempt to improve their speaking.

It is a good plan, therefore, to confront one's own abilities and limitations. Caution also to the man who has been around a long time and who speaks extemporaneously. It is careless not to properly prepare. A word of advice to responsible priests who, as a

hospitable gesture, invite a visiting priest to give the sermon. This sometimes means that the guest speaker must speak with little or no preparation. In all fairness, advance notice should be given to the person who shall deliver the sermon, unless the speaker is known to deliver a suitable homily well. When we are careless in our preparation, it will show in our sermons.

There is an old rule of thumb, which says: For each minute of a sermon, the speaker must prepare one hour. This would require fifteen hours for a fifteen- minute address!! But even a half hour per minute will give a good idea that time is needed for meditation and study to properly prepare for a sermon.

CHAPTER II

SPEECH · TECHNIQUES AND DEVELOPMENT

(from “Speech in the Ministry” by Rev. A.H. Bradley)

GENERAL

Perhaps the two things, which set a man most obviously above his brothers of the animal world, are his hands and his voice. With hands, man manipulates and controls his physical environment, and with his voice, he makes possible the miracle of communication, not just of concrete symbols, but also of abstract ideas.

For a priest these two faculties are the keys to his practice of the ministry. His hands become Christ’s hands holding the bread and lifting the cup and his voice becomes that of the Lord.

In the technical terms of theology, the manual actions of the priest’s hands are to do with the MATTER of each Sacrament, while his voice is used to utter its FORM.

The Liberal Catholic Church has always been particularly careful to stress the importance of the manual actions in the ceremonial training of candidates for ordination to the Priesthood. Yet surely we must take equal care to train each priest to use his voice effectively – for careless manual actions, undesirable though they may be, are usually hidden from the congregation, while poor voice quality and careless production are only too obvious to all present.

Bishop Wedgwood held the sound of the human voice to be a most important element in the correct ceremonial effect, and one does not need to have developed Bishop Leadbeater’s clairvoyance, to guess what a constructive role the priest’s voice plays in the inner side of the Sacraments and conversely, how a poor voice can destroy the full ceremonial effect of any rite or Sacrament.

Of course, the matter of voice training and production has the other vital side of its importance in preaching. The guidance and inspiration of a well-prepared sermon are largely destroyed by poor delivery. The Ministry of the Word is a vital part of the work of our Church and our inspiring Liberal Catholic teachings will make a far greater impact on the wings of good speech.

The main difficulty in the business of speech production is our inability to register the impact of our own speech. We all hear our voices from the inside, so to speak, and we are all unable to hear ourselves as others hear us. Also, many people imagine that it is too late to change the voice of a 30 or 40 year old. This is, of course, not true, and without aiming for artificial or false changes in the quality of the voice, each person can learn to use the voice to better advantage and particularly in the work of the Church, and can learn the adaptations required in the speech of a priest.

It is assumed that those reading further are anxious to make the most of their voices in the work of the Church. Thus the rest of this paper will be devoted largely to the techniques of speech.

GOOD SPEECH

Bearing in mind the prime function of speech as being that of communication of ideas to other persons, we may expect speech to be:

AUDIBLE
CORRECTLY PRONOUNCED
INTELLIGIBLE
INTERESTING
PLEASANT

AUDIBILITY

The term “inaudible” is used for different degrees of ability to make oneself heard, just as the term “deaf” is used for different degrees of ability to hear. A person may therefore be said to be inaudible if he does not make every word clear to his audience. From this, it will be realised that a speaker may be audible in one situation, but not in another. For instance, he may be audible at a tea party, but not in a classroom or court of law; in a classroom or court of law, but not in a church or theatre, but not when speaking across a hockey field or when taking part in an open-air play.

There are two kinds of inaudibility:

1. Inaudibility of *word*
2. Inaudibility of *voice*

1. Inaudibility of word is caused by weak articulation of the consonants. Sometimes the position for forming the consonant is not taken up but, more often, the position is taken up and the sound not projected.

2. Inaudibility of voice may be due either to poor projection of the voice, or to bad balance of tone.

Many people think that a “large” voice is needed for audibility, but in fact, *clarity of consonants is more important*. A good speaker who has “lost his voice” may be heard in a whisper in a normal classroom by means of very clear articulation of his consonants, whereas a poor speaker, though possessed of a very strong but booming voice, may fail to make himself understood, owing to lack of clarity of his consonants. For the most part,

inaudibility of word is more common than inaudibility of voice, and attention to the projection of consonants is the remedy. If the voice really is too small, exercises for breathing and resonance will improve it.

PRONUNCIATION

Sometimes speakers fail to convey meaning, because their pronunciation of separate words differs markedly from that of the majority of people to whom they speak. The audience either fails to recognise the word quickly enough, or attention is diverted from the subject matter to such thoughts as, "where does he come from?", "what a strange pronunciation!" and so on.

In this sense mispronunciation are of two kinds.

1. Those caused by ignorance of the accepted way in which a word is pronounced, for example, pronouncing mature so that it rhymes with nature; or by failure to accept contemporary usage as the standard, for example, giving the eighteenth century pronunciation tay to the word tea.
2. Those due to local accent, for example, the Scot who pronounces good and food so that they rhyme, the Yorkshireman who pronounces ant and aunt in the same way, if either were speaking in the south of England, Australia or America.

Anyone wishing to correct faults of the first type, can do so quite easily, by reference to a good pronouncing dictionary. Those in the second group who wish to develop a more widely acceptable type of speech, will have more difficulty in changing their pronunciation. Of course, speakers will have no need to change if their audiences are limited to people of their own local accent. However, if the speaker possesses an accent markedly different from that of the people to whom he is talking, his audience will tend to listen to how he is speaking, instead of to what he is saying. The changing of an accent may therefore be desirable.

It may not be possible, nor even desirable, that everyone speaking English should speak alike, but from a purely utilitarian point of view, if a person's speech differs markedly from that of the general run of people among whom he lives, it will be more difficult for him to be understood and to be understood is, as we have already stated, the primary function of speech.

INTELLIGIBILITY

Even if speech be audible and there be no barrier of accent, it may still be difficult for an audience to take in the *meaning* of the speaker's sentences, for he may be unintelligible because of bad phrasing, poorly chosen stress words or inexpressive tunes.

Phrasing is the linking together in sound of those words which are linked by their meaning. Within the phrase, the *operative* words should be made prominent by stress, so that the listener's attention is guided to this part of the phrase. Stress is reinforced by the use of pause, pace and tune.

INTEREST

A speaker must arrest and hold the attention of his audience, and he will not do this merely by being audible and intelligible and by having an acceptable accent. He must also be interesting. The essence of interest is *variety*. Speech may be varied in four ways, by means of force, time, pitch and tone balance. Of course, every normal speaker varies his speech in some degree, but interest may be added by the use of a big range of difference. The crude speaker, in his effort to be intelligible and interesting, depends almost entirely on variety of force. He gives heavy *stress* to far too many words, while his *inflection* range remains limited and his *pace* fairly even. The result is a rather heavy, dogmatic type, which soon becomes monotonous. To be interesting, a speaker should make an economical use of stress, have a big pitch range with clear-cut inflections and perhaps, most important of all, his pace on word, phrase and sentence should vary greatly, if the tone of voice be varied, to express differences in mood and atmosphere. This should be done, however, not for the mere sake of variety, but because the mood and atmosphere demand it.

PLEASANT SPEECH

So far, the utilitarian aspect of speech has been stressed. From this point of view, audibility and intelligibility are of first importance, but very few will deny that there is some utilitarian value, too, in a pleasant voice, since even moderately sensitive people will shut their ears to a harsh or whining voice. However, speech has also an aesthetic value over and above the utilitarian one. A good speaker will be able to express, not only thought, but also feeling and imagination. The expression of feeling and imagination is bound up with the question of style. Good style involves an exact matching, by means of subtle variations of force, time, pitch and tone, of the content of any given speech material and its expression.

VOICE PRODUCTION

A voice is said to be well produced when it is strong, tireless, full, varied, and pleasant to listen to. The strength of the voice depends on the proper use of good breathing; the tirelessness and pleasantness of the voice depends on the absence of undue tension in the vocal apparatus; the fullness and variety depend largely on the balance of resonance. These three aspects, breathing, relaxation and resonation, will be dealt with in turn.

BREATHING

The primary function of breathing is to oxygenate the blood. The demands of the body for oxygen vary with the amount of bodily movement, and the breathing automatically adjusts itself.

In repose, little oxygen is needed and breathing is mainly diaphragmatic. In this type of breathing, the size of the chest is increased vertically. In action (speech is a form of action), more oxygen is required, and therefore, in addition to the diaphragm being contracted, the lower ribs are raised, which increases the size of the lower chest cavity laterally and from front to back. In effort, still more oxygen is required, so the sternum (breastbone) is arched and the upper ribs are raised in addition to the movements already mentioned. This increases the size of the upper chest laterally and from front to back.

In breathing for action other than speech, an adequate intake is what is required. For speech, the main thing is to control and use the output. That is to say, for speaking, we need merely a development of the normal breathing for action, with the focus on expiration rather than inspiration.

Many people breathe and produce their voices naturally and well by habit. This results from good posture, from good models in childhood, when speech habits were being formed, and from absence of any psychological interference. There are, however, many people who produce their voices unnaturally. In order to draw attention to the distinction between “natural” and “habitual”, the following illustration may be useful. The most efficient and economical way to hold the body is in a position of good posture; it is natural to stand or sit well. Despite this, however, many people have formed habits of bad posture. Such people might say, “it’s not natural to me to stand well”, when the fact is that it is not habitual for them to stand well. It is the same in breathing for speech – good breathing is natural, but not always habitual.

A person who habitually breathes and produces his voice naturally may never need to be taught voice production, but he may not be able to adapt his voice to public speaking, should he wish to do so. In such a case, a few lessons will usually suffice, to bring his good speech habits under conscious control, so that he may continue to use them under more difficult conditions.

For everyday speech, good natural habits of breathing are sufficient. This means that a fairly large breath, confined to the lower chest, is inhaled without undue effort, and then expelled in a steady stream. One reason for breathing in the lower chest is that this part (the region of the sixth, seventh and eighth ribs) is capable of the greatest expansion. This is because of the length, the slope and the shape of the ribs, and because of the amount of cartilage joining them to each other, or to the sternum. Increased capacity is therefore obtained with less effort, by moving the lower ribs, than by moving the upper ones. An additional reason for lower chest breathing is that movement in the upper ribs produces tension in the region of the larynx, which affects the voice and makes it either thin or harsh.

BREATHING FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

The principles involved are:

1. Relaxation of muscles not directly in use.
2. Movement confined to the lower chest.
3. Large capacity (inspiration)
4. Complete control (expiration)

For public speaking, more breath is needed than for conversation, because a louder voice is required, and also to enable the speaker to phrase correctly at the slower rate usually necessary for a larger audience. Therefore we need to breathe as for everyday speech, but the inspiration must be larger and the control greater. One way of achieving this is through the method of breathing called “rib reserve”, which allows for large capacity, for

a quick intake and for a slow output, so that the breath lasts to the end of a long phrase, and for attack on the beginning of a phrase.

DESCRIPTION OF "RIB RESERVE" BREATHING

The difference between this and the type of breathing already described, is that the intake is speeded up and the output is closed down. The region of movement – just above the waist – is the same, and relation in the region of the larynx is just as important. The quicker intake and slower output are achieved by moving only the diaphragm and abdominal muscles for each individual breath, while maintaining the ribs in a raised position. The diaphragm contracts the abdominal muscles, relax and vice versa. Large capacity is achieved by swinging the lower ribs out before beginning to speak and holding them in this extended position throughout, thus maintaining a reserve of breath in the lungs.

Exercises for Use in Teaching Breathing for Public Speaking

Good natural breathing should be well established before these exercises are attempted.

1. Breathe in as for action breathing, making no movement in the upper chest, but with free movement at the sides, front and back of the lower chest. Think how strong the rib muscles are and that they could be held out for a long time. Breathe right out as for action breathing.
2. Breathe in. Keep the ribs raised by concentrating on the rib muscles, while breathing out a little. This results in a movement inwards of the top of the front abdominal wall, that is, the centre of the body just above the waist. Then breathe right out, lowering the ribs and allowing the reserve of air held in the lungs to escape.
3. Breathe in. Hold the ribs out. Breathe out while maintaining the raised rib position. Breathe in while maintaining the raised rib position. Breathe out while maintaining the raised rib position. Breathe right out lowering the ribs.
4. Repeat the above exercise, increasing the number of inspirations and expirations, while the ribs are still raised.

One stage of these exercises should be well established before going on to the next. The aim should be that ultimately the ribs can be raised before speaking begins, and not be lowered until speaking is ended. This can become almost automatic.

The following exercises may be practiced for controlling the abdominal muscles, a control which is essential for good attack on sound, and also for bringing to the pupils' consciousness the influence of the abdominal muscles on breath output, and consequently on volume of sound.

EXERCISES

1. Pull in (contract) the abdominal wall, trying to confine the contraction to the part which is above the waist. In order to help the pupil to realise that the abdominal muscles above the waist can be used independently of those below the waist, let the pupil place one hand above and one below the waist and then laugh.

- He will notice that there is considerable movement above the waist and none or very little below it.
2. Breathe in with one hand on the upper abdominal wall; then suddenly pull in the upper abdominal wall, while the mouth is wide open, and get the feeling that the breath which issues from the mouth is being directed by pressure from the abdominal muscles.
 3. Breathe in as in “. Open the mouth in a vowel position. Speak a vowel, and while speaking it, pull the abdominal muscles in suddenly. The result will be a sudden increase in the volume of sound.

Variety in these exercises may be obtained by using different vowel sounds.

RELAXATION

As has already been said, speech is an action. In order to perform any action, certain muscles have to be contracted. If other muscles are brought into play, energy is unnecessarily expended. Also, muscles work in pairs, and if the opposing muscles are not relaxed, the efficient working of the contracting muscles is interfered with. Sometimes habits of what is called “sympathetic” tension – tension in the muscles surrounding the required ones – are formed in quite young children, causing still exhausting and inefficient movements. The beginner at any sport usually makes these “un-relaxed” movements. With practice or good teaching, or both, it is usually possible to overcome such unnecessary tension, although it may recur at times of nervous strain. However, a player who is nervous, but who has learned to bring relaxation under conscious control, can prevent his nervousness from affecting his muscles, and can still perform as rhythmically and efficiently as he habitually does when he is not nervous. All this holds good for speech.

The most unusual habit of tension connected to speech is tension in the neck. This is extremely harmful to the voice because it is here that the voice is made. No matter how full the breathing and how well controlled the expiration, the good these might do to the voice is cancelled if there is undue tension in the neck.

Tension in the jaw also interferes directly with speech. Here it prevents free opening and shutting of the jaw, which are necessary both to good voice and to clear enunciation. What is required is the ability to contract and relax the muscles of the jaw in rapid succession.

Flexibility of the tongue muscles is of even greater importance and this cannot be achieved if there is any undue tension.

In order to avoid any unnecessary tension, even in moments of nervousness, a speaker must have conscious control of relaxation so that, while contracting those muscles which must be used, he can relax the muscles not needed. It is this partial relaxation, which must be aimed at.

THE TEACHING OF RELAXATION

Partial relaxation is extremely difficult to achieve, so it is better to approach it by means of complete relaxation.

Complete relaxation is most easily learned in the following way. The student should lie supine. Then he should try to relax the parts of the body separately. He should contract the muscles of the forehead by raising the eyebrows and lower them, relaxing the muscles. He should think of the difference between the feeling when the eyebrows are raised, and when they are lowered. Repeat the actions, trying to exaggerate the difference between the two feelings. Apply this to all parts of the body, going down the face, through the neck and spine into the legs and feet. As the main object is to relax the neck, every time the neck is mentioned, the student should be told to roll his head on the floor, then keep it still, trying to exaggerate the difference between the sensations of movement and stillness. The muscles may be partially contracted even when still, and by trying to exaggerate the difference, full relaxation will gradually be achieved. Considerable concentration is required and, even when the student thinks he is relaxed, he will suddenly find that the muscles have “let go” still more, and he will realise that he could not have completely relaxed to begin with, and that there still may be other muscles which could “let go”.

It may help the student in the early stages to understand the idea of relaxing, if he first stretches various parts of the body separately, or the whole body, and then “lets go”. Small children can be asked to think about cats stretching and then relaxing before the fire. If this is done, the main concentration should be on relaxing; the proportion of time given to stretching being very small.

The following approaches may also be found useful in getting the student to relax completely:

- (a) the student should think of the blood flowing through his body. The teacher should mention the parts of the body in order, as in the first exercise. Emphasis should be laid on the refreshing and invigorating effect of the blood flowing through, and of the feeling of the flow of blood and the resulting tingling sensation in the fingers and toes.
- (b) The student should think how heavy the different parts of the body are.
- (c) The student should think that he is floating lightly.

Having concentrated on one of the above approaches, the student should then be asked to imagine himself in pleasant, peaceful surroundings, where he is quite free from worry. The teacher begins by describing some such place from his own experience, and later the pupil may choose one from his own. It is best to begin with some rhythmical movement being performed in this imagined place, such as walking, swimming, rowing or riding. Describe the muscular movements which are made and the deep breathing required. Then tell the student to imagine resting in this place, and get him to use, in imagination, the various senses, by thinking of the colour of the sky, the shapes of trees, birds, the sounds of the wind in leaves, or lapping of water, the scent of pine trees and flowers, the touch of grass or cool water. The student should be helped to concentrate hard on these pleasant things by being told to imagine them in copious and precise detail.

It should be noticed that cool colours, such as blue and green, are more relaxing than hot colours, like scarlet and yellow. Use may be made of blue and green in relaxing exercises by describing objects having these colours.

These exercises will be found very restful. Complete relaxation may be regarded as a cure for fatigue, while partial relaxation prevents undue fatigue.

When the pupil can recapture the sense of relaxation at will, he should apply it to those muscles not required, when some action is in progress.

PITCH

When the breath leaves the lungs, it passes eventually into the windpipe at the top which is the larynx. The vocal cords form part of the larynx. They are curtain-like membranes, which can be brought together so that they close the windpipe, or parted, so that the air may pass freely between them. The vocal cords are not under the direct control of the will, but operate in obedience to the desire to speak. This desire causes them to come together, and because they are of an elastic substance, when they are near enough together, the air passing between them makes them vibrate. These vibrations are what we hear as voice. It is the amount of breath pressure used in producing the vibrations, which determines the loudness of the voice and it is the rate of the vibrations, which determines the pitch. This rate is determined by a combination of length and tension in the vocal cords. The general pitch range of a particular voice is limited by such physical characteristics as the length and thickness of the vocal cords. The pitch range of the average man's voice differs from that of the average woman's, because of differences in their physical characteristics, the man's vocal cords being considerably longer than the woman's. A boy's voice is said to break when, at the onset of puberty, there is a sudden growth in the length of the vocal cords.

Since the pitch range depends on the physical structure of the vocal cords, it is harmful to make frequent use of the voice at the extreme pitch limits, whether high or low. Just as a motor car works more efficiently and lasts longer if not driven constantly at extreme speeds, so the voice works more efficiently, and is less liable to strain, if most of the work is done in the middle range, with only occasional use of the highest and lowest pitches.

Sometimes speakers habitually use a pitch range, which is too near the extremes of their own particular capacity for pitch. It may be too high or too low. This results in strain or lack of timbre. Normal speaking pitch should be round about the middle of the total pitch of which the voice is capable.

RESONATION

Sound is amplified – made fuller and richer – by passing through hollow spaces. The hollow spaces are called resonators.

In the case of the voice, the main resonators are the neck and mouth. The chest and nose, including the connected sinuses and antrums, also act as resonators. The theory of the resonation of the voice is a very controversial subject, and it is not necessary to enter into much detail in a book which aims to help the teaching of voice production and speech in

a practical way. Only those theoretical questions, which are necessary to an understanding of the practical work, will be dealt with here.

As has been seen in Chapter 3, in connection with vowels, resonance is much affected by the size and shape of the resonating cavity, and the size, shape and position of the orifices. The size of the chest resonator can be increased in many ways, as has been stated earlier in this chapter. It improves resonance to keep the ribs raised and to arch the sternum. These actions also help to expand the neck resonator, by drawing down the larynx, thus making the size and the space above it greater. The only other method of increasing the size of the neck is by relaxation of its muscles. It sometimes helps the students to suggest that they should try to get a “sense of expansion” in the neck.

Improvement of mouth resonance is a fairly simple matter. The size of the mouth may be readily increased by dropping the lower jaw. An added brightness may be given to mouth resonance by arching the soft palate, as this increases the size of the resonator at the back. Another way of improving mouth resonance is to make use of what is called “forward tone”. It is impossible to describe the enormous improvement made both to audibility and to pleasantness of voice by the practice of it. “Forward tone” is the particular quality given to the voice when it is well directed from the diaphragm and feels as though it is projected unflinchingly to the front of the mouth. For most sound, even the teeth vibrate when forward tone is present.

As the priest is often called upon to celebrate and preach in large, as well as small, churches, it is vital to use forward tone, which makes the voice audible, without the strain or harshness of forced volume. Also, there are churches which have absorbent east walls, sometimes hung with heavy drapes, or curtains. As the Liberal Catholic Rite provides for east facing celebration, it can be important to adjust the voice to make it audible to the congregation, after allowing for the loss of sound through absorption. It is just thoughtless to use the same voice level, whether celebrating in a private home or a cathedral. The priest should be careful to match his voice to each particular situation.

STYLE

No notes on speech would be complete without reference to the importance of style. A sense of style, more than anything else, distinguishes the really effective speaker from the merely competent one.

To say that a person has a “sense of style” means that he has a sense of what is fitting in any given circumstances. A singer with a sense of style enhances the meaning of the song by the quality of the tone she uses, as well as by the phrasing of pace. She does not sing a patter song with the smooth legato phrasing and full resonant tone suited to an operatic area. So it is in speech.

To achieve good style, the attitude must be one of complete surrender to the subject and an intuitive awareness of the ideas one is presenting. The cadence and speech rhythm will then be appropriate, and this is good style.

Some people mistakenly suppose good style in everything in life comes from a self-conscious awareness of what is right.

The speaker's mental attitude must be surrender of himself to his subject matter and to his audience, and as a result, his own personality is not allowed to intrude. The priest at the altar is thus tuned first to the divine mystery he is celebrating, and secondly, he is committed to his congregation who celebrate the Eucharist with him and through his hands and his voice.

In preaching, the priest will be well prepared and will thus be able to commit himself wholly to his ideas and his listeners. His whole style of speaking, while preaching, may be quite different to that of his celebration.

While exaggerated emotion is to be avoided, both in speech and gesture, the good priest will keep genuine warmth of tone in his voice when preaching. A coldly clinical voice with little variation in pitch or pace will quickly lose the attention of the listener. It is a useful exercise to meditate on the logia or sayings of Jesus, not from a point of view of the spiritual impact of the words, but by entering inwardly into an awareness of how they sounded as spoken by the voice of our Lord. Just as each of us has the spiritual potential of sons of the highest, so we should realise that all aspects of our personality, including our speech, can reflect the highest possibilities of our nature. For most of us with no organic defects, there is imply no excuse for expressing the most inspiring and sublime concepts in a third rate voice. The power to improve in this area, as in every other, lies in our own hands.

PRACTICAL HINTS

1. Use a tape recorder. Practice reading the Collects, Epistles and Gospels on tape and then replaying them.
2. Tape record your sermons and then critically appraise them afterwards.
3. Enlist the help of your Vicar or some other trusted friend who will promise to criticise your speech constructively and pick up for you any obvious errors.
4. Make a determined effort to do the breathing exercises mentioned above a few minutes a day, for a sustained period of time. Your tone will improve and your voice will gain greater flexibility and increased usefulness.

CHAPTER III

PREACHING THE SERMON AT THE EUCHARIST

GENERAL

It will be well to remind ourselves that, if there are any areas in which our Church is deficient by contrast with other denominations, these would probably be generally our knowledge of scriptures, and the standard of our preaching. There are reasons why this may be so: Our concentration on the action of the mass; our awareness that the Bible is a library in which some books are of much greater value than others; the fact that our clergy have to work at the secular occupation. You may be able to think of others.

Be this as it may, our ministry clearly involves that of the Word, as well as the Sacraments. If this were not so, qualification for the Priesthood would be simply those of the medieval chantry-priest, and the whole course would be unnecessary. We “feed” the flock as much by teaching as by administration of the Sacraments. As Liberal Catholics, we believe we have much that is unique (and therefore of special value) to offer our members or enquirers, but we must ever seek the best mode of presentation in our sermons.

Therefore, a study of preaching and scripture go hand in hand, while both need meditation.

We cannot give to others what we haven’t got ourselves, so that , if we are to impart anything of value, we must first make it our own by study, by seeing how it works in our own experience, and by discovering its spiritual value.

To sum up this introduction: We have the words of the Christ and the Mystery Drama of the Gospels, and we have letters from the beginnings of the Church in scripture. We know something about the evolutionary process, which prepared the world for His appearance. We must first separate the essential from the accidental. This so far, is a matter of study.

Having done this work, we then look closely to discover the eternal truths hidden in the essentials, using, not only the conscious mind, but other deeper areas as well, through meditation. We then apply those aspects of our meditation, which are relevant to our own milieu, the local parish, and to bring this last about, will necessitate prayer for those to whom we preach. If we go about this work methodically, we can be sure that what we say will be made fruitful, by the action of the Holy Spirit, in our words.

TYPES OF PREACHING

Preaching may be divided into three main types: (Preparation for any of these parts is covered in Chapter I.)

- a. The sermon at the Eucharist. (Chapter II)
- b. The evening homily. (Chapter III)
- c. Speaking at occasional services, such as funerals, public events, etc. (Chapter IV)
Note: the *homily* is usually considered as a short informal sermon or talk on moral conduct. Homiletics, the Art of Preaching. It nevertheless must contain the same ingredients as the full sermon, in order to be as effective.

THE SERMON AT THE EUCHARIST

The first point to be made is that of *position*. It must be remembered that the sermon is part of the fore mass, the teaching bloc. If we divide the Eucharist (for the purpose of this Unit), we see that it commences with a preparation involving the use of holy water, confession, absolution, incense, and prayers of entry, not only to lay the foundations of the spiritual edifice, but to banish secular thoughts, in order that the congregation and the angels together may be ready to engage in the great work, which follows the Offertory; and between this preparation and the Offertory, is a solid slab of teaching,

which directs our thoughts and feelings to the particular “Intent” of that days’ mass. A special prayer *collects* the day’s special mood or direction, uniting everyone present, in a combined effort leading to a particular end. It is very clear why the compilers of the Liturgy placed the sermon precisely where they did, after the Gospel and before the Creed, rather than in, say, the Anglican/Episcopalian position, after the Creed.

The Collect is the theme, with the Epistle and Gospel reinforcing, descanting, illustrating; and as if this were not enough, the intention is clearly printed to underline what will follow. After the Sermon, by reciting the Creed or Act of Faith together, we affirm, in a general way, not only our reliance on and trust in God, but affirm that the study of the Collect, Epistle, Gospel and Sermon has been done, and that we, having done this together, are united by this study, so that communally we understand what we are about. The fruit of this study is then used to direct or “point” the action of the mass following in the way it is *intended* (hence Intent) to go. Put another way, each mass has its very special flavour. In some particularly important ones, this is further reinforced by a special Gradual and Preface.

The theme or intent is meant to be an on-going thing taken from the Church into our daily lives and applied in them until the next Sunday or next feast supplies us with a new one. We are definitely intended to remember in each week that follows each Sunday, the Intent we are given in the mass; and this “chewing over”, which we each do individually, as we go about our lives, unites us across the world in a very special manner. It has the effect of *extending* the reception of that particular holy communion into everything we do, until we come together again, and we stay spiritually united, although separated physically.

Why all this about *position*? This: The Sermon can either brilliantly light up the Intent, Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, so that by the Creed we are really and truly one of all levels of our being; or, disastrously to the plan, it can be a distraction and a discrete lump of irrelevance, which can partly destroy the whole effort, and to vitiate the value of the action of the mass. We are, then, recognising that the well prepared Sermon can be of immense value because it is strategically placed to enhance enormously the total effect of the Eucharist. It follows simply from this, that with few exceptions, which will be noted, we should, as a rule, not preach from any text other than the one from either the Collect, Epistle, or Gospel. You must have quite overwhelmingly valid reasons for doing otherwise. It must also be said, that to use sermon time at mass, as a means of carrying on about a pet topic, is to fail your listeners miserably. We have all heard preachers who push their own thinly disguised political opinions. It would be better to have *no* sermon, than this sort of thing. I have also heard sermons at mass on some aspect of, say, “The Science of the Sacraments”. One I remember was 18 minutes on the tessellated pavement. This misuse of valuable time should be avoided. *Of course*, there is a place for discussion on such matters. But it is *NOT* at mass.

People sometimes need shepherding and cultivating, so that they work concertedly at mass. When this happens, the effect is such, that the priest at the altar can feel on the verge of losing consciousness, so great is the force of devotion and the reality of the

Presence. It is that which epitomises the great ones and caused our Church to spread across the world. The sermon can be a wonderful tool to tune priest and people into such an harmonious whole, that they forget everything else in the world, but the glory that is all around them.

LENGTH OF SERMON

As the sermon length, try your hardest never to go over the 15 minute mark. Test your sermon beforehand with a timer, allowing for pauses for effect, and if it is over 15 minutes, you should be able to prune it. This does not mean cutting out essentials, but rather using simpler constructions, chopping out involved sentences. You must always bear in mind that while a certain amount of repetition may be necessary, too much is boring and defeats its own purpose. One great preacher used to concentrate on making sermons at mass no longer than 12 minutes. He would break his subject into three connecting ideas of three minutes each, with a summary of three minutes. This is training practice used in Toastmasters International. Speak in the vernacular of your audience. Do not use outmoded words in excess, they may be used to emphasise a point if used with taste.

Concerning the technique of delivery, more will be said later. Here, let it suffice that you are being heard clearly. If you feel you are not being heard clearly, take deeper breaths and project your voice. Merely speaking louder will do little to help, unless you have a normally weak voice. (I would certainly advise all our Clergy to experiment in amateur dramatics, if they have the chance. Not only will this teach you a lot about delivery, projection, breathing, and stance, but will also give you self-confidence before the audience, and the faintest touch of histrionics (dramatics) can enhance some sermons. But remember, *only* a touch and *only* with some sermons).

Do not, but do not, fiddle while you preach. Turn pages unobstrusively, but otherwise keep your hands and your body still, with your head held well up.

Liturgically, it is proper to remove the chasuble and maniple to preach when leaving the sanctuary and walking to the pulpit. It is sufficient, however, simply to remove the maniple when preaching from the sanctuary.

Recommended reading must be done with careful discrimination. As a general rule in this Course, we will recommend reading of specific literature. It is suggested in due time to read any famous sermons available, and also famous speeches.³ Some speeches are available on long playing records. Try to analyse these speeches, such as intenal rhyme, alliteration, measure or beat, and also discuss points raised with any good preacher, if such a person is readily available. There are a number of L.P. records from which much may be learned. Do not hesitate to write to your mentor about any point you wish to raise.

³ See: "*Masters of Speech*" by Dewitt Jones, Baker Book House paperback.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHORT INFORMAL SERMON OR HOMILY

GENERAL

In Chapter II we divided (for the convenience for discussion) preaching into three main types. Part II was devoted to Preaching at the Eucharist. This paper will be given up to thinking about the second type, which we listed as the evening homily, since it usually involves a shorter sermon set in a quiet mood.

For convenience, let us further subdivide this second main type into two sub-groups, which will be:

- a. Preaching at occasions which occur at night, or mainly at night: Vespers, Benediction, healing, Complin; and
- b. Preaching in the day, such as at quiet hours, Prime, or a morning talk before the Holy Eucharist.

We are aware that Vespers, for example, may be held in the late afternoon and be followed by other activities or services: The purpose for this sub-division is to allow us to look firstly at those services which are normally the last act of a day, and those services which are not, for reasons which I hope will become clear.

PREACHING AT EVENING SERVICES

Services such as a Benediction and Complin are generally intended to be quiet devotions, as a preparation for retiring and before re-entering next morning the rush and bustle of the secular world, particularly in the normal parish set-up, where they are held as the final act of the Sunday night. It is on this supposition that this section of the paper should be read. Where such services are not so directed, anything said should be modified and perhaps seen more in the light of the previous discussion. In a Course such as this, we must assume a norm, and therefore, you will have to interpret what is said in the light of the usual practice of your own centre.

Such services then are directed to quieting the mind, rather than stimulating it to a degree as one might have sought to do at mass. It is not a time to be stirring the will of higher resolves, but rather to strengthening it in the work, which by now it should have done. In short, these sort of services are a rounding off, ancillary to the central one of the mass, a means of confirming intentions rather than initiating them.

However, this does not mean that what is said, should be merely soporific, soothing. The aim of any sermon here should be to direct the whole attitude and personality of the listener, to a quiet contemplation of God's goodness and all-embracing loving-kindness (cf. Hebrew *chesed*-translated "lovingkindness" in the King James Bible, but meaning so much more, including total provision for all needs of all men. (See a good Commentary if you can).

As preacher, the aim is to underline the basic fact of sacramental life, which is that in all our aspects we are safe amid “the changes and chances of this fleeting world”. At this particular time, it is not desirable to evoke ideas of the upward struggle for spiritual evolution, but to enhance the already-present sense of assurance, coloured with gratitude for all the good things, physical, spiritual, and sacramental, with which we have been endowed.

Where at the Eucharist, we preach in such a manner as to weld the whole company of the faithful into a “working-group” with a single aim – that of praying the particular mass of the day – at evening service we seek to trigger *individual* thoughts, reflections, and emotions, which will impart to each separate heart that particular expression of faith and trust, which is peculiar and special to each person.

It will, I trust, be clear that this is quite a different kind of preaching from that used at the Eucharist. In Paper One, we thought of how we are virtually obliged to preach from the Intent, Collect, Epistle, or Gospel, and in so doing, we were using what we might label the congregational or group approach. In the Paper, or rather in this section of this paper, we think of how we might so appeal to each individual, as to assist each one to obtain the maximum private or personal benefit from the service. Naturally, it follows that the approach, as well as details of delivery and subject matter, will be different.

We are, in the first place, much freer in our choice of text. (Or subject-peg-“Text” is used here quite loosely and is not intended necessarily to be quite the same notion as the word “text” means in relation to the mass). It is of course still perfectly correct to use a phrase or thought from the collect or lesson for the day, but one need not here be so closely obliged to do so. For example, at Benediction one could preach a sermon (or a series of sermons, if it is a regular service) on the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. This service would obviously be eminently suitable for this, or equally, say, for a sermon or series on the Holy Angels.

Let us take a hypothetical case: a certain preacher has been rostered to preach at Solemn Benediction next Sunday. He had already prepared two sermons. One is on the parable of the vineyard and how the labourers were hired to assist at the vintage, and how and why they were paid the wages they received. It is a sermon which has appropriate things to say about the value of work, of greed, of labour troubles, and of the “vineyard of this life”. He feels it is pretty good stuff. On the other hand, he has a sermon about the Angels. It’s quite good, nothing wrong with it at all, but he doesn’t think that by comparison with the vineyard sermon, it is quite as picturesque or evocative. Which one to use?

If I have made myself clear so far, you will know at once that he is to choose the second one. The sermon of the labourers in the vineyard cannot fail to conjure up ideas of work, of the hot sun, the bustle and creak of wagons, shouts of the bosses, grumbles of the workers, all the sights and sounds and smells of vintage. In short, it takes the listener immediately out of his surroundings and lands him back fair and square in the world that he came into the chapel to escape from for a short while. He is back in the wheeling and dealing, in the heart of hectic activity, when this is what he seeks respite from. He

cannot escape this come Monday morning, but just for now, he needs the refreshment of knowing only the deep things of the invisible world.

Our preacher should choose the sermon on the Angels. If it (i.e., the sermon) is a little pedestrian, a little uninspired, he can rely on the beings about whom he is talking, to help him, for they will listen. They will help the Holy Spirit make a way for the best of his words to lodge in each heart, according to each heart's needs.

This sort of preaching is thus more a kind of directed meditation than a sermon. As long as all can hear you without straining, your voice should be quiet, melodious, and above all unhurried.

There is little room for wide gestures, rapid movements of the hand, or for faised "dramatic delivery" points.

It is a very SELF-EFACING EXERCISE!

Your voice should almost appear to be coming from inside the mind of each listener. They, if you are successful, will be to all intents and purposes unaware of you. If they appear not even to see you, so much the better. This can be a clear sign that you are doing your job well. Your voice is merging with your surroundings, and they will come to be in an excellent state of mind to hear the special whisperings of the spirit, which God-within-them wishes them to note.

It is obviously not easy. Like the mass sermon, this other kind needs lots of personal meditation, for no one – not even a Spurgeon⁴ can preach this sort, without first placing himself in that circumstance towards which he wishes to attract his listeners.

Length in this case is almost impossible to pre-determine. If effective, your sermon can be very brief indeed, say 4 to 7 minutes. On the other hand, if you chance upon a rich lode, do not be afraid to go on. Nut generally, sermons are like dinners: It is better to stop still wishing there was just a little more, rather than feeling you have had too much.

There is another important point: whereas at mass you supplied that lot, so to speak, which is to say that the whole sermon so far as it went, finished with a logical adequate conclusion, here your listeners must each in his own way, be so led on, as to supply each his own special conclusion.

The task is difficult and very much a matter of experience. But there is a golden rule: If you love your listeners and wish very deeply to be of service to each one, you will succeed. You will not be able to judge this, nor is it necessary. If you have used every means in your power:

Prayer
Meditation

⁴ Spurgeon – a famous preacher

Preparation
Deep-caring
Invocation of the Spirit, the Angels, and the Saints

Then God will see to it that what should happen will.

PREACHING IN THE DAY-TIME OTHER THAN AT THE EUCHARIST

We are thinking here of sermons or talks of instruction, which are neither sermons at the Eucharist, nor yet are the sort of quiet introspective meditation that we have been thinking about, in the previous chapter.

We strike a new note somewhere between the two types. We have to rely on priestly intuition here, more than anywhere else. Therefore, we must look at this strange thing “priestly intuition”.

Any discussion on how to be a proper channel for the Priesthood of the laity, must involve a certain outlook. It is a thousand pities that his sort of consideration cannot be postponed to the very end of this course, but since it cannot, we are obliged to take tentative steps in the direction we hope will have become second nature by the time you have completed your studies.

What now is said will be repeated long after this course. The one thing which sets everything to right, and which is the yard-stick of priestly endeavour is : “Intention is the ultimate judgement”.

It is never so much HOW, WHEN, or WHERE, but WHY. What is my intention, my reason, my purpose, in preaching, teaching, guiding, directing, influencing, in using means in my power to achieve this, that, or the other end? The general answer must always be to resist the temptation to perform, to flaunt yourself, to use the opportunity of preaching as a means to demonstrate anything selfish.

There is a good reason why this is the moment to say this for the first time if you are following the line of thought so far, you will understand that both at mass and during quiet devotional services, you are, to a great extent, limited by the occasion. You have heard many sermons, and if you recall good ones, you will recognise that they fitted into the framework of the liturgical act.

Now, we are considering occasions where this is not quite like that, and each time you will need to consider what the purpose (the intention) of the particular service is. For example, you have been chosen to say something at a convention service to be held in the early afternoon of a day that has been given over to a group discussion, working parties, social gatherings, and so on.

It may be that after the service at which you will speak, there will follow an outing by bus to some pleasant place. People are dressed casually and it is all very enjoyable.

To strike an over-solemn or deeply meditative note, would surely be out of place. Now you have the chance to enhance the sense of brotherhood, and to assist your listeners to both contribute fully and to get the most benefit from the gatherings. You would be quite justified in adopting an easy informal note, using a suitably humorous approach even, though obviously you *won't* aim to have your listeners rolling in the aisles.

The intention for holding the service will be your guide, and you will frame your little talk accordingly, careful not to spoil a good mood, but equally careful to give it just a slant in the direction you know the organisers of the Convention would wish you to lead your listeners. In short, it is a good chance to increase the sense of unity of your congregation, without turning a validly happy lot into a sombre serious group.

Again, you may be preaching at a short service designed to end a study session. Now is the perfect opportunity to speak about a point from "*The Science of the Sacraments*", or about our own distinctive views on vestments. This can be extremely useful and appropriate, and you can use teaching aids to illustrate, such as tape library slides, liturgical items, a flannel-graph, or whatever. And at this sort of service, it is often better not to place yourself in the pulpit.

As to length, it is probably a good idea not to go much beyond ten minutes. Such services in entirety gain from a sensible brevity and should be aimed at giving participants a chance to share with God, and give Him thanks for that particular day's activity, but without interrupting the mood.

A few special papers are to follow these two very general ones. But enough has been said so far, for you to compare the expressed ideas with your own approach. It should be emphasised that what has been said is offered in the hope that it will assist, and that it will be modified by your own circumstances and experiences. We are not in any sense trying to tell you what you must do. However, most has been tried and proven reasonably effective in practice over a considerable period. If you are experiencing any difficulty, please write to your mentor. If anything is not clear, or you find yourself unable to accept anything, again get in touch.

On the other hand, if you can extract some value, then use it on your preaching occasions. Sample sermons will be required before long, and it is good idea to preach at least once or twice, after reading these papers, and before sending in your contribution.

CHAPTER V

SPECIFIC POINTS AT SPECIAL SERVICES AND OCCASIONS

GENERAL

Preaching at such functions as funerals, weddings, baptisms, ordinations, the consecration of a church on similar occasions, presents a special challenge to Liberal Catholic Clergy. This challenge is two-fold, first, the priest is able to offer help and guidance directed to the individual around whom the service is centred. The couple being married, the person being baptised or confirmed, the candidate for ordination – all

of these people are in a particularly open and vulnerable state of mind and may respond especially well to the word preached at the service in which they are the key figures.

The second part of the priest's challenge lies in the fact that on such occasions, he is called upon to represent the Liberal Catholic Church before a much wider circle of the general public than would normally be present at regular Church services.

It is vital, therefore, that the priest of the Liberal Catholic Church be well prepared, sure of what he wishes to say, and above all else, he must be obviously clearly in complete command of the particular situation. Nothing is more unnerving for the principals in such functions as weddings and funerals, than a priest who is so obviously nervous, that he stumbles, hesitates and speaks in a shaky, trembling voice. It is sometimes better not to give a sermon at all, rather than betray a bad case of nerves to all present. For the candidate in training, it is vital that he visits and observes as many services as possible by Liberal Catholic and other ministers, in crematoria, cemeteries, indoor and outdoor weddings, and so on. It is also very helpful to assist other clergy on such occasions if possible, by giving scriptural readings, offering some of the prayers and in other such appropriate assistant roles as may be available. This will gradually build a sense of familiarity and self-confidence.

The Liberal Catholic Liturgy is so positive and uplifting spiritually in its whole tone that even those quite outside the orbit of the Liberal Catholic Church and indeed of any Christian Church, quite often find the services surprisingly fine. So many of the general public have rejected formal religious worship, often because of the depressing approach of some of the large orthodox bodies, both in the form of service, and in the doctrine. Yet many of these same folk are deeply moved by the warmth, sincerity and positive approach of the Liberal Catholic services. Especially at baptisms, weddings and funerals the opportunity exists for channelling Liberal Catholic thought to the general public. The Liberal Catholic Church has never tried actively to win members through proselytising, but there may be those present on such occasions, who are desperately looking for light and guidance, and upon the priest there rests the special responsibility for presenting the inspiring teachings of the Church as effectively as possible. A short, lucid sermon, which says something, rather than reciting platitudes, can provide that very opportunity for God to reach seekers after truth, and can lead individuals to the spiritual home they may so desperately seek.

As with all liturgical functions, the priest must make sure he is completely familiar with all functional aspects of the occasional services he performs. This aspect of preparation will be more thoroughly dealt with in a later unit of study. Some clergy have suggested that, in view of the splendid form and language of the services, as we have them in our Liturgy, there is no need for any sermon at all, since so much vital teaching is couched in the actual service. However, careful reflection will lead to the realisation that each baptism, confirmation, wedding, or funeral involves *an experience which is unique for the principal participants*, each of whom has their own special background and circumstances. The priest, therefore, is able to speak directly and personally to those concerned, and make the spiritual impact of the service itself even greater by the preacher of an opposite address.

WHAT TO PREACH

Each sermon must be designed to meet the specific need of the occasion. The priest must remember always that the congregation present at occasional services, may well be composed largely of non-Liberal Catholics, including some who may be agnostic or even atheistic. These labels will not worry a Liberal Catholic priest who is especially fitted to meet St. Paul's admonition to be "all things to all men". Barriers of belief (or lack thereof) will never hinder him, since he will see his ministry in the broadest terms as being to the whole family of Christ, which embraces the whole human race.

Use of dogmatic theology and doctrinal terms, either orthodox or theosophical, must be avoided. Those present who have rejected the traditional Christian Churches, have often done so because of the apparent absurdity of so much of the Church's theology, and the use of even basic terms, such as SALVATION, HEAVEN, HOLY MOTHER CHURCH, will often simply alienate these people.

On the other hand, while so much light and inspiration has come to many of the members of the Liberal Catholic Church through the study of theosophy, we must remember when we speak as Christian Priests to the general public, that we should carefully avoid the use of eastern terminology. Words such as KARMA, DHARMA, NIRVANA, BODHISATTVA, etc., are thoroughly confusing to strangers. The ideas we wish to convey must be couched in the most universal language, which will readily be understood by all present at the service.

Many people today have rejected religion in general, because they cannot see its relevance to daily life. The Liberal Catholic Church is able to offer the startling and refreshing concept of religion, as an essentially practical function of the whole man, giving a new dimension to all aspects of life here and now, and also adding richness and blessing to the world at large. No other Church stresses so strongly the deeply functional nature of worship, belief, study, prayer and meditation, even to the point of explaining the Sacraments themselves, in extremely practical terms. This is a Church of practical and applied mysticism, and the priest can often convey some of this vision to others in even the briefest sermon.

WHERE TO PREACH

Apart from the regular services, such as Holy Eucharist, Benediction, Healing, in which the correct place and time to preach is clearly laid down, we find that in the occasional services, there is provided more flexibility for the priest to decide where to preach, both in terms of location, where to actually deliver the sermon (at the head of the grave or beside it; in the centre of, at the Epistle or Gospel side of the sanctuary, if marrying people in church, etc.) and also at what point in the service it is most appropriate to speak.

Many experienced clergy would suggest that the address has greatest practical impact in baptisms, weddings and funerals, if it is given prior to the service. A brief, lucid introductory sermon can explain the nature and form of the service to follow, and spiritually the priest can set the keynote for what follows, and also gather into focus the attention of all those present in the congregation.

HOW TO PREACH

The personal nature of most occasional services makes the keynote of preaching "Sincerity". The Liberal Catholic priest will preach from the heart, which of course does not mean an emotional outpouring of sentimental religious platitudes. It means that the worker priest of the Liberal Catholic Church who is involved fully in the affairs of the workday world and aware of the needs, fears and aspirations of his fellow man, will unite in his message this practical understanding with the uniquely inspiring vision of an evolving universe, in which each man is destined for an increased sharing of the Creator's life and love.

If the priest remembers the need to give the Church's message in a natural and sincere manner, he will gradually develop the technical side of his delivery and discover which method of preparation is best suited for him. Most clergy in early days of their ministry find it useful to write fairly comprehensive notes from which to preach. Many later abandon full notes and have only brief outline notes to preach, from which contain only subject headings. However, even when he is confident in his ability to speak from brief notes, or even without any notes at all, he must scrupulously avoid delivering unstructured verbal rambles. No priest is carrying out his responsibility properly unless he is at least preparing carefully the ideas of his sermon in advance. This preparation should be, not only at the intellectual level, but the wise priest opens himself inwards in quiet listening. One of those real reminders of the sense of vocation can come to a priest when he knows that he is being used by Christ and His Holy Spirit in the ministry of the Word.

After all these suggestions, you may say "but where do I find time for all this?" The answer is that you may or may not. It depends upon many circumstances and the priorities you have made. Using time efficiently plays a major role here. It is said that the former Justice of the Supreme Court of the U.S. , Louis D. Brandeis, in his mature years, accomplished a staggering amount of work and applied scientific management to his own life and work.

His day ran according to a steady routine, in which hours, even minutes, were carefully scheduled. Personal efficiency was sharply increased.

There is a difference of 100% between what we do and what we are capable of doing!

CHAPTER VI

MISCELLANEOUS

We would be amiss if we would not include a few words on reading and announcing.

There are announcements to make, letters from the Bishop to read, the Epistle, the Gospel. All these should be read as efficiently as possible.

If a Sunday bulletin is issued, many announcements can be omitted or perhaps only the most important ones emphasised.

The Epistle and Gospel can be made more effective and understandable if properly read.

If your work in the Church covers most all functions, and when the several duties during the Holy Eucharist are assigned before the service, there should be preparedness. And being prepared to read the Epistle or Gospel requires – if properly done – that they are read the day before and perhaps again on the Sunday morning.

Seek out the words that might require proper pronunciation; (Bethphage) is a good example! Rehearse in a private room if possible. Check the rate, pitch, and stance. Correct them when faulty.

Make sure what is read is also understood. This will make it possible to read with greater feeling and communication will be enhanced.

Keep the audience or congregation in mind. You must realise that they feed back to the speaker or reader. You must therefore stand erect and with alertness, project the attitude that you are interested in reading something of importance to them.

This will require that you do not keep your eyes glued to the text. Look up and at your listeners now and then. Rehearse enough so that you can know what comes next. (Imagine listening to the 6 o'clock news on T.V. while the newscaster has his eyes glued to the paper in front of him or her). There should be no barrier between speaker and audience. Modulate your voice. Make the right variation of tone. Ask questions in a questioning way. If an emotion is expressed, use and convey that emotion.

It is far more effective to project the right emotion with their appropriate words. Some practice will bring good results.

Do not rush through the Epistle and or the Gospel. Use a proper pace and use the pause to emphasise and dramatise, but do not over dramatise.

When making announcements, keep them as such, but do not use announcement period for other things.

Newcomers will feel self-conscious, especially if they know that they are the only newcomers in the group! Make them feel at ease!

The effect of the sermon will depend on sundry factors. One of them is posture. Unless you are a bishop, you will usually stand while giving the sermon. Some of our churches have a pulpit so that you will first remove your chasuble. Make certain here that your stole lies properly over your shoulders. When in a small church, you will usually move to the Gospel side to deliver the sermon. Stand on both feet and erect with one foot slightly in advance of the other foot, for the sake of comfort. Once in a while, shift your posture to rest your muscles or to indicate a transition in thought. Do this deliberately, but not while saying anything important. Keep both hands down beside the body if possible and still, yet not stiff. Motions subconsciously broadcast something to the listeners. Hold

your head still. Have a friendly attitude. (I have often in my mind “embraced” the whole group with a sense of fondness towards them before I uttered the first words). Let your facts reflect what you are saying or expressing. Be a messenger of good tidings. Use your eyes. Look into the faces of your listeners – not staring. Look at one then the other. Aim largely at the central rear part of the throng. Be careful about opening words. Speak them deliberately, distinctly and quite naturally. Speak with the poise and assurance of a man with a message from God. Be careful about *articulation* or *enunciation*, they go hand in hand. The right use of the pause may be utilised.

Winston Churchill did this quite effectively. Listen to sermons on the radio in a clinical way. Observe the phrasing – make notes if you will. Listen to the rhythm of a good speaker, his building up, his crucial climax and the voice control. Vary the pace of your sermon. Emphasis may be gained by slowing down in parts. Be deliberate rather than hasty. ‘In closing, develop the quiet close. Let your last words of appeal have something in them of the hush that falls when Christ Himself draws near’.*

* J.S. Stewart, “*Heralds of God*”

LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF STUDIES

QUESTIONS ON UNIT 080.001-I

PREACHING

1. Enumerate the various liturgical services at which addresses can be given and mention the differences in presentation and content.
2. Has the sermon a Scriptural basis? Give at least two references from the Acts of the Apostles or the Epistle of Paul.
3. What is the difference between a speech and a sermon? (Min. 50 words)
4. Write a few lines about the structure of the sermon and the desirable attributes of each part.
5. What kind of groundwork and preparation does a preacher need to do?
6. Mention at least six “don’ts” applying to sermons.
7. What exercises can and should one regularly perform to improve voice production?
8. Within what time limits should a Eucharistic sermon fall? Discuss the conditions relating to the lower and upper limit.
9. Mention four methods of delivery of a sermon.
10. What points would you touch upon when speaking:
 - a) At a funeral
 - b) At a wedding (100-200 words each)
11. Answer in 200-400 words
Is the use of humour permissible in a Eucharistic sermon?
If not, why not? If you think it is, state why you think so and mention certain limitations.
12. Prepare and record on cassette two sermons (one each side):
 - a) One sermon suitable for a major feast-day of the Church (Any ‘A’ class day of your choice).
 - b) A sermon you would give at an Ecumenical service in a Liberal Catholic Church, emphasising the common ground of belief, yet not losing sight of the typical Liberal Catholic ethos.

If English is not your liturgical language – record the sermon in your usual liturgical language and enclose a fairly literal English translation.

SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE ABOVE ASSIGNMENT WILL LEAD TO THE AWARD OF
I.S.U.