

Insights in Liturgy

Liturgical Preaching

By FATHER ROBERT KENNEDY

Last week we described the homily as "the proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, that is, the mystery of Christ, which is ever made present and active within us." It should be biblical and pastoral, that is, opening up the dimensions of the mysteries of faith and drawing out their implications for daily Christian living.

Thus, preaching occupies a central and critical role in the life of the Church. Like Jesus' own preaching, it reveals the Father and opens up the meaning of the scriptures so that all may give a faithful and obedient response to God's Word. An integral part of the liturgy, preaching is an instrument of salvation for all who hear God's Word and seek to understand its meaning for us.

Liturgical preaching, if it is to be true to the Word on

which it is based, should have the following four characteristics:

(1) It should be **challenging**. "The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit; joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart" (Heb 4:12). "Challenging preaching" lays bare the intentions and attitudes of the heart, making apparent the distance between where God's Word calls us and where we really are. Preaching should challenge each hearer to conversion, a change of heart, so that our lives are ever more centered in Christ.

(2) It should be **welcoming**. Jesus not only challenged the people of his time to abandon their sins and turn wholeheartedly to the Lord; he also welcomed sinners and reconciled them with the Father. "Welcoming preaching" should be an attractive word that invites people in,

communicating to them that the place where God's Word dwells is a place of warm and gentle hospitality. In other words, when the challenging word is spoken, it does not wound or destroy but rather recreates and enlivens.

(3) It should be **comforting**. After having been invited in, the hearer should find a place of restful peace in God's message, a place of renewed hope and healing and joy. "Comforting preaching" does not give us words we want to hear, so that our security is assured;

rather it offers again the vision of God's intention to save us, and renews us, like a cool drink of water, so that we might strive for that vision with revitalized energy.

(4) It should be **nourishing**. The crowds followed Jesus because they were hungry for the Word of Life, and we today are no different. Christ himself is the center of "nourishing preaching." Such preaching strengthens our faith, satisfies our hunger and thirst for Christ, and deepens our commitment to

live the Christ-life in caring service of our brothers and sisters. It should unify the Christian Community by a stronger bond of love, and thus make that unity and love a more practical reality in our world.

Preaching that is challenging, welcoming, comforting and nourishing demands much of both homilist and hearer. The homilist must be immersed in the mystery of Christ, continually searching out the depths of God's message in Christ and boldly yet humbly preaching it in word

and action. The hearer must be open to what God will say, even though that Word may sting or disrupt our security.

For preaching is a cooperative effort, not only between the homilist and hearer, but also between God's People and God's Spirit; it is words, but it goes far beyond them, sounding in the ears but touching the heart. Preaching is the mysterious grace-filled way in which God invites us to enter and grow into the saving mystery of his love for us in Christ.

Operation Breadbox To Help 3 Countries

The International Justice and Peace Commission for the diocese announced this week that preparations for the second annual Operation Breadbox have begun.

The consciousness raising and fund development campaign is aimed at offering long lasting solutions to hunger problems in the world.

Monies raised are used to sponsor agricultural self-help programs in three different countries, as well as local hunger efforts.

This year's selected regions are Gorom-Gorom, in Upper Volta, Africa, Macuspana, Mexico and the Sayangun Catholic Mission in the Philippines. Both

Gorom-Gorom and Macuspana were recipients last year.

Lourdes Perez, Justice and Peace coordinator, explained that parishes interested in participating in this year's program, which includes informational programs, slide shows, and fact sheets about each region may do so by calling her or Francine Patella at (716) 328-6400.

Operation Breadbox, which begins Ash Wednesday and continues through Lent, raised \$27,875.77 last year with 82 parishes participating. Ms. Perez is hopeful that even more parishes as well as regional assemblies and individuals will join the program this year.

Seminary May Offer Gerontology Program

St. Bernard's Seminary expects to take part in a nationwide study program entitled Gerontology in Seminary Training, or Project GIST. A faculty member, Mercy Sister Gratia L'Esperance, helped design the program. She is a member of the National Interfaith Coalition, which, as sponsoring agency, has received a \$125,000 Federal grant.

"Project GIST," the seminary announcement explains, "has as its long-range goal greater cooperation among the various Church, educational and health-related institutions, and the sharing of expertise among all those

who are interested in ministry with and by the aging."

The announcement notes that Monroe County has "one of the highest percentages of retirees in the nation" and that the diocese is increasingly involved with them through its new Commission on Aging and the Office of Human Development, as well as in "daily ministry at the parish level."

The two-year Project GIST emphasizes "training trainers," the announcement says.

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