

Bulletin Article #15 = The Homily (*Teaching? Story-Telling? Jokes?...*)

What is the purpose of a homily? Should the priest mainly just try to teach people about the faith? Should the priest make sure it is always entertaining and fun? In this history of the Church, where did this come from, and what is the true purpose or actual goal of giving a homily? The word homily comes from the New Testament, and the Greek word *homilia*, which literally means a crowd-together (or an assembly that is united as one) see Acts 20:11 as one example. It developed throughout the early church (similar to the word sermon, but a bit different) as a conversation or a discourse between a priest or bishop and his people in relation to Scripture, especially in the context of the Mass. Today, if we surveyed everyone in the parish, you might find different opinions or perspectives of how someone should preach a homily, however, what does the Catholic Church officially teach about it? The bottom line is that the homily is considered a sacred action where the Priest is trying to be an instrument of God's grace to help people **encounter Jesus Christ in the entirety of His Paschal Mystery**. The Priest tries to do this by reflecting on the readings of Scripture given by the Church, and He is supposed to help people enter into the current Eucharistic celebration they are within as well as hear how the application of these reflections can be practically lived out and transform our day-to-day lives. In other words, my own summary of this would be – is the Catholic Priest (or Catholic Bishop or Deacon) doing his best to (1) reflect on the Scripture & Prayers of the Mass, (2) relate it to the lived reality of faith, and (3) connect it to the current celebration of the Mass and Jesus love for us present in the Eucharist today. The Priest is certainly allowed to teach, to tell-stories, and even to tell an occasional joke, but the homily should not be about *him personally*; the homily is about – *is the priest being an instrument* to help people encounter the true person of Jesus Christ who is alive in Scripture, in the Eucharist, and in the words and prayers of the Mass as well? That is the goal! Please pray for our priests.