

A Handbook for Catholic Preaching, gen. ed. Edward Foley, ass. eds. Catherine Vincie and Richard Fragomeni, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 2016, pp. 318. ISBN 9780814663165.

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A Handbook for Catholic preaching (HCP) is a collective work developed under the auspices of the Catholic Academy of Liturgy, co-sponsored by the Catholic Association of Teachers of Homiletics and the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions. The volume considers various aspects of the preaching. “This resource is intended to aid those who teach or direct the preaching arts, professors and bishops, working preachers, and pastoral supervisors, the design and writing style were particularly calibrated to graduate students in ministerial studies” (p. x).

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HCP consists of the following parts: table of contents, preface, introduction, list of abbreviations and three introductory essays (pp. 1-38). The book consists five sections. The first one being *Historical Perspectives* contains six essays (pp. 39-102). The second section considers *Genres of Preaching* has six essays (pp. 103-165). The third section deals with *Contemporary Perspectives on Preaching* consists six essays (pp. 167-229). The last section, *Contemporary Issues in Preaching* (pp. 231-296), consists six essays. The book also contains some brief information about the contributors (pp. 297-299) and an index (pp. 300-318).

The review is divided into two parts. The longer first part concerns the substantive content of the volume. The second and shorter part offers some formal considerations.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS

The introductory essays offer the most fundamental information about the contemporary understanding of preaching. The author of *Preaching as a Spiritual Exercise* (the first essay) persuades readers, in the style and manner of Pope Francis, that preachers should encounter their listeners; they are supposed to not only “take on smell of the sheep” (EG, no. 24) but also to “contemplate” their people and keep “an ear to the people” (EG, no. 154). To achieve these objectives the following aids are suggested: prayer, study, creative exercises, and the pursuit of a love of language.

Contributors to *The Teaching of Preaching* (the second introductory essay) show that preaching is a multipurpose activity. Preachers ought to cultivate the appropriate attitudes of humility, compassion, patience, respect, love and joy. Homiletic practice, preparation and performance should always involve prayerful silence, looking and listening, study and imaging. It is necessary for the preacher to understand that preaching text is written “not for the eyes but for the ears of the hearers” (p. 22), therefore, incubation, practicing aloud, seeking feedback and group preparation are helpful and useful.

Roman Catholic Teaching on Preaching. A Postconciliar Survey (the third essay) presents a chronological review of the official Church understanding of preaching, which is contained in conciliar and postconciliar documents and which relates to the universal Roman Catholic Church. This essay also contains a series of observations of preaching from these official church documents.

THE FIRST SECTION – HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Six articles in the first section recount the development of the homily throughout two thousand years of Christianity. The first article, entitled *Preaching in the New Testament* (pp. 41-50), begins by showing that Jesus as a prophet taught with authority and power, revealing the mystery of God’s reign through parables that “were subversive, and counterintuitive, grabbing the attention of those who heard them” (p. 41). The author also shows that The Book of Acts gives many paradigms of effective preaching, one of the finest being Paul’s sermon at the Aeropagus (Acts 17:22-31).

The Chapter entitled *Preaching in the Early Christian Church* (pp. 51-61) presents a history of preaching from the second to the sixth century. This article illustrates how the followers of Jesus moved from the synagogue to households and then to meeting halls and basilicas; the mode of communication shifted to fit their new environment and changing needs of community. The essay suggests that the sermons of homiletic masters like Origen, John Chrysostom, Basil, Ambrose Ephrem and Augustine were used as models for lesser preachers throughout the Middle Ages.

The Author of *Medieval Preaching* (pp. 62-73) relates the debate between priests and monks as to whether preaching is only a priestly function or not. The appearance of the Dominicans and the Franciscans renewed the controversy about who has the right to preach. This essay presents accounts of how and where the medievals

preached. At the end of this chapter there are indications as to how sermons were often tied to the liturgical calendar.

The article *Preaching from Trent to the Enlightenment* (pp. 74-83) illustrates the enormous impact which the decrees of the Council of Trent had on preaching in general and the development of the great emphasis on moralising as a form of homiletics. The author also presents many profiles of famous preachers with illustrations of the characteristic features of their preaching.

The next chapter *Preaching before Vatican II* (pp. 84-94) presents readers with some of the myths concerning preaching before Vatican II. Preaching in the United States is given as an example of changes in how the Gospel is proclaimed. Here preaching was being revitalized at the grassroots level “through liturgical renewal, a rise in diverse forms of evangelization, and Catholic Groups” (p. 85).

The last article in this section *Preaching after Vatican II* (pp. 95-102) presents the crucial statements of Vatican II and their impact on contemporary ecclesiology and the importance of the homily. Attending to the needs of the listener during the homily became one of the most important things in proclamation of the Gospel. It results from the recognition of the dialogical character of the liturgy as the action of Christ’s head and congregation.

THE SECOND SECTION – GENRES OF PREACHING

The second section presents genres of Preaching. *Evangelization and the Ministry of Preaching* (pp. 105-115) explains connections between Evangelization and Preaching. The author presents a history of the defining notion of “evangelization” and proves that preaching relates to evangelization by responding to its call for both encounter and conversion. He highlights that evangelization has always been about the Good News of the Gospel in the various forms in which it is articulated.

The next article *Biblical Preaching* (pp. 116-123) shows the Bible as the most important source for preaching. The author focuses on the celebration of sacraments. He noticed that “the passages read during the Eucharistic celebration are no longer biblical passages” (p. 119) because they have been placed in another literary context, the Lectionary.

In the next chapter, *Doctrinal and Catechetical Preaching* (pp. 124-133), we find information about the emergence and purpose of church doctrines and the interconnection between doctrine and liturgical preaching. The author concludes that doctrine and Scripture are never to be viewed in a contrasting light, but rather as being complementary.

Mystagogical preaching (pp. 134-145) shows what word “mystagogy” means and how mystagogical preaching changed over the course of millennia. In the patristic period mystagogy was understood as the way which “opened up the mysteries of Christian faith to communities within the context of adult initiation” (p. 135). Mystagogy returned to preaching in the period since Vatican II. In the final part of this article we can find clues about how to implement mystagogy in the Ministry of Preaching.

The author of *Liturgical and Sacramental Preaching* (pp. 146-155) presents some characteristic ways of preaching in sacramental and liturgical celebrations. He describes also some of the challenges and opportunities for liturgical preaching. Based on his own experience and documents of the Church, he shows how the preaching should be worked into different celebrations such as: baptism, confirmation, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders and ministries, weddings, funerals and vigil services.

The last article in this section *The Homily* (pp. 156-165) recapitulates a brief historical summary of the homily, following which the author explains how some contemporary commentators and documents define "homily". At the end of this essay he proposes a basic defining term for the homily; the author's crucial conclusion is "that the homily is not only a rhetorical exercise, but also an enacted form of public theology" (p.156).

THE THIRD SECTION – CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON PREACHING

The third section deals with contemporary perspectives on preaching. *Narrative Preaching and Narrative Reciprocity* (pp. 169-179) demonstrates how learning to think in stories is a means to effective preaching. The author explains the essence of the homiletical plot and presents Lowry's tools to compose a narrative homily. The essential point of narrative preaching is to articulate the ambiguity and disequilibrium about a biblical text or faith-matter in order to attract listeners.

The essay *Preaching as public Theology* (pp. 180-189) consists of three parts: defining "public theology", preaching throughout the Tradition and characteristics of preaching as public theology. The most crucial statement is that preaching is always public because it is socially rooted. Contemporary life and culture are fundamental sources for the content and formal aspect of preaching.

The author of *Imagination and Preaching* (pp. 190-199) demonstrates how to create an imagination process that should be developed during a homily. The use of imagination in preaching is necessary because it plays an important role in the experience of God. By using imagination as a tool the preacher ensures the content of the sermon is not abstract for the listeners. In the second part of article (imagination as practice) the author distinguishes between different levels of imagination, also underlining that one of the preacher's tasks is to develop the imagination of the listeners.

In the next chapter, *Rhetorical Approaches to Preaching* (pp. 200-209), we can find a definition of "rhetoric" as "planned and strategic use of symbols, language, and discourse – both spoken and written – to influence and persuade" (p. 200). The essay begins with a presentation of the historical origins of rhetoric (Aristotle, Cicero) and its adaptation to catholic preaching (Augustine). Then the author focuses attention on the adaptation of the classical understanding of rhetoric in the Church. Finally, the author presents the current attitude to the place of rhetoric in preaching.

Prophetic Preaching (pp. 210-220) is the next essay. "Prophetic preaching" is a way of preaching that begins when God "calls the prophetic preacher to proclaim God's immeasurable compassion for all but especially for the poor and the op-

pressed" (p. 210). The author explains the issue with examples: Latin American liberationist preaching; prophetic preaching in the African American Church; feminist, womanist and mujerista preaching, Latinoa prophetic preaching.

The "New Hermeneutics" (pp. 221-229) ends this section of *HCP*. This essay presents the understanding of the term "hermeneutics" proffered by different authors: Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Bultmann, Fuchs, Ebeling. The second part of this study shows Ricoeur's philosophy of language and interpretation theory, according to which the praxis of preaching can be improved.

THE FOURTH SECTION – CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN PREACHING

The final part of *HCP* concerns contemporary issues in preaching. The author of the first essay *Contextual Preaching* (pp. 233-243) states that authentic catholic preaching is a contextual act, because it is "the product of a dialogue between the scriptural-liturgical texts and congregation's context" (p. 234). This context is formed by: individual and social experience, culture, social environment and social change. The second half of this study shows that the contextual competence in preaching can be developed by using six models of contextual theology: translation, anthropological, praxis, synthetic, transcendental and countercultural.

The next chapter *Ecumenical and Interfaith Preaching* (pp. 244-253) focuses on interreligious act of preaching. Preachers ought to remember that they preach to different worshipers, with different life context, especially relating to married couples where one partner may profess the Catholic faith while the other partner may adhere to a different Christian denomination or indeed another faith or no faith at all. The second part of this article, presents three recommendations for contemporary preaching based on the paradigm of the Christian sermon.

Preaching in a Digital Age (pp. 254-263). The main subject of this essay analyzes media as a tool for evangelization. The chapter begins with the presentation of selected theories of media and the digital age. The author goes on to show that social networking services can help in: evangelizers in preparing for preaching, the publication of homilies and evangelizing materials, as well as getting feedback and connecting with people.

The essay *Charism and Order in Preaching* (pp. 264-274) consists of two parts. After the introduction, the authors present some meanings for the term "charism". The second part examines canon law and other related documents concerning who has the right to preach. The main goal of this article is the question about offering opportunities to preach to non-ordained persons. Although laypeople can preach on various occasion, it must be emphasized, what *Homiletic Directory* (no. 5) clearly stated: "It is because the homily is an integral part of the Church's worship that it is to be delivered only by bishops, priests, or deacons".

Preaching and Catholic Social Teaching (pp. 275-286) underlines that preaching must involve the sharing the social dimension of faith. The author also presents the "Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching" (USCCB 2005).

The chapter *The Ecumenical Contributions of Roman Catholic Preaching* (pp. 287-296) concludes the volume. The authors take the following issues: expanding Scripture's context, Scripture as interpreter, enlivening study, a Roman Catholic perspectives, catechesis and evangelization, evangelical testimony, Gospel-actualizing community.

CONCLUSIONS

The great advantage of *HCP* is its clear structure, division of sections and chapters. The essays were also clearly divided – each having an introduction, subheadings and conclusion. The only exception is *Preaching from Trent to the Enlightenment*. Every article consists of approximately four thousand words and is supported by the bibliography. Essays are largely devoid of footnotes, as was intended by the authors (see p. x). *HCP* contains the index – which is really useful for readers. However, the mixing of authors, titles and subject headings is problematic. Two different types of paging (Roman and Arabic) make quotations more difficult.

It must be highlighted that the authors carefully studied the documents of the Church relating to their particular subject area. By quoting the recent documents of Pope Francis they show that care was taken with the topicality of the presented content. *HCP* is a good example of cultivation of contextual homiletics. The authors demonstrate that homiletics is associated not only with multiple theological disciplines but also with other disciplines, such as rhetoric, sociology, psychology, linguistics. These essays also show the contemporary challenges of preaching, e.g. preaching in a digital age. Preachers have to remember that “the homily should be tailored to the needs of the particular community, and indeed draw inspiration from it. Pope Francis speaks eloquently to this point in *Evangelii gaudium*: [...] «Christian preaching thus finds in the heart of people and their culture a source of living water, which helps the preacher to know what must be said and how to say it»” (*Homiletic Directory*, no. 8).

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