

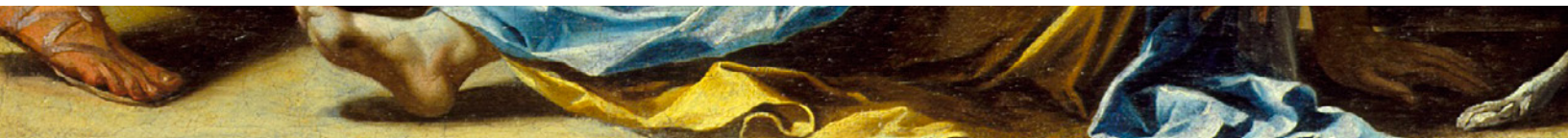
Charles Poërson; *Saint Peter Preaching
in Jerusalem* (1642); Los Angeles
County Museum of Art

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EVANGELISTIC PREACHING IN THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

BY COLLEEN REISS VERMEULEN, M.DIV.



In 1975, the Venerable Pope Paul VI boldly proclaimed that *the Church exists to evangelize*, to “preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass.”¹ Paul VI went on to explain that the:

question of “how to evangelize” is permanently relevant, because the methods of evangelizing vary according to the different circumstances of time, place and culture, and because they thereby present a certain challenge to our capacity for discovery and adaptation.²

How to evangelize begins with the necessary foundation of the witness of an authentically Christian life.³ Building on this witness, the second “fundamental” “means” of evangelization is preaching.⁴ Preaching, “the verbal proclamation of a message,” is “indeed always indispensable,” and “ever relevant, especially when it is the bearer of the power of God,” for it is “the Word that is heard which leads to belief.”⁵ Paul VI comments, “evangelizing preaching takes on many forms, and zeal will inspire the reshaping of them almost indefinitely.”⁶

Nearly four decades after the publication of Paul VI’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, we live in an era of what is called the “New Evangelization,” a renewed appropriation of the Church’s mission “to reach out to those who are far from God and the Christian community to invite them to once again hear the Word of God in order to encounter the Lord Jesus in a new and profound way.”⁷ Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI writes that responding with belief to this encounter is the “fundamental decision” of one’s life and “gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”⁸ In an interview with Alejandro Rodríguez, national director of Youth With a Mission (YWAM) Argentina, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, explained:

you can speak Christian jargon, but...if you haven’t had an encounter with Jesus Christ, you aren’t Christian, so for me that’s the point [of] a true Christian, not the nominal one...with tradition comes the upbringing, values and that helps a lot, but there is a moment in your life that you encounter Jesus Christ and that’s it, you saw him, and you said, yes Lord [sic].⁹

The emphases on response to Jesus Christ from both Benedict XVI and Francis point to the significance of *initial proclamation* as a stage of evangelization. Initial proclamation:

is where the kerygma, the message of salvation of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, is proclaimed with great spiritual power to the point of bringing about repentance of sin, conversion of hearts and a decision of faith.¹⁰

This leads to our central question: *how do we preach for initial proclamation?* To adopt the language of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, what “forms” of “evangelizing preaching” are most appropriate for our setting of the New Evangelization in the United States?

To answer this question, I will first examine the warrant and possibilities for evangelistic preaching¹¹ in our Catholic tradition. With this foundation, I offer a definition of evangelistic preaching, rooted in Catholic teaching. Fully understanding *what* Catholic evangelistic preaching is, I propose ten practical strategies for developing evangelistic sermons and discuss how and why evangelistic preaching should play a role in parish appropriation of the call of the New Evangelization.

THE WARRANT AND POSSIBILITIES FOR CATHOLIC EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

When applied to preaching, the word *evangelistic* conjures up a variety of images—we might think of a tele-evangelist, a famous evangelistic preacher such as Billy Graham or Dwight Moody, or a small-town preacher pounding a Bible on a pulpit. For many Americans (especially American Catholics), these are unfavorable images and *evangelistic* has a negative connotation, similar to being “pushy” about one’s religion or proselytizing. Additionally, for many Catholics, preaching evokes the singular image of the Eucharistic homily in the context of Mass. In common usage, the terms “homily,” “sermon,” and “preaching” all nearly exclusively refer to the Eucharistic homily,¹² yet the Church teaches otherwise. In the Catholic Church, the Eucharistic homily is one of many forms of preaching. In addition to the Eucharistic homily, the Church also speaks of “other forms of preaching adapted to needs;” “evangelizing preaching;” preaching

as part of: “spiritual exercises” or “sacred missions;” homilies at sacraments and paraliturgies;¹³ homilies in generic “assemblies of the faithful;” preaching in “evangelistic gatherings, in the catechumenate, and in groups devoted to the study of the Bible and to prayer;” “pastoral preaching;” and “preaching in general.”¹⁴ Thus, it is clear that in our Church documents, preaching is not limited to the Eucharistic homily.

History provides examples of deliberately planned Catholic preaching beyond the Eucharistic homily. In fourth and fifth century Cappadocia, Milan, and North Africa, Cathedral Vigil services often included preaching and explanation of Scriptures, especially on Saturdays and Sundays.¹⁵ Patristic preaching served a variety of purposes that align with our modern Catholic understanding of pre-evangelization, initial proclamation [evangelization],¹⁶ initiatory catechesis, and on-going catechesis as stages of evangelization. For example, Cyprian (c. 200-258, Bishop of Carthage) preached in marketplaces during times of persecution, and Eusebius (c. 263-399, Bishop of Caesarea) described early preachers as performing “the work of evangelists, making it their aim to preach to such as had not yet heard the word of faith at all.”¹⁷ Both of these represent preaching outside of the Eucharistic homily for the purposes of pre-evangelization and evangelization [initial proclamation]. Even within a Eucharistic context, in the sermon before the unbaptized were dismissed, Augustine of Hippo (c. 354-430) offered specific exhortations to nonbelievers.¹⁸

Other examples of evangelistic preaching in the Patristic era served to deepen or reinforce response to the initial proclamation. The Cappadocians used preaching to attempt to “rally their catechumens” “to put in their names for baptism.”¹⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus appealed to catechumens’ common sense, preaching tantalizing images of the “ineffable mysteries” baptism would give

them access to, “play[ing] upon their fears of hell and warn[ing] that death might come unexpectedly.”²⁰

William Harmless concludes that these sermons included “sparkling theology and rhetorical acumen, but the intent behind them was the same as an evangelical preacher’s altar call: to bring people to the water.”²¹

These forms of preaching beyond the Eucharistic homily did not disappear in the Medieval period, though they were “reshaped” for a new cultural context, as we are challenged to do in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Preaching often accompanied processions, and hermit monks such as John Buoni (c.1168-1249) and Peter of the Morrone (1215–1296), better known as Pope Celestine V, attracted crowds who came in search of healing, miracles, and preaching.²² Franciscan and Dominican friars practiced open-air preaching, delivering sermons in city squares or village common spaces, for example:

Anthony of Padua (1195–1231) and Berthold of Regensburg (1220–1272) preached outside university settings, and contemporaneously, female lay penitents such as Rose of Viterbo and Margaret of Cortona were preaching and enacting the Passion in public places.²³

While these forms of preaching outside of Mass were not functioning in the pre-evangelistic or initial proclamation stages of evangelization, since the audiences were presumably baptized in line with the culture of medieval Christendom, the purpose of this preaching was evangelistic in the sense of our current New Evangelization, where some who were baptized are indifferent to the faith or living apart from the Church.²⁴ In this context of medieval Christendom, an English friar (c. 1405-09) explained the purpose of forms of preaching other than the Eucharistic homily:

by preaching folk be stirred to contrition, and to forsake sin and the fiend, and to love God and goodness; and be illumined to know their God,

and virtues from vices, truth from falsehood, and to forsake errors and heresies. By the Mass they be not so; but if they come to Mass in sin they go away in sin... And also the virtue of the Mass standeth principally in the true belief of the Mass, and especially of Christ that is there sacred in the Host. But that may men learn by preaching of God’s Word and not by hearing of Mass [sic].²⁵

This reveals that even in an era of an officially Catholic society, evangelistic preaching was needed to, as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* reminds us today, call men and women “to faith and to conversion” before they come to the Eucharistic liturgy.²⁶ From this exploration we see, both in theology and practice, the Church’s long tradition of evangelistic preaching.

However, to understand the essentiality of preaching beyond the Eucharistic homily, we must examine the relationship between these other forms of preaching and the Eucharistic homily. A comprehensive understanding of our current Church teaching on preaching and the stages of evangelization reveals that evangelistic preaching is not merely an option within Catholicism, but a necessity.

The multiple forms of preaching (the Church also refers to them as “types” or “kinds”) are understood within Catholic teaching to be complementary, not in competition. Within context, the Eucharistic homily is “preeminent,” holding “pride of place” as the “most important,” since it “occupies a privileged position... [taking] up again the journey of faith put forward by catechesis and bring[ing] it to its natural fulfillment.”²⁷ The Eucharistic homily is “underlined” as a place of “ongoing education in the faith,” after first proclamation of the Gospel and catechesis.²⁸ Eucharistic preaching is decidedly different, separate as a form from other types of Catholic preaching because of its theological

distinctiveness—namely its function in the ongoing life of faith of the initiated and its complete integration into the dynamic actions of Mass—assembling in response to a call, hearing the Word of God, and responding with praise, adoration, supplication, and sacrifice.²⁹ The U.S. bishops caution against relying on the Eucharistic homily as an exclusive form of preaching, explaining, “even though the liturgical homily [referring specifically to a Sunday Eucharistic homily] can incorporate instruction and exhortation, it will not be able to carry the whole weight of the

Church’s preaching.”³⁰ Thus, it is not that Catholic preaching *can* be something broader, larger than the Eucharistic homily alone, but that it *must* be.

This means that while many imagine a classification chart of Catholic preaching that looks something like this:

CATHOLIC PREACHING

Conventional wisdom from the pew (among the ‘typical’ Catholic, or one who doesn’t attend Mass)

Preaching/Homily/Sermon

=

Eucharistic Homily by Ordained Minister

Evangelistic Services

General preaching in assemblies of the faithful

Preaching in other liturgical settings (Liturgy of the Hours, Liturgy of the Word)

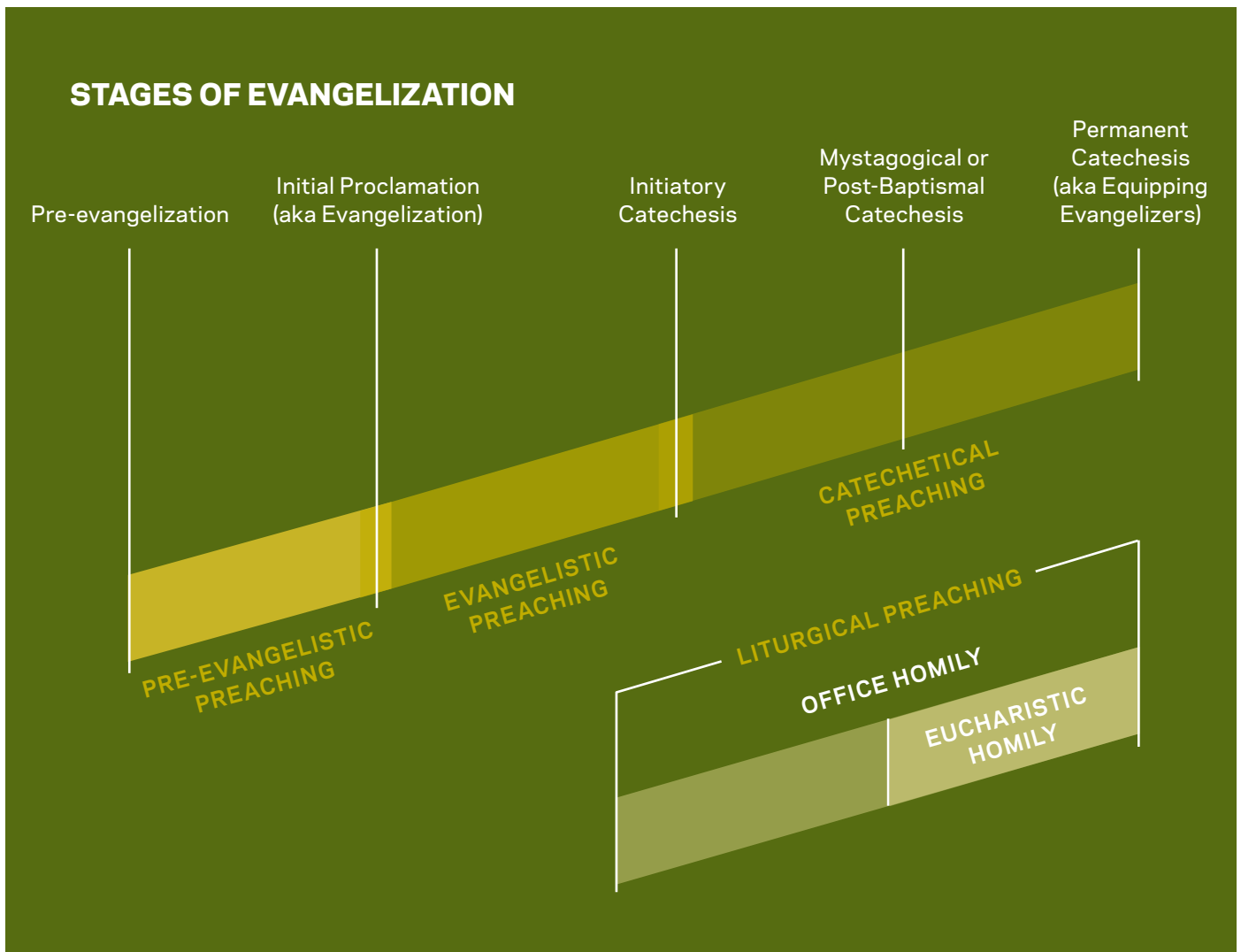
Etc.

These other types are inferior, substitutes, not really important, just stuff we do because of a ‘priest shortage,’ a modern invention, or meaningless

Church writings actually point to a schema of complementarity—where a Eucharistic homily uniquely “enables the gathered congregation to celebrate the [Eucharistic] liturgy with faith,” while complementing all other forms of preaching, “by attending more specifically to what it is to accomplish.”³¹ Other forms of preaching exist to “[address] human values in such a way as to dispose the hearers to be open to the

Gospel of Jesus Christ,” “bring the hearers to an inner conversion of heart,” and “instruct the faithful in matters of doctrine or morality.”³²

This points to an arrangement of forms of Catholic preaching by function, and aligned with the stages of evangelization, such as this:



Preaching can, of course, include multiple functions within the same setting, however, the reality of our theology is that the Eucharistic homily is not primarily designed for the nonbeliever to come to faith for the first time.³³ Thus, some of the “weight of the Church’s preaching” that cannot be carried by the Eucharistic homily alone is preaching the critical, initial proclamation of evangelization.³⁴

CATHOLIC EVANGELISTIC PREACHING: DEFINED BY AUDIENCE, CONTENT, AND PURPOSE

Having articulated the case for evangelistic preaching as a necessary part of the fullness of Catholic preaching, especially within the context of the New Evangelization’s focus on a fundamental response to Jesus Christ, I now turn to the logical question, *what is evangelistic preaching—this preaching focused on the initial proclamation stage of evangelization?* While Vatican and USCCB documents from the Second Vatican Council onward have explored the meaning of, proper function of, and purpose of the Eucharistic homily, the Church has not yet elaborated on the specific nature of preaching for pre-evangelization, evangelization, and/or catechesis with similar detail. Not surprisingly, Catholic homiletic scholarship (which is limited in comparison to non-Catholic sources)³⁵ focuses almost exclusively on Eucharistic preaching. Thus while *evangelistic preaching* is a vibrant subcategory of homiletic scholarship in many Christian traditions—and definitions, descriptions, and “how-to” texts abound—these definitions and principles are not necessarily rooted in, or compatible with, a Catholic theology of evangelization. Given this reality, I will offer a definition of evangelistic preaching proceeding from Catholic sources, and providing insights from non-Catholic homileticians when applicable.

I define evangelistic preaching in Catholic contexts by audience, content, and purpose. The audience of evangelistic preaching is *nonbelievers*. This audience includes three main groups: first, those who have never heard the Gospel (including children).³⁶ Second, it includes those who are baptized Christians but live “outside Christian life,” are indifferent to the faith, are in need of deeper foundations of their faith, and/or “feel the need to know Jesus Christ in a light different from the instruction they received as children.”³⁷ And third, the

audience includes non-Christians (i.e. atheists, secular humanists, etc.).³⁸

Now, at first one might think, “that’s pastorally impossible—unless I stand on a street corner and preach as people pass by, I’m going to have more believers than nonbelievers any time I preach!” But, evangelistic preaching need not quantitatively have more nonbelievers than believers in the audience, the point is the *intent* of the preaching. Additionally, our Catholic theology allows for the very real possibility (a major concern of the New Evangelization) that those who believe in some way or are baptized are still in need of initial proclamation. Defining the audience of evangelistic preaching as nonbelievers means that in practice, evangelistic sermons should be prepared as if the entire audience is in need of initial proclamation of the Gospel, rather than attempting to adapt a sermon preached to mature believers (i.e. many Eucharistic homilies) by merely simplifying language or making other less-than-substantive changes.³⁹

The content of evangelistic preaching is the *message of salvation*—that through a living, personal encounter with Jesus Christ, who died and rose from the dead, salvation that begins in this life and is fulfilled in eternity, is offered to all people, as a gift of God’s grace and mercy.⁴⁰ This does not mean that in pastoral practice, all evangelistic messages are identical. Audience-driven topics such as universal spiritual needs (i.e. stability, hope, wisdom), intellectual questions (i.e. Does God exist?), and existential issues (i.e. broken relationships, direction in life) are all valuable starting points in evangelistic preaching to bring people to the core content that defines the sermon, and hopefully cultivates the conditions for encounter with Jesus Christ.⁴¹

The purpose of evangelistic preaching is to bring about “repentance of sin, conversion of hearts, and a decision of faith.”⁴² This is the “conversion from radical unbelief

to belief” mentioned in *Fulfilled in Your Hearing* that is not the primary purpose of the Eucharistic homily.⁴³ Practically, this means that an evangelistic sermon’s message or topic is designed for action. It is not merely information about the core content, information about salvation, but communication intended to foster and cultivate conditions for a response of conversion.

Putting the elements of audience, content, and purpose together to form a definition, evangelistic preaching in Catholicism is *announcing the message of salvation in Jesus Christ to nonbelievers in order to bring about repentance of sin, conversion of hearts, and a decision of faith*. On the surface, this appears to be a simple definition. Yet, many preachers who can comfortably prepare and preach Eucharistic homilies or catechetical sermons to the gathered community of the faithful are decidedly less confident in preaching an evangelistic message. Truly actualizing and embodying evangelistic preaching requires a complete orientation towards the world of the nonbeliever—a category that includes not only those who have not heard the Gospel or are not Christian, but also baptized (and even fully initiated) Christians who have not made a fundamental response to an encounter with Jesus Christ or who need to deepen this response—and this is no simple task.

DEVELOPING EVANGELISTIC SERMONS

Foundational elements of the homiletic method such as reading, listening, and praying with a text and/or topic; listening to and praying about the community; biblical exegesis; choosing an appropriate structure; delivery; assessment; and others apply to all forms of preaching, regardless of whether it is pre-evangelistic, evangelistic, catechetical, or liturgical preaching, including Eucharistic homilies. Beyond this general homiletic foundation, building a genuinely *evangelistic* homily requires intentionality. To aid in our collective rediscovery of vibrant Catholic evangelistic preaching tailored for our cultural context, I offer ten practical strategies for developing effective sermons that are authentically evangelistic in outlook.

1

Enter into their worldview.

On a basic level, this means not assuming the audience's knowledge of Scriptures and Christian or Catholic terminology, acceptance of underlying presuppositions, or even their interest in oneself as a preacher or interest in the chosen topic.⁴⁴ However, this does not mean presuming ignorance, British theologian Stephen Wright explains:

not only have people (sometimes) been influenced by a variety of preachers before the one they are listening to now, they may also (quite often) have read at least something of the Bible, maybe with accompanying notes. They may have dipped into theological reading, of the lighter or heavier variety.⁴⁵

Thomas Long echoes this concern, cautioning, "it would be a mistake...to imagine that we are preaching to blank tablets on which the gospel can be freshly inscribed. The culture has been scribbling on those tablets," with the messages that humanity is saved by knowledge and enlightened people will be ethical, human rituals are "at best unfortunate, and at worst contaminants," and spiritual experiences and "heartfelt moments of illumination" are good, but "religious institutions are inevitably corrupt."⁴⁶ By imagining the questions, fears, and joys of our contemporaries who hold these views, and using these perspectives as a cornerstone, we can develop truly evangelistic sermons.

2

Meticulously choose a text.

For Catholic preachers, this is a significant difference from a liturgical homily in the context of the Eucharist or the Liturgy of the Hours, where a relatively large portion of Scripture is provided as the basis for preaching and well-crafted integration of diverse texts is encouraged as a fruitful means of reflection for the assembly. When preaching evangelistically, one often has greater choice of text and should carefully consider: if the text can be readily understood without extensive background, if the text is effective with hearers who do not associate it with a particular place in the liturgical year, if the text will be visible to the audience during the sermon, and if a distinctly Catholic hermeneutic is required to grasp the message of the sermon. In many cases, texts for evangelistic sermons will often be much shorter than selections of Scripture used for catechetical or Eucharistic homilies.

3

Bring the facts.

Again, this highlights another point of difference in emphasis when comparing evangelistic and Eucharistic preaching. Eucharistic homilies are intended to be essentially connected to Scripture and intrinsically related to doctrine and catechesis.⁴⁷ While this is appropriate for preaching to an audience of faith, hearers of evangelistic sermons often have misperceptions based on faulty factual knowledge of Christian tradition and the Catholic Church. For example, many Americans do consciously think or subconsciously assume that Catholicism and/or Christianity fails modern tests of theodicy, evolution, or human rights, or that the *real* origins of the Bible and Christianity are not what the Church teaches.⁴⁸ Long warns that when preaching does not:

wrestle with the intellectual challenges that stand in the way of many...[our beliefs]... can seem like rote, take-it-or-leave-it dogmatic moments... rather than expressions of hard-won, blood-stained wisdom wrung from of centuries of wrestling with the meaning of God and human experience.⁴⁹

As a result, effective evangelistic sermons will often include a greater proportion of time spent on factual clarification and/or apologetics when compared to other forms of preaching.

4

Maximize personal connectedness.

In our information and media saturated world, “in which cynicism about what to believe or not believe is everywhere,” what makes preaching unique as a form of communication?⁵⁰ One element is the potential for personal connection between a speaker and listener. We cultivate this connection, this “fullest and most intense bonding between the preacher and those who share the preaching,” by offering personal testimony, appropriate intimacy and vulnerability, being relational and interactive, and sharing our fervor, passion, love, and genuine emotion and humor.⁵¹ Many preachers accomplish this through absence of or minimal use of notes, outlines, or memorization of a script for delivery, for “when a preacher develops the ability to organize his thoughts, own them in his soul, and pour them out directly to an audience, connection is all but inevitable.”⁵²

5

Make it memorable.

Effective evangelistic sermons are memorable so that hearers can continue to ponder the message after it has ended, reviewing and considering (hopefully prayerfully) the call for action or decision. To help make a sermon more memorable, preachers consider clarity (if the one delivering the message can remember it without notes, then a hearer might also be able to remember the logic of the sermon and even potentially recount it to another person), repetition—not simply restatement—of key phrases, and use of illustrations as essential elements of a memorable sermon.⁵³

6**Use a variety of media.**

“Present-day audiences are oriented toward story in sight and sound in addition to verbal instruction,” and are indeed “accustomed to receiv[ing] and shar[ing] much of our communication through images.”⁵⁴ The use of multiple media to convey a message could be as simple as offering Scripture verses projected on a screen for those who are unfamiliar with a Bible or Missal, or as intricate as the use of interwoven theater or drama to communicate a message. Medieval preachers, for example, used a visual homiletic that included drama, plays, and a specific repertoire of gestures known to audiences from paintings.⁵⁵ When incorporated with care and discernment, the use of a variety of media can make an evangelistic sermon more evocative, vivid, moving, and memorable.⁵⁶

7**Incorporate multiple points of engagement.**

Doug Pagitt observes that regardless of the size of a venue or audience, the preacher often “remains a removed stranger who gives speeches about God.”⁵⁷ In an evangelistic setting, where establishing the credibility of the preacher and a way for hearers to follow-up and continue to ask questions are of particular importance, creating multiple points of engagement can help create lasting impact for the sermon. This means considering opportunities for dialogue, discussion, interaction and questions after or during preaching, using the internet and text-messaging to offer opportunities for virtual engagement, and exploring how to make the audience part of the sermon moment.

8**Explore sermon structure options.**

The use of narrative structures in preaching, pioneered by homiletics such as David Buttrick, Fred Craddock, Thomas Long, and Eugene Lowry, has proved tremendously important for Catholic Eucharistic preaching since the Second Vatican Council, and for good reason—a faith community gathered for the Eucharist is participating in a meta-narrative that includes both the mystical and visible elements of Christianity. However, for the potential hearers of evangelistic sermons, this narrative is largely unknown and in a culture that displays tendencies of becoming increasingly episodic rather than narrative in thinking, other sermon structures—i.e. expository, textual, declarative, dialectical, rhetorical, polar opposites, pragmatic, topical, quadrilateral, etc.—may be better suited for evangelistic preaching.⁵⁸

End with invitation, not just application.

For those who have already made a committed response to Jesus Christ, any application of Scripture or doctrine to their life is implicitly an invitation to deeper relationship with God. Yet, for the audience of evangelistic preaching, more explicit invitation to a tangible action is essential for encouraging response to an encounter with Jesus Christ. Catholic ministers Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran emphasize the importance of preaching the “outcomes of the message” and “life-change”—without this a preacher can easily fall into the habit of “aim[ing] at nothing” and “hit[ting] every time.”⁵⁹

Make evangelistic preaching part of something larger.

Stephen Wright observes the commonsense reality, “most unchurched or unbelieving people need more than a single sermon to understand the gospel and be moved to respond to it.”⁶⁰ And, given our Catholic theology of the breadth of evangelization, we understand any decision that flows from hearing an initial proclamation as incomplete. An initial encounter requires ongoing conversion and life in the Christian community. Because of this, every evangelistic sermon should include an intentional *what’s next*—a clear step, follow-up action, or opportunity for those who may have encountered Jesus Christ and are seeking a way to respond. It also points to the potentially fruitful use of *series* in evangelistic preaching, so that the preacher can offer multiple topics and build a relationship with a hearer.

These ten practical strategies for Catholic evangelistic preaching are a starting point, and every preacher will develop his or her own preferred methods and techniques. The underlying premise is intentionality, not choosing only one technique or imitating a particular preaching, for we are reminded, “evangelizing preaching takes on many forms, and zeal will inspire the reshaping of them almost indefinitely”—this is our task.⁶¹

DOING EVANGELISTIC PREACHING IN THE PARISH

The parish is the focal point for evangelistic preaching because it is *near where most people are*. Most non-Catholics and Catholics who are in need of evangelistic preaching are not going to attend a diocesan rally, a retreat, or large conference—but, they may be regularly attending a parish or make a one-time visit to a parish in a time of need or spiritual inquiry.

How does a parish become a focal point for evangelistic preaching? First, we need preachers. Most parishes already have a combination of priests, deacons, and/or general [lay] ministers with homiletic training. Baptized faithful who are “orthodox in faith, and well-qualified, both by the witness of their lives as Christians and by a preparation for preaching appropriate to the circumstances” can be admitted by the bishop to preach (with the exception of the Eucharistic homily, which is not ordinarily a primary place for evangelistic preaching).⁶² Parishes can take steps to help faithful parishioners discern the call to evangelistic preaching by cultivating a culture of sharing personal testimony, reflecting on one’s own conversion story in small-groups, and recruiting from within the flock.

The second key step for parishes is integrating evangelistic preaching into parish life. Though Mass is not intended to be a place for initial proclamation, certain Masses, i.e. Christmas, Easter, Mother’s/Father’s Day, and harvest or homecoming Sundays in certain regions, tend to attract a large number of visitors, a prime opportunity for evangelistic preaching.⁶³ Parishes can also consider adding a service *designed* for evangelistic preaching. For many parishes this requires a radical re-orientation from an nearly exclusive focus on the “already converted” to allocating quality resources for initial proclamation, seeking to attract and offer something designed for the nominal believer or nonbeliever. This shift is at the heart of the call to the

New Evangelization in the United States. What might this look like? Possibilities for parish services⁶⁴ that incorporate evangelistic preaching include:

- Taizé-inspired prayer services;⁶⁵
- Modeling a service after the XLT (pronounced “Ex-alt”) nights popular with teenagers and young adults. XLTs “combine quality music and a dynamic teaching with worship of the Eucharist in an energetic and reverent setting. In other words, you are sure to hear a fun and relevant talk, some of the best new worship music, and experience the intimacy of spending time with Christ in Eucharistic Adoration;”⁶⁶
- Reviving the Cathedral Vigil services (or other adaptations of the Liturgy of the Hours) popular in the Patristic era. A version of this is currently popular among young adults in Colorado;⁶⁷
- Making use of services that do not include reception of the Eucharist, since receiving the Eucharist is often not applicable for someone in need of initial proclamation and allows for wider use of the baptized faithful as preachers of the Word or Liturgy of the Hours as a venue for evangelistic preaching (i.e. Liturgy of the Hours, Liturgy of the Word);
- Offerings modeled on small-group series, such as the Alpha Course,⁶⁸ or a retreat-based opportunity for preaching and decision, similar to a Cursillo.⁶⁹

Finally, parishes can also bring evangelistic preaching outside the walls of the parish to non-parish facilities. This includes offering evangelistic messages in public locations, virtually through the internet, using broadcast media, and in hospitals, Catholic schools, and prisons. Preaching in the public square is not limited to presenting a sermon. Processions and other visual aspects of the Catholic tradition offer settings where preaching could potentially be inserted, after the visual captures the attention and imagination of the audience.⁷⁰

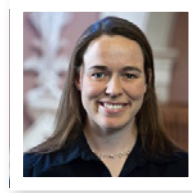
GOING FORWARD

Pastoral team Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran, observe:

the great periods of reform were marked by the renewal of preaching. The founding of the Dominicans and the Franciscans, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuit movement, the missionary efforts of the Church in North and South America, Asia, Africa, and now today a more evangelically minded Catholic community have all been exercises in effective and relevant preaching.⁷¹

The New Evangelization is not exactly a reform, but it is a call to renewal, a significant recognition of the fullness and weight of our mission to proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ. We are simply not doing our best if we fail to use all of the forms of preaching offered by our Church in complementary and supportive ways. Every stage of evangelization calls for a specific vision and use of preaching. Preaching as a method of initial proclamation—evangelistic preaching—is nothing new in the history of Catholicism, nor is it foreign or incompatible with our robust theology of evangelization.

Evangelistic preaching forms a necessary complement to the Eucharistic homily, which uniquely calls the faithful to praise and thanksgiving at the Lord's Table, by calling those who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, those who have heard but have not responded, and those who are otherwise far from it to encounter Jesus Christ and enter into the life of the community of believers called the Church. Reviving and reimagining evangelistic preaching as a part of the typical Catholic experience in the United States is a realistic and vitally important element of the New Evangelization.



Colleen Reiss Vermeulen, M.Div. is a STEP Facilitator, Master of Non-Profit Administration candidate in the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza School of Business, and writer for NewEvangelizers.com.

NOTES

1 Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975), §14.

2 Ibid., §40.

3 Ibid., §41.

4 Ibid., §§40-42.

5 Ibid., §§21, 42.

6 Ibid., §43.

7 Ibid.

8 Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter: *Deus Caritas Est*, (2005), §1.

9 "Jorge Bergoglio, the Pope interviewed by Alejandro Rodríguez, president of YWAM Argentina," last modified April 12, 2013, accessed May 1, 2013, <http://youtu.be/L0equeo3gYw>.

10 "Bulletin...Synod [on] the New Evangelization," prop. 9.

11 I use the term "evangelistic preaching" to identify preaching oriented towards the initial proclamation stage of evangelization. Though the term, to my knowledge, does not specifically appear in Catholic teaching, it is a commonly used and broadly accepted term in Christian homiletic scholarship. Additionally, the phrase "evangelistic gatherings" appears in the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)'s *Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly* (27). Thus, by extension, preaching in an evangelistic gathering could justifiably be called "evangelistic preaching."

12 The use of the specific terms, “homily,” “sermon,” and “preaching” in the Catholic Church seems to flow from a historical, cultural, and/or linguistic context, rather than from a theological or legal context where the specificity in the term implies a certain definition. I use these terms interchangeably. When speaking of the homily given at Mass, I use the term “Eucharistic homily.”

13 To my knowledge, “paraliturgy” is not formally defined by the Church, though it does appear in Church documents. The term is generally applied to rites and celebrations that use a quasi-liturgical format, i.e. a liturgical format resembling but not appearing in an official liturgical book (Edward McNamara, “On Paraliturgies,” *Zenit: The World Seen From Rome*, 2 Dec 2008).

14 Code of Canon Law (1983), Can. 770; *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §43; USCCB, *Fulfilled in Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly*, (Washington, D.C.: Office of Pub. Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1982), 2; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1993), §132; John Burke and Thomas P. Doyle, *The Homilist’s Guide to Scripture, Theology, and Canon Law*, (New York, NY: Pueblo Pub. Co, 1987), 43.

15 Robert F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), 2, 39, 168, 175-176.

16 Evangelization in Catholic theology is a complex and dynamic process that involves many stages, from pre-evangelization and contact with authentic Christian witness to on-going catechesis in the life of an adult baptized decades prior as an infant. The term “evangelization” is also often used to refer to the specific stage of initial (or first) proclamation of the Gospel. An example of this appears in the USCCB’s *Fulfilled in Your Hearing* (27). See also *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §§18, 22, 24, and 47 for the broader context of evangelization.

17 David L. Larsen, *The Company of the Preachers: A History of Biblical Preaching from the Old Testament to the Modern Era*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1998), 73; John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1982), 20.

18 William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 83.

19 *Ibid.*, 61.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 Beverly Mayne Kienzle and John Zaleski, “The Settings for Medieval Preaching,” *A History of Medieval Christian Preaching as Seen in the Manuscripts of the Houghton Library*.

23 Katherine Wrisley Shelby, “Franciscan Preaching in the High Middle Ages,” *A History of Medieval Christian Preaching as Seen in the Manuscripts of the Houghton Library*.

24 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §§52-56; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, (1975), §33; “Bulletin...Synod [on] the New Evangelization,” prop. 7.

25 Charles Hugh Egerton Smyth, *The Art of Preaching; A Practical Survey of Preaching in the Church of England, 747-1939*, (London: Society for promoting Christian knowledge, 1940), 16.

26 Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy]*, (1975), §9. The importance of preaching as a requisite or call to the Eucharist is not a division between Word and Sacrament, but a progression. John Wesley’s use of preaching for Eucharistic revival demonstrates this potential (Colleen R. Vermeulen, “New Evangelization and the Wesley Brothers.” *On the Square, First Things*, 5 Sep 2012). Pastoral team Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran explain in our contemporary context: “for lost people as well as those new to the discipleship path, the weekend message [=homily/sermon] is the defining element of the weekend experience, because they don’t yet understand or appreciate the Eucharist” (*Rebuilt*, 130).

27 Code of Canon Law (1983), para. 767§1; CCC, §132; *General Directory for Catechesis*, (1997), §§51, 70.

28 *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)*, §57.

29 Louis Bouyer, *Liturgical Piety*, (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1955), 24-29.

30 *Fulfilled in Your Hearing (FIYH)*, 26.

31 *Ibid.*, 27.

32 *Ibid.*, 26-27.

33 *GDC*, §52. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §9.

34 *FIYH*, 26.

35 In *An Introduction to the Homily*, Waznak notes, “because homiletics never occupied a primary academic status in Roman Catholic theological education, most...[homiletics] texts, especially the theoretical ones, have come from Protestant and Anglican homiletics” (p. viii).

- 36 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §52. See also *Redemptoris Missio*, §33.
- 37 *Ibid.*, §52.
- 38 *Ibid.*, §53.
- 39 R. Larry Moyer, *Show Me How to Preach Evangelistic Sermons*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Pub., 2010), 170.
- 40 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §§26-27; “Bulletin...Synod [on] the New Evangelization,” 9; *Deus Caritas Est*, §1.
- 41 Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Preaching Salvation*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 136-142.
- 42 “Bulletin...Synod [on] the New Evangelization,” prop. 9.
- 43 *FIYH*, 17.
- 44 Moyer, *Show Me How to Preach Evangelistic Sermons*, 58-78.
- 45 Stephen I. Wright, *Alive to the Word: A Practical Theology of Preaching for the Whole Church*, (London: SCM Press, 2010), 28.
- 46 Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 77, 73.
- 47 Final Draft, USCCB, *Preaching the Mystery of Faith: The Sunday Homily*, 23, 31.
- 48 Long, *Preaching from Memory to Hope*, 81-82.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 63.
- 50 Joseph M. Webb, *Preaching Without Notes*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 29.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 52 Fred R. Lybrand, *Preaching on Your Feet: Connecting God and the Audience in the Preachable Moment*, (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2008), 43.
- 53 Moyer, *Show Me How to Preach Evangelistic Sermons*, 164; Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons*, 152-157.
- 54 Richard, *Preparing Evangelistic Sermons*, 155; Wright, *Alive to the Word*, 162.
- 55 Thomas H. Troeger, *Ten Strategies for Preaching in a Multimedia Culture*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 12.
- 56 Wright, *Alive to the Word*, 164.
- 57 Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined: The Role of the Sermon in Communities of Faith*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 88.
- 58 Thomas G. Long, “Out of the Loop” in *What’s the Shape of Narrative Preaching? Essays in Honor of Eugene L. Lowry*, ed. Mike Graves, David J. Schlafer, and Eugene L. Lowry, (Saint Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008), 126.
- 59 Michael White and Tom Corcoran, *Rebuilt: The Story of a Catholic Parish: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, Making Church Matter*, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2013), 144.
- 60 Wright, *Alive to the Word*, 150.
- 61 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §43.
- 62 USCCB, “Complementary Norms: Canon 766 – Lay Preaching,” 2001.
- 63 See “180 Week One: Easter,” a sermon preached by Fr. Michael White, March 31, 2013 as an excellent example of evangelistic preaching in an Easter Mass, <http://churchnativity.tv/media.php?pageID=96>.
- 64 Charles Arn’s *How to Start a New Service: Your Church Can Reach New People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997) provides how-to steps on planning a new/additional service.
- 65 See the Taizé community’s website for examples of contemplative *ostinato* music, intercessory prayer, and silence as characteristics of Taizé prayer: <http://www.taize.fr/en>.
- 66 “XLT: Teaching – Adoration – Worship,” <http://emmausyouth.squarespace.com/xlt/>, accessed January 2013.
- 67 “Young Adults Pray at Vigil Praise,” *National Catholic Register*, 13 April 2013, <http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/young-adults-pray-at-vigil-praise/>.
- 68 See the Alpha USA website for more information: http://www.alphausa.org/Groups/1000065342/Alt_Home_page.aspx
- 69 For a description of the Cursillo movement, see: <http://www.cursillo.org/whatis.html>.
- 70 See “Lift the City: A Catholic Eucharistic Flash Mob,” <http://youtu.be/cZ5aYoSr3Hg> and “No, Not a Wedding, a Eucharistic Procession,” <http://newevangelizers.com/blog/2013/04/30/no-not-a-wedding-a-eucharistic-procession/> as examples of how the visual can capture the attention of onlookers, offering a potential way for parishes to take evangelistic preaching to the public square.
- 71 White and Corcoran, *Rebuilt*, 129-130.