

The Eucharist is the vital centre of all that the Church is and does. At its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, who continues his saving work among us. The Second Vatican Council reminded us: ‘the most holy Eucharist holds within itself the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Passover and our living bread’. (cf. *One Bread One Body* 3)

All who exercise a liturgical ministry need a proper preparation for their responsibilities. They are to have the competence to perform the particular ministry with which they have been entrusted. (cf. *Celebrating the Mass* 29)



This leaflet is one of a series of leaflets prepared for liturgical ministers to help them refresh their understanding of their role at Mass. The series draws on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and *Celebrating the Mass*, a document of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.

It is one of the collection of resources produced by the Liturgy Office to assist the work of liturgical renewal in England and Wales.

What the Church says about...

The Homily

The Homily is part of the Liturgy and is strongly recommended, for it is necessary for the nurturing of the Christian life. It should be an exposition of some aspect of the readings from Sacred Scripture or of another text from the Ordinary or from the Proper of the Mass of the day and should take into account both the mystery being celebrated and the particular needs of the listeners.

The Homily should ordinarily be given by the priest celebrant himself. He may entrust it to a concelebrating priest or occasionally, according to circumstances, to the deacon, but never to a lay person.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 167, 168.

In the readings God’s word is accessible to people of every age and condition, but the Homily as a living explanation of the word increases its impact by assisting the faithful to assimilate it and apply it in their lives. It leads them from contemplation of the word to profound appropriation of the mystery of Christ and his Sacrifice in a more wholehearted celebration of the Eucharist and in their daily lives.

If it is to fulfil its purpose, the Homily must be the fruit of meditation, carefully prepared, and in length, style, and content sensitively adapted to the needs and capacities of all present. This may well be more easily achieved if the priest pre-

pares the Homily in shared reflection and prayer with members or representatives of the congregation.

- On Sundays and holy days of obligation there must be a Homily at all Masses celebrated with a congregation; it may not be omitted without a serious reason.
- For the benefit of those people who are regular participants, and because it is indeed an integral part of the liturgy, a Homily is appropriate at almost all Masses with a congregation.
- The priest celebrant gives the Homily from the ambo or while standing at his chair, from the ambo, or when appropriate, in another suitable place. In particular circumstances, such as in an unrenovated church or at a celebration with children, the homilist may need to approach closer to the congregation in order to communicate effectively.
- It is most appropriate that a period of silence follow the Homily, so that the people may take the word of God to heart and prepare a response to it in prayer.

Celebrating the Mass 167-9

Preparing the Homily

It is increasingly common for the homilist to begin to prepare a homily by reflecting on the scriptures together with other ministers of the word – for example readers and catechists. A simple process which is frequently used.

1. Opening prayer
2. The first reading is read twice, by different people, with three minutes of silence between and after the readings. Group members listen to the reading.
3. Group members share briefly their response to the question: What word or phrase strikes you and why? Other members listen to these echoes of the word.
4. The second reading or Gospel is read twice, by different people, with three minutes of silence between and after the readings. Group members listen to the reading.
5. Group members share briefly their response to the question: What word or phrase strikes you and why? Other members listen to these echoes of the word. Consider the question: What does this mean for our community?
6. The meeting ends with spontaneous and intercessory prayer arising from the session.

Such collaborative reflection can greatly enrich and ease the work of preparation of the homily and more firmly secure it in the life of the assembly.

*When Jesus came to Nazareth,
where he had been brought up,
he went to the synagogue
on the sabbath day, as was his custom.
He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet
Isaiah was given to him.
He unrolled the scroll
and found the place where it was written:
'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'
And he rolled up the scroll,
gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.
The eyes of all in the synagogue
were fixed on him.
Then he began to say to them,
'Today this scripture
has been fulfilled in your hearing.'*

LUKE 4: 14–21

May the word of God always be heard in this place, unfolding the mystery of Christ before us, and achieve our salvation within the Church.

Based on text from
Rite of Dedication of a Church

**Liturgy
Office**
ENGLAND
& WALES

Excerpts from *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* © 2004, *Rite of Dedication* © 1978 International Commission on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved.

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible, copyrighted 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

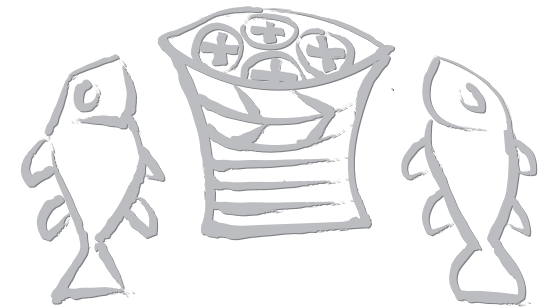
Excerpts from *Celebrating the Mass* and all other texts and layout © 2004 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

This leaflet is one of series for liturgical ministers on the *Year of the Eucharist* produced by the Liturgy Office, 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PL.

www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources

M006

Liturgical Preaching and Catechesis



How are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

ROMANS 10:14–15