

CLARIFICATIONS LAY PREACHING IN THE DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS

- Proclaiming the Gospel: A **lay preacher** proclaims the Gospel at a celebration in the absence of a priest. A **lay leader of prayer** may also proclaim the Gospel in the absence of a priest and then the lay preacher would preach. A lay preacher may never proclaim the Gospel in the presence of a priest or deacon except in the case of proclaiming the Gospel in another language, e.g., Spanish, Crow, etc.
- The Word homily: This term is reserved to preaching by a priest or deacon (see Code of Canon Law 767.1) All lay preachers, priests, deacons and members of our local church should be extremely careful in avoiding the use of the word homily when referring to preaching by a lay person. When a lay person preaches, the term to be used is preaching or reflection.
- Homiletic method: One of the primary texts used in the formation of the Lay Preachers in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings was the text of the U.S. Bishop (Committee for Priestly Life and Formation) “Fulfilled in your Hearing, the Homily in the Sunday Assembly. One principle outlined in the book is the “homiletic method” which lays out for homilists and preachers a method for weekly preparation of their homily or preaching. One principle highly recommended from this section of the book is the Homily Preparation group. Even in communities where Lay Preachers preach infrequently, they should meet weekly with the priest, deacon or others to share insights together from the scripture readings (see Chapter IV, “Fulfilled in your Hearing”).
- Preaching at Sunday Eucharist: A lay preacher may preach at a Sunday Eucharist in the presence of a priest or deacon on occasion. This exception is allowed for in the Code of Canon Law #766 and is listed as one of the Norms for Lay Preaching in our diocesan guidelines #9i. This privilege, however should not be abused. Communities throughout the diocese have interpreted this norm in various ways. In some communities the lay preachers have been invited to preach on the fifth Sunday of the month four times a year or once in a liturgical season – Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Winter, Summer or Fall Ordinary Time. What must be avoided is the regular scheduling of lay preachers, e.g., once a month. In many communities where there are lay preachers, the priest has welcomed the occasional opportunity for others to preach. One pastor in our diocese has remarked that he “preaches too often.” In one week’s time, this pastor often prepares five or more homilies for Sunday Eucharist, weddings, funerals, school liturgies and weekday Eucharists. This pastor occasionally welcomes preaching by a lay preacher in order to have a break from the strenuous task of preparing several homilies.

Questions, clarifications or comments of these reflections may be addressed to:

Office of Worship – 1-800-332-9998, ext. 20
Office of Lay Ministry – 1-800-882-9998, ext 17

May 2000
Revised June 13, 2007