

The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry

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Deacon David Shea

The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry

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“Any way you look at it, that act is a foolhardy thing to do. Who will volunteer to conduct lightning from heaven to earth?”

Barbara Brown Taylor, *When God is Silent*

The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry

Our Starting Point – If the homily is the most important 7-9 minutes in the life of a Catholic, then...

- Has Preaching Ever Been More Challenging?
 - Preaching is such a personal & risky process. We truly put ourselves *out there* when we preach.
 - Our assemblies are “schooled by an oversaturated, overstimulated society.” Guerric DeBona, *The Ladder of Homiletics*
 - People seem to no longer value the spoken word . . . even the **sacred Word**.
 - “Those gathered for an hour on Sundays have been substantially engaged in rhetorical forms which may have robbed their attention span.” Guerric DeBona, *The Ladder of Homiletics*
 - There is significant competition drawing Catholics away from Sunday Mass.
 - Other worship options
 - Sporting events
 - Busy lives & too many other things that have to be done.
 - “We don’t have hell anymore!” – It appears that we have lost a sense of sin that once helped get people to Mass on Sundays.

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Our Starting Point – What has happened to Catholic Preaching?

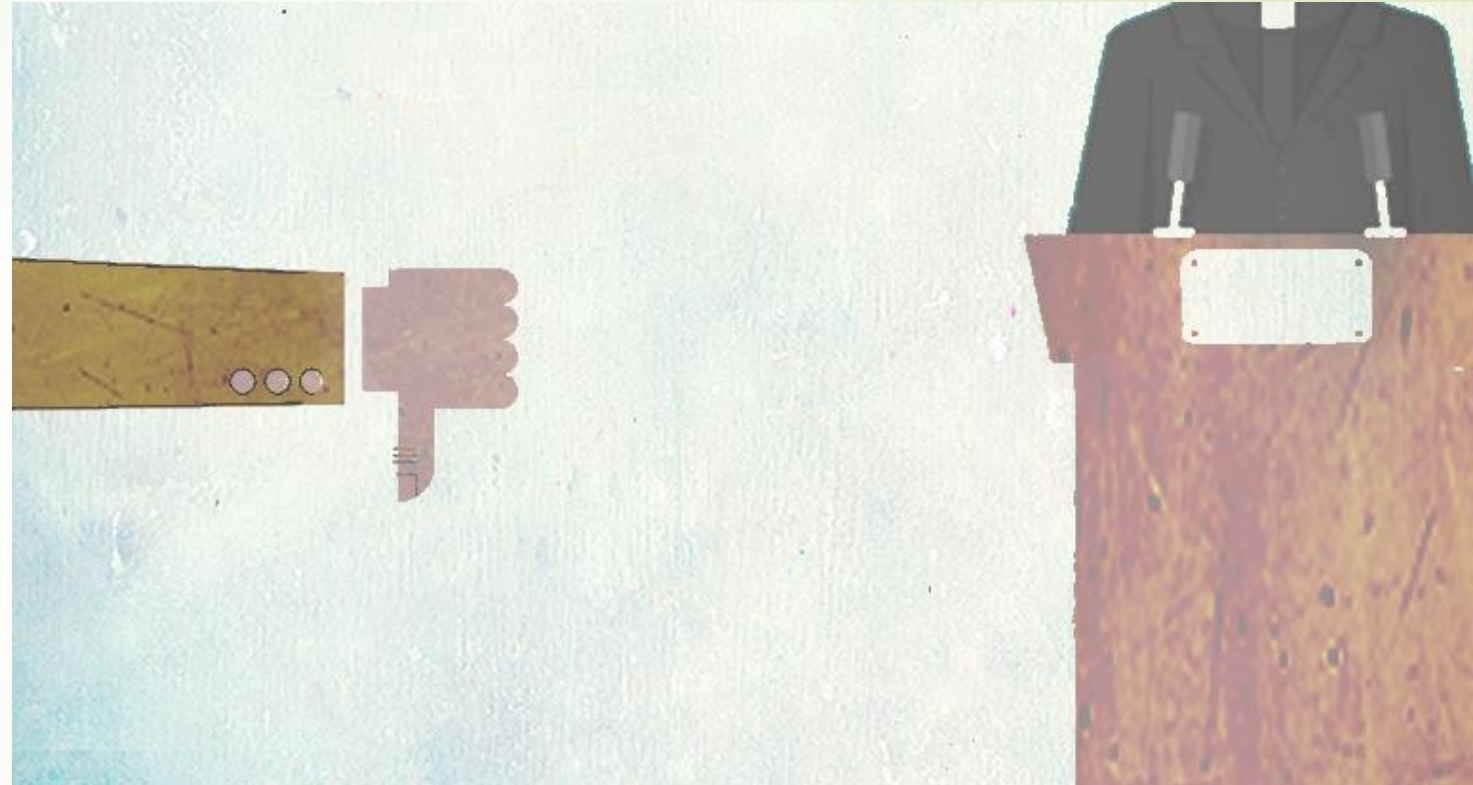


Little wonder that Catholic preachers are asking themselves “Is it even worth all the effort and time to prepare & preach a good homily is it’s not really having an impact on the lives of Catholics?”

What are the Primary Reasons for Bad Preaching Habits?

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- Why do bad preaching habits occur in the years following formation & ordination?
- Why, despite good course work, formation & practice, do preachers take-on bad habits?



Our Starting Point – What has happened to Catholic Preaching?

- There's a general impression that preaching is of secondary importance to the sacraments; to the Eucharist.
- Do we still believe – and act accordingly – that the preacher mediates an encounter with Christ, who is truly present and speaks to us through Word and Preaching?
- What happened to our belief, our fundamental theology of the Mass & the Eucharist, that liturgy is incarnational – that the encounter with the divine is mediated through us and so demands the best of us?

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Why do bad preaching habits develop in the years following formation & ordination?

- a. Time** – deacons get busy & homiletic preparation slides.
- b. Value** – many see little difference or effect whether they spend lots of time preparing or not
- c. Cynicism** – preaching doesn't make a real difference, so why bother
- d. Example** – they see bad examples in other preachers & figure, “Why put in the time?”
- e. Formal Evaluation** – no one is holding their feet to the fire thru a formal feedback process.



What are the Primary Reasons for Bad Preaching Habits?

What are Some of the Symptoms of Bad Preaching?

- Getting away from a manuscript
- Lack of unity
- Multiple subjects in the same homily
- Bad decisions about content
- Poor conclusions or multiple conclusions
- Poor delivery
- Inability to bring a homily to its conclusion

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“What has caused bad preaching you have heard to be bad?”

- Because homilies don't deliver a single message.
- Preachers ramble on and on
- Either too abstract or too simple
- Non-scriptural
- Don't relate to real life issues
- Emerge only out of the preacher's interests, ideologies, or life issues
- Have too many unrelated points
- Don't suggest a plan of action

Michael Monshau, “A Catholic Conversation About Preaching”

JOSHUA J. WHITFIELD

THE CRISIS OF BAD PREACHING

Redeeming the Heart and Way
of the Catholic Preacher

“Just the challenge that we need to hear—
beautifully written and filled with wisdom.”
Rev. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P.
Former Master of the Order of Preachers

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Good Homilies are good because they:

- ❖ Are to the point
- ❖ Address issues of critical importance to the lives of the hearers
- ❖ Are Scriptural
- ❖ Suggest a mission or plan of action as a result of the homily.
- ❖ Feature a disciplined & reasonable use of time.
- ❖ End when they are finished.

Michael Monshau, "A Catholic Conversation About Preaching"

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IF JESUS
PREACHED
THE SAME
MESSAGE
MINISTERS
PREACH TODAY,
HE WOULD
NEVER HAVE
BEEN CRUCIFIED.
-LEONARD RAVENHILL

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What Can We Do About Bad Preaching?

- Preparation is one of the essentials of a good homily.
- But be careful about reducing a homily to the level of "a book report" or to merely relaying "ideas and 'detached values.'"
- A huge concern is a lack of personality in preaching; the lack of "the preacher's personality."
- That personality must come into clear view, even though it is Christ's word that the preaching delivers.
- "The renewal of preaching begins with the renewal of the heart, the renewal of the preacher's 'ethos' or character."

"The Crisis of Bad Preaching: Redeeming the Heart and Way of the Catholic Preacher" by Joshua J. Whitfield



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What Can We Do About Bad Preaching?

- "Too much preaching, in tone and gesture, simply lacks personality. ... Clunky, formulaic, cut and pasted, impersonal, it just doesn't touch listeners.
- "That's because listeners have nothing to touch in return – no person, no heart, just a voice, just words."
- The attention homilists pay to the lives of their listeners means "resisting the temptation to abuse the pulpit by using it as a forum for personal pet issues or for putting one's alleged expertise on display."
- "The preacher should be alert to the trials, tribulations, triumphs, challenges and goings-on of listeners, and preach as if these things really exist and really matter."



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- ➔ But Catholics still yearn for good preaching.
- ➔ They haven't completely given up on the homily.
- ➔ And they know what they want in good preaching and in good homilies.
- ➔ They have clear and specific "wants" in a Catholic homily.
- ➔ And they still go to Mass hoping that those needs will be fulfilled.

**WE NEED PREACHERS WHO
PREACH THAT HELL IS STILL
HOT, THAT HEAVEN IS STILL
REAL, THAT SIN IS STILL
WRONG, THAT THE BIBLE IS
GOD'S WORD AND THAT JESUS
IS THE ONLY WAY OF
SALVATION.**

What Catholics Want in the Sunday Homily

The Quantitative Study

- ▶ Parishioners rated the level of importance or desirability of 63 Sunday homily attributes which were grouped into the following categories:
 - ▶ Homily Content
 - ▶ Impact of Homily on Listener
 - ▶ Preaching Styles
 - ▶ Preacher Characteristics

What Catholics Want in the Sunday Homily

Some of the Interesting Results

- Mean rating for Overall Preaching Quality is *5.10* on a 7-pt. scale
- Desired homily length of 7.9 minutes
- Preaching by priests and deacons rated about the same

Key Findings on the Sunday Homily

✓ Critical Issues

“Inspirational”

- Preacher Draws You Into the Homily
- Homily Touches You Deeply
- Homily Is Thought-Provoking
- Homily Strengthens Your Faith

“Motivational”

- Homily Provides Hope & Vision to Go Forward into the World
- Homily Makes a Difference in Your Life
- Homily Helps Build Your Personal Relationship with Christ
- Homily Gives You Something Concrete to Think About in Coming Week

“Clear”

- Homily Delivers a Clear Message
- Homily Speaks to You on Your Level

“Relevant”

- Preacher Understands Your Daily Lives
- Homily Relates the Gospel to Daily Lives & Experiences

What Catholics Want in the Sunday Homily

➤ ***Inspirational***

- Preacher draws you into homily
- Homily touches you deeply
- Homily is thought-provoking
- Homily strengthens your faith
- *Homily provides hope & vision*
- Homily makes a difference in your life

What Catholics Want in the Sunday Homily

➤ **Motivational**

- Homily *helps build your personal relationship with Christ*
- Homily gives you something concrete to think about in the coming week.
- Homily delivers a clear message

What Catholics Want in the Sunday Homily

➤ **Clear**

- Homily speaks to you on your level
- Preacher understands your daily lives

What Catholics Want in the Sunday Homily

➤ **Relevant**

- Homily relates the Gospel to our daily lives and experiences

Our Starting Point – If the homily is the most important 7-9 minutes in the life of a Catholic, then...

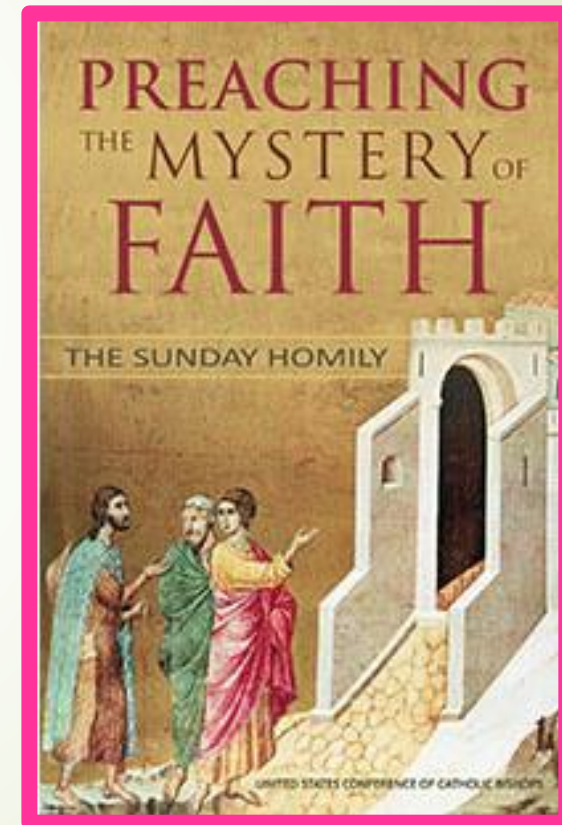
- For majority of Catholics, the homily is the **only communication** they receive on their faith.
- **Expectations** for the content of the Sunday homily remain **high** despite the poor reputation of Catholic preaching.
- Yet, Catholic preaching is generally judged to be **lacking**.
 - “We are also aware that in survey after survey . . . People of God have called for more powerful & inspiring preaching.” (PMF)
 - “A steady diet of tepid or poorly prepared homilies is often cited as a cause for discouragement on the part of the laity & even leading some to turn away from the Church.” (PMF)

Our Starting Point – Assessment of Church by US Bishops

- Catholic population increasingly diverse
- Many Catholics indifferent or disaffected
- Strong emphasis on individual
- Wounded Church
- Sharp polarities in political life
- Spirit of relativism
- Feverish consumerism
- Participation of young adults declining

Preaching the Mystery of Faith, June 2013

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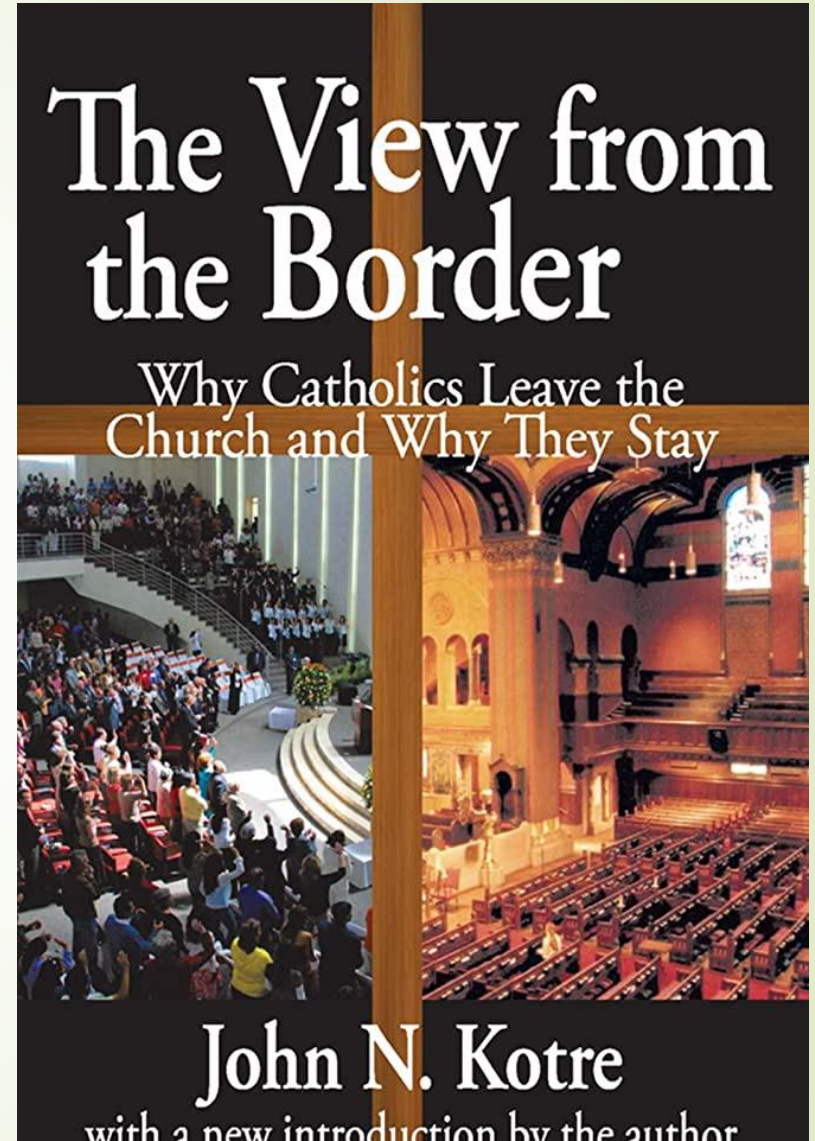


Our Starting Point

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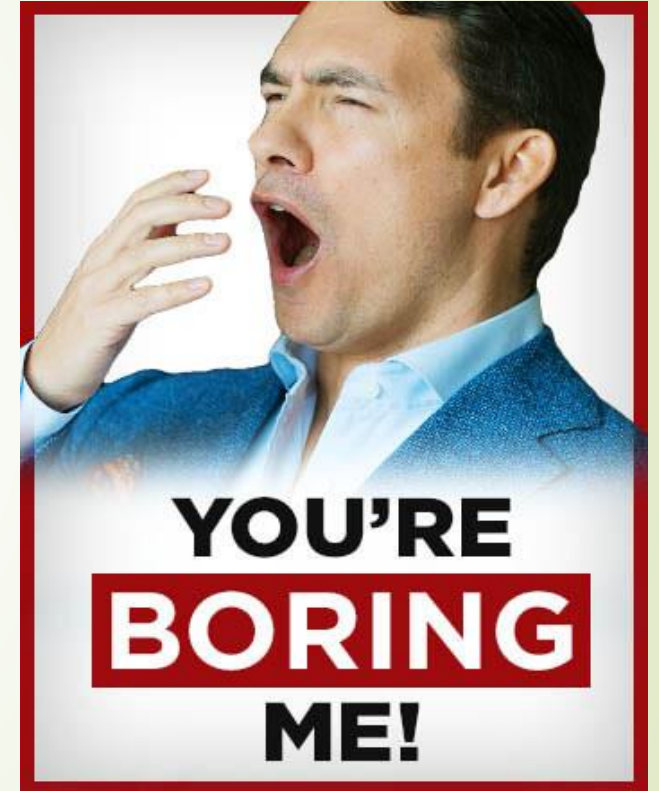
Why Catholics Leave the Church?

- Mass is just not that important anymore
 - “We have other things to do.”
- Crisis of faith – declining belief in Real Presence
- There are other options for Sunday worship
- Issues with **Church teaching**
- Problems with **irregular marriages**
- Certain bad experiences under the category of “poor customer relations”
- Waiving of the Sunday Mass obligation during the pandemic fundamentally changed Catholic attitudes towards the Mass.



Our Starting Point

- ▶ Why Catholics Leave the Church?
 - ▶ And many people leave because of ***bad preaching***:
 - ▶ Boring
 - ▶ Irrelevant
 - ▶ Poorly *prepared*
 - ▶ Poorly *preached*



Our Starting Point

Why Catholics Leave the Church?

➤ **Bad preaching:**

- Catholics “shop around” for a preacher and a Sunday liturgy
- “I tried different Catholic churches in the area because I just didn’t seem to be getting anything out of Mass, especially the homily.”
- “I stopped going regularly because the **homilies are so empty.**”



Our Starting Point

Why Catholics Leave the Church?

- Bad preaching:
 - Catholic preachers have more competition than we've ever had:
 - "Mega churches" which offer an "uplifting Sunday experience" with terrific preaching . . . and a cup of coffee.
 - The people who sit in the pews at our Sunday Masses "hold a remote control in their hand."



Our Starting Point

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“Religion Refugees”

- A new term for those who leave church and religion altogether
- Videos posted on TikTok explain why they've left their churches and their religion
- Many white evangelical Christians witness to their efforts to “get out of the religion” that shaped them as youngsters.
- And these are now former Christians who are not returning to the practice of religion.
- It used to be that college-age Catholics stepped out of the Church until they got married and started to have children. But this trend is no longer valid. Once they leave, they're gone!

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CHURCH REFUGEES

Sociologists reveal why people are
DONE with church but not their faith

Today's Congregation is Incredibly Complex

- “Average parish is made up of individuals with opposing views, conflicting ideologies & marked differences in operational theologies.”
- “Forming any kind of true community can seem beyond human possibility.”
- “People bring their divisions & conflicts to church.”

James A. Wallace, *Preaching to a House Divided*



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Today's Congregation is Incredibly Complex

- ▶ “We are called to live one faith & one spirit, yet our Church’s official teaching, on moral and social issues, finds varying degrees of acceptance among a significant number.”
- ▶ “Then there are the personal areas of conflict . . . ranging from disagreements among family members, troubled marriages, difficulties at work, dissatisfaction with one’s place in the world, inner battles with discouragement, despair, self-destruction, alcoholism, and other destructive forms of behavior.”

James A. Wallace, *Preaching to a House Divided*

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The Pulpit is for the Gospel . . . or is it?

- ❑ People will often say that they didn't come to Mass to hear about the social, economic, or political issues of the day . . . but to hear the Gospel preached.
- ❑ "The pulpit is not the proper forum in which to pontificate on complicated & highly controversial political & socio-economic issues."
- ❑ "Nor is it a place of partisan politics that alienate & make worshipers of a different view unwanted."
- ❑ "But the preacher has a serious duty to instruct the faithful on the moral implications of social & political issues and to provide a forum in which discussion can take place." George Higgins, Secretary of Research for USCCB



The Pulpit is for the Gospel . . . or is it?

- ▶ “The pulpit is not the place to resolve complex issues in areas such as the economy, welfare, health-care, capital punishment or military intervention.”
- ▶ **“But it is the place to raise these issues in order to bring them to the consciousness of the community.”**
- ▶ “Preaching that raises consciousness must be characterized by competency, compassion, & conviction.”
- ▶ “Competency involves knowing the issues, having done your homework, & a willingness to draw on the expertise of others.”
- ▶ “Compassion is at the heart of all preaching whose end is to touch the heart.”

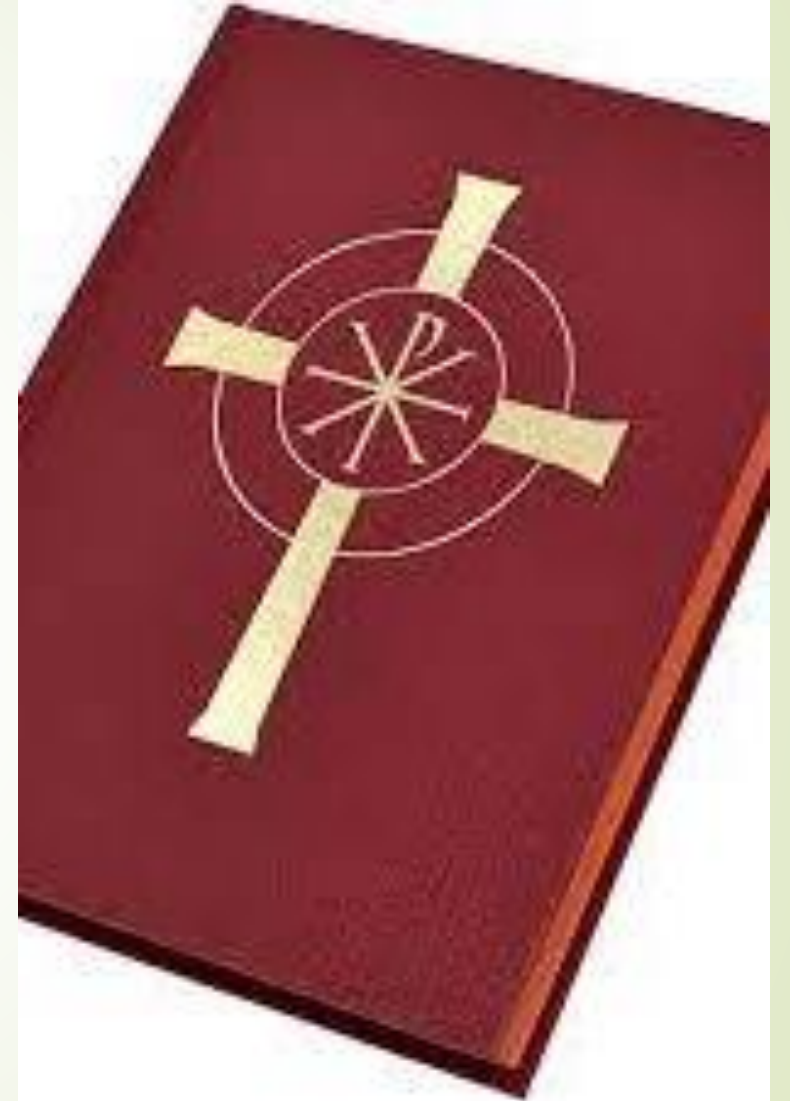
Walter Burghardt, *Preaching the Just Word*

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The Centrality of the Word

- ▶ “The readings in the Lectionary take us into the story of salvation whose focal point is the risen, crucified Jesus, through whom we have entered into the new covenant of his blood.”
- ▶ “The Liturgy of the Word is inherently dialogical, renewing the ongoing conversation between God and God’s pilgrim people.”
- ▶ “By the conclusion of the Liturgy of the Word there should be a readiness & awakened desire to celebrate the mystery of Christ ever made present in this very assembly.”
- ▶ ***The purpose of every homily is to bring people to an encounter with Christ. There is no more important task.***
- ▶ ***Such is the work of the proclamation of Scriptures & the preaching that flows from it.***

James A. Wallace, “Preaching to a House Divided”



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- ❑ “*FIYH* calls on preachers to take seriously the diversity that cuts across racial, ethnic, economic, & social lines, yet reminds us that ‘this diversity should not blind us to another, even greater reality: the unity of the congregation,’ rooted in baptism and the common faith that binds us all together.”
- ❑ “But in our own time there is more to it than diversity; there are **fundamental differences and disagreements** among those who come together.”
- ❑ “This depends on an effective **performance** both of the introductory rites that move a group from a gathering of discrete individuals . . . to a group enabled to give a focused listening to the voices of the selected biblical texts and **to the homily** that follows.”

James A. Wallace, “Preaching to a House Divided”

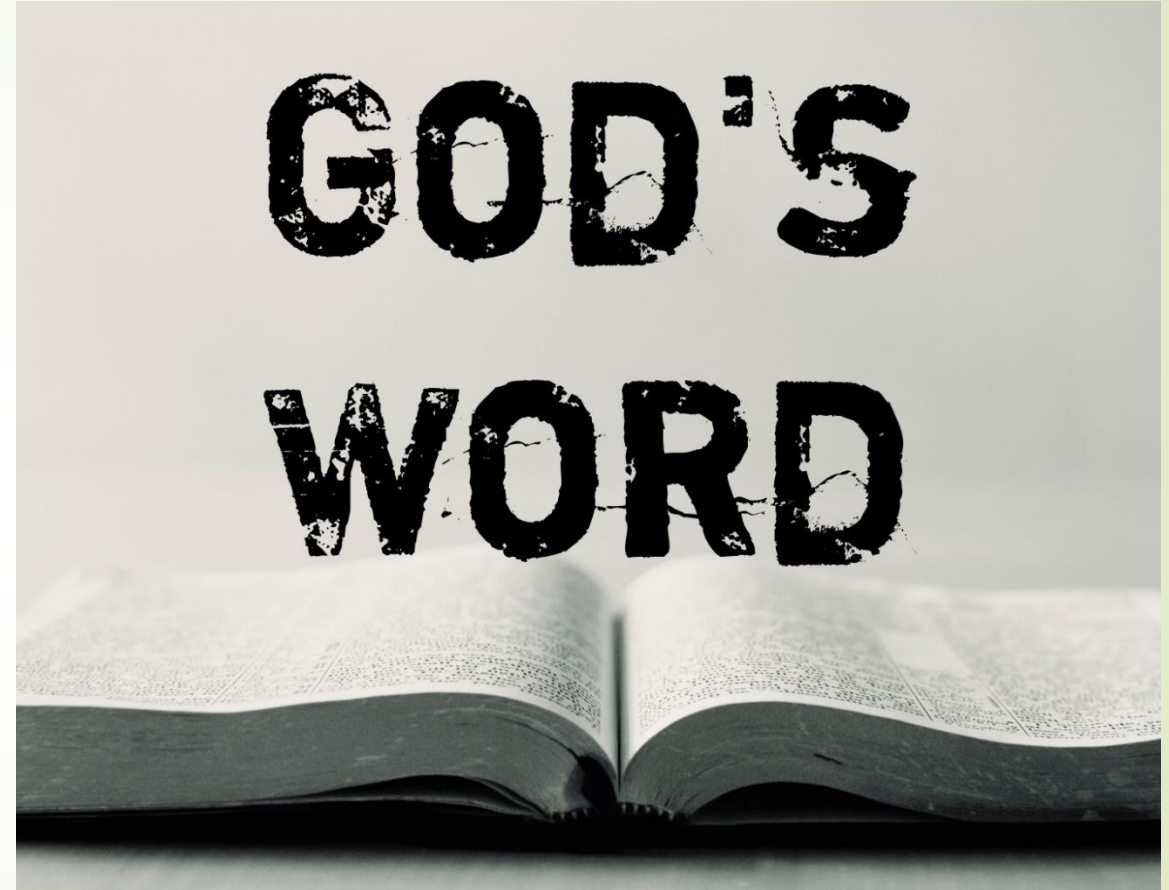
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The Word in the Preaching Event

- “Preaching’s task is to address the word of God to the lives of a particular group of listeners.”
- “Preaching focuses the biblical texts on the lives of the listeners in a number of ways.”
- “The preacher may need to take on the role of the teacher, or the herald, at other times the witness, or the interpreter of the life of the community.”

James A. Wallace, “Preaching to a House Divided”

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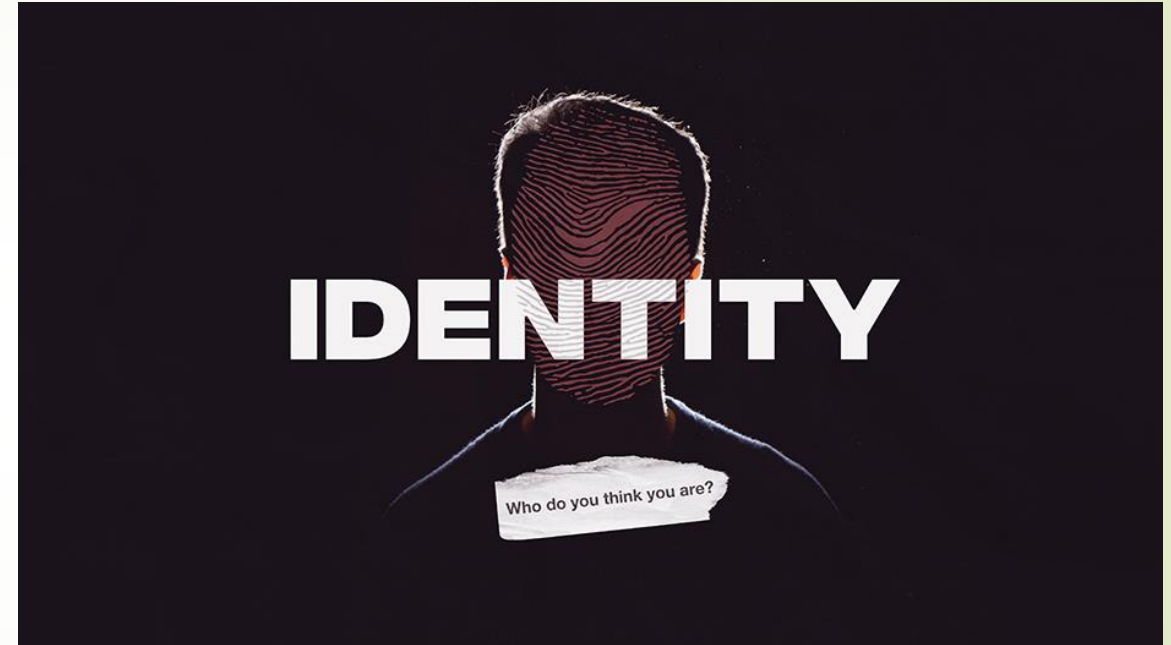
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The Identity of the Preacher

- “If catechesis is needed, the voice of the **teacher** is called for.”
- “If a clear proclamation of some aspect of the good news is needed to support, encourage, & strengthen, as a community of faith, the voice of the **herald** is a good choice.”
- “If a conflict is particularly difficult & allows for various ways of responding, preachers may offer themselves as a **witness**.”

James A. Wallace, “Preaching to a House Divided”

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The Preacher as Interpreter – A Tough Task

- “The **interpreter** is exhorted first of all to be a listener, both to the biblical & liturgical texts & to the community.”
- “It is the task of the **interpreter-preacher** to bring together text & communal experience so that in the interaction of these two God’s word might be heard & a communal response evoked.”

James A. Wallace, “Preaching to a House Divided”



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From & Through the Scriptures

- ▶ “FIYH states that one of the principal tasks of the preacher ‘is to provide the congregation with words to express their faith, and with words to express the human realities to which this faith responds.”
- ▶ “The homily is not so much on the Scriptures as from & through them.”
- ▶ “By listening to the text & experience of the community, preacher prays to bring the two together in a way that moves the community forward, sometimes in resolution, but sometimes to a position in which a struggle is more bearable, when one can humanly deal with unsatisfying ambiguity.”

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James A. Wallace, “Preaching to a House Divided”



39 The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry

The Gift of Artistry

- ▶ “FIYH observes that since the homily’s immediate function is to enable people to lift up their hearts in praise & thanksgiving, it will do this if the language of the homily is ‘**specific, graphic, and imaginative.**’”
- ▶ “The interpreter-homilist will turn to the language of the artist, particularly the poet & storyteller, for evoking a response from the heart as well as the mind.”
- ▶ “The language of metaphor & imagery is the language of the heart.”
- ▶ “The homilist is called on to make use of the skills of three great artists of language – the poet, storyteller, & orator.”

James A. Wallace, “Preaching to a House Divided”

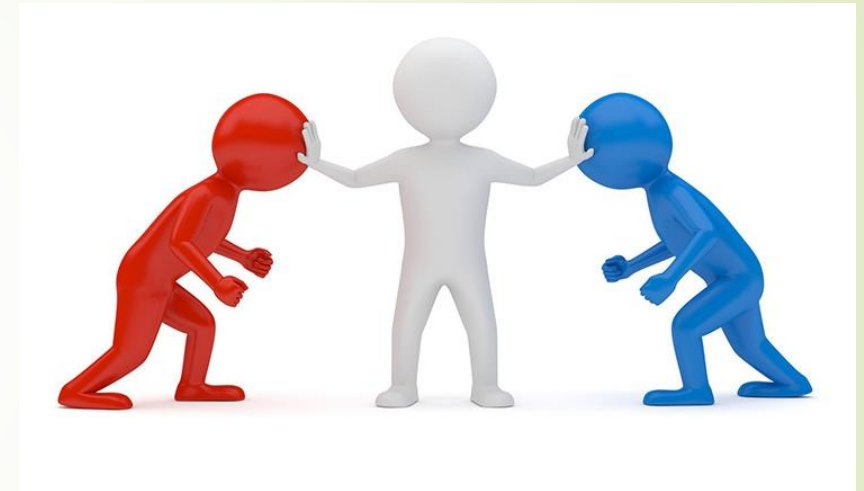


ARTIST

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⁴⁰The Word that Addresses Conflict

- “The dominant text of the people of the US has been a variation on what is called the ‘Enlightenment script.’”
- ***“The Enlightenment script, with its emphasis on the autonomy of the individual, the primacy of reason, a vision of reality that has the self & human initiative at its core, and an agenda that concentrates on personal achievement, accumulation, & advantage.”***
- “It is this script that many people live out of during the week & come clutching when they gather for worship on Sunday.”
- “The task of preaching ‘is an act of imagination, an offer of an image through which perception, experience, and **finally faith can be reorganized by alternative ways.**’” James A. Wallace, “Preaching to a House Divided”



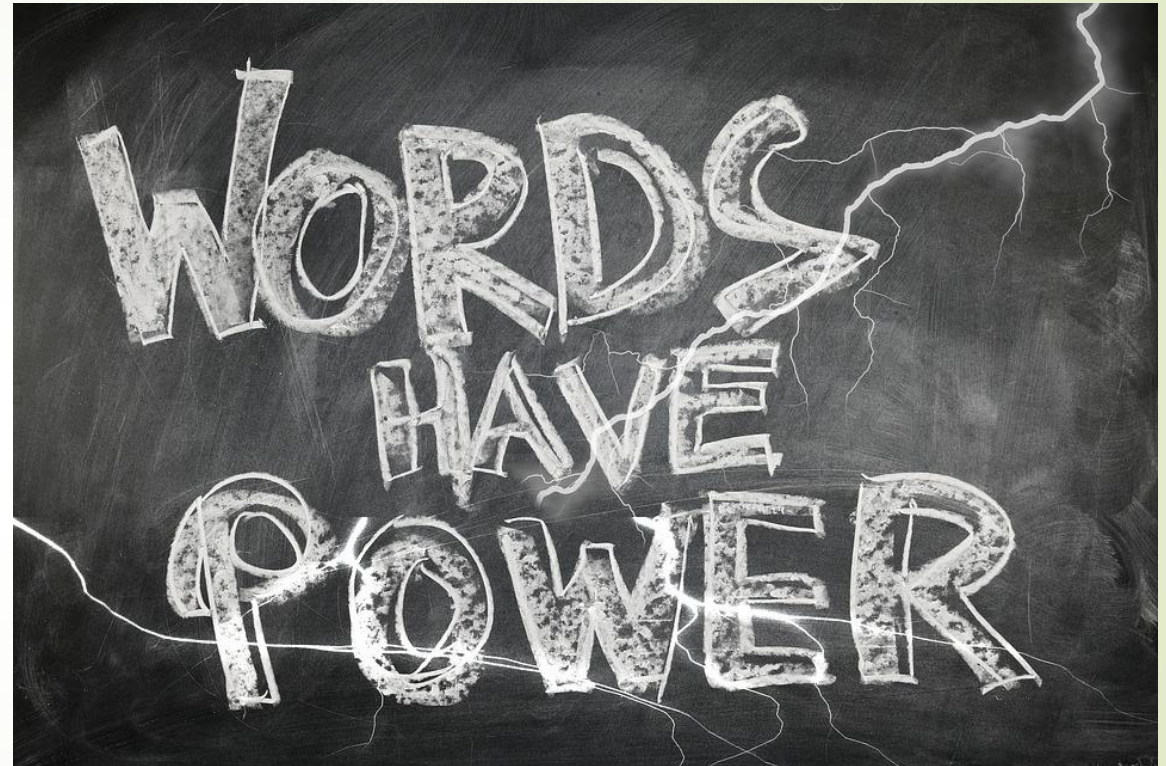
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Preaching to a House Divided – Some Concluding Thoughts

► “This is **not a time to neglect imagery** that captures the reality of the struggle for the soul, calling it from slumber and passive inaction to its full humanity.

► “It **is a time to take seriously the conflicts** that we carry within our physical and political bodies, and to offer them the curative powers of words, old & new, brought forth from our storerooms, to catch and captivate the conscience of a wandering people on the way to renewal and restoration.”

James A. Wallace, “Preaching to a House Divided”



Preaching Feedback Experiences

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December 2018

Research Study Conducted by David J. Shea

Background on Feedback Study

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The Sunday Homily – Preaching Assessment & Feedback Survey - Archdiocese of Cincinnati - Winter 2018

Survey Approach & Methodology

- A survey document was developed and then reviewed by a research specialist for its form, flow, sequencing, and content of the questions.
- The survey was first tested by a number of priests and deacons. They offered inputs, raised questions and suggested revisions.
- A final version of the survey was then set-up using Google Forms

Preaching Feedback Survey – Methodology

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This research was conducted via a self-administered web-based survey. Participants were invited from among the **preaching Priests and Deacons** in the **Archdiocese of Cincinnati**. Survey completion took place between November 26th and December 7th, 2018.

- **110 Participated in the survey.**
- **59% were deacons and 41% were priests**

Respondents were told their responses would be kept confidential and are reported in Total only.

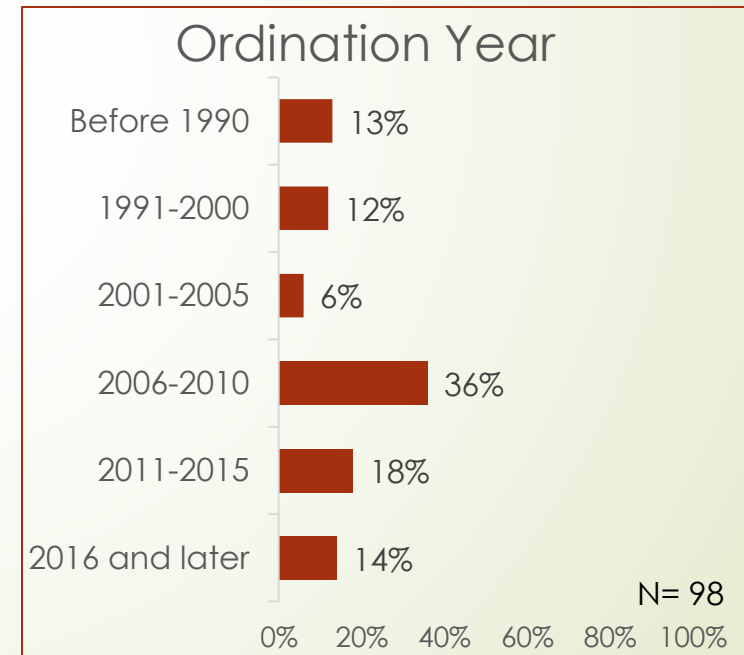
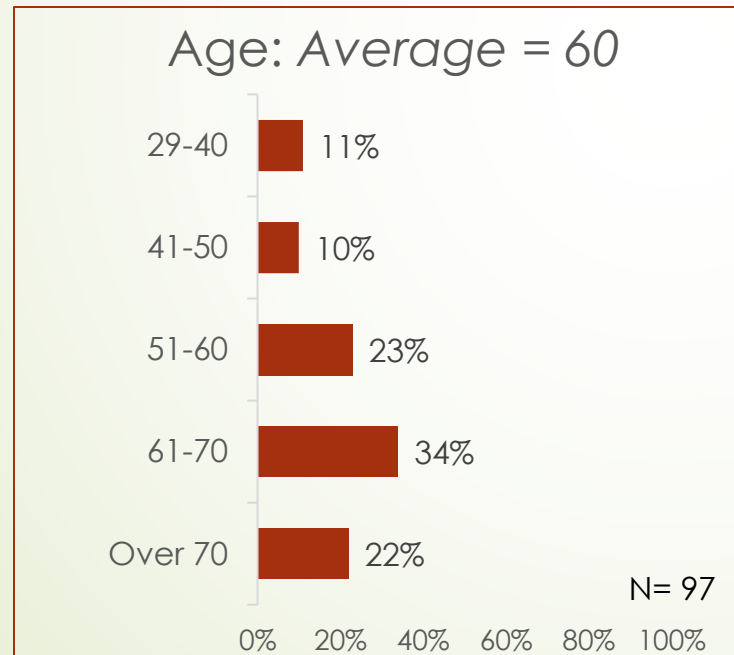
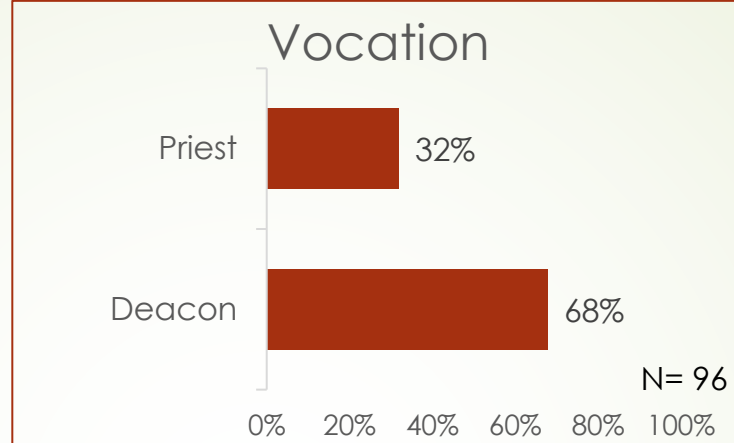
After data collection was completed, results were aggregated and responses to open-ended questions were coded to facilitate reporting.

In tables, charts and graphs, a reference to 'N' refers to the number of preachers responding to the question.

In some cases, responses may not total 100%. This is due to either rounding or to accepting more than one answer choice.

Survey Participants

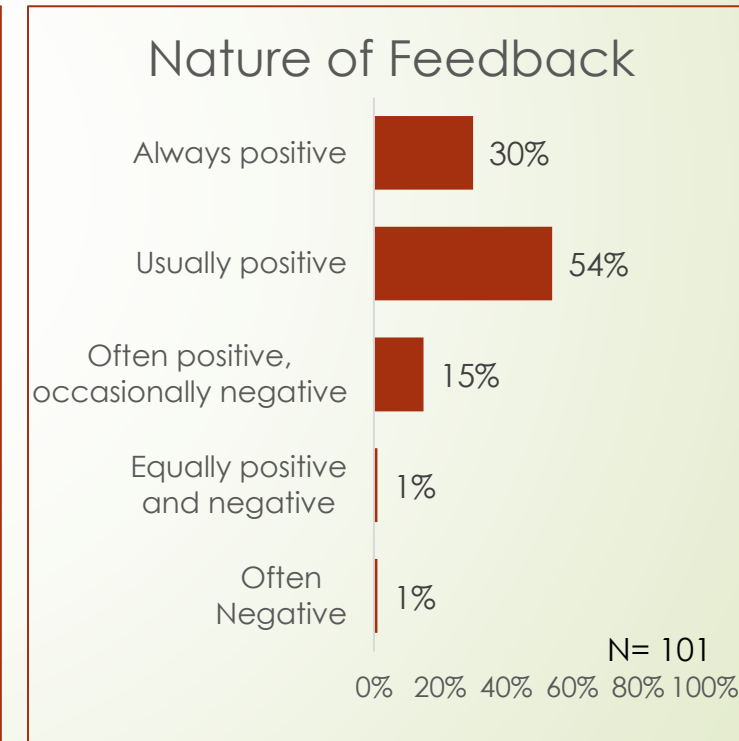
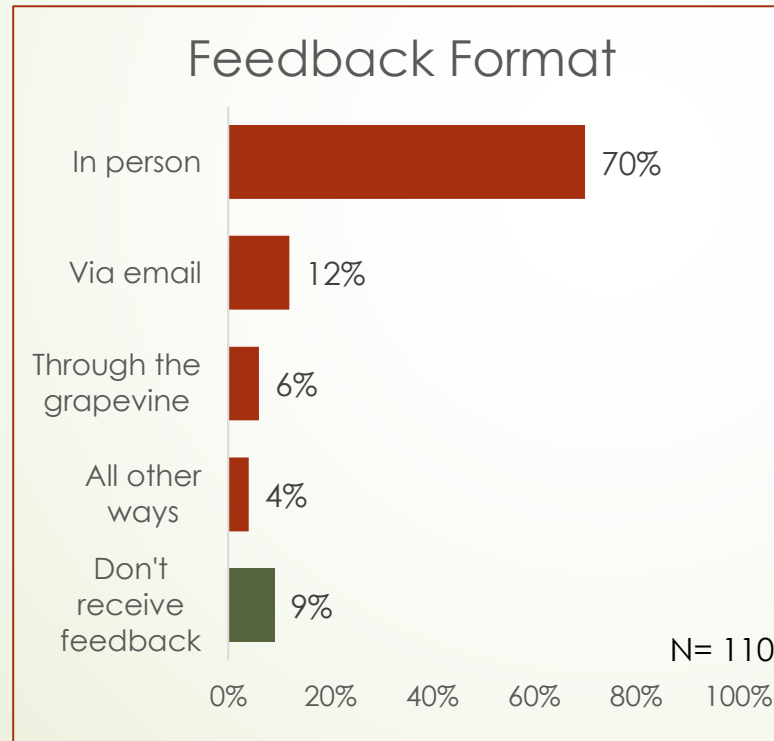
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Unstructured Feedback

Unstructured Feedback Format

- Most unstructured feedback is received in person.
 - One in ten report they do not receive feedback.
- Few report receiving negative feedback on a regular basis.
 - Eight in ten say feedback is 'always/usually positive'.



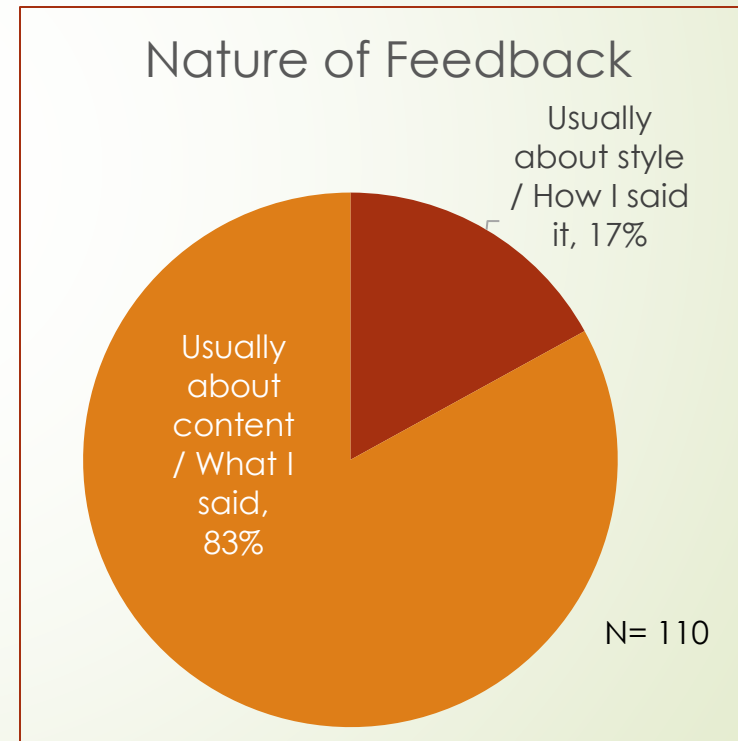
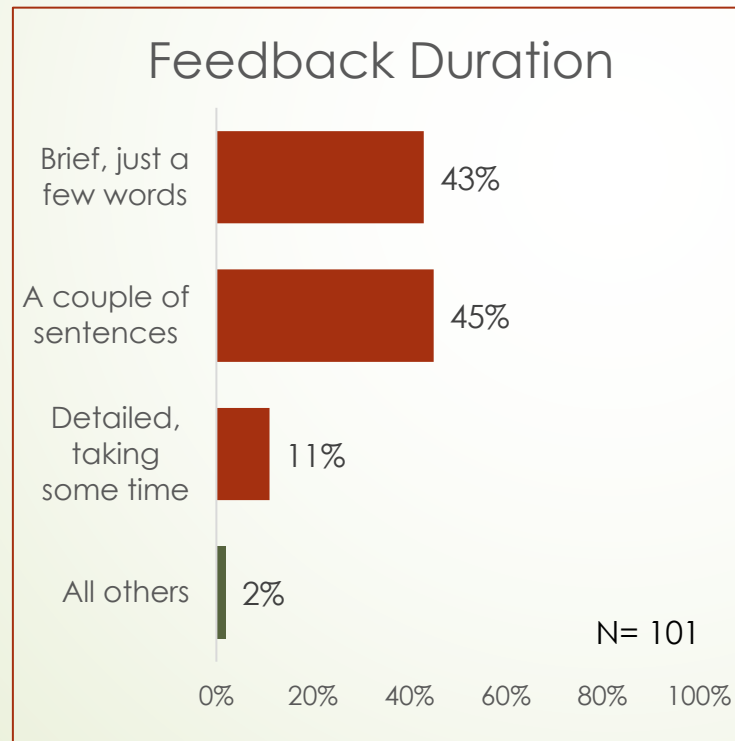
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Q1. Apart from the brief comments you receive from parishioners as they leave Mass, how do you primarily receive feedback on your Sunday homilies? Q2. What is the nature of the feedback and assessment you receive?

Unstructured Feedback Content

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- For most preachers (nine in ten) feedback is typically brief, just a few words or a couple of sentences.
- Most often, feedback comments are centered on content rather than on delivery style (83% versus 17%)



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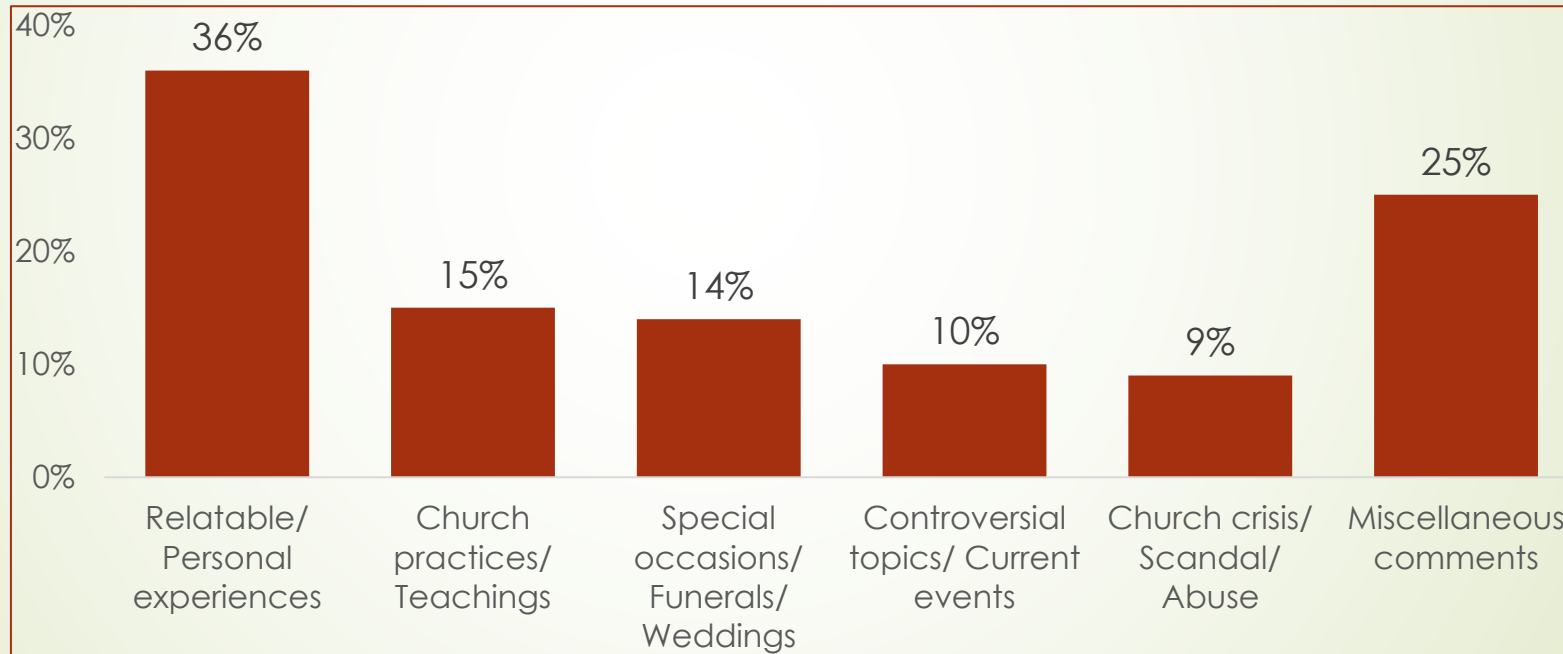
Q3. How would you describe the comments you received?

Q8. To what do the comments most often pertain?

Homilies Generating Most Feedback

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- One preacher in three reported getting frequent feedback when their homily includes a personal story, something relatable to the congregation.
- Homilies on Church teachings and homilies for special occasions such as funerals and weddings are also frequent sources of feedback.



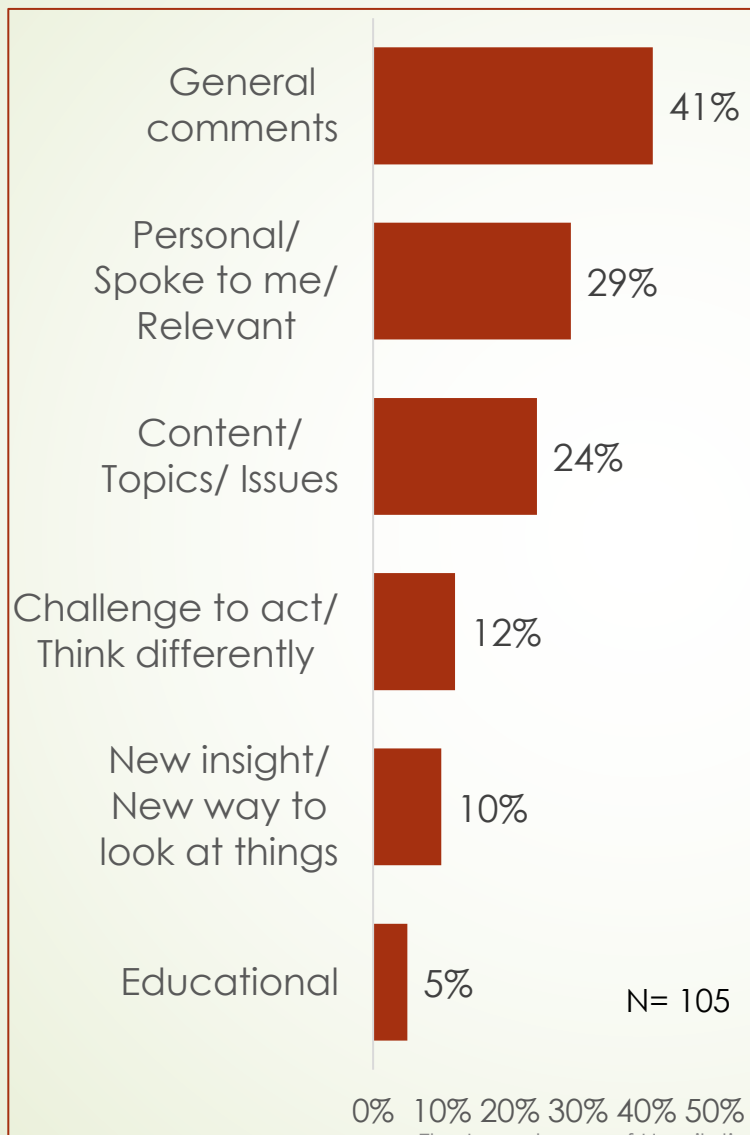
N= 100

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Q7. What homilies, in your experience, have resulted in the most response, either positively or negatively? (Occasions, topics, congregation, etc.)

Nature of **Positive** Comments

50



Nice job. Good homily. I like it when you preach. Best I've heard in a while.

The story you shared touched me - I could relate. I thought you were speaking to me.

Thanks for speaking the truth. Thanks for speaking out about pro-life, and why abortion is wrong.

Challenged me to action. You gave me something to think about.

I had never thought of that passage that way in all those years reading it.

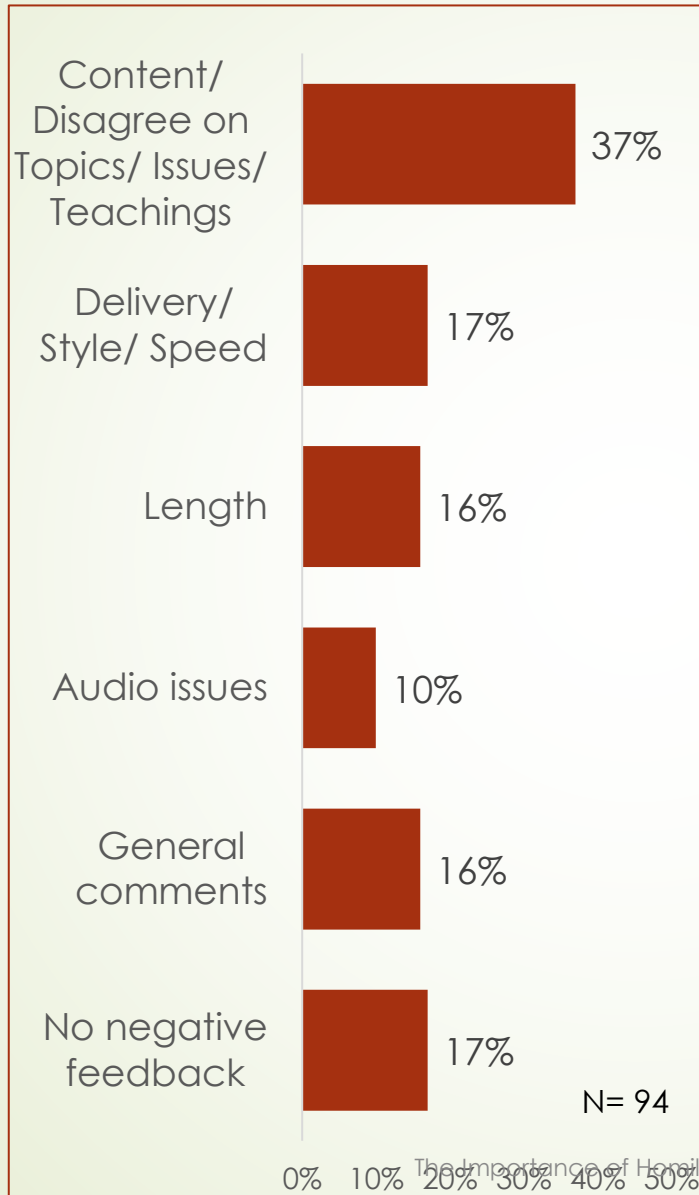
No one explained to me what being created in the image and likeness of God meant until you explained it in your homily.

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Q4. What is the typical nature of the **positive** comments you receive on your preaching? Cite an example (or examples) of the comments? MULTIPLE RESPONSES ACCEPTED

Nature of Negative Comments

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Some are struggling with the teaching authority of the Church at this time so references to that are always negative.

Mainly my preaching & delivery skills. I am not proficient at public speaking.

Homily Length - Too long. Too short.

Try to speak up a little more, talk into the mike. Hard to hear you.

I receive comments like "Your Excellency" which is obviously a slam. The grapevine murmurs things like "He thinks he is better than the rest of us!"

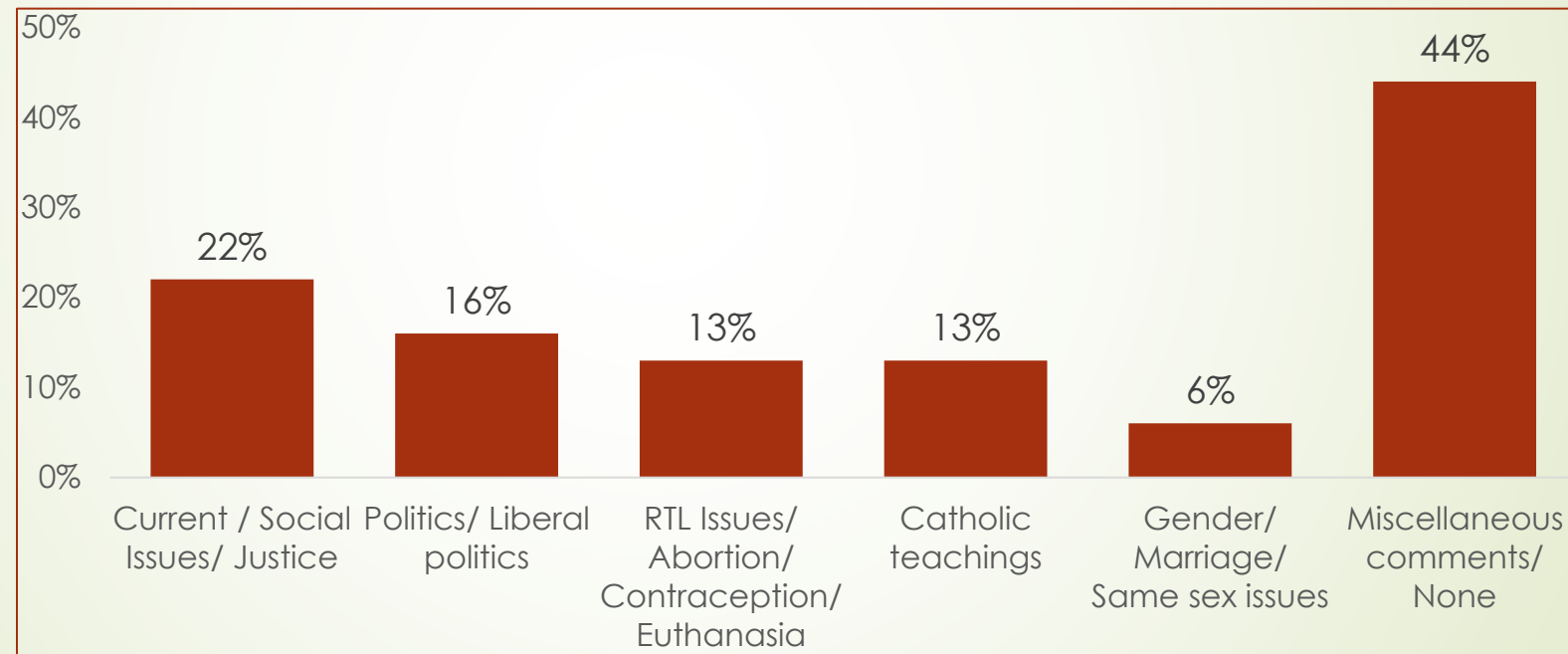
In all my years of preaching, I have not received a negative comment.

Q5. What is the typical nature of the **negative** comments you receive on your preaching? Cite an example (or examples) of the comments? MULTIPLE RESPONSES ACCEPTED

Topics Generating Negative Feedback

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- Four preachers in ten did not identify a major topic that would typically generate negative feedback.
- One in five feels that Current Events and Social Justice Issues generate negative feedback, although some mention being praised for broaching 'tough' subjects.



N= 89

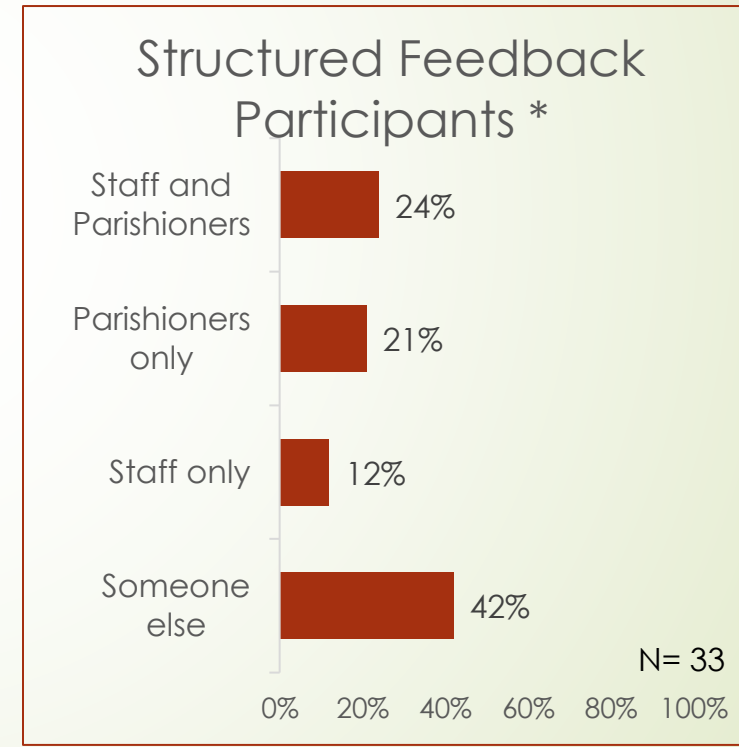
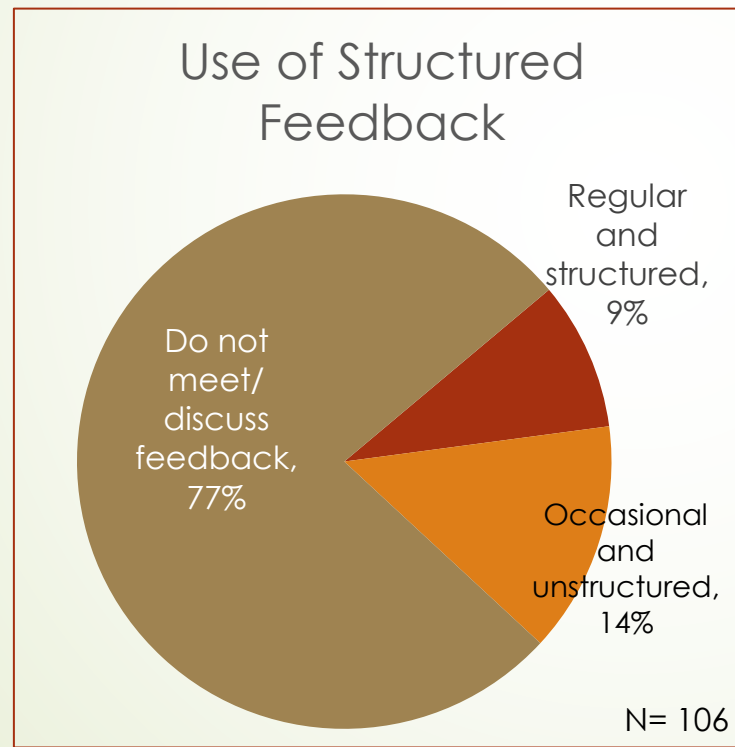
The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry

Q6. What subjects tend to result in negative or critical comments?

Structured Feedback

Use of Structured Feedback

- Nearly eight preachers in ten (77%) do not meet with any stakeholders to discuss feedback.
- Of those who avail themselves of structured feedback, one in four meets with staff and parishioners together, and one in five meets with parishioners only.



* Small Base Size

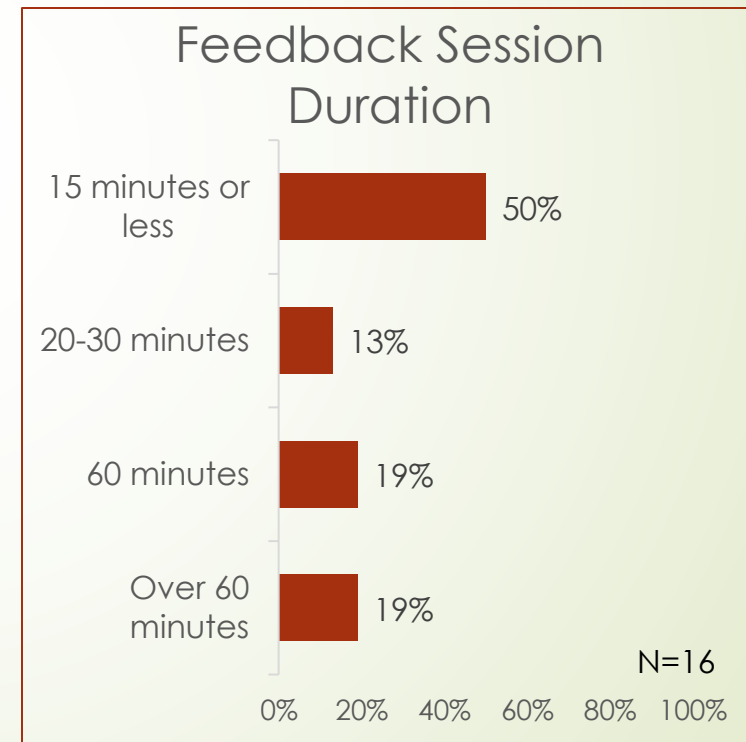
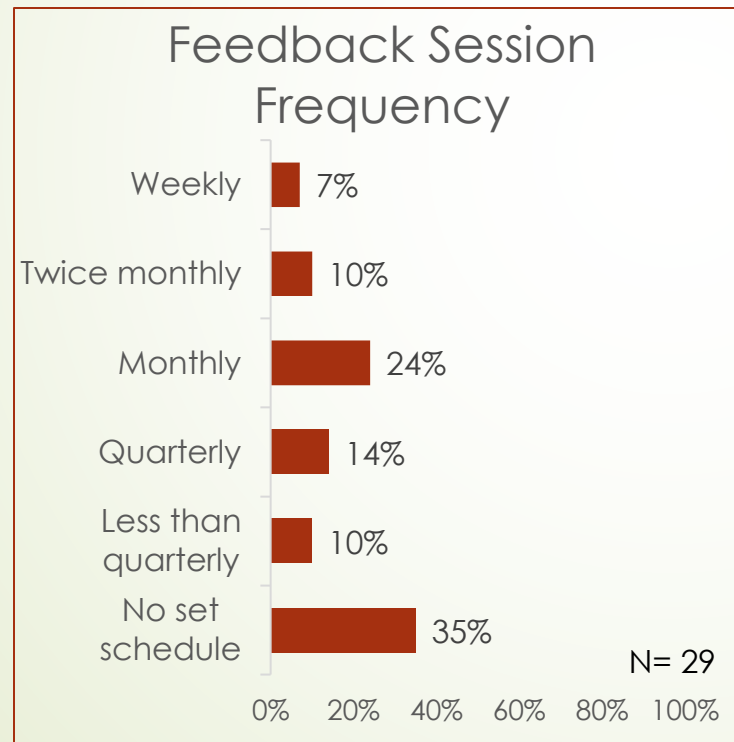
The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry

Q9. Do you work or meet with a group of parishioners (or parish staff) on a structured and regular basis to discuss your preaching where the primary purpose of the meetings is to provide you with feedback on your homilies and preaching?
Q10. With whom do you meet to discuss your preaching?

Feedback Session Details

Based on a small sample size

- Four in ten preachers involved in structured feedback say they meet monthly or more often. An additional three in ten have no set schedule for structured feedback sessions.
- Half of the preachers report feedback sessions of 15 minutes or less, and one in four meets for an hour or more.



The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry

Q11. How long do these sessions typically last?

Q12. How often do you meet to discuss your preaching?

Plans for Structured Feedback

56

- Two in every three preachers have no plans to implement structured feedback, for a variety of reasons:

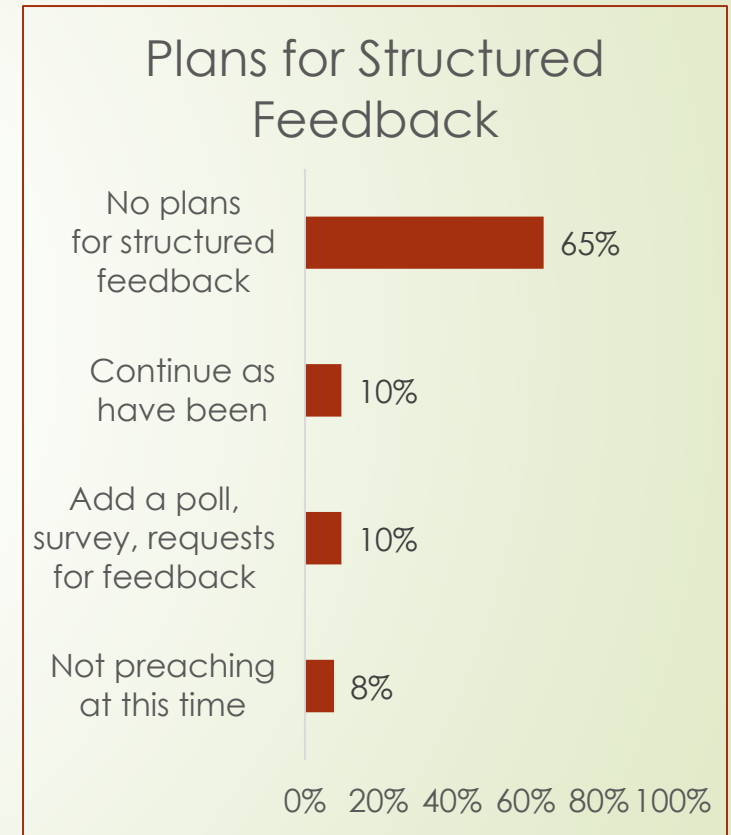
I at times ask certain parishioners or staff their thoughts

No plans in place, but I believe it could be beneficial.

If I notice that the quality begins to go down, I will consider organized feedback, but have no plans at this time.

I tried making up feedback forms to give to a few parishioner but got very few (if any) back with any comments.

I intend to keep my monthly meetings. These are advertised in the bulletin, in our electronic communications to our parish. I have mentioned these on the Sunday prior to the next Saturday meeting time at the Sunday dismissal.



N= 88

Survey Conclusions

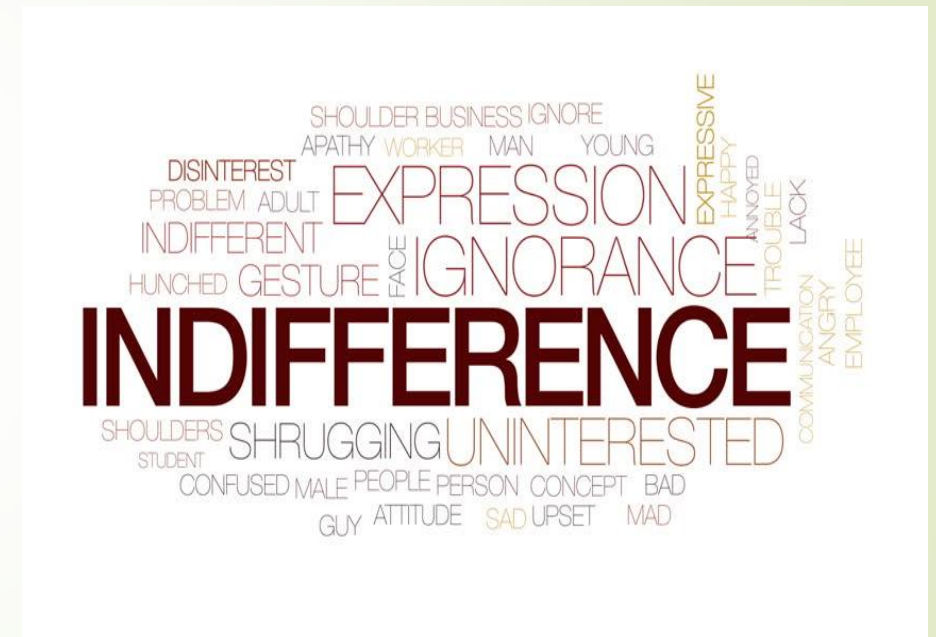
Some Questions to Ponder

- Why is the homily one of the last forms of public discourse in which no feedback is expected?
- Or why are members of the assembly so unwilling to give **honest** feedback?
- And why is it that preachers seem so indifferent and ambivalent toward receiving feedback?



The Preacher's Attitude Toward Feedback

- Reality is that, as preachers, we are not very receptive to negative feedback.
- Yet, we all tend to believe that we are very good preachers.
- But as students, as we were being formed as preachers, we were open to receive feedback and we even welcomed criticism recognizing the need to change and to improve.



Feedback Always Take Place

60

- It's not that there isn't feedback – Rather, it's the forms it takes.
- The conventional, “Nice homily,” is mostly simplistic and insipid:
 - It may help the preacher to feel good . . . for a moment, but
 - It is meaningless.
 - It is not helpful
 - It rarely translates into constructive changes in either the content or the delivery of the preacher's homily.
- The real critical and constructive feedback is rarely spoken to the preacher.
- The result is that nothing changes.

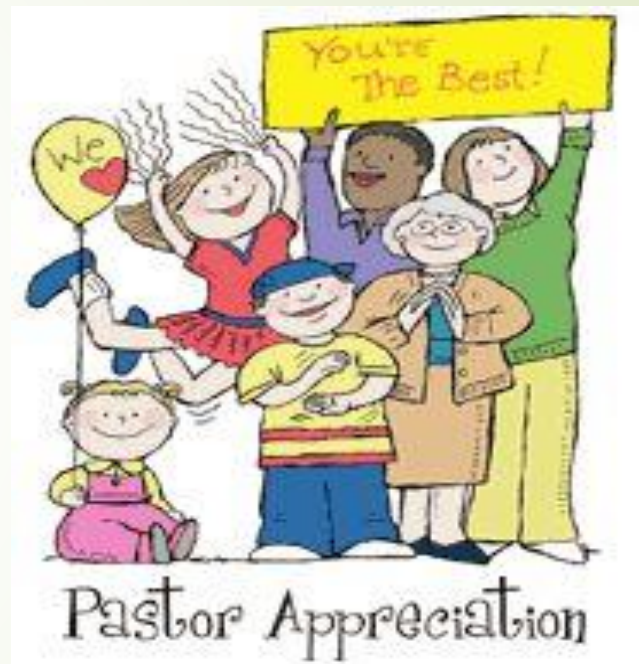


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Feedback Always Take Place

- Is the preacher noticing what's happening as he preaches his homily?
- How is the preacher interpreting that feedback?
- Does the preacher do anything with it? Does the preacher make any real-time adjustments in the remaining content or the delivery?
- In the article, "Preaching in a Vacuum," the author makes the point: "...the one-way street of the monologue homily risks becoming a cultural curiosity or an alien authoritarian symbol."



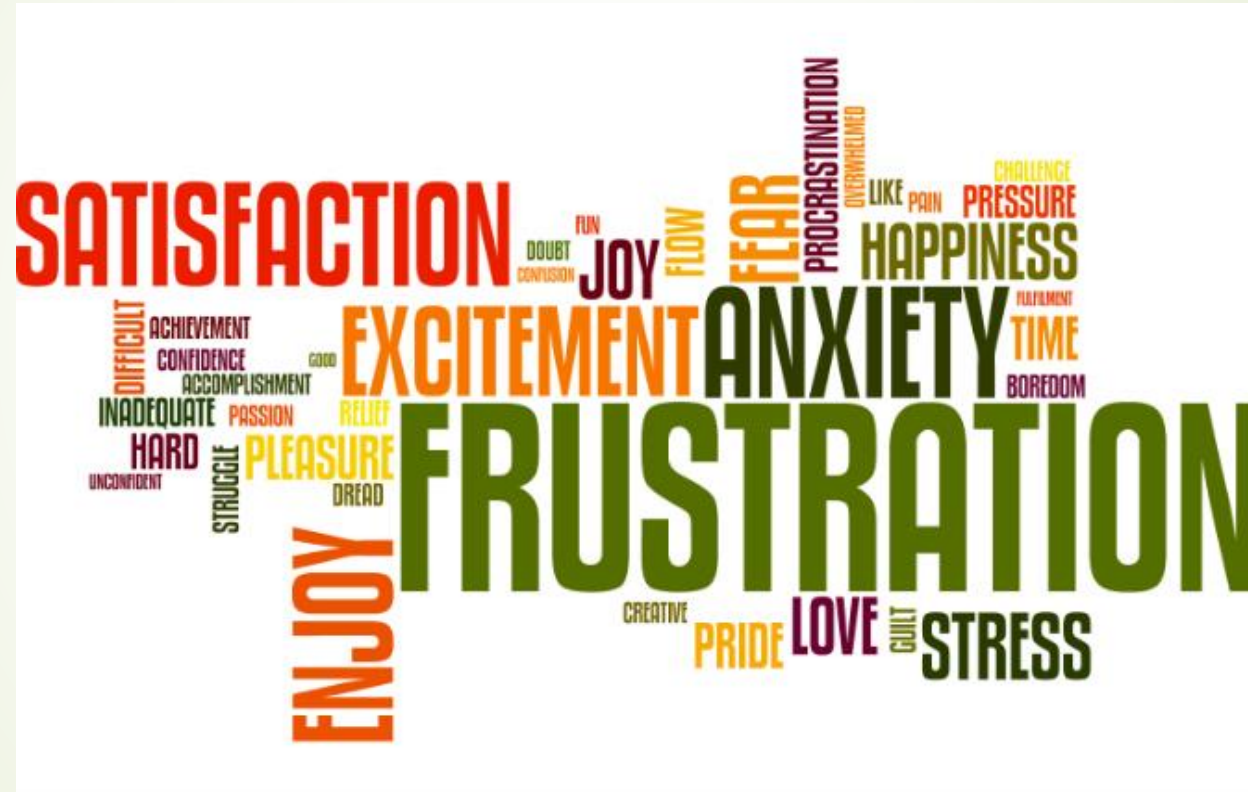
Preaching is a Complex Communication Task

63

- There are 5 generations that comprise the typical Sunday / weekend Mass congregation.
- They are:
 - From diverse ethnic & family backgrounds.
 - Generally well-educated.
 - Represent a great diversity of professions.
 - Bring a great variability of life experiences.
 - Bring a huge assortment of needs, concerns, joys & fears.
 - Hear the same homily through the prism of all of these factors.
- Little wonder that they receive different messages.



Models for Obtaining Feedback



65 Models for Obtaining Feedback



Parish-Wide Evaluation

- One ambitious approach is to conduct preacher evaluations at weekend Masses.
- Parish in Archdiocese of Cincinnati – Immaculate Heart of Mary
- Located in Anderson Township – eastern suburb of Cincinnati.
- Affluent & professional.
- Parish of 3,200 families.
- Weekend Mass attendance averages 2,630 people.

Models for Obtaining Feedback

Parish-Wide Evaluation

Approach

- ▶ Parish clergy consists of two priests and five deacons.
- ▶ All preachers were evaluated over a period of weeks on scheduled basis.
- ▶ Parish was informed about the process well in advance.
- ▶ Publicized as an effort to respond to inputs in parish survey concerning the quality of preaching



Models for Obtaining Feedback

Parish-Wide Evaluation

Approach

- Before Mass, the assembly was reminded that they would be evaluating the preacher.
- Evaluation cards were provided, with pencils, in the pews.
- Once the homily was finished, parishioners were instructed to complete the cards & provided with 3-5 minutes to complete their evaluations.
- Cards were then collected & Mass resumed.

Circle appropriate response:

Age Range: Junior High to 24 25 -39 40-59 60-74 ≥75

Male Female

The Preacher ...	1 Poor	2	3	4	5 Excellent	Not Applicable
Was pleasant to listen to					X	
Did not speak down to me					X	
Showed his love for the people					X	
Believes what he preached					X	
Made good eye contact					X	
Held my interest from the beginning					X	

Please Use reverse side for any other comments regarding this homily 4

Models for Obtaining Feedback

Parish-Wide Evaluation

Approach

- ▶ The process was completely anonymous.
- ▶ The evaluation cards asked people to indicate their age & gender.
- ▶ Four different evaluation cards were used:
 - ▶ Three on the Homily
 - ▶ One on the Preacher

Circle appropriate response:

Age Range: Junior High to 24 25 -39 40-59 60-74 ≥75

Male Female

	1 Poor	2	3	4	5 Excellent	Not Applicable
<i>The Preacher ...</i>						
<i>Was pleasant to listen to</i>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Did not speak down to me</i>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Showed his love for the people</i>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Believes what he preached</i>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Made good eye contact</i>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Held my interest from the beginning</i>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Please Use reverse side for any other comments regarding this homily 4

Models for Obtaining Feedback

Parish-Wide Evaluation

Approach

- ▶ The **Preacher** was evaluated in 6 different categories on the front of the cards.
 - ▶ Was pleasant to listen to
 - ▶ Did not speak down to me
 - ▶ Showed his love for the people
 - ▶ Believes what he preached
 - ▶ Made good eye contact
 - ▶ Held my interest from the beginning.

Circle appropriate response:

Age Range: Junior High to 24 25 -39 40-59 60-74 ≥75

Male Female

	1 Poor	2	3	4	5 Excellent	Not Applicable
The Preacher ...						
Was pleasant to listen to					X	
Did not speak down to me					X	
Showed his love for the people					X	
Believes what he preached					X	
Made good eye contact					X	
Held my interest from the beginning					X	

Please Use reverse side for any other comments regarding this homily 4

Models for Obtaining Feedback

Parish-Wide Evaluation

Approach

- ▶ Homilies were evaluated in 14 categories including such factors as:
 - ▶ Connected scripture to today's life.
 - ▶ Inspired me to be a better person.
 - ▶ Was audible and easy to follow.
 - ▶ Touched me spiritually.
 - ▶ Was appropriate length.
 - ▶ Was clear & well-organized
 - ▶ Applicable to my life
 - ▶ Helped me understand Church teachings



Models for Obtaining Feedback

Parish-Wide Evaluation

Approach

- ▶ Each category was considered on a rating scale:
 - ▶ 1 Poor to
 - ▶ 5 Excellent
- ▶ For each Homily Evaluation Card, parishioners were asked to give overall ratings on:
 - ▶ Content
 - ▶ Delivery



Models for Obtaining Feedback

Parish-Wide Evaluation

Approach

- ▶ Cards were coded by Mass and by preacher.
- ▶ Evaluations of all preachers took about 3 months.
- ▶ Responses were tabulated by Mass, preacher, and by age and gender of evaluators.
- ▶ Positive comments were separated from critical comments.
- ▶ Cards with evaluation summaries were reviewed by a committee.



Models for Obtaining Feedback

Parish-Wide Evaluation

Approach

- Results were then provided to the pastor.
- Pastor held meeting with *all* preachers, as a group, and provided each preacher with his cards & summary evaluations.
- Individual sessions were held on a preacher-by-preacher basis.
- Unfortunately, this is where the process stopped.
- It was then left to the individual preachers to consider the feedback & make (or not) whatever changes they wanted to make.



Models for Obtaining Feedback

Parish-Wide Evaluation

What Happened - Overall?

- ▶ What did the preachers think about being formally evaluated by parishioners:
 - ▶ “Over the years, I’ve become more bold & have grown less concerned about how the truth is received. For me personally, it is difficult to receive critical feedback.”
 - ▶ “I looked at the cards when I first received them. I threw the bag away after a year without looking at the cards again.”
 - ▶ “Most of the comments were positive & some of the comments were unrelated to the homily.”
 - ▶ “The process didn’t influence my preaching. I was disappointed that I received negative comments.”



Models for Obtaining Feedback

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Parish-Wide Evaluation

What Happened?

- ▶ What did the preachers think about being formally evaluated by parishioners:
 - ▶ “Frankly, what was written was marginally useful. I already knew what the surveys told me.”
 - ▶ “I read the cards and tried to determine what feedback was actionable since the answers didn’t lend themselves to concrete action.”
 - ▶ “Overall, I really appreciated the feedback but found it pretty toothless.”
 - ▶ “I was very excited for the evaluation but disappointed that the feedback wasn’t, in my opinion, very helpful.”
 - ▶ “There was one recurring comment that I have taken to heart . . . that I was reading too much rather than speaking directly. And this is something I am now working on.”

The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry



**I DON'T WANT TO
CHANGE
ANYTHING.**

Models for Obtaining Feedback

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Parish-Wide Evaluation

- ▶ How could the process be improved?
 - ▶ “It’s essential that we evaluate our preachers and provide comments that are actionable and offer/expect them to attend additional training if needed.”
 - ▶ “What about creating 5 different panels of evaluators who evaluate homilies over two months of Sundays. Each panel would cover two months each & together cover almost a year of preaching. At the end of their panel’s 2 month evaluation period they gather their notes, meet and create a single, comprehensive evaluation for each preacher they heard.”



k8520222 www.fotosearch.com

Models for Obtaining Feedback

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Partners in Preaching

- “Is a faith-sharing opportunity for members of the congregation.”
- Homiletics’ students form a group of 5-8 parishioners.
- Parishioners should represent a cross-section of the parish.
- Parishioners become the student’s *Partners in Preaching*.
- Partners participate in both an Input Session and a Follow-Up Feedback Session.



Models for Obtaining Feedback

Partners in Preaching

- Input Session:
 - Student meets with *Partners* early in the week.
 - *Partners* have already reviewed the readings and develop questions and ideas for the homily.
 - Student conducts the meeting & listens to the *Partners* reflections & inputs on the reading.
 - Sessions typically last for one hour.
 - Students are not obligated to follow the direction established during the input session.



Models for Obtaining Feedback

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Partners in Preaching

- Faith-Sharing / Feedback Session:
 - Partners attend one of the Masses at which the student preaches.
 - They meet immediately following Mass to discuss the homily that was just preached.
 - Session lasts for 30 minutes.
 - One partner serves as the moderator.
 - Preacher does not attend the session.
 - Session is recorded for the preacher.



Models for Obtaining Feedback

Partners in Preaching

► Faith-Sharing / Feedback Session:

► Partners address 3 questions:

1. How did God's Word & the preaching touch your life today? or, What did you experience in hearing God's Word in today's preaching?
2. What difference will God's Word & the preaching make in your week?
3. Are there ways in which the preacher might have improved in communicating the message?



Models for Obtaining Feedback

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Partners in Preaching

- Preachers' Impressions
 - Lots of work to set-up.
 - Process takes time.
 - Partners go through a learning curve; they learn how to give good feedback.
 - Initial feedback tends to be overwhelmingly positive.
 - Partners have to be given permission to be critical of the preacher.
 - Students come to value the process and



POSITIVE
REACTION

Models for Obtaining Feedback

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Partners in Preaching

➤ Student Comments

- “My *Partners in Preaching* have been a tremendous help in this process. Their insights into the scriptures and their sharing during the input meetings have been invaluable.”
- “My *Partners* comments & suggestions on my homilies were very helpful.”
- “All in all this has been a very rewarding experience.”
- “I have to say that my *Partners* have been wonderful throughout this process. They took this seriously & still had fun being part of the process. Their comments were very complimentary at times but they were ***not afraid to be critical.***”

Awesome!!
EXCELLENT
GOOD
AVERAGE
POOR



Models for Obtaining Feedback

83

One Pastor's Approach for Providing Inputs on Homilies—

- ▶ Pastor meets with his deacons on weekly basis.
- ▶ Deacons are required to participate.
- ▶ They preach homilies to the small group.
- ▶ Group listens to each deacon give the homily and make notes as they listen.
- ▶ Group then spends 20 or so minutes walking thru the homily and providing feedback from their notes.



Models for Obtaining Feedback

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One Pastor's Approach for Providing Inputs on Homilies–

- ▶ The objectives of the process are:
 1. Homily is clearly reflecting the readings or liturgical text.
 2. Homily does not contain any theological errors.
 3. Homily is “timely” – that those who hear it can relate to it.
 4. Homily is well crafted.
 5. Delivery is done in a manner which engages the assembly.



Models for Obtaining Feedback

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One Pastor's Approach for Providing Inputs on Homilies–

- ▶ Comments from the Pastor:
 - ▶ “The deacons are generally open to changing their homilies; some more than others.”
 - ▶ “If there are theological issues, all of them are open to change.”
 - ▶ “We have been using this process for 10+ years and I have found it to work well.”
 - ▶ “Not only do we get an opportunity to hear the homily **before** it is preached, but it also gives us some time just ‘chat’ about things.”
 - ▶ “In one sense, it has become a support group for those who attend.”
 - ▶ “I think it has greatly influenced the deacons’ writing and delivery.”
 - ▶ “I am not too sure that we ever ‘close the loop’ with the preachers after they preach on Sunday. I usually say something to them, but they don’t always preach at my Masses.”

The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry



Models for Obtaining Feedback

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One Pastor's Approach for Providing Inputs on Homilies–

- ▶ Comments from the Deacons:
 - ▶ “This process ‘has raised the bar’ on the overall quality of preaching in the parish.”
 - ▶ “We would not be preaching if we weren’t good at it and this process helps us to be good . . . consistently.”
 - ▶ “You are only as good as your last homily and continuous improvement is always necessary.”
 - ▶ “Candidly, I don’t want to disappoint my pastor. He’s a great preacher himself and he wants us to be great preachers.”
 - ▶ “It is abundantly clear that this is a rigorous process and a great support system.”
 - ▶ “This process, with its pastoral support, should be the norm in all parishes.”
 - ▶ “This process does require work and time; lots of time.”

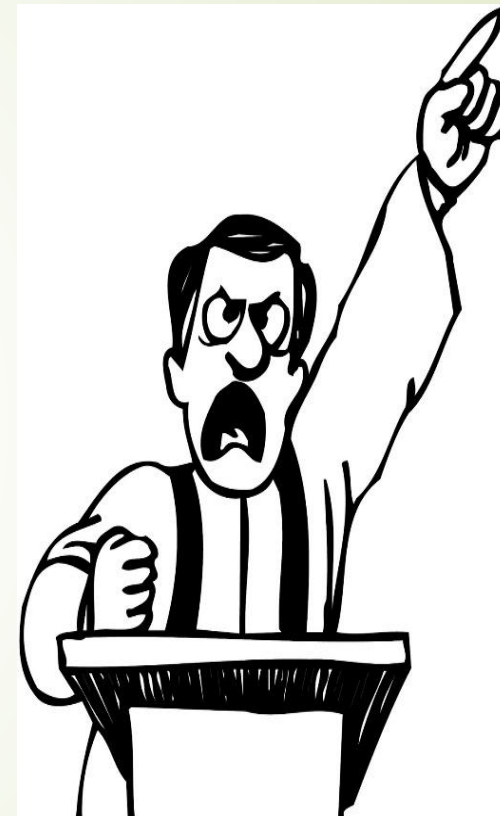
The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry



Models for Obtaining Feedback

One Pastor's Approach for Providing Inputs on Homilies–

- ▶ This model appears to work & is well-received by all participants.
- ▶ Not necessarily a parish feedback model, it does provide valuable input to preachers on their homilies and their preaching.
 - ▶ It is a unique & rare approach.
 - ▶ Requires extraordinary commitment by the pastor and the preachers.
 - ▶ Pastor sets a standard for excellent preaching in his own preaching and demands the same in his deacons' preaching.
 - ▶ Pastor establishes the approach as a priority and budgets the time for it every week.



Conclusions on Feedback Models

- While the homilies of priests and deacons are always informally critiqued by those in the pews, **formal evaluation after ordination is limited.**
- Congregants have different expectations for the homily; whether one wants to be taught, entertained, encouraged, or uplifted.
- The perceived quality of homilies varies considerably from preacher-to-preacher. This may have less to do with formation & training of preachers and more to do with differences in aptitude, temperament & personality.
- The ministry of preaching . . . does not attract only the vocally gifted, eloquent, and charismatic. Rather, it attracts a great diversity of personalities.
- While there are differences in the content of today's homilies, the most significant differences have to do with style: how a homily is preached and delivered.

Taken from: **Q&A: ARE THE HOMILIES OF PRIESTS & DEACONS CRITIQUED?** *The Catholic Telegraph* / August 24, 2016, Fr. David Endres

Conclusions

- ▶ Attitudes toward feedback are generally troubling.
- ▶ The critical question is, “How do we fundamentally change preachers’ attitude about feedback?”
 - ▶ Most preachers see the value in it.
 - ▶ Varying attitudes & openness towards it.
 - ▶ Preachers unwilling to invest the time to organize it and stick with it.
 - ▶ Then there’s the issue of positive feedback versus critical or negative feedback.
- ▶ After ordination an attitude shift occurs where we tend to become indifferent to feedback.
 - ▶ Interestingly, while we are being formed as preachers, we seem eager to obtain feedback and receive it openly.
 - ▶ Despite very positive reactions to working with small parish groups, preachers tend to be unwilling or unable to continue to work with *partners* after it ceases being a course requirement.



Conclusions

- It is essential that preachers be evaluated.
- It is impossible and even reckless to believe that you can preach in today's Church without feedback.
- Parish-wide surveys have a place & can yield input to give preachers general impressions on their preaching.
 - But critical & constructive feedback tends to be isolated & lacking in relevance.



Conclusions

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- There does not appear to be a “one size fit all” approach to obtaining feedback.
- There are different models and approaches for obtaining feedback:
 - Website with Commentators’ Review of Homily Drafts
 - Parish-wide Preaching Evaluations
 - *The Roundtable Pulpit*
 - *Partners in Preaching*
 - Feedback on “Hot Button” homilies
 - Feedback from the congregation as the homily is preached.
 - Feedback in the Seminary Classroom
 - Fr. Jim’s Weekly Meetings with Parishioners
 - One Pastor’s Approach / Model for evaluating the preaching of his deacons.

Conclusions

- ▶ The *Partners* model, and other small groups approaches, brings together input & feedback elements both of which provide proven value to preachers.
- ▶ But these models require:
 - ▶ Long term commitment by preacher and group members.
 - ▶ Structure and continuity among team and group members.
 - ▶ Some training for participants on how to provide informed feedback
- ▶ Participants / team members have to also be given permission to be critical; to provide negative feedback.





Conclusions

Whatever the approach or model for obtaining feedback, they all require a significant commitment of time and effort over an extended period of time.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Actions We Can Take

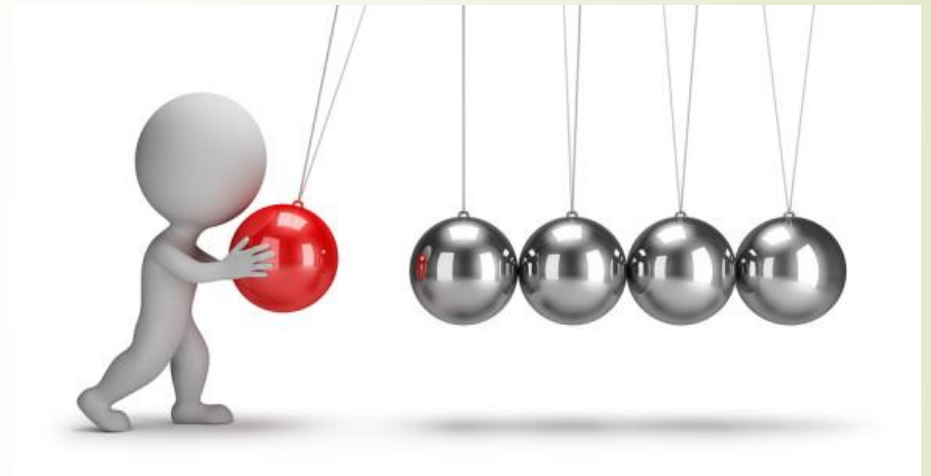
- ***Preachers—Change the Culture on Preaching***
 - Goal is to create a shared responsibility with parishioners for the quality of preaching
 - Parishioners should take an active role in influencing the content & delivery of homilies
 - Parishioners should accept co-responsibility with the preacher/s for the Sunday homily
 - Parishioners have to provide “insight, feedback, and encouragement to the homilist.”

Where Do We Go From Here?

Actions We Can Take

➤ *Preachers & Feedback*

- Start asking for feedback; not once but ongoing
- Instruct parishioners on why we need their feedback
- Give parishioners permission to be critical . . . “There will be no consequences.”
- Provide parishioners with a mechanism to provide the feedback so that it is timely
- Listen and allow the feedback to shape your preaching



Where Do We Go From Here?

Actions We Can Take

- Ask Our Parishioners to:
 - Speak up; take a risk in saying what they really think
 - Provide feedback to all our preachers, good and bad
 - Offer to become a part of preaching input & feedback groups
 - No longer sit back & accept mediocre preaching



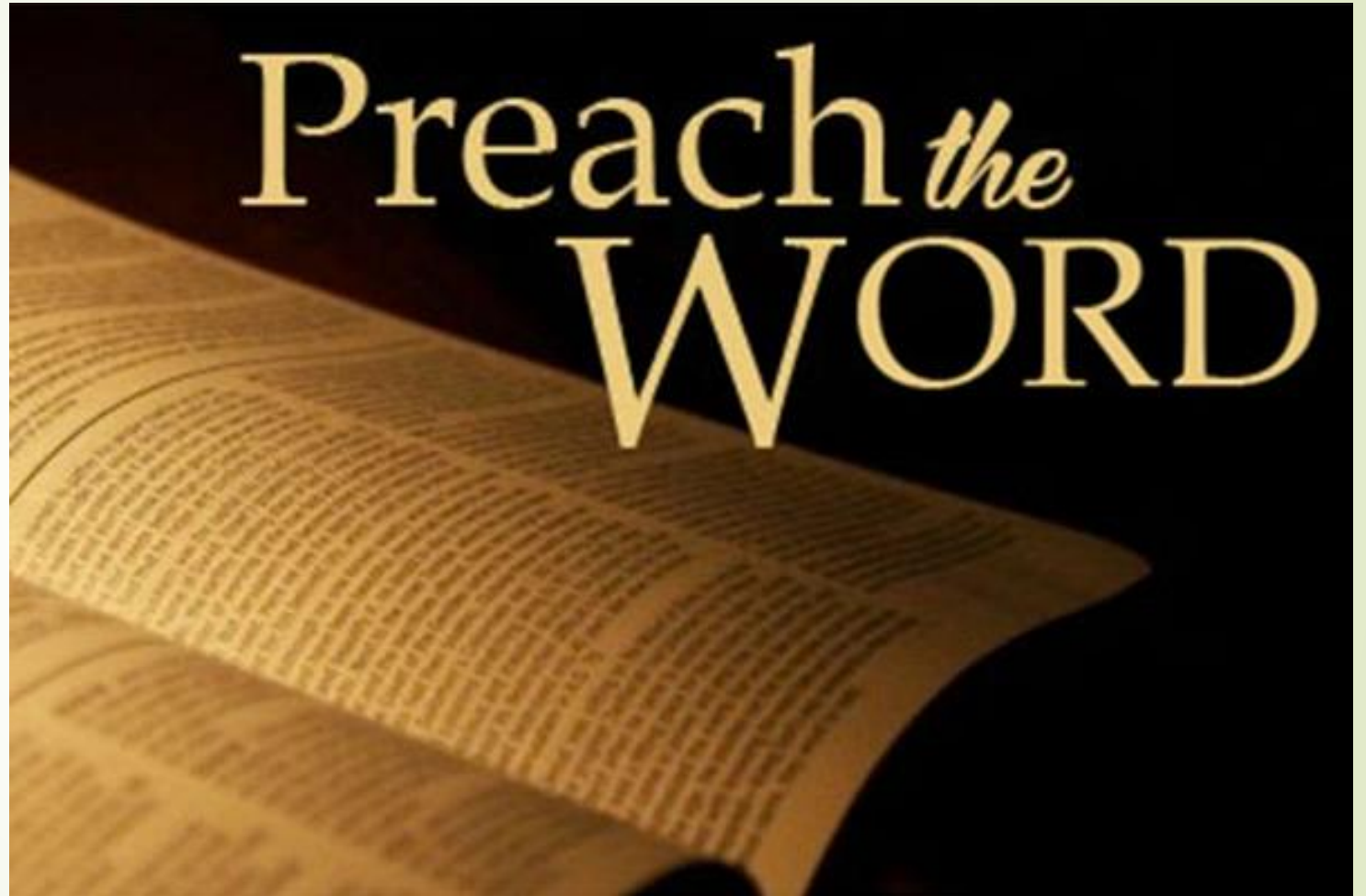
Deacons Challenges & Frustrations in Preaching

Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Challenges & Frustrations in Preaching

Background:

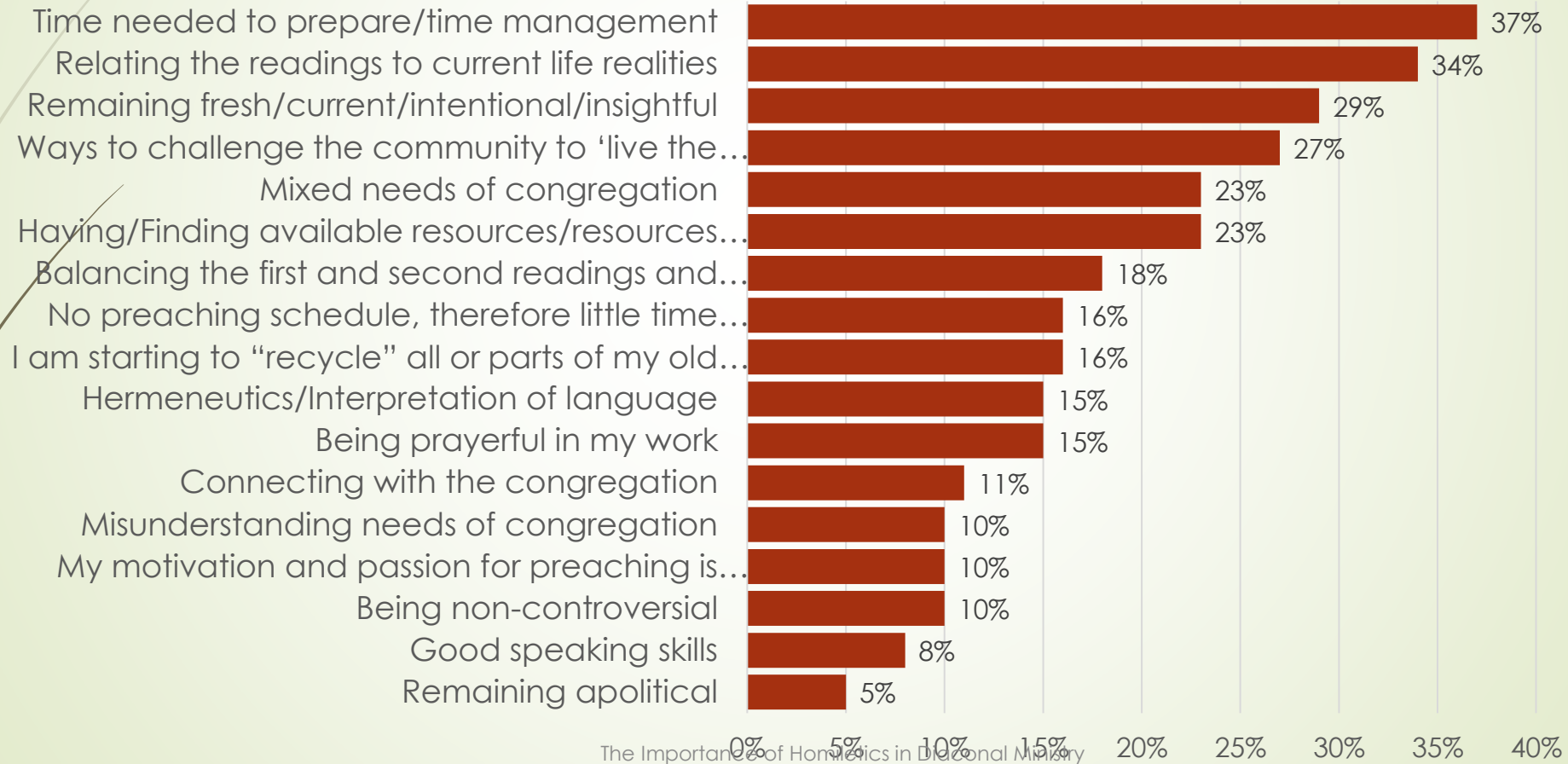
- Spring 2022 Workshop on Preaching for Deacons of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati
- Survey administered to identify topics for half-day workshop
- Intent was to address biggest concerns during the workshop



Biggest Challenges as a Preacher

99

- One deacon in three cited time as their biggest challenge – finding sufficient time to prepare their homilies. Nearly the same number find it difficult relating the reading to current life situations.



1. What are your biggest challenges as a preacher? Select as many apply.

N=62

Challenges - Additional Insights

No Sunday preaching opportunities

Extremely limited opportunities to preach / Pastor gives few opportunities to preach

Mix of parishioners from traditionalist to progressive/liberal;
Mix of casual versus committed Catholics

I have to have a small amount of "pressure" to get started writing.

The humility to remain brief

Developing the story that conveys the message.

Learning to slow down when I speak

Challenges - Additional Insights

Deacon Preaching Frequency

- ▶ There are huge differences in how often priests preach versus deacons.
- ▶ During the first year following ordination, priests preach about 400 times.
- ▶ In that very same time period, deacons preach 40-45 times.

Deacons – Preaching Frequency

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Priest preach about 400 homilies a year

Deacons preach 40 to 45 homilies a year.

During the first two years of active ministry & preaching, priests preach 800 homilies

During the first two years of ministry & preaching, deacons preach 80 to 90 homilies

The big difference between Priests & deacons is experience in preaching

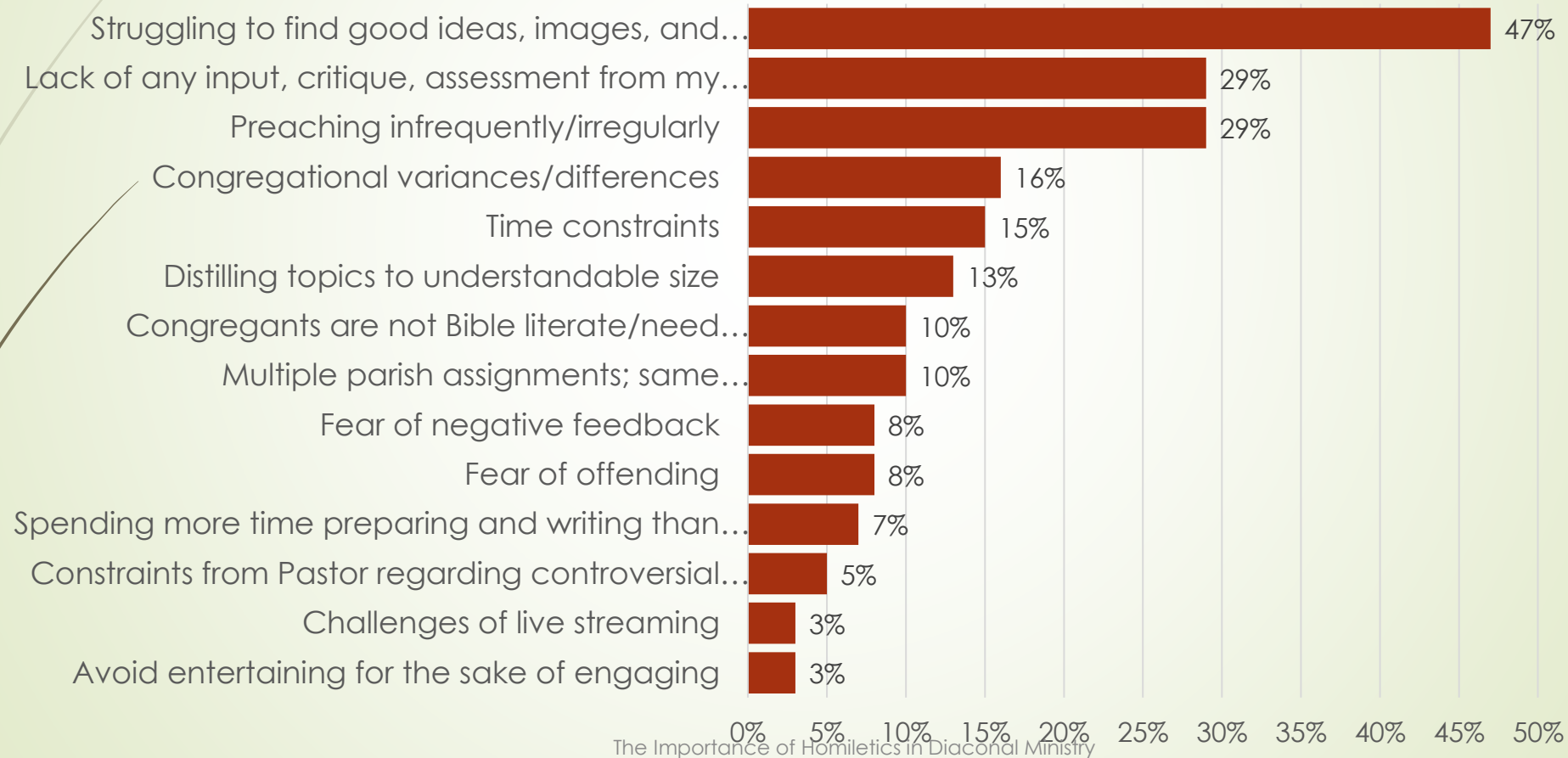
The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry

1. What are your biggest challenges as a preacher? Select as many apply.

Biggest Frustrations as a Preacher

103

- Nearly half of the Deacons struggle finding ideas, images and illustrations to use in their homilies. Over one-quarter mention lack of input from their Pastor and infrequent preaching opportunities as among their biggest frustrations.



2. What are the biggest frustrations you are facing as a preacher today? Again, select as many as apply.

N=62

Frustrations - Additional Insights

Discerning the most important message for this particular Sunday

Physical stamina, and eyesight as I get older

I had a homily review team that helped me with *lectio divina*, but since covid hit we can't seem to get *lectio* started again

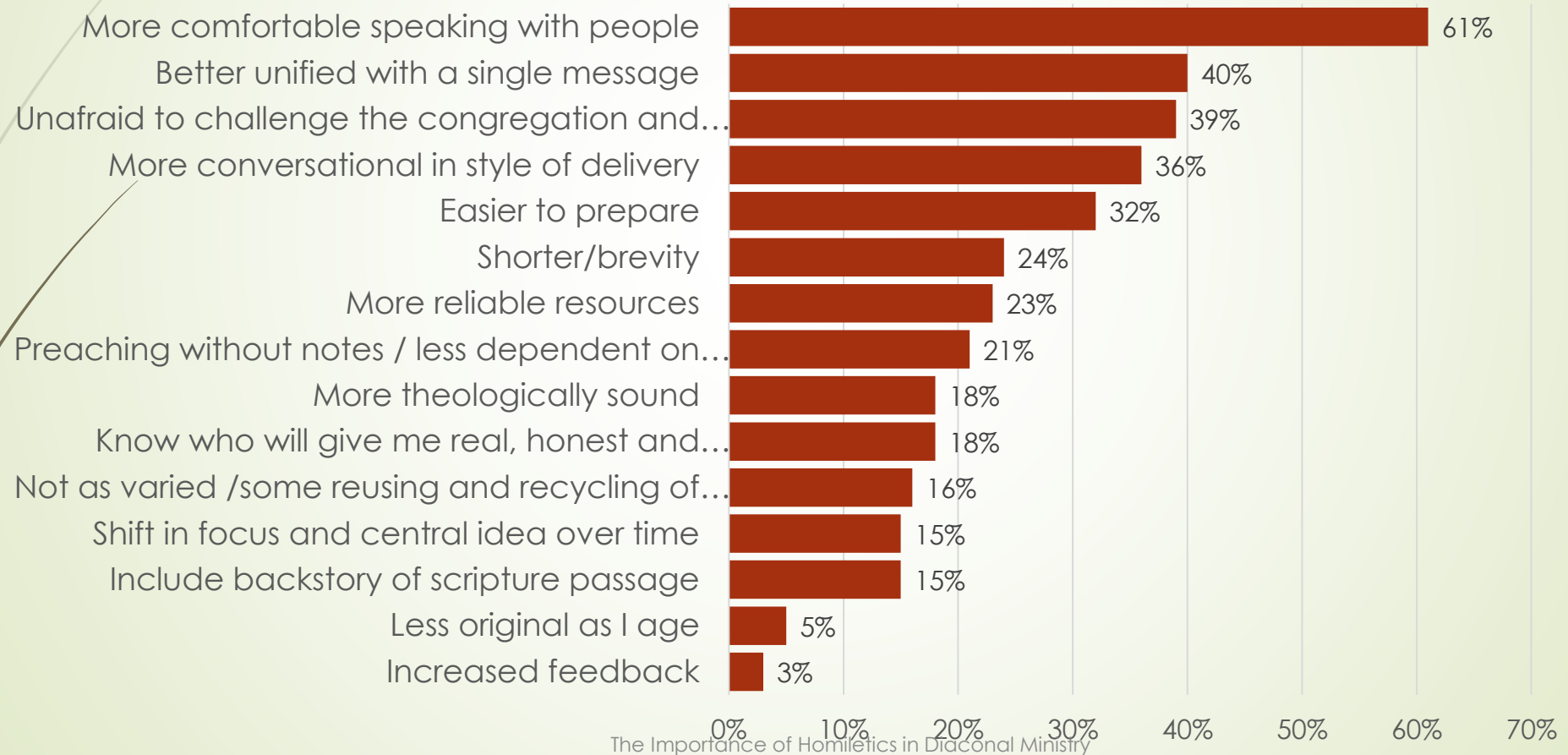
Pastor Issues

Lack of any feedback at all

Changes

Most Significant Changes

- Most Deacons expressed a growing comfort level with preaching. Many find themselves more conversational, and homilies easier to prepare with time.



Significant Changes – Additional Insight

107

Allowing the Holy Spirit to manifest itself in all its zeal.

More reliance on the Holy Spirit

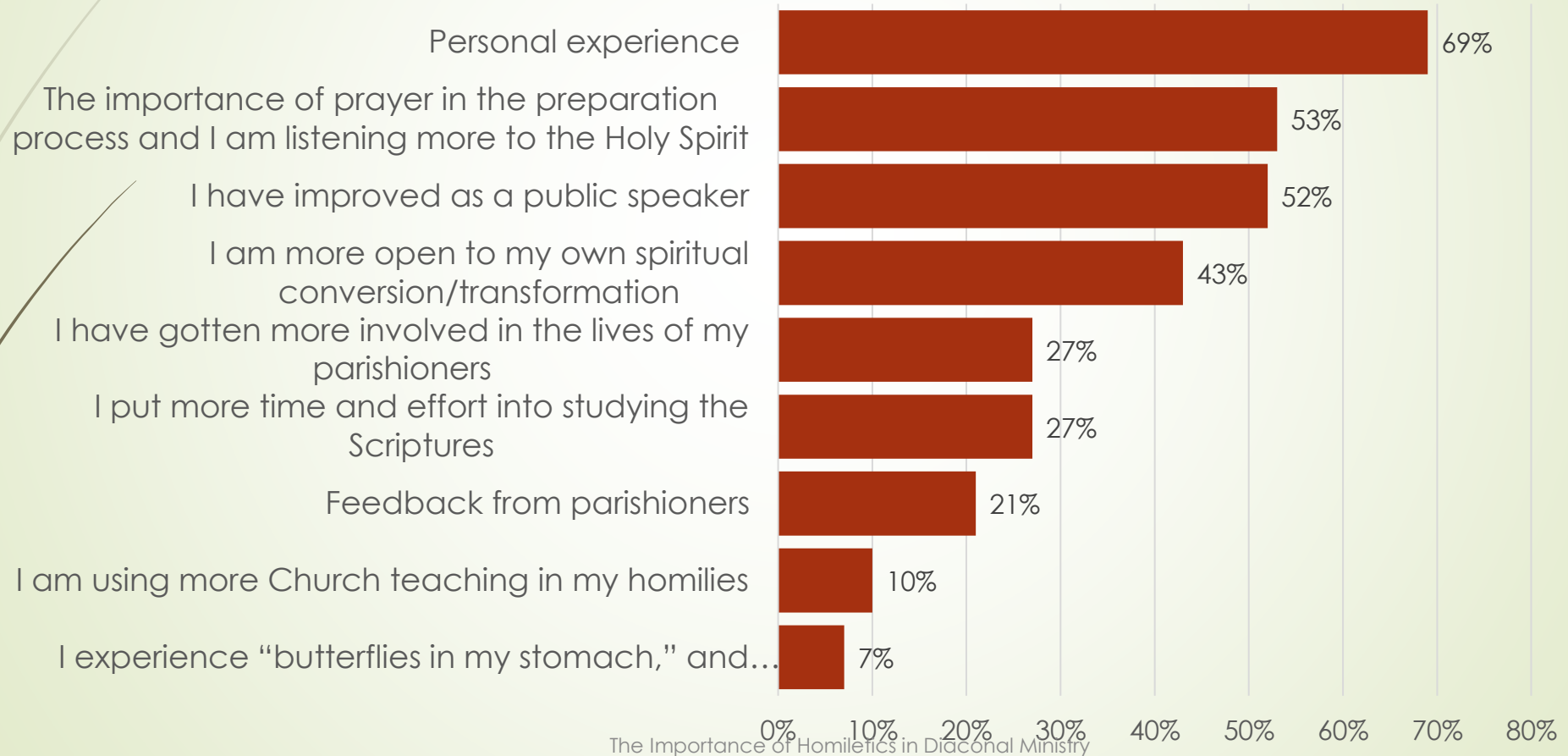
Incorporating into my preaching what I've learned while ministering and teaching

I try not to 'recycle'

3. What are the most significant differences in your homilies now versus when you first started to preach? Select as many apply.

Reasons for Significant Changes

- While personal experience is often credited as a source of change, the Holy Spirit and prayer are recognized as a source of change as well.



4. What are the reasons behind these differences? In other words, what are the factors contributing to, or the causes behind, the significant changes in your preaching?

N=62

Reasons for Change – Added Insights

Researching and knowledgeable about ideological threats to Church and parental promises to bring up or children in the Catholic faith

I am approaching burnout if not already there. Preparing a homily is another thing I have to do.

Striving to strike balance for diverse congregation; Search for experiences common to all

Allowing God to speak through me, in preparation and delivery

The Importance of Homiletics in Diaconal Ministry

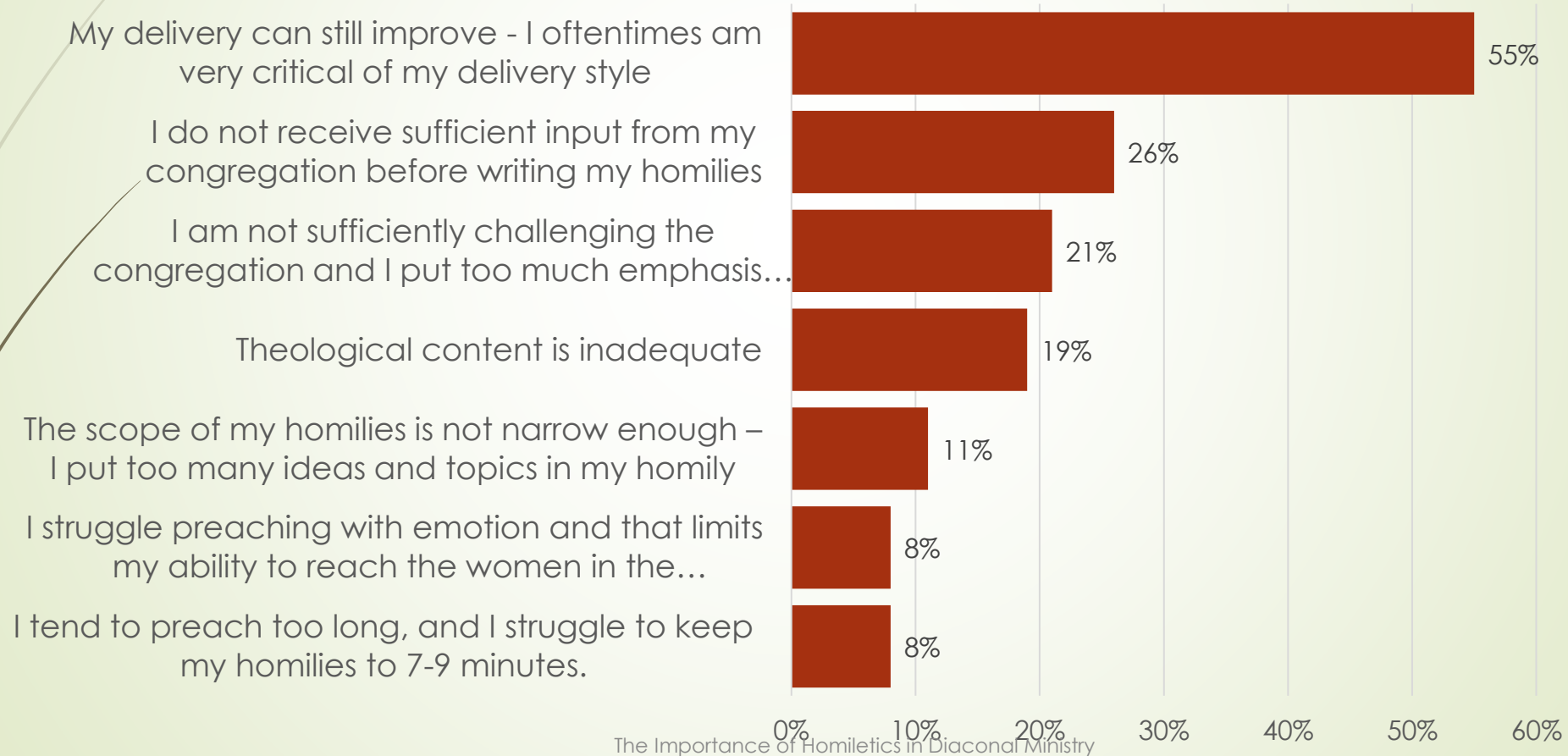
4. What are the reasons behind these differences? In other words, what are the factors contributing to, or the causes behind, the significant changes in your preaching?

Falling Short & Bad Habits

Falling Short

111

- Half of the Deacons recognize room for improvement in their homilies, and half of that group view the congregants as a potential source of input. One in five find their theological content to be inadequate.



5. Where do you believe your homilies are falling short?

N=62

Falling Short – Additional Insight

None/
My homilies have
no shortcomings

I get good feedback
so I must be OK

Length / Expanded /
gotten longer

Finding diverse
resources that are
Catholic

In giving concrete
examples of the
significance of the
readings to real life
situations

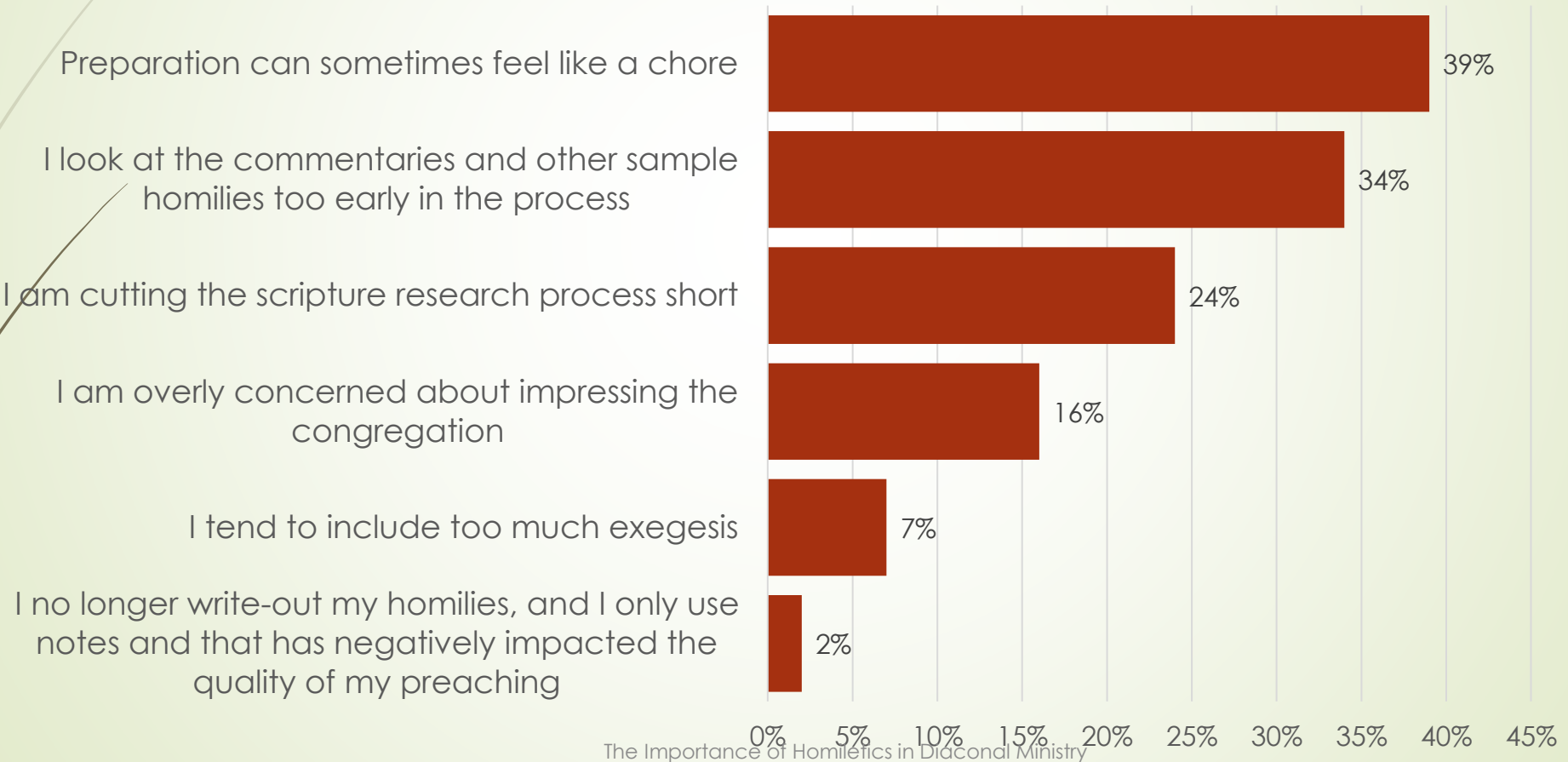
I tend to focus
mainly on the
Gospel and
sometimes neglect
the first or second
reading

Preaching the same
homily four Masses in
a row

My delivery can still
improve

Bad Habits in Homily Preparation

- Many Deacons report early use of 'short cuts' in preparing their homilies – a likely result of time constraints



Preparation Habits – Additional Insight

I don't start preparing as early as early as I should

I sometimes think I need some entertainment factor like comedy or props

Concerned I'm not being challenging enough

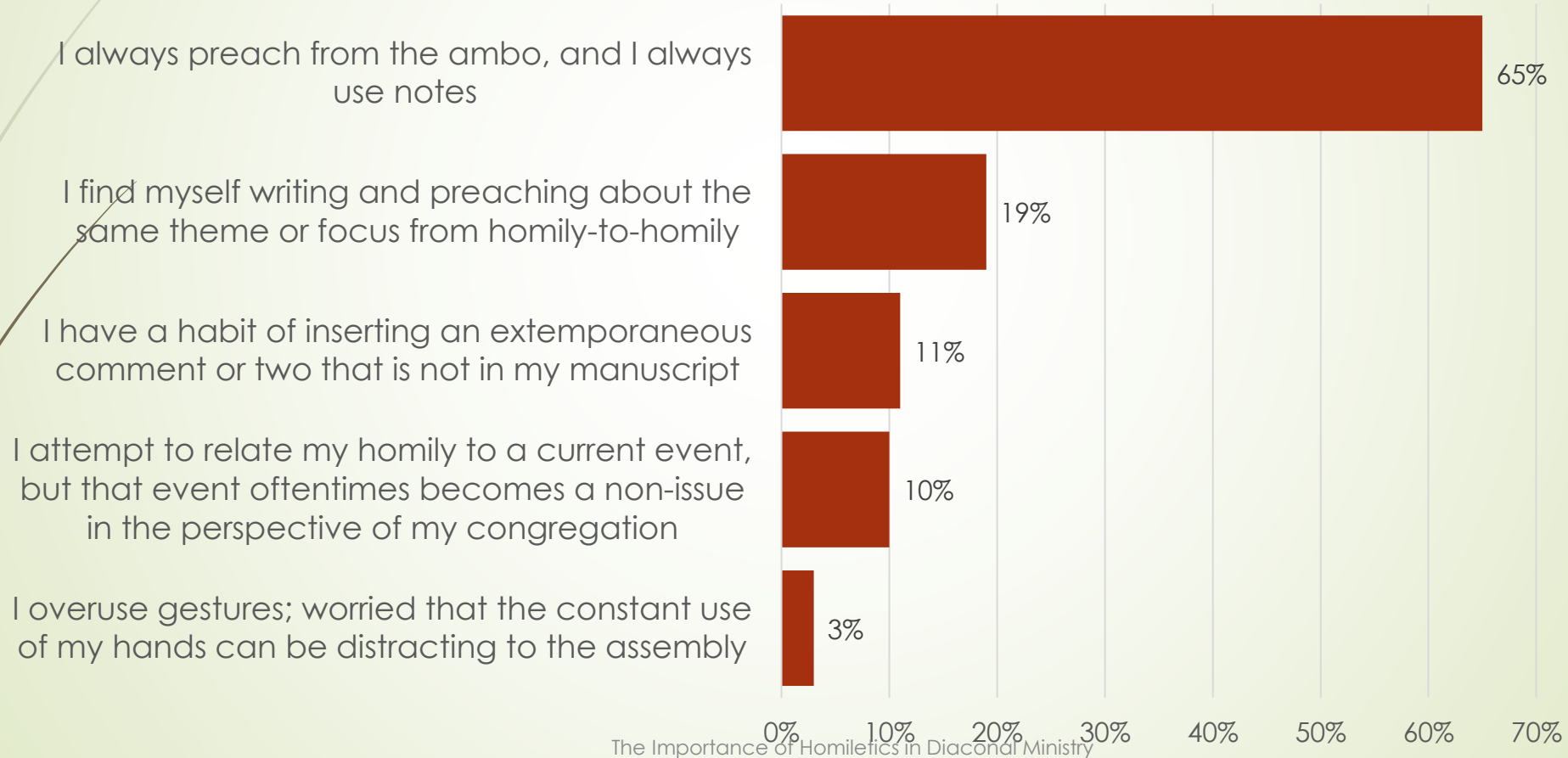
I tend to wait until the last minute to put my thoughts down on paper even though I begin my prep well enough in advance

I am overly concerned about impressing the congregation

Fear of offending

Bad Habits in Homily Delivery

- Deacons are able to identify their shortcomings in delivery, from always using notes to straying from notes.



Delivery Habits – Additional Insight

Forgetting that it's all
God's words not
mine. Relax and let
Him speak.

I'm not as natural as
when I am simply
speaking to people

I speak too fast and
don't give listeners
time to think

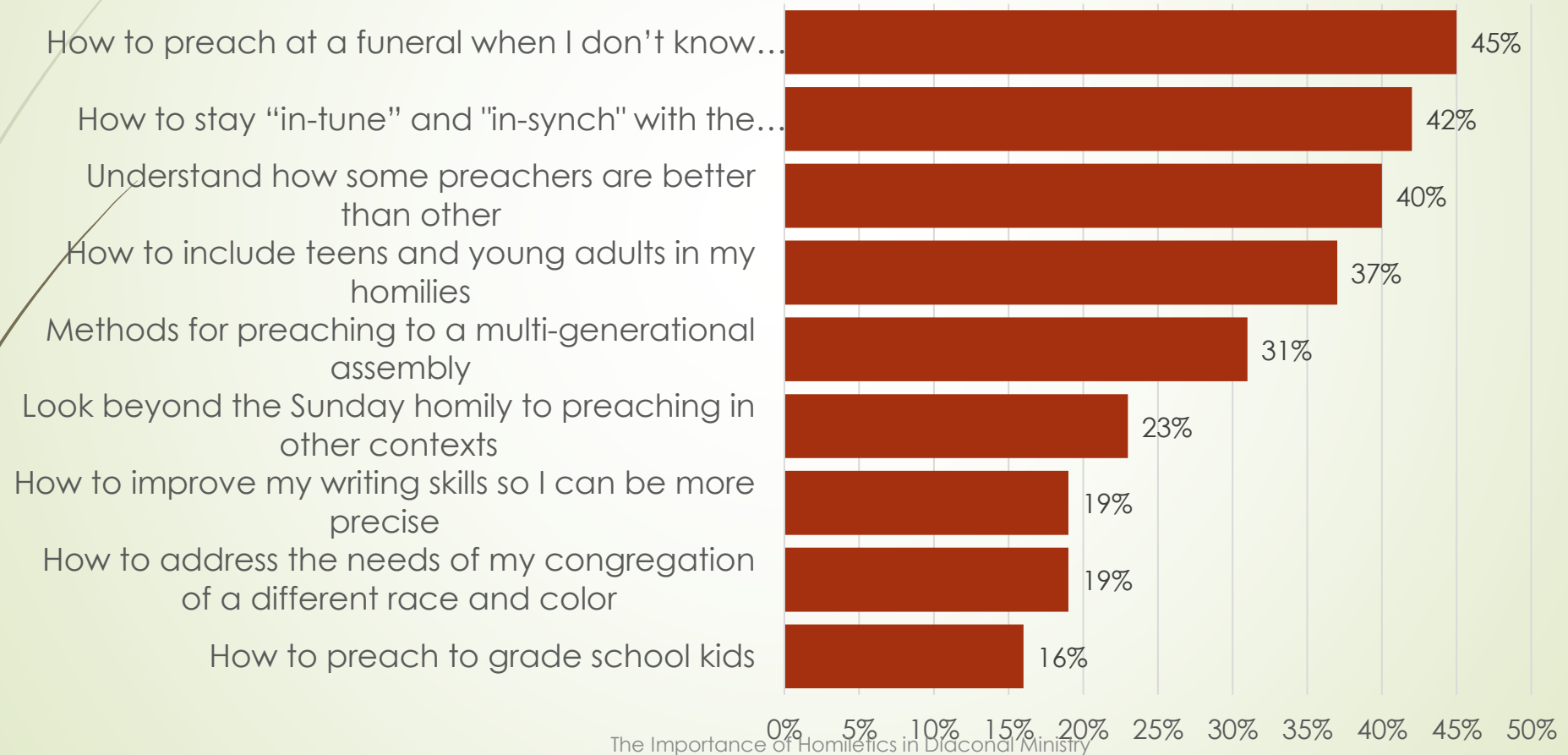
Trying to challenge,
not crush, the
congregation seems
more difficult with a
community so
divided

I overuse notes

Needs

Overriding Formation Needs

- Deacons expressed several desires for formation in learning how to better connect with their congregations and their needs.



8. What are your overriding formation needs in homiletics? In other words, would you attend a workshop to receive training, education, and formation on these specific subjects?? N=62

What Can We Do About It?

- Notre Dame, with funding from the Marten Program, is undertaking steps to hold a special seminar on Homiletic Pedagogy in June 2024.
- Members of CATH, among several other interested stakeholders, are participating in preliminary virtual discussions to prepare for the seminar.
- Fourteen homiletics professors prepared for a virtual conversation by submitting answers to three important overarching questions.



What Can We Do About It?

Three Important Questions:

1. What is the one “takeaway” you want to receive from the seminar that would make it a successful event for you?
2. What is the one biggest weakness or challenge you are experiencing in teaching homiletics?
3. What is the one issue in preaching that your students consistently find in their study & practice of preaching?

What Can We Do About It? – Three Important Questions

1. What is the one “takeaway” you want to receive from the seminar that would make it a successful event for you?
 - New skills & new inspiration for teaching form / structure
 - Best practices from seasoned teachers on beneficial types of feedback
 - How to move students from preaching that is informative to preaching for encounter & transformation
 - How to offer insights for coaching & encouraging practice homilies
 - Greater understanding of assessment by using an effective rubric
 - How do we know that we are effective?
 - Help students preach one central message

122 What Can We Do About It? – Three Important Questions

2. What is the one biggest weakness or challenge you are experiencing in teaching homiletics?

- Developing life-long, responsible habits of homily preparation
- Overcome the “recipe” mentality that students tend to have
- How can we overcome all the bad habits that so many preachers develop when they stop using different homily forms, fail to prepare & use manuscripts, while compromising & shortening homily preparation.
- Providing feedback in a way that is constructive; how do we “grade” homilies that sets a path to improvement but does not discourage the student?
- How do we help students to develop confident & bold delivery techniques & employ different styles for different contexts?

What Can We Do About It? – Three Important Questions

3. What is the one issue in preaching that your students consistently find in their study & practice of preaching?

- Students struggle with employing personal stories / witnesses in their homilies
- Some types & kinds of different homily forms.
- Staying faithful to their focus & function
- Improve attitudes towards feedback and remain open to receive constructive inputs on their preaching – too many preachers “preach in a vacuum.”
- How to integrate preaching into one’s ministerial identity?
- How to overcome the impact of years of deficient or bad homiletical examples?
- How to preach in conversational manner while using a manuscript?
- How to avoid preaching on all the readings in a weekend’s lection?

What Can Diaconate Directors Do?

- Preaching is not just a task of formation, but a critical issue for diaconate directors to address on a continuing basis.
- You cannot assume that formation in homiletics & preaching was sufficient.
- Directors need to be “hands on” and develop a strong attitude towards continuing formation.
- In other words, Directors Pick-Up when formation concludes.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white sign with the text "WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU" written in large, bold, dark blue capital letters. The hand is positioned on the right side of the sign, and the person is wearing a dark blue jacket. The background is a light, neutral color with a faint grid pattern.

**WHAT
CAN WE DO
FOR YOU**

What Can Diaconate Directors Do?

START WITH FORMATION

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▶ For Directors who are also in charge of Formators:
 - ▶ Ensure that there is sufficient emphasis placed on homiletics during formation.
 - ▶ Include a important number of courses and credit hours devoted to homiletics:
 - ▶ Oral Interpretation / Proclamation
 - ▶ Basic Preaching Skills
 - ▶ Introduction to Homiletics
 - ▶ Preaching at Baptisms, Weddings, & Funerals
 - ▶ Preaching to the Sunday Assembly
 - ▶ And give them lots of opportunities to preach.

A photograph of a church service. In the foreground, the backs of several people's heads are visible as they sit in pews. In the background, a wooden pulpit stands on a stage. A person wearing a red long-sleeved shirt is partially visible on the right side of the frame. The scene is lit with soft, warm light.

TO EVALUATE
TEACHING
TEACHING

What Can Diaconate Directors Do?

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Some Ideas to Consider:

- Make ongoing formation in preaching a priority.
- Hold annual workshops which address the needs of the preachers and make attendance mandatory for those who wish to continue to preach at Sunday Eucharist.
- Require that deacons read at least one text on preaching each year.
- Make preaching a required issue for pastors to discuss with deacons as part of their performance appraisals.
- Include preaching as part of the annual Continuing Formation Report.
- Address individual needs and problems deacon-by-deacon.

**GREAT
IDEAS
START
HERE**

What Can Diaconate Directors Do?

Offer Annual Preaching Workshops:

- Survey preaching needs of your deacons.
- Hold specific workshops directed at those needs.
- Hold multiple sessions in different locations on different dates.
- Shoot for 70%+ attendance & participation.
- Use different workshop leaders and teachers.
- Budget for it.





What Can Diaconate Directors Do?

Formal Feedback

- Move strongly away from “Preaching in a Vacuum.”
- Encourage – and maybe even require – deacons to institute formal evaluation of their preaching by the folks in the pews.
 - Give them the feedback models and methods to set-up an evaluation program that works for them.
 - The **Partners in Preaching** model is excellent, but it’s not a “One size fits all.”
- Recruit parishioners, train them on the homily, conduct workshops on how to critique preaching, build collaborative teams with deacons, & give them permission to be critical.

What Can Diaconate Directors Do?

Institute Mandatory Annual Performance Reviews with Pastors

- Provide Performance Appraisal Form for the process.
- Make preaching a required part of that process.
- Ensure that the pastor completes and signs the form.
- Have that form sent into the Diaconate Office and made a part of the deacons' personnel file.
- Review in order to determine needs directly related to preaching.
- Hold face-to-face meeting with deacons if needed.
- Develop corrective action plan with deacons.



What Can Diaconate Directors Do?

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Conclusion:

- ➔ Thank you for listening.
- ➔ Questions?
- ➔ Comments?
- ➔ Other?
- ➔ Where do we go from here?

