

PREACHING: EXEGESIS AND HERMENEUTICS

How do you approach the ministry of preaching? I begin with a daily praying of the scriptures that I will be preaching on (*lectio divina*). Ideally, for Sunday preaching, I like to begin on the evening of the preceding Sunday. I focus on what questions the readings raise—especially in light of current events. Therefore, during the week, as I read the paper and listen to the news, I try to find any anchoring issues or events. I don't turn to the commentaries until after I have "chewed" on the word myself for a while; depending on my schedule I begin the exegetical research around Tuesday. I like to begin writing by Thursday and have a final text by Friday. Saturday is for practice.

My personal approach is to pray the readings using the monastic model of *lectio divina*—reading the pericopes out loud, pausing as words or phrases "grab" my attention and resting in them. Those words/phrases often form the core around which the homily is built. I find it especially helpful to engage in group lectio—finding that the insights that others have into the readings can be quite profound, and an excellent way to help prepare a homily that will connect to the community. I continue this process daily until the preaching event; it is crucial that the issues of most import rise to the surface before turning to commentaries and the like.

I tend to turn to commentaries and other resources—print and electronic—late in the process. I have listed a number of my favorites below. For those who have the interest (especially in the original languages) and means, a comprehensive Bible software suite—such as LOGOS—can be very helpful (with the caveat that many of the resources that come in their 'packages' are either Protestant or, if Catholic, are quite dated).

Resources:*Theology and the Scriptures:*

Brown, Raymond E. *Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.

Harrington, Daniel J. *How Do Catholics Read the Bible?* New York: A Sheed and Ward Book, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005.

Schneiders, Sandra M. *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*. Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book, the Liturgical Press, 1999.

Introductions to the various methods of Biblical interpretation:

Carvalho, Corrine L. *Primer on Biblical Methods*. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2009.

Foskett, Mary F. *Interpreting the Bible: Approaching the Text in Preparation for Preaching*. Elements of Preaching Series. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009.

General Commentaries/References:

In addition to a good Catholic Study Bible (RNAB), and to other translations of the Bible for comparison, consider the following:

A Bible Dictionary, for example:

The Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vol)

StuhlmueLLer, Carroll, et. al., eds. *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996.

General Commentaries, for example:

Bergant, Dianne and Robert J. Karris, eds. *The Collegeville Bible Commentary*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989.

Brown, Raymond E., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990.

Concordance and Similar, for example:

Throckmorton, Burton H., ed. *Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979.

Greek

If you are interested at all in how reading the New Testament in Greek might inform your preaching, a good place to start is:

Webb, Joseph M. and Robert Kysar. *Greek for Preachers*. St; Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002.

Series, Individual Commentaries, and Special Studies:

I have found the *Sacra Pagina* series from The Liturgical Press to be quite helpful, and use a number of individual commentaries from a variety of authors as needed. Other resources include:

Brown, Raymond E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1997.

Malina, Bruce J. and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. *Social Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch. *Social Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

Malina, Bruce J. and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, second edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch. *Social Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006.

Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch. *Social Science Commentary on the Book of Acts*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

Malina, Bruce J. and John J. Pilch. *Social Science Commentary on the Deutero-Pauline Letters*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013

Lectionary-Based Resources:

Bergant, Diane with Richard Fragomeni. *Preaching the New Lectionary, Year A, B, C*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999-2001.

Matera, Frank J. *Strategies for Preaching Paul*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001.

Nowell, Irene. *Sing a New Song: The Psalms in the Sunday Lectionary*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993.

Pilch, John J. *The Cultural World of Jesus (Cycles A, B, C)*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995-1997. [he also has series that focus on the 1st reading/psalm and 2nd reading]

Sklba, Richard J. *Fire Starters: Igniting the Holy in the Weekday Homily*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2013.

Sloyan, Gerard. *Preaching from the Lectionary: An Exegetical Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

**Websites:*

Here are two websites that contain links to many other sites:

Diocese of Davenport: <http://www.davenportdiocese.org/lit/litpreach.htm>
(all the links listed here are posted on this site)

The Word on the Web: <http://www.kn.sbc.com/wired/fil/pages/listpreachergr.html>

There are literally thousands of preaching websites out there; these are the ones that I visit as a matter of routine preparation:

The Athenaeum of Ohio: <http://www.mtsm.org/Homilies.aspx>

Jude Siciliano, OP / The Preachers' Exchange: <http://www.preacherexchange.com/>

The Center for Liturgy: <http://liturgy.slu.edu/>

The Text the Week (ecumenical): <http://www.textweek.com/>

Finally, there is the downloadable resource from the Congregation for Clergy, called "Biblia Clerus" – you can link to it from the Deacon Links webpage ("Reading the Word of God with the Church") or use this URL: http://www.clerus.org/bibliaclerus/index_eng.html

An excellent source of information on the Scriptures: <http://catholic-resources.org/>