

Homily

33rd Sunday in OT, November 18, 2018

The pope recently offered his recipe to parish priests for a good homily --- to be short – no more than 10 minutes. I don't think he said anything about deacons.

He also said they should be well-prepared. But how long does it take to prepare a 10-minute or less homily?

Every homily is different, and each deacon or priest is different. But I heard that the average is 11 hours.

When I'm preparing a homily, I read, re-read and reflect on the scriptures for days and sometimes weeks before I put pen to paper. Then I research some ideas for a focal topic. Then I write for a while – maybe an hour to two, and set it aside to consider what I've written. And then I read what I have so far to my wife. After her input and a few comments, I throw it all away and start over.

Then I usually finish my homily as I'm walking out the door to come to Mass.

We all prepare for the things we do in our lives.

- We prepare a Thanksgiving meal
 - Decide the menu and make a list
 - Go to the grocery
 - We gather the recipes
 - We divvy up the chores

- We prepare to go on vacation
 - We decide where to go
 - How we are going to get there
 - What we are going to do there
 - How to dress
 - What to pack

- We prepare for the birth of a child
 - Get the room ready
 - Take Lamaze classes
 - Go to lots of doctor visits
 - Baby shower
 - Decide on possible names

But what do we do and how much time do we spend to prepare for our death?

There are things we do to prepare for the end of our life, such as funeral arrangements, cemetery plot, finances and estate issues.

But what about after our death? What about our eternal life?

As Christians, we should not fear death, but rather ready ourselves for it, by growing in holiness and striving for eternal life.

That is what Daniel is warning us in the first reading; there will be unsurpassed distress. Some will live forever; some will be an everlasting horror and disgrace. Then he gives us hope; the wise shall shine brightly.

Jesus also prepares his disciples, warning them of the coming darkness. He tells them to look at the signs to know the time is coming.

But it's been coming for 2000 years.

What does this mean for you and me today, right now? Where are we going to spend eternity?

We know that heaven is real and ready for us. And we know that Jesus opened the gates to heaven by reconciling us to God the Father. That is done. Jesus saved us once and for all.

So all that is left for us is to make sure we are prepared. And since we don't know the hour or day, we need to be always prepared.

What does being prepared look like?

First, it means being honest with ourselves. Only God knows us inside and out, every hair on our heads, each thought before it even comes to our mind. We need to be vigilant, attentive, wary of our thoughts.

Watch your thoughts, for they become words; watch your words, for they become actions; watch your actions, for they become habits; watch your habits for they become character; and watch your character, for it becomes your destiny. What we think, we become.

Every day, we have the opportunity to make mistakes. And every day, we have the opportunity to make amends with God and our neighbor.

Jesus spent his entire ministry telling us what we need to do to be prepared:

Care for those in need; the poor, the widow, the orphan, those in jail, the sick, the lonely. Be kind to everyone, even if they are not kind to you:

- Let the car next to you cut in front
- Listen to the person who won't stop talking about his problems
- Always be helpful to those around you in need
- Randomly offer to pay for the person behind you at Starbucks. It'll confuse them but definitely make them think.

Mother Teresa said, "A life not lived for others is not a life." She also said, "Life is a song; sing it. Life is a struggle; accept it."

I can't help but think of Jesus saying, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

If we live for Jesus, our troubles won't go away, but they will be bearable. He has already given us the tools we need to handle our challenges in life. And when we struggle, we offer our struggles to Him who has already suffered the eternal, final struggle. Our sufferings are never meaningless if we offer them up and unite them with Christ's sufferings. Just as His suffering brings salvation to all, our sufferings, united with His, brings salvation as well.

At Fatima, the children, and we, were taught this prayer for offering up our sufferings, "Oh my Jesus, I offer this for love of You, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

The alternative is that our sufferings are wasted. We sulk, we have a pity party, we complain about our pain. And don't we all sometimes complain? But to what end? As Winnie the Pooh's friend, Eeyore says, "It's not much of a tail, but I'm sort of attached to it."

Do we get attached to our pain? Do we spend valuable time complaining when we could be preparing? Be prepared so that you can be among the elect.