

## *The Liturgy of the Word: Let the Conversation Continue*

In our last installment we considered the several ways we respond to the proclamation of God's Word during the Liturgy of the Word at Mass: immediately after each reading, in our prayer of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and in our daily lives. There are several other elements of the Liturgy of the Word by which we respond to God's conversational initiative: the *Homily*, the *Profession of Faith*, and the *Prayers of the Faithful*. We'll look at these over the next couple of weeks. First to the homily. The first thing to consider here is just what a "homily" is, as different from a "sermon". A sermon can be on any topic the preacher chooses, whenever and wherever he or she might be preaching. A homily has its proper place in a liturgical celebration and is based on the scripture readings used for the particular celebration, the readings assigned for the day, or some other text or part of the liturgy itself. Its ultimate goal is to help us enter more deeply into the prayer of the liturgy, and draw us into a closer relationship with the Lord who speaks to us. The homily is meant to foster and deepen our conversation with God by helping us become more aware of how God is present and active in our lives and the world. This awareness can lead us to a greater sense of gratitude for God's presence and gifts, and thus better prepare us to give God the praise and thanks we lift up in the Eucharistic prayer, and live out in our daily lives. Of course, this exalted purpose of the homily is not always realized in practice, and sometimes the preacher could do a better job at doing his job. Two possible ways those who hear homilies could help those who give homilies would be to offer both input and feedback to preacher. Such input would be based on reading and reflecting on the scriptures for Mass ahead of time, and such feedback would offer thoughts and ideas on a particular homily, and how the homilist might do even better the next time. But all the 'work' of the homily is not just the homilist's. The value of a homily also depends on those who hear it. Do they listen attentively, and try to remember a key idea of word that struck home? Do they use the silence after the homily for personal reflection and understanding? The most important work of the homily really begins when we walk out the church doors.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about.  
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