

Ten Points on “How to be a Good Catholic Youth Preacher”

The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation– *Dei Verbum*^[1], (DV), which was solemnly promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on November 18, 1965– is an authentic doctrine on proclaiming our faith based on the divine revelation^[2]. As a Catholic preacher of God’s word, I found *Dei Verbum* helpful for it gives guidelines not only to those who are priests, deacons and seminarians but also to catechists, apologists, parents and youth ministers on how to proclaim with faith the word of God.

Any Youth Ministry can develop its own pool of speakers in facilitating or assisting youth seminars, team-buildings, recollections and retreats. Each youth speaker could be more effective in the field of talk-giving if they would take some advice from *Dei Verbum*.

From *Dei Verbum*, I made a list of ten (10) good traits of a preacher:

1. Believer of the Sacred Scripture: *“...inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that the truth of God which God wanted put into sacred writing for the sake of salvation...” DV#11.* A preacher must believe in the Sacred Scripture. More than that, he should believe that God is the author of the Sacred Scripture– through His (God’s) chosen men who wrote for Him. A preacher should be convinced that through the Sacred Scripture, God Himself speaks to him/her; and what the preacher is publicly preaching is God Himself.

2. Faithful to the tradition. *“...hold fast to the traditions which they have learned either by word or letter...” DV#8.* A

preacher should be faithful to the tradition for it is rooted from the Apostles, who, most of them, were eyewitnesses to Jesus himself. Christian traditions were handed down from generations of Catholic Christians and it is true that it became richer as time goes by with newer generations of Christians who look deeper into the Divine Revelation in a newer perspective as a growing Church. The result was the development of massive reflections and realizations about God but not all these were grounded to the Church's Sacred Tradition. The challenge is, despite of these new perspectives, we need to filter which are faithful to our Catholic Christian tradition.

Tradition marks our identity as Catholic Christians. We cannot simply omit our tradition and purely dedicate ourselves in studying the Sacred Scripture or the Bible alone. The reason is simple, Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition belong together. When books of the Sacred Scripture were written, the background of each book was the existing tradition during the time of its writing. To understand the message of each book of the Bible, we need to understand the context of the writer where he is coming from. Sacred Tradition is the unwritten words of God. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit manifesting Himself [\[3\]](#) through the actions of God's people. The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. She is the sacrament of the Holy Trinity's communion with men. [\[4\]](#)

As preachers, we should also know the official teachings of the Catholic Church's Magisterium. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) is always a handy source-guide of our Catholic belief. The Magisterium is the official interpreter of the Church. She officially interprets the Sacred Scripture and preserves our church's Sacred Tradition dating back from the earliest part of our church history.

2. Courageous. *"... fight in defense of faith handed on once and for all," DV#8.* Jesus promised His disciples that they would

not commit omissions or mistakes in terms of faith for He will “...ask the Father ... to give them another advocate... the Spirit of Truth...[5]” so, I believe that we should be courageous in defending our faith for we are guided by the Spirit of Truth. The Church has labored too much through the ages, amidst the challenges of the anti-Catholic Christian philosophies which have challenged our Catholic faith from different times in the courses of the entire human history; and until now, the Church is defending herself from different issues that the present society is pressing against her. Despite of the many current criticisms on how we preserve and value the integrity of life; the unity of family; values and morals; and Christian faith... the Church remains strong amidst these trials. Two thousand years had passed, and still Jesus remains faithful to His Church and to His people.

4. Investigative, mindful about Biblical details. “..the interpreter of the Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words,” DV#12. Time has changed the meaning of things. Cultures evolved so as the spoken and written word which may vary now from its original meaning and context. The preacher should know this reality– that he should not interpret the Sacred Scripture literally, or patch together verses that will serve his vested interest. A good interpreter of the Bible understands the context of the bible; and also asks ‘why’ and ‘for whom’ the book of the Bible was addressed. He should also be aware that there are available references that will be a great help for him/her in preparing for his preaching. He should let him/herself consult available references, such as Catholic commentaries, that would help him/her to understand further the meanings and significance of every actions and words that is in the Sacred Scripture.

Nowadays, there are many Apologists who, like you, are eager

to study our Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. They try to explain our faith in accordance to the Church's Magisterium. They also answer the questions addressed by our Christian brethren.

5. Balanced. *"The living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the harmony which exists between elements of faith," DV#12.* Throughout the history, the Church has gathered a living truth that is greater than Herself which is the deposit of faith. A preacher should be aware of it, a *depositum fidei*, a deposit of faith that is to be preserved. When interpreting the Sacred Scripture, the preacher must interpret the whole message with a view to its heart and mystery. One practical way of knowing particular texts as Sacred Scripture is by their general acceptance in the Church— how they were understood by the Church Fathers and how they were interpreted by the Church's Magisterium.

6. Sees God as Gentle and Kind. *"In Sacred Scripture...that we may learn the gentle kindness of God, which word cannot express..." DV#13.* The Sacred Scripture, if taken seriously by the preacher, would let him/her understand the loving goodness of God. He should read the Sacred Scripture prayerfully; and trusting that the Holy Spirit is with him/her. He must bear in mind that the Sacred Scripture is God's word which reveals Himself to us.

I am always asked by many youth organizations every time I gave talks or recollections: "How could we know if there is presence of the Holy Spirit?" I usually tell them, "If your understanding of the Bible leads you to love... because God is love."

7. Realistic. *"The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed by word of mouth and in writing...always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus Christ." DV#19.* This is the dilemma of many preacher: 'how to connect together all the

fragments that came from traditions to the Sacred Scripture?' It is true that the Sacred Scripture focuses only on the more important details, nevertheless, the preacher should also consider the culture behind every actions stated from the Sacred Scripture.

8. Open-minded. *"..the Church by her authority and with maternal concern sees to it that suitable and correct translations are made into different languages...and should the opportunity to arise and the Church authorities approved, if these translations are produced in cooperation with the separated brethren as well, all Christians will be able to use them."* DV#22. As a preacher, he/she should accept the fact that, as Christians, we also share the Sacred Scripture with our other brothers and sisters outside the Church. They, too, may shed further light to some revelations which our Mother Church has already interpreted. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in other religions[6]. The Catholic Church also believes that there are also some ray of truths from other religion.[7]

9. Diligent. *"Catholic exegetes then and other students of sacred theology, working diligently together and using appropriate means, should devote their energies, under the watchful care of the sacred teaching office of the Church to an exploration and exposition of the divine writings."* DV#23. The preacher should devout time in studying the Scriptures. In doing this, he/she should be careful in studying the Scripture and be diligent enough in making connections of the periscopes, bible verses and the underlying biblical traditions that are needed to be understood while studying the Sacred Scripture. To understand the Scripture, patience is needed in doing researches and in consulting bulky references. The preacher should always bear in his/her mind that all of his efforts should comply and not go beyond the teaching office of the Church which is the Magisterium. Although, it is seemingly very painstaking, a good foundation

always bears good fruits.

10. **Witness.** “Therefore, all the clergy must hold fast the Sacred Scriptures through diligent sacred reading and careful study.” DV#25. A preacher should also be a believer of what he is preaching. He/she is *walking the talk*, as a famous adage would suggest. He/she should be convinced with what he/she is preaching.

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Preaching is a way of life, not only for those who are priests and deacons or for those who are aspiring to be a priest someday, but also to everyone who wants to be an “apologists.” Apologists are those who defend the Catholic faith. Catechists who teach our faith to young and old alike are also expected to bear witness to Jesus Christ. To be a Catholic preacher is to embrace its underlying responsibilities which include careful and diligent study of the Sacred Scripture and our Sacred Tradition.

Our Catholic faith is deeply rooted in the Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and to the teachings of Church’s Magisterium. The Magisterium is the teaching authority of the Church who alone interprets infallibly the Sacred Scripture and preserves our Sacred Tradition.

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[1] The entire electronic copy is available through the Vatican

Website: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html (Accessed: September 25, 2013).

[2] Divine Revelation-simply speaking, it is the understanding

of man about God according to God's self-manifestation to man; 'Divine Revelation comes down to us by two means: through Holy Scripture, written down under divine inspiration, and through Tradition, handed down orally from Apostolic times,' from: <http://www.catholicbook.com/AgredaCD/MyCatholicFaith/mfc007.htm> (Accessed: September 25, 2013).

[3] The author preferred the male gender of the Holy Spirit based on Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) no. 687; ECCE Word and Life Publications, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Manila: 1994), no. 687; also accessible through the internet: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/pls2c3a8.htm (Accessed: September 18, 2013).

[4] Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) no. 747.

[5] Cf. John 14:16-17, NJB.

[6] Cf. *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2; *Nostra Aetate* is the declaration on the relation of the Catholic Church to non-Christian religions. Proclaimed by his holiness, Pope Paul VI.

on October 28, 1965.

[7] Cf. *Nostra Aetate*, no. 2.