

By Val J. Peter

## **The Selling of Gayness in America**

### **Three-point social manipulation attack aimed to make homosexual behavior acceptable**

The postmodern age in which we live is called the Age of Marketing by many experts. It was preceded by the Age of Aquarius starting in the late 1960s where the individual was supreme, where self-centeredness was exulted, where narcissistic self-interest was proclaimed by the media to be the meaning of life. It was a time when the individual was exulted. The new Age of Marketing, which we live in today, is one in which the individual is not exulted, but rather manipulated.

This is in large part due to the advances that have been made in the area of social manipulation by marketers. In the olden days, we were all aware of the powerful marketing that went on for children, selling toys, cereal, games and the consumer view of life. We're way beyond that now as certain groups in our society are employing marketing techniques intentionally to condition adults to arrive at, not our own conclusions, but their desired conclusions.

If you have to read one article, it would be Paul E. Rondeau's "Selling Homosexuality in America" in the Spring 2002 Regent University Law Review.

What Rondeau does is introduce us to the best theories and techniques of persuasion today. They are based on the assumption that you can persuade someone to adopt a view without appearing to do so. In their book *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*, Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson called this "pre-selling."

The most widely recognized model for marketing is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo. The words "elaboration likelihood" look at the chance of prospect "that a message receiver will elaborate on a message by thinking about it and reacting to it by comparing it to his or her preexisting thoughts and beliefs. . ." (Terence A. Shrimp, *Advertising, Promotion and Other Aspects of Integrated Marketing Communication*, 6th edition.

### **The Root of It All**

The ELM is perhaps the most widespread popular, current theory of persuading people and changing attitudes. It predicts two kinds of message processing and change of attitude, namely, the central root and the peripheral roots. ELM's research shows that the central root embodies high involvement of the consumer and leads to a more permanent change of attitude than do the peripheral roots.

ELM is the acknowledged way to go among proponents of gay rights. It fits beautifully with the gay rights movement because ELM insists that it is much more important to influence attitude than is the attitude or opinion itself. There is emphasis on cognitive dissidence. There is insistence that behavioral change precedes attitude change. Rondeau says that is why the focus of the gay rights marketing is calling people names -- homophobic, bigot, lacking in compassion.

The 4 P's of marketing are progress, price, place and promotion. Gay rights folks are not selling dishwashers or autos. They are selling an issue, namely acceptance and approval of their lifestyle, but the methods are the same.

Tammy Bruce, who styles herself a lesbian feminist and is the former president of the L.A. chapter of NOW, says: "In each case, the critical thing is not to let the public know how it is done."

### **Paying the Price**

In the old days, the traditional way to price products was thought of in marketing as an exchange of bipartisan satisfaction. That exchange relationship is not critical to gay marketing. What is critical is something called "exaction pricing." This simply means that the gays will exact an emotional price from targeted groups for not buying into the gay rights idea.

Remember in 1973 when the American Psychological Association changed its position and no longer put homosexuality in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) as a mental disorder. This was a marketing decision and it was the first step toward achieving gay rights goals of normalization. And it starts with convincing people that homosexuality is an alternative lifestyle. That's where marketers come in.

In 1988, two Harvard-trained social scientists, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen, wrote a clever homosexual marketing plan "dismissing the movement's outworn techniques in favor of carefully calculated public relations propaganda . . . laying the groundwork for the next stage of the gay revolution and its ultimate victory over bigotry." Kirk and Madsen said: "To one extent or another, the separability and manipulability of the verbal label is the basis for all abstract principles underlying our proposed campaign."

### **Desensitization**

The campaign has three phases. Phase one is called desensitization which Kirk and Madsen describe as a "continuous flood of gay-related advertising, presented in the least offensive fashion possible." You want to flood the market with normal-looking gay people doing normal things so that the public no longer takes a double look at people identified as gays.

In this phase, it is good to have well-known ministers, priests and even bishops with good reputations stand up and proudly say they are gay. That's very helpful. It is very helpful to produce a movie like *Brokeback Mountain* and make sure the Academy Awards notice it. It is good to also write books for school children such as *Joey Has Two Mommies*. It is good for a parish to be gay friendly when a gay couple wants their adopted child baptized.

This is all part of desensitization. It is good to have gays on the news helping the community and suggesting that it's all genetic and that they're really very nice people. It is good to welcome gay parishioners publicly. Kirk and Madsen say: "It is not overt coercion. It is one group's covert orchestration of compliance by another group through structuring the consciousness of the second group."

In other words, the whole idea we need to remember is that this is nothing more than conscious manipulation of you and me to change our Christian views without our realizing the manipulation involved. This first phase, namely, desensitization, is clearly seen in the June 2008 document or game plan "Make Change, Not Lawsuits," created by nine pro-homosexual groups.

The first step, they say, is desensitization. Start with winning over your family and your friends. Insist that they treat a gay married couple the same as any other couple. Make them feel you are nice folks. The document says: "Couples who want to, should get married, call themselves married, and ask (sometimes demand) that family, friends, neighbors, businesses, employers and the community treat their marriages with respect. Making the marriages of same-sex couples a conspicuous part of American society will help us get something we'll need to win ultimately, namely, public acceptance." Get state legislatures to see this public acceptance and pass gay-friendly legislation.

### **Exaction Pricing or Psychological Terrorism**

If desensitization is the first phase in selling homosexuality, the second phase is a new pricing concept called "exaction pricing," defined as "the economic or emotional price being exacted from target groups for not buying the gay rights agenda." It is also called jamming, making use of associative conditioning and direct emotional modeling.

Rondeau calls exaction pricing "psychological terrorism meant to silence expression or even support for dissenting opinion." It is a scare tactic that says it is important to beat down anyone who opposes the gay agenda. In this regard, shouting, yelling, hollering and fiery rhetoric are powerful marketing tools.

Call them gay (less offensive), not homosexuals. Call them a humble, long suffering minority, not a savvy group wanting recognition. Call the opposition homophobic. Laugh them to scorn. Ridicule them publicly. Look at what they did to Dr. Laura. Have her apologize publicly. Scare

preachers by suggesting laws forbidding them to claim the Scriptures are opposed to homosexual activity. Make it a crime of hate speech.

Show pictures of Nazi concentration camps where homosexual were tortured and murdered. "Gays can undermine the moral authority of homo-hating churches . . . by portraying them as antiquated backwaters, badly out of step . . . with the latest findings of psychology" (Kirk & Madsen).

### **Conversion Through Psychological Attack**

After jamming or exaction pricing, the third phase is conversion, which Kirk and Madsen call "conversion of the average American's emotions, mind and will through a planned psychological attack, in the form of propaganda fed to the nation via the media." Laugh to scorn the sacred Scriptures. Why would you rely on Scripture? After all, Exodus 21:7 talks about a good price for selling your daughter into slavery. Then there is Exodus 35:20 where you must kill your fellow employee who works on the Sabbath. And remember Deuteronomy 14:18 where the Chicago Bears would have to wear gloves rather than touch the skin of a pig. You want people to live and let live. You want them to say, "I changed my mind."

Rondeau puts it this way: "Pederasts, gender-benders, sadomasochists and other minorities in the homosexual community with more extreme peculiarities would keep a low profile until homosexuality is in the tent. Only strong and favorable images of homosexuals should be displayed."

It is important, finally, to remember that priests and bishops are very susceptible to what Rondeau calls the illusion of being informed and enlightened. Why? Because priests and bishops are pastoral people and, in this postmodern age, they need very much to be liked and they need to be seen as caring, sharing and compassionate.

If being liked takes first place, then truth takes a distant second or third place. This is a great temptation of any mega-church, namely, to bring vast crowds into the fold at the expense of truth.

If this slick marketing or environmental conditioning wins the day, what will they say 100 years from now? Will they look at our age as having made a giant step forward in human progress, or as an example of early mass marketing gone astray? This is Rondeau's question and mine, too.

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By Msgr. Owen F. Campion

## **Patron of Priests Knew What Life Was All About**

For many decades, St. Jean Marie Vianney, a priest of the Lyon archdiocese in France, has been presented as the model for priests. Popes have given him this distinction, always mentioned in superlatives, for his commitment to and service in behalf of his vocation.

For 40 years, he served as pastor of the little community in the village of Ars-en-Dombes. In his day, the population never exceeded 250 people. It was, as it is, out of the way, anything but an important or bustling or cosmopolitan place.

Yet, Jean-Marie Vianney knew life. He came to accept his vocation knowing life at his time very well. In other words, he knew what the world had to offer, and he knew what it could never offer.

Born on May 8, 1786, in Dardilly, near Lyon, his birth coincided with the turmoil of the French Revolution. The little town of his birth was far removed from Paris in more ways than one. The Revolution was centered in Paris. There its Reign of Terror took the greatest toll. There the movers and shakers of the Revolution, Georges Jacques Danton, Maximilien Robespierre, and even Napoleon Bonaparte, schemed and pitched back and forth on the angry waves of change and upheaval.

That was Paris. However, no community in France was free from the chaos and cruelty that accompanied the Revolution, which continued through the last decade of the 18th century.

For the young Jean Marie, for his family and for his neighbors in Dardilly, certainly a major outcome of all that was happening in the name of the Revolution was the pressure brought to bear on the Church.

### **France and the Church**

Beginning virtually at the very dawn of the history of France as a national state, the Church had had a close relationship with the powers that were. Until the Revolution these powers were the monarchs who successively reigned over, and indeed ruled, the country.

It was not a relationship that without interruption was cordial, and arguably it was not a relationship that in every respect benefited the Church.

Of course, there were good days for the Church, especially in the Counter-Reformation as it unfolded in France. It was during the Counter-Reformation that many of the grandest names in Catholic sainthood came onto the stage of the Church. St. Vincent de Paul made his magnificent mark for Christian care for the sick, poor and incarcerated. He founded the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity.

His associate in so many great endeavors, St. Louise de Marillac, was a laywoman. She, too, gleams as a great example of the noblest Christian witness in an era in which many such names shine.

St. Jean Baptiste de la Salle founded the Brothers of the Christian Schools, or Christian Brothers, to educate poor boys, thereby giving them opportunities for better lives.

Jean Jacques Olier formed the Society of St. Sulpice, or Sulpicians, ultimately to enrich the clergy by operating seminaries in which the best intellectual formation, as well as preparation for lives lived close to the Gospels, was the goal and indeed were provided.

Great missionaries, such as St. Isaac Jogues and St. Jean de Brébeuf, who came to America, and who died as martyrs here, went forth to bring Christ to native peoples and to immigrating French in all parts of the increasingly large colonial empire of France.

Asceticism had the great benefit of the deep reflection and profound holiness of figures such as St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, whose visions initiated devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and St. Francis de Sales, the Frenchman who was officially the Bishop of Geneva, but who lived in Annecy in France.

It was a glorious time, the time of Catholicism in France before the Revolution.

But there were shadows. When the Reformation began to develop, it affected France as much as elsewhere. Regarded properly as one of the leaders of the Reformation was a Frenchman, Jean Cauvin, or John Calvin to use his name as it is rendered in English.

Eventually settling in Geneva, Switzerland, but on the very outskirts of France, Calvin established not just a theocracy in Geneva but an entire theology at odds with many of the teachings of the Catholic magisterium.

Calvin's theology quickly found its way into France, resulting in the very rapid and considerable growth of a French Protestant community, called the Huguenots.

Official governmental response to this growth of Protestantism, and its implications for Catholicism (long the established religion of the French state and the French monarchy, all powerful as the monarchy was in the life of the French state) varied over the course of some generations.

### **The Huguenots**

One French king, himself a convert to Catholicism from Calvinism, Henri IV, actually accorded some rights and privileges to Huguenots, pitiful as these rights might today be seen in the light of modern concepts of religious liberty and in the face of today's pluralism.

Nevertheless, these rights meant that Huguenots could live with some peace in France, although they were not atop the mountain of advantage and esteem.

However, in 1685, Henri IV's grandson, King Louis XIV, reversed the concessions given to the Huguenots. While Huguenots were not required by law to convert to Catholicism, they were forbidden publicly to worship or to rear their children as Protestants. Only Catholic marriages were respected under the law. Huguenot clergy were banished.

For any Huguenot failing to comply, the penalties were severe, and they were gruesome. Some noncompliers were sentenced literally to being pulled apart by horses tied to the victim's limbs and driven in opposite directions.

People do not forget such horrors. Many Huguenots fled, among them the forebears of many distinguished figures in American history, such as John Calhoun and Francis Marion.

Others remained, many sullenly adopting the appearances of Catholicism, but never converting in the authentic sense.

### **The Rise of Free Thinking**

The brutality of Louis XIV's order, and the disgust if not fury of the Huguenots themselves, set the stage for at least one aspect of the rise of free thinking and a deism devoid of institutional Christianity that took hold of French philosophy in the years before to the Revolution.

At the same time, as for so long, the reality was that the Church and the monarchy, despite differences and strained relations from time to time, were united in the worst of symbiotic relationships. Each fed the other. Each fed on the other.

When the walls of the very French culture came tumbling down in the Revolution, the Church faced the rage of the revolt as much as the monarchy itself.

The crowning sacrilege, one among an untold number of outrages, was the seating of a prostitute on the high altar of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and paying her homage as a goddess.

More than a few priests and religious climbed the steps to guillotines. The new, or formative, revolutionary regime attempted to separate the Church in France from Rome.

Even when Queen Marie Antoinette, the widow of the executed Louis XVI, awaited her turn with the death sentence, she refused to see a priest sent to her to prepare her sacramentally for death, because he was one of those clergy who had repudiated allegiance to the Pope.

"I die in the Roman, Apostolic and Catholic faith in which I was born," the doomed queen insisted.

The upheaval in religion confronted not just the royals. Jean Marie Vianney's family, simple folk as they were, stood with the Church and in the Church, although they had to do so quietly, even secretly.

In fact, Jean Marie Vianney had to make his first confession and receive his first Communion in secret. His family insisted upon a loyal priest, and priests loyal to the Church dared not function in the open.

The Church was in utter disarray. More broadly, French life, to its core, was in disarray. None of this situation would ease.

It began to ease with the ascendancy of Napoleon Bonaparte, the Corsican army officer who, by hook and by crook took power, eventually establishing himself as "Napoleon I, Emperor of the French."

Napoleon reinstated the Church as the religion of the state, well, after a fashion, and he renewed recognition of the Petrine Supremacy, again, well, after a fashion.

He also launched a military strategy that took the French flag, behind bayonets, all across Europe and even into the Middle East.

Jean Marie Vianney was called to military service. He went, but he also assisted in hiding what today would be called a conscientious objector.

When the wars ended, and Napoleon was exiled, first to Elba and then to St. Helena, Vianney was able to follow his long desire to study for the priesthood.

His lackluster performance as a student of theology is very well chronicled. He persevered, struggling against great odds. At long last, he was ordained. His ordination began the priestly ministry that has now made him the model for priests, the saintly patron of priests.

Rather than retelling the story of his anguished path through the seminary and its demanding courses in formal theology, it is interesting to put this effort to reach the point of ordination at the end of a process of discernment.

The French Revolution was much more to the French than the American Revolution was to the people of the thirteen Atlantic colonies in what became the United States.

In the United States, the system of government changed with the Revolution, along with certain concepts. But, the culture remained what it was, the social conventions and values and even the basic laws of Britain occurring as strongly in the fabric of the United States as they had in the days of the Colonial Era.

As for France, everything changed. Nothing was secure. Much was violently eliminated. The French Revolution, understandably, is regarded by historians as being as much an earthquake in the social order as were the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the Iranian Revolution 60 years later.

### **Removing God**

Underscore these points. Everything in French life changed, and much more often than not it changed radically. Nothing was secure. Much was violently eliminated. Add to it the rejection of God, and expressly of the Church, and as importantly, the exaltation of the human mind and of human instinct.

In the process of attaining a sense of life and of purpose in this time of uproar and even terror, Jean Marie Vianney demonstrated not intellectual dullness but instead commendable wisdom, showing that he possessed an insight denied to others regarded as much brighter.

The turbulence in which he was born and through which he lived as he grew into adulthood, and even the different atmosphere that pertained in the days of Napoleon's empire, gave him a perspective from which to view life.

He was able to see that the human struggle to build a perfect society on its own, deliberately removing God from the equation, ultimately produced nothing good or permanent, to understate the situation.

He saw that there was more to the Church than its organization or its grand edifices. Its prize is in the Gospel committed to it by the Savior. He was able to see that the Church's glory was not in its umbilical link with the monarchy of the "Most Christian kings," to use the honorific the papacy itself had conferred upon the monarchs of France, but in the sanctity and in the witness of the likes of Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, Margaret Mary Alacoque, and Isaac Jogues.

Impelled by the thought that this Savior personally had called him to the priesthood, and so utterly convinced of the eternal, unique value of Christianity, Jean Marie Vianney worked so hard to be worthy of the Church's expectations for those seeking ordination, and he worked so hard to serve his vocation by serving God's people through all the legendary experiences that now fill his biographies.

As this Year of the Priest commences, it is a time to look upon the life of St. Jean Marie Vianney, the Cure d'Ars, and to ponder that in his life he was so taken by the belief that God alone matters and that life in God is the only reward. Nothing else matters.

The gift of the priest is that in Holy Orders, and in ongoing priestly ministry, the priest holds the key, namely in the sacraments, in his unity with the Church, and in witness to the Gospel, to give others access to this supreme reward.

Realizing the power and critical need of the priesthood in human lives led St. Jean Marie Vianney to live as he lived for so many years, until his death in Ars on Aug. 4, 1859.

It is his example of living the priesthood that the Church offers priests in this year. It was his life as a priest that led the Church to recognize his holiness and to declare him a saint in 1925, only 66 years after his death.

First and foremost, he was the Lord's disciple. He loved the Lord. The Lord had proved to him that nothing else mattered other than to love God and to follow God's Son. TP

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By Eugene Hemrick

## **A Year of Preaching**

### **A nuts-and-bolts approach proposed for proclaiming the Word of God**

One of the most exciting ideas to surface during the world Bishops' Synod on the Bible last October was the suggestion by Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson, Arizona, to create a year of preaching. If this is created, what might be some practical forms it could take?

A good starting point would be to address the nature of the Word, and our use of words. Why should we start here? Because priests have entered an age of bi-location and increased responsibilities. Approximately 20 percent of priests serve more than one parish. This often requires celebrating and preaching several Masses in a day. The proverb "familiarity breeds contempt" reminds us that the Word and use of words can easily become misused, or meaningless. To guard against this, periodic renewal is needed in which delving deeper into the meaning of the Word and the manner in which we proclaim it is given special emphasis.

### **The Power of the Proclaimed Word**

In reviewing the ancient tradition of the homily, the renowned theologian Cardinal Yves Congar, O.P., observed, "If in one country Mass were celebrated for 30 years without preaching and in

another there was preaching for 30 years without Mass, people would be more Christian in the country where there was preaching."

How can Congar's strong emphasis on preaching be justified? Isn't the Mass in itself sufficient?

The meaning of the Hebrew word *dabhar*, "to drive forward" or "to push," gives us one sound justification; it conveys a clear sense of energy. When this definition is applied to the homily, it teaches us that the power of the Word carries forth the power of its speaker. In Genesis, God said, ". . . and so it happened." As God's word created the world, so too, does our preaching create life. This is especially true when it inspires hope in a person filled with despair and lifts up the human spirit to new heights. Even truer is when it leads to salvation.

The Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy further justifies Congar's assertion in stating the real presence of Christ not only is in the consecrated bread and wine, but in the gathered community and proclaimed word as well.

To clinch Congar's argument, we need only review the historical development of the Church and how the preaching of saints such as Paul, Peter, Chrysostom, Dominic, Francis and Ignatius was the primary reason behind its growth.

I must confess that after decades of preaching, I had become nonchalant about it. Then I attended a meeting with the renowned preacher Father Walter Burghardt, S.J. It began with a question being thrown out to those attending.

When it was Burghardt's turn to answer, his words sounded like carefully weighted hammer strokes. His enunciation was impeccable; he didn't waste a word, and like a professional musician, he intoned each word as if it was the crucial note upon which all others depended. Because of this experience, I resolved to be much more careful in the way I use words and proclaim the Word.

A year of preaching might begin on this note by studying the sacredness of the Word and the art of choosing and weighing the spoken word.

### **The Nuts and Bolts for the Year of the Homily**

What else more might be included in a schema for the year of preaching? Educators divide teaching into two essential elements: content and process. In the case of preaching, Scripture is its content, and employing the best means for communicating it effectively is its process.

### **A Process to Consider**

When the year of the preaching was suggested, some observers of the synod recommended the process of publishing homily outlines to assist preachers. What might be their pros and cons?

If the homily outlines contained a uniform catechesis and priests stayed true to their purpose, one advantage would be more uniform catechesis throughout a diocese. The faithful would receive the same message, which would help keep everyone singing in the same choir at a time in which we sometimes have more dissonant soloists than a unified choir.

When I was a young priest, I utilized a homily outline that was very helpful and contained fresh material. It was published by Scripture scholars who possessed good pastoral sense. Below is an example of the use of excellent Scripture and applying it with good pastoral sensitivity.

The Scripture scholars pointed out St. Matthew's central Gospel theme is mercy, which contains three meanings in Hebrew: the womb of a woman, a covenant, and no quid pro quo. When we forgive, it should be from the bottom of our heart for the purpose of reuniting us with another, and there should be no expectation of getting anything in return.

The Scripture scholars then applied mercy to everyday living. "If you ever want to experience an affirmative nod in the congregation, address the topic of resentment, most everyone is plagued by it. It is also the direct antithesis to mercy and forgiving. In portraying the heart of Christ as caring for and forgiving others, Matthew teaches us how to overcome the hardness of heart it spawns. Practicing Christ's forgiveness and caring break the death grip resentment has on us!"

This example from a homily outline contains the substance a homily should contain, i.e., Matthew's Gospel is primarily about mercy and its three principal qualities. Furthermore, it exemplifies Scripture addressing a pastoral problem: resentment.

Homily outlines of this caliber would be an excellent way to make the year of preaching a time for raising the level of catechesis and evangelization.

Another positive advantage of these outlines is assisting priests who have multiple responsibilities, live alone and do not have a brother priest to bounce off homily ideas. [Some of the best homilies I have given were because of discussions I had with priests with whom I lived.]

### **One of the Drawbacks**

This being said, a note of caution must be sounded. One of the drawbacks of ready-made homilies is that they can lead to intellectual and spiritual laziness. Numerous cases have been reported of preachers who read homily outlines word for word. Often these readings are lifeless because the preacher hasn't conducted the study necessary to make them meaningful. As much as most of us don't like the word professional to describe our priestly calling, we are professionals who are expected to keep up our education, and utilize the latest resources in preaching.

In a study we conducted on seminarians, it was found that one of the skills they lacked most was the ability to do research. This finding leads to another possible objective for the year of preaching: discussing the advantages of utilizing research in preparing homilies. Using resources such as a biblical encyclopedia, or scriptural journals creates internalization; the homily becomes an integral part of us because of the effort we expend in creating it. And, too, our people are the first to sense this. When we are handed a homily on a silver platter, we tend to leave our ongoing education in the hands of another. This in turn reduces our personal touch.

Another caution needs to be sounded: homily outlines should not be ones that fit all! In our growing multicultural Church, we need to be cautious of producing homily outlines that speak to one culture. Producing meaningful outlines requires multiple homily outlines for multiple cultures. In the book *Preaching Words*, edited by John McClure, James Nieman and Thomas Rogers, the editors address the work this implies:

It is important to study the social and cultural context and its [the multicultural] demographics. Sermons must be written to respond to the issues and problems of living together as a diverse community beyond the congregation . . . typical issues caused by class distinctions, such as wealth and a sense of danger, grief and loss, as well as the need for spiritual place, sanctuary and hope.

Preachers should use multicultural illustrations and images, working to locate the good news in varied cultural experiences.

I can resonate with this, as I am sure others can. At times, I recite my breviary in Spanish. With no disrespect to English, the Spanish version is much more colorful and imaginative. Capturing this imagery is imperative for connecting with a Latin American culture. It requires an anthropological mentality in which we enter into another's culture and avoid using images solely based on our own culture. If this were accomplished ever so little in the year of preaching, we would see many more immigrants in Church and fewer flocking to denominational churches.

During the year of preaching, another process that might be included in its schema would be to blitz preachers with a list of books and articles on preaching. One of the roles of our website, The National Institute for the Renewal of the Priesthood [[www.jknirp.com](http://www.jknirp.com)] is to accomplish this.

To our surprise, we found more excellent, creative books and articles than we thought existed on the topic. For example, in *Fulfilled in Our Hearing: History and Method of Christian Preaching*, author Guerric DeBona, O.S.B., points out that there is a generative language in preaching, "the kind that evokes concrete feelings, memory, or experiences for the hearer."

DeBona's observation reminds us of the enormous powers we possess for evoking emotions, memories and personal experiences and moving people's hearts.

DeBona goes on to say that "language ought to be as specific and economical as possible, using images and metaphors that generate the concrete world of brick and mortar, the skin and bones

where men and women work and love." Put another way, we are being encouraged to enter into the workplace and homes of our people through the homily in order to lift them to new spiritual heights.

In *The Practice of Preaching: Revised Edition*, Paul Scott Wilson states, "Sermons need to end with a mission and [inspire] lives of faithful service . . . Sermons need a So what? Or Therefore! Every sermon needs to answer for itself Micah's question, 'What does the Lord require of us?'"

Bishop Blase Cupich of Rapid City, South Dakota, states that the process of good preaching "begins with a sound knowledge of Scripture and includes reflection on the Church's tradition down through the centuries to the present time." In other words, we should be growing in our understanding of the traditions of the Church and Scripture constantly in order to be living symbols of them through our preaching.

In his book *How to Make Homilies Better, Briefer, and Bolder*, Father Alfred McBride, O. Praem., implores preachers who give funeral homilies to "begin with words of sympathy for relatives and friends. Be warm, personal and consoling."

"Next, briefly refer to the paschal candle that symbolizes the presence of the risen Christ who leads our friend to the Kingdom. Explain the white pall, or robe, over the casket that recalls the baptismal robe received by our beloved, who has completed the earthly journey."

In *Homilies: What Makes For a Good One?*, Catholic News Service columnist Jane Harriman learned from respondents of a homily survey that they believe "a good homily is something that resonates with my faith, something that makes me go a little deeper and connects to the faith with honesty."

She also found "the ideal homily helps its hearers apply Scripture to their daily lives, but it also reminds them of the presence of Jesus Christ among us and the fact that he alone is our hope."

Another sobering finding was the advice to practice the three Bs: "Be brief, be short, and be done."

In other books we have posted on [www.jknirp.com](http://www.jknirp.com), some authors went into the difference between evoking feelings of empathy and compassion, and how to preach with fire in the belly.

As we can see from these few examples, the list of sermon/homily books and articles on the process of the homily is enormous, varied and waiting to be fully tapped.

## **The Content**

Turning to the content of the homily, the year of preaching might include providing scriptural resources, lectures or courses that explain the biblical underpinnings of the Gospels.

In an age of the iPod and teleconferencing, some of this information could also be posted on the Internet. I say "some," because I believe it would be equally important to have clergy gatherings built around this topic. Gathering priests for a clergy day that would emphasize the year of preaching should be for everyone and should be a concerted effort! There should be no holdouts!

Dioceses might also compose a list of books and articles specifically geared to Scripture-based homilies. They might go so far as to give short summaries and evaluations of the books.

### **A Suggestion**

Allow me to make a suggestion dear to my heart. Someone could scan the literature on preaching and post weekly preaching tips similar to the daily marriage tips posted on the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops' website. Below are two examples of which I speak.

A final decision-making strategy -- Consensus -- combines parts of Concede, Compromise, Chance, and Create a New Solution. It looks at the most likely solution and asks if both partners can live with the decision even if it isn't perfect. One decision-making strategy is Chance, in which you flip a coin or play rock/paper/scissors. A better approach is to Create a new solution. In this way you set up a win/win situation.

In couple decision making, one spouse can Concede to the other if it's not something he or she feels strongly about. Compromise, however, is the more common strategy where both of you agree to meet in the middle.

How about posting brief, digested suggestions on how to make a homily more substantive, inviting and contemporary? Why is this dear to me? In the practice of centering prayer, one of its exercises is composing a short prayer and repeating it throughout the day in order to center on one thought and internalize it. What better way to improve a homily than working on one tip weekly?

I also like the idea of homily tips because short quotes often contain more wisdom than long dissertations. They are short, easy to remember and a good quote is worth its weight in gold.

### **A Sage Principle for All Preaching**

Allow me one last suggestion. The year of preaching should address in one way or other, the sage advice St. Charles Borromeo gave to his priests: "Be sure that you first preach by the way you live. If you do not, people will notice that you say one thing, but live otherwise, and your words will bring only cynical laughter and a derisive shake of the head."

Would it be suggesting too much if a means were constructed for helping us realize more deeply how daily ministry carries into preaching? Perhaps a retreat is the place for this to be implemented?

The schema proposed here is the tip of an iceberg that contains a plethora of exciting schema waiting to be imagined and employed for a year of preaching. In fact, there is so very much we

could include in it that it might be extended beyond a year. Take for example the following suggestions:

- Have preachers trade pulpits with neighboring preachers.
- Select a group of lay persons to give feedback on homilies.
- Have preachers attend Mass and observe how others are preaching.
- Gather famous talks/speeches, and have a session that studies their dynamics.
- Have a session with persons who are in the business of maximizing communication for the public.
- Invite homiletic professors to address preachers.
- Encourage preachers to video/ audio tape themselves and evaluate their performance.

As we can see, a year of preaching could be very interesting, invigorating and inspiring. It could also be very refreshing for our parishioners who often endure rather than enjoy the homily. TP

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