

Looking Out My Window, February 25, 2022



Last week, I shared with you my best thoughts on my intentions in preaching. Today, reflect with me on preparation. People often ask how long it takes to prepare a homily. The answer comes at two levels. First, all of life experience, reading, and reflection lie behind preparation. Second, the actual desk time for a particular homily varies from person to person. For me, that can be 8-12 hours.

First, I do a deep dive into the reading on which the homily will be based. For me, that means reading in the original language. But, twenty years in the academy, including teaching biblical Greek to seminarians makes that possible. Reading involves being alert for where energy clusters in the text, where there might be polarities and tensions.

Once something jumps off the page, I will reflect on that portion of the reading and ask what God might be saying to me. What might be meaningful for the faith community here, what messages from God? Then, I will do a deep dive into at least one major commentary on that passage, preferably one I've not read before. I seldom look at popular level commentaries and sermons, preferring rather to depend on my own imagination.

Then, I begin looking for a way to begin—an image or turn of phrase from a novel, a poem, a vivid quotation. an imaginative line of my own. One rule of thumb—I never quote from materials I've not read personally, so no gathering isolated quotes from the internet. The intent—to capture your attention with an image or vivid line that also opens up the theme(s) in the reading that the homily develops.

Last of all, the last few words will be an appeal for your response in feeling, intent, and action. Can I appeal to your mind and heart in a way that you will respond?

My written preparation usually fills four typed pages. More than that and I know you're in for a longer Sunday morning.

God's peace,

*David* +

Fr. David