



Introduction

Your Task: to Reveal Holy & Gracious Mystery

To preach or teach in a way that invites others into Holy Mystery is to take part in the sacred work of revealing Love made flesh. It is to touch the deepest longing of the human heart—to be known, loved, and drawn into communion with the Divine. The purpose of the homily or catechetical lesson is not merely to explain but to awaken, not simply to inform but to transform.

Each Sunday, the readings open before us like windows through which the Divine Light shines into human experience—sometimes gently, sometimes piercingly, always with grace. The task of the homilist or catechist is not merely to interpret these texts, but to help hearts encounter the living Christ who still speaks through them.

The homilist or teacher, therefore, must speak with both reverence and warmth, revealing that the Holy One is not distant but profoundly near—present in every act of forgiveness, every gesture of compassion, every rising of hope amid despair. Such preaching forms hearts that believe forgiveness can triumph over resentment, that love can disarm hatred, that light still burns even when shadows fall, and that hope, like Christ, rises from the ashes of sorrow.

When we proclaim that forgiveness triumphs over resentment, that love overwhelms hatred, that light endures the darkness, and that hope rises even from the ashes, we do more than convey doctrine—we awaken faith. We make present the God who is Love, incarnate and indwelling, whose tenderness meets every wound and whose mercy restores what seems lost. Such moments of proclamation are occasions of grace, where the Word becomes flesh once more in the hearts of listeners.

The effective homilist allows that tension to live within their words and tone: God’s tenderness and transcendence intertwined. In doing so, the preacher becomes a vessel of grace, allowing listeners to experience—not just hear—that the Word has become flesh and dwells among us still.

To preach in this spirit is to balance awe and intimacy: to stand humbly before the inexhaustible Mystery of God who is at once utterly beyond us and profoundly near. It is to speak of divine transcendence in a voice warm with compassion, to reveal a Presence that is both radiant and familiar. In every liturgy, every lesson, this is our calling—to help the People of God recognize, in the ordinary and the sacred alike, that the Holy Mystery dwells among us, loving us into fullness of life.

Karl Rahner SJ

In these homilies—presented as a complete set of “talking points” for each week and feast—we follow the sage and helpful advice of Fr Karl Rahner, SJ. Consulting Karl Rahner when preparing homilies is valuable because he unites profound spirituality with rigorous theology, grounding the preacher’s words in both faith and lived experience. His vision of God as Holy Mystery—ever present, self-giving, and beyond comprehension—helps homilists speak not in abstractions, but with reverent awe and pastoral warmth, inviting listeners into the wonder of divine presence woven through everyday life.

The Importance of the Poetry

The poetry in each chapter is integral to the theology here. Karl Rahner taught that ordinary, analytical language can never fully capture the Holy Mystery that is God. Theology, while necessary, often runs up against the limits of words. Poetry, however, with its imagery, rhythm, and openness, can gesture toward what is beyond precise concepts. It lets faith “speak” in a way that keeps mystery intact.

In his essay “Priest and Poet” (1954), Rahner reflected on how the poet’s word is closer to the experience of mystery than ordinary speech. He distinguished between everyday language, which serves practical tasks, and “primordial words,” which are charged with existential depth. Poetry uses these primordial words, allowing mystery to shine through language.

“There are words which are not just tools, but living beings,” he wrote in that essay, “embodying the mystery which they reveal. Poetry is the sphere in which such words live and speak.”

Rahner went further, saying theology should not treat poetry, music, or art as “optional illustrations.” They are intrinsic ways of expressing the human encounter with God’s self-communication. The Mystery of God overflows rational categories, and so the symbolic, poetic, and artistic become vital to theology itself.¹

Speaking Of God

For added resources, additional poetry, new ideas from readers like you, applications of this to faith formation, liturgy, and pastoral care, free and reproducible parish resources—and many other helpful elements—please visit the book’s website: **SpeakingOfGod.org**

You will also find the book itself, *Speaking of God: The Language of Love in Holy Mystery* to be a helpful background resource because in this homily resource we are moving away from an older, often implicit image of God as distant, unpredictable, and hard to approach—a God who seemed to watch from afar, judge quickly, and forgive slowly. Instead, we turn toward the God revealed by Jesus: A God who comes close, who heals and embraces, who forgives seventy-times-seven, who calls us friends, and whose very nature is merciful love poured out for the life of the world.

This is not a new God, but the fuller truth of who God has always been—Emmanuel, God-with-us—inviting us not into fear and distance, but into trust, intimacy, and joyful communion with Holy Mystery who dwells within and walks lovingly beside us. This is the God portrayed by Jesus in the story of the rambunctious son who returned to his father in Luke 15, only to be received with open arms and mercy. It’s the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19, of Matthew called from his tax table in Matthew 9, and of countless others in the pastoral ministry and homiletic teaching of Jesus.

And it’s the call you offer to your listeners as you reveal this Holy and Gracious Mystery. You will open their hearts to a profound encounter with God and prepare them to celebrate the Eucharist with you a few minutes after you finish your homily. Thank you for the weekly efforts to find the words with which to reveal this Mystery in your homily or teaching. We hope the tender and graceful words we offer here in each week’s note—the pastoral warmth they suggest and the closeness to Jesus they portray—will be your helpful companion.

Here is a poem to set the stage for the task of revealing Holy Mystery:

Nearer Than We Dream

We once imagined You far away—
high above the clouds,
watching, judging,
too holy to draw near.

But You stepped into our dust,
called us by name,
touched the wounded places,
and spoke forgiveness
like sunlight breaking through morning mist.

Now we know:
You were never distant.
You are the breath behind our breathing,
the mercy holding our sorrow,
the love that will not let us go.

Nearer than we dream,
You are here.

How to Use These Talking Points

We provide a full set of talking points for each week or feast, but please make them your own. There is space here for you to jot a note, highlight or underline a phrase, or insert a poem of your own. The homilies all follow a similar pattern and are designed to run 8-10 minutes. Note please that the design of each homily has been kept uniform to allow you to proclaim it from these pages plus your own notes. *These aren't meant to be read verbatim*, but to serve as the platform for your homiletic message. Hence, each set of homily notes includes 5 or 6 points (including the opening and closing thoughts), separated by lines to help guide your eye in the pulpit.

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Preaching with Heart and Purpose



As you prepare your homily, remember you are not simply conveying information—you are breaking open the Word for a people who hunger for hope, guidance, and meaning.

Use these talking points and reflections as a **starting place**, not a script. Let them spark your imagination, touch your prayer, and connect with your own lived experience of Christ.

Then speak **in your own voice**, from your own heart, to the particular people entrusted to your care.

A few guiding principles:

1. Pray first, and pray again.

Sit with the Scriptures.

Let a word, an image, a feeling rise.

Preach from the place where prayer meets real life.

2. Know who is in front of you.

They are parents and widows,
students and workers,
the lonely, the joyful, the exhausted, the searching.
Honor their dignity.
Speak to their reality.

3. Be pastoral and welcoming — yet honest and bold.

Jesus comforted the broken
and confronted what hindered love.
Let compassion lead,
and let truth follow with tenderness.

4. Keep it simple and human.

One message.
One movement of hope.
One invitation to grace.
Paint pictures people can live in,
not arguments they must decipher.

5. Stay within 8–10 minutes.

Not because time is the measure of holiness,
but because hearts receive best
when we offer clarity, focus, and reverence for their time.

6. Leave them with something to do or believe.

A small practice.
A new way of seeing.
A word to plant in the week ahead.

7. Preach with warmth, authenticity, and joy.

People listen not only to what we say,
but to who we are.
Let your love for Christ — and for them — be visible.

And above all:

Trust the Holy Spirit.

More is happening than you can see.
Grace does the deepest work.
You are sowing seeds that God will water.

Thank you for this sacred ministry.
May your preaching be a bridge of mercy,
a doorway to hope,
and a quiet flame that lights the way to Christ.

¹ Karl Rahner, “Priest and Poet,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 3, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1967), 354–67. See also Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, *More Recent Writings* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), where he speaks of symbolic and artistic language as mediating mystery.