

# **A Priest's Guide to Preaching the Gospel**

Summary of *Humani Generis Redemptionem*  
On Preaching the Word of God  
Pope Benedict XV  
June 15, 1917

## I. Jesus Commissioned the Apostles to Preach the Gospel

1. It was the desire of Jesus Christ, after he had won the redemption of the human race, to send his heralds to announce to all mankind what they must believe and do in order to be saved. Their preaching renewed the face of the earth, it turned men from error to truth, and it turned men's hearts from vice to virtue.
2. Preaching the wisdom taught by the Christian Religion is the means to continue the work of eternal salvation. Preaching must be looked upon as a matter of the greatest and most momentous concern and must be the object of special care and attention.

## II. Preaching the Word of God Does Not Produce its Effect

1. The preachers of the Word are more numerous; however, the state of public and private morals and the constitutions and laws of nations there is a general disregard for the supernatural, a falling away from Christian virtue, and a slipping back more and more into the shameful practices of paganism.
2. Has the Word of God ceased to be living and effectual or more piercing than any two-edged sword? Has its long and continued use blunted the sword? Were the Apostles living in better times or did they find minds more readily disposed to the Gospel?
3. If the Word of God does not everywhere produce its effect the blame certainly must be laid on those ministers of the Gospel who do not handle it as they should.

## III. Bringing Preaching to its Norm and Ideal

### A. Duty of the Bishop

1. Preaching the Gospel is the paramount duty of the Bishop. Due to the Bishop's many duties he must of necessity comply with this obligation through others. No one on his own responsibility is to undertake the office of preaching. No one is to preach in the diocese without being summoned and approved by the Bishop.
2. The preacher is the Bishop's substitute. The Bishop is to select for this sacred office only those who are fit and can exercise the ministry with profit to souls. This profit is spiritual fruit. Those fit for preaching have signs of a Divine vocation, are imbued with power from on high, and have the required knowledge and virtue. The character and learning of the person are of utmost importance.

3. If a Bishop detects someone preaching for his own gain and glory and perverting the holy office of preaching, the Bishop is to remove this person lest a stain is brought upon the sacred office of preaching. The Bishop is responsible for the errors of the untrained preacher.

#### B. Ideals of a Good Preacher

1. The ideal preacher must:
  - a. Be the right person.
  - b. Have the requisite virtues.
  - c. Preach with the right intention.
  - d. Preach with the right method.

#### C. Purpose in Preaching

1. To be ambassadors of Christ
2. To give testimony to the Truth

The preacher must diffuse the light of truth made known by God and he must quicken and nourish their supernatural life. The preacher must promote the glory of God. He must lead men to a fuller knowledge of God and the way of eternal salvation.

#### D. Errors in Preaching

1. Some are moved to preach by the desire of vainglory and to satisfy it. Due to this they express high rather than practical thoughts. They are ashamed of what is simple and plain.
2. Since some truths revealed by God frighten our weak and corrupt nature and are not calculated to attract a multitude, therefore, some preachers avoid them.
3. Some do not focus on things eternal but instead focus on current issues engrossed in the minds of their listeners. They seek to only please their hearers.
4. Some do not focus on the Scriptures but turn to non-Catholic literature.
5. Some take to preaching to make money.
6. Some have neglected the acquisition of what is necessary for performing the sacred office of preaching.

### IV. Successful Preaching

#### A. Learning is absolutely necessary for the preacher, especially knowledge of:

1. Self – will lead a priest to renounce his own advantage.
2. God – will lead him to make others know and love God.
3. Duties – will lead him to discharge his duties.

## B. Spiritual Preparation for Preaching

1. Full conformity to the will of God. Perfect submission to the will of God. “Lord what will thou have me do?” (Acts 9:6)
2. Patient endurance of hardships. A soul prepared for hardships that will not avoid labor or trouble of any kind. This effaces whatever human weakness there is in the preacher.
3. A spirit of prayer. What gives a man’s words life and vigor and makes them promote the salvation of souls is Divine grace. He little given to prayer profits not himself or his listeners.

## C. Important Subjects for Preaching

- Never avoid subjects, owing to the corruption of the age, that appear too stern. How unworthy of commendation are those preachers who are afraid to touch upon certain points of Christian doctrine lest they should give their hearers offense.
- The test of the orator’s power and skill is his success in making his hearers accept the stern truth he is preaching.
- Those who do not accept the truth are blinded because their souls are corrupt.
  1. Jesus Christ and him crucified: “For I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.” (1 Cor. 2:2).
  2. To make men know Jesus Christ better and better and to make that knowledge have a bearing not only on their faith but on their lives as well.
  3. All of Christ’s commandments; even the sterner ones.
  4. Humility, self-denial, chastity, contempt for the world, obedience, forgiveness of sins, love of one’s enemy and the like.
  5. Sacred Scriptures, Fathers, Doctors of the Church, Sacred Theology

### *Humani Generis Redemptionem*

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