

Fr. Perozich comments —

As a priest I could be insulted that a lay Catholic said the homilies are dull, that he has to go to Protestant radio for inspiration. Yet it was my own experience as a layman, an experience expressed before the board of deans in 1991 which almost kept me from ordination.

I was asked what I liked about the diocese. My response was that I liked the priests that I had met over the years.

I was asked what I did not like, and imprudently told the truth, “Poor liturgies and poor homilies, as if priests just get up in the pulpit unprepared and speak.” I said that I would not do that. Several of the deans were furious, one in particular demanding my dismissal from seminary.

It resulted in multiple more meetings before a positive decision to ordain me was made.

I prepared my homily for 6 days before Sunday Mass and for an hour each day before daily Mass. Never did I pull an old one out of a file and reuse it, rather I made a fresh homily for each Mass. They are available at <http://richardperozich.com/homilies>.

I considered my bulletin reflections an extension of good preaching, and those were silenced in 2016. (Some things never change, LOL!)

Lifesite just quoted the Holy Father regarding COVID-19, “Pope Francis told a Spanish journalist on Sunday that he believes that the coronavirus pandemic is nature “having a fit” in response to environmental pollution.” Very little of the spiritual was in the report.

<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/pope-francis-blames-coronavirus-on-nature-having-a-fit-over-environmental-damage>

“Parish pastors are often too busy and overworked with worldly affairs to rise early every morning for deep prayer and contemplation before work, in order to sharpen their dulled wits at the grindstone.”

For you laity, the bureaucracy of the church on a priest is growing, taking time from sacramental life, prayer, evangelization. Annual convocation, winter and fall assemblies, quarterly deanery meetings, special meetings with the bishop, pastoral and finance council meetings, school board meetings, coordination with mandatory appointees from the parish to the various offices of the bishop and his diocese, and on and on.

I never neglected preparation for liturgy or for homilies as I vowed I would be unlike those I criticized in year 3 of seminary before the board of deans. Rather, I let go the meetings instead.

In my letter asking for retirement I noted that I could no longer attend long meetings. Brother priests complain that it has gotten worse with the new crop of bishops from the year 2,000 up to now.

This time of COVID-19 can be a stressor for pastors who still have to pay bills without a Sunday collection and with spotty donations by mail or electronic debit.

It can be a time of grace to reevaluate what priesthood is about to connect the people with God and God with His people through good liturgy and solid preaching once again, even if in the future it costs the priest his good relationship with the diocesan bishop and bureaucracies, assuming they ever exist again in the same way because of the lack of finances.

The Grindstone

An analogy for restoring a cutting edge to evangelization



TOPICS

[Uncategorized](#)

By Richard DellOrfano | March 24th 2020 3:13 PM

During a homily, the priest lifted our bored faces by boldly declaring, “So not everyone’s going to heaven.” A matronly woman sitting next to me looked up for a moment from thumbing her cell phone. Somehow assured that her Judgment Day was not imminent, she then returned to marking the Joyful and Sorrowful Mysteries via social media.

Toddlers were fidgeting more than usual, because their parents were too. A father stifled his yawn for fear it would spread to his wife and kids. His boy popped bubblegum and woke lots of drowsy folks. That 20-minute sermon was so dull. What was missing?

The question lingered until one day, **Lou, an 81-year-old Catholic friend of mine, complained about the dull Sunday sermons at his own parish.**

“Sixty years ago it wasn’t that way,” he said. “Back then the Mass was in Latin, shrouded with a sense of mystery and awe, when women covered their heads with black shawls, their lips moving in whispered prayers while fingering their rosaries. There was standing room only at Mass every week. Sermons back then had fire and

brimstone. **Now I have to listen to Protestant radio preachers for inspiration. Our priests have lost it.**”

He got me thinking about what’s missing. My mind flashed back to my grandfather, Michael, who, at age 78, was a tall, large-framed, muscular man. When I was 14, he was in robust health, with hazel eyes, a full crop of dark hair, and a gray handlebar mustache. Leaving his wife and son behind for later passage here, he had immigrated to New York from Italy in 1902. Unable to speak English but trained in farm work from his early childhood, he knew, with no more than a sixth-grade education, the secrets of making barren soil productive with manure, compost, and loving husbandry.

His son (my dad) was successful in business and bought a half acre in Melrose, MA, where Grandpa planted Concord grapes, peach trees, and tilled a large garden every year to grow a variety of vegetables like cucumbers, spinach, and lettuce. We kids sowed seeds, hunted for tomato worms, and picked red, sweet plum tomatoes. Mother then canned them for her luscious tomato recipes laced with fresh herbs.

Grandpa selected the best tomato seeds for next year and stored them to dry in the tool shed beneath our house. Herbs like basil and rosemary hung from a nail on the edge of a shelf. He’d neatly arranged tools on wall pegs. When he visited us for a weekend, he’d sleep on a cot next to his sacred possession: a treadle grindstone enshrined in a dark corner. Above it, a string of garlic bulbs dangled as if to drive off demons.

Early one morning I entered the tool shed and found him as usual sharpening his knives on that grindstone – a gray wheel about a foot in diameter with a flat 2-inch rim and a peddle crank.

He pumped the foot treadle while his hands skillfully stroked a blade's edge on the stone's rotating rim. Water dribbled from a suspended can to cool the stone lest it overheat and distort the blade. It seemed he didn't notice me enter, he was so preoccupied – as though mesmerized by the flashing sparks of steel on stone. His hands performed the ancient practice – a cloaked liturgy chorused by the grindstone's enchanting drone. I was oblivious to the charisma and mystique of a contemplative holy man in action.

“How long do you have to sharpen that, Grandpa?”

He didn't understand English much, so he grunted a response. An hour later, he nicked shavings from the surface of fingernails, to show me his knives were razor sharp.

I am now in my late seventies, as was my grandfather back then. This remembrance of his devotional focus helps explain why typical Catholic homilies have no cutting edge. **Parish pastors are often too busy and overworked with worldly affairs to rise early every morning for deep prayer and contemplation before work, in order to sharpen their dulled wits at the grindstone.**

Richard M. DellOrfano spent ten years on a cross-country pilgrimage following Christ's instruction to minister without possessions. He is completing his autobiography: Path Perilous, My Search for God and the Miraculous.