

Getting the Most Out of the Homily

Listening attentively to a homily can be a challenge. If you listen for liturgical, seasonal, and biblical references in the homily, you can train yourself to follow along and come away with a point or two worth contemplating during the week. Probably the best way to listen to a homily is to prepare yourself before Mass begins.



attentiveness will be rewarded with an insight into the specific purpose of *this celebration*.

Step Four: Having done steps one through three you are ready to give your attention to the homily. The preacher will preach from the prayers of the liturgy, the lectionary readings, or both. His job is bring the ancient wisdom of Scripture and the

Church into the current moment and show how God knows and loves each one of us intimately, and how His Word applies to our joys, our suffering, and our growth in holiness. Ask yourself: *what is God encouraging me to do so that I may be closer to Him?*

Step Five: Now that the homily is done, sit for a moment with what you heard God encouraging you to do. Receive from Him the grace you need to understand and to do His will. Be sure to give Him thanks for His Word, and devote yourself to growing in holiness. Gratitude perfects humility and humility is the foundation of prayer.

If you sincerely and consistently follow these five steps, you will find yourself appreciating the homily as a means of growing closer to God.

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Here are five steps to take in order to get the most out of the homily:

Step One: Read the assigned lectionary readings before Mass begins. You can find the readings on the USCCB's website at <http://www.usccb.org> or in one of the many missalette available in your pew. Read for themes, images, key ideas, and connect these to the liturgical season or occasion. If you prepare the readings beforehand, you can listen to the reader proclaim the Word from the ambo. You might be surprised by what you hear!

Step Two: Pray over the readings. Once you have read the lectionary readings, sit quietly in prayer, receiving from God the grace of wisdom to understand. Jesus says many times in the Gospels that those with ears to hear and eyes to see will understand his Word and deeds. There will not be any lightning bolts or claps of thunder, but when you open your heart and mind in prayer, the Holy Spirit will show you the Way.

Step Three: Follow the prayers of the Mass (or the liturgy) word for word; that is, repeat in your head each word the celebrant prays aloud. Not only will this keep you focused, it will also help you connect the liturgy's prayers to the readings. Since you have already read and prayed over the readings, your

