

UNIT 1B LITURGY AND HOMILETICS

12a: Baptism and Chrismation

Baptismal Rites: East and West

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann describes baptism "as the sacrament of regeneration, as re-creation [that is, New Creation] as the personal Pascha and the personal Pentecost of man, as the integration into the *laos*, the people of God, as the 'passage' from the old into the new life and finally as an Epiphany of the Kingdom of God."¹ However, Father Schmemmann notes that this full understanding of baptism as a central foundation of the Christian life is often ignored because it does "not fit into the legalistic framework adopted from the West."² Part of the difficulty is that the rites of the Latin Church are often termed "sacraments," while the Eastern Church often prefers the term "mysteries." Although the term "sacraments" has been retained for this lecture (as it was by Father Schmemmann), the insights of David Melling are important. In a careful analysis of the term "mysteries" in the context of seeking to understand the mysteries of "the knowledge of God" (Wisdom of Solomon 8.4), he reminds us:

Roman Catholic neo-scholastic sacramental theology tended to emphasize (1) the role of sacraments in personal sanctification, (2) the juridical status of sacramental rites and (3) the status of the sacraments as means of grace. Eastern understanding of the mysteries would tend to emphasize (1) the mysteries as divine and ecclesial acts, (2) the theological status of the mysteries and (3) their role in transformation and deification. The two approaches are not simply opposed, still less incompatible, but they represent a significant difference of emphasis.³

The difference of emphasis is indeed significant; however, within both Roman Catholic and Orthodox theology and life "Christians are called to participate in Christ's divinity, not to become disincarnate spirits but to attain a more authentic humanity."⁴

In the Orthodox perspective, baptism initiates a lifelong journey into the mystery of how the knowledge of God can be acquired by a human being through a process of growth as set out by St. Peter in 1 Peter 1:2-4:

¹ Fr Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (Crestwood NY: SVS Press, 1974), pp. 10-11.

² Schmemmann, p. 11.

³ David Melling, "mysteries" in Ken Parry, David J. Melling, Dimitri Brady, Sidney H. Griffith & John F. Healey (eds.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 333.

⁴ Ken Parry, "deification" in Parry, Melling, Brady, Griffith & Healey (eds.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, p. 159.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, and through these you may be partakers of the divine nature

The mystery of how human beings become “partakers of the divine nature” is begun by God, but human assent and participation in free will is also essential in order to achieve “a more authentic humanity.” Rather than pursue this linguistic and theological distinction further, let us focus on the meaning of baptism in the New Testament and the early Church, as well as the contemporary order of baptism and chrismation, with its continuing stress upon the unity of baptism and the Eucharist.

Baptism in the New Testament

The numerous references to baptism in the New Testament form a unity beginning with the witness and actions of St. John the Baptist (Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3), more than 20 references in Acts, the theological implications of baptism set out by St. Paul (Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 1:17; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12) and the Great Commission of the resurrected Christ in Matthew 28.19 to baptise “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” There are also narratives in each of the synoptic gospels of Christ's own baptism (Matthew 3.13-17; Mark 1.9-13; Luke 4:21-22). What then is the connection between Christian baptism, Jesus' baptism in Jordan and His life and work? We know of various forms of baptism in Judaism at the time, for example, that of Gentile proselytes for the forgiveness of sins and other cleansing rituals, mostly priestly in character, as well as the ablutions of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement being the most striking. St. John the Baptist was demanding proselyte baptism of all Jews, a practice quite scandalous, holding these sons and daughters of Israel as no better than pagans with regard to the coming of Kingdom and the appearance of Messiah. However, the fact that St. John the Baptist was baptising in the Jordan at the very place where Joshua had led the Israelites into the Promised Land⁵ indicates the firm continuity between Judaism and Christianity of which both St. John the Baptist and Jesus Christ Himself were fully aware.

Why did Jesus, being sinless, also submit Himself to baptism? He Himself answers that it is “to fulfil all righteousness” (Matthew 3.15). What does He mean? As set out in the New Testament, the baptism in Jordan is the beginning of Christ's work of salvation, the revelation concerning His identity and mission from the Father, and the resting upon Him of the Holy Spirit, a theophany in

⁵ Andrew D. Mayes, *Beyond the Edge: Spiritual Transitions for Adventurous Souls* (London: SPCK, 2013), pp. 3-4.

fact of the Trinity. This heavenly proclamation given in Matthew 12.18-21 cites Isaiah 42:1-6, the Song of the Suffering Servant, who suffers vicariously for his people. In the moment of His baptism He is declared Son of God and is equipped by the Holy Spirit for this special role as the Suffering Servant. He is told that He is baptised not for His own sins but for those of the whole people. He is baptised in view of His death, which achieves forgiveness for all men. Thus His baptism manifests the connection between His death on the cross and the forgiveness of sins. When Jesus applies the word "baptidzein" to Himself He means to suffer and to die for His people. This means that the baptismal grace that we receive comes from His death on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead. Christian baptism then is a transformative participation in the death and the resurrection of Christ. It is more than this though. It is an infilling of the Holy Spirit as well as an immersion in the waters. Indeed, the Forerunner declares that he baptises with water but the one to come will baptise with Holy Spirit, and with fire (Matthew 3.11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3.16). The baptism given by St. John is preparatory and transient, but Christ brings a baptism that is final and leads directly into the Kingdom of God. Baptism in its Chrismation element imparts the Holy Spirit, this eschatological gift which is even now realised at Pentecost. This means that Christian Baptism only becomes possible when Christ's work is complete, and the Church is formed by the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism in the Early Church

In the early Church the preparation for Baptism lasted a long period of time, anything between one and three years. Then, as today, baptism was viewed as "the door that leads peoples into the Christian Church;"⁶ however, that door was opened rather more slowly in the early Church than today in order to assess each candidate with due acumen. All candidates were initially scrutinised by the bishop in relation to their faith and character and then enrolled as catechumens. After prayer and exorcism, they were instructed in the life of the Church by the study of the Scriptures and Holy Tradition. The community prayed for them and supported them in their journeys. Baptism usually happened at Pascha, just once a year, although with the increasing prevalence of infant baptism this connection was lost after the Council of Carthage in 253 made infant baptism a recommended practice. During the final 40 days of the Great Fast before Pascha the candidate's preparation intensified with prayer, fasting and confession. On the night of the Paschal Vigil candidates were led into the baptistery of the darkened church, cast away their old clothing and made their profession of faith naked before being immersed three times in the waters of the font

⁶ Sergey Trostyanskiy, "Baptism," in John Antony McGuckin (ed.), *The Concise Encyclopedia of Orthodox Christianity* (Chichester, West Sussex, 2014), p. 53

in the name of the Trinity and clothed in a white garment signifying Christ, in the context that the original meaning of the word *candidatus* was white;⁷ and this continued in England with the tradition of "Whit Sunday," that is "white Sunday." Finally they were each anointed with holy chrism for the gift of the Holy Spirit and then led into church with the rest of the congregation for the remainder of the Vigil, the Service of Light at midnight and Holy Communion in the Divine Liturgy at dawn—with full participation in the One Holy Liturgy. It is also important to remember that for many candidates for baptism their willingness to become Christian also expressed an acceptance of the possibility of martyrdom in the face of intermittent but intense persecution of the Church and many of its members. Therefore, in the early Church for hundreds of years the choice and implementation of the decision to be baptised was a life changing experience.

This powerful experience of paschal rebirth by water and the Holy Spirit has essentially been followed unchanged to this day, although a few changes in the order reflect the decline, until recently at least, of the catechumenate. The recent recovery of the catechumenate in both post-Christian societies and remaining virgin mission cultures will doubtless revive and restore something of the integrity and functionality of the original process of preparation and initiation. We shall describe below the pattern of initiation in holy baptism currently practised, although it should be recognised that a recovery of the catechumenate would probably require that the two liturgies of the catechumens and of baptism be separated once more in order to allow the prayers to follow more closely the trajectory and timeline of the catechetical process.

The Contemporary Order of Baptism and Chrismation

Several rites which used to be spread over this whole period are now performed at the beginning of the baptismal service, the so called "Prayers at the reception of the Catechumens:"

1. The Priest brings the person to be baptised into the middle of the church, thrice breathes in his face, signs his face with the sign of cross and lays his hand upon his head.
2. Then he performs Prayers of exorcism. There follows ...
3. The Renunciation of Satan
4. The Allegiance to Christ
5. The Confession of Faith
6. The last prayer 'Blessed is God' with the supplication that this person become "the Child of Thy Kingdom."

⁷ Sergey Trostyanskiy, "Baptism," in John Antony McGuckin (ed.), *The Concise Encyclopedia of Orthodox Christianity* (Chichester, West Sussex, 2014), p. 53

Then follows baptism proper. It starts with the solemn doxology: "Blessed is the Kingdom." Only three services begin with this doxology – baptism, Eucharist and marriage. This indicates that these three liturgical services are intimately connected, with baptism and marriage being fulfilled in the Eucharist. It also shows us the eschatological character of the Church, her main task being the expectation of the fullness of God's reign in the New Creation. Here is the sequence of the baptism itself:

1. The Blessing of the Water. This blessing reveals the true dimensions of the baptismal mystery, not only personal and communal, but also cosmic, showing its relation to the world and matter, to life and all its aspects. Water has a very important spiritual symbolism in all human cultures, but especially in Judaism, with its role in the creative and redemptive activity of God.
2. The Priest's prayer for himself. This refutes any 'magical' understanding of the sacrament and reminds us of our responsibility for praying the service with integrity and faith.
3. The Prayer of the Blessing. This is an 'eucharistic' prayer or prayer of thanksgiving, identical in basic structure to that of the Divine Liturgy itself. It consists of:-
 - a. Preface, similar to the preface of the Eucharistic prayer over the Bread and Wine.
 - b. Anamnesis or a realised remembrance, the recapitulation of the salvation history, past, present AND future, NOW, all in the present moment.
 - c. Epiclesis, that is, the invocation of the Holy Spirit.
 - d. Consecration – "to show this water to be the water of redemption, sanctification, purification, the loosening of bonds, the remission of sins, the illumination of the soul, the laver of regeneration, the renewal of the Spirit, the gift of adoption to sonship, the garment of incorruption and the fountain of life." People often talk of baptism as mainly a remission of sins, yet this approach neglects the incredible range of the gifts it includes! Baptism is indeed a sacrament of joining and participation in the life, death and resurrection of the Saviour of the world.
4. Anointing with the 'Oil of Gladness.' This first anointing is for the fullness of life which comes from the waters of baptism, irrigating not only embodied souls but also the whole of creation.
5. Immersion three times of the one to be baptised in the Name of the Trinity—with the firm requirement that water must flow over the whole body, whatever the extent of the immersion. The grace of Baptism offers a possibility to truly die and rise with Christ, to have new life in Him. We give ourselves to Him, unite ourselves with Him, so we are given Christ's death and Resurrection, thus making His death and Resurrection ours! We truly die; but we rise again, because

by dying on the cross He filled death with Himself so that death is no more; and we shall rise again with Him.

This first part of the baptism proper is sometimes described as the 'Sacrament of the Water,' as opposed to the next part which is the 'Sacrament of the Spirit' (more commonly known as Chrismation). Christian Baptism, as pointed out earlier, is different from the Jewish proselyte baptism in being the 'complete sacrament,' both of a death to sin and a gift of the new life in the Spirit. Thus we have no need for charismatic renewal, because baptism itself is our renewal.

The second part of the baptism proper is the Gift of the Holy Spirit. This includes:

1. The Vesting in the white garment signifying purity by being clothed in Christ; and
2. The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit by anointing. In this the baptised is given the dignity of being King, Priest and Prophet. This empowerment with the Holy Spirit is also the rite of ordination for all into the Royal Priesthood of all believers.

From Baptism to Eucharist: A Continuing Reality

The Church is the eschatological Israel whereby she becomes a whole nation of prophets, priests and kings (of all genders and ages). Prefiguring this, there were indeed anointings of the High Priest in the Jerusalem Temple on the Day of Atonement, and these anointings are remarkably similar to our whole rite of Baptism, including the ritual washing for purification. Fittingly the next part of the rite of baptism is the Entrance into the Kingdom, which is indeed the place, the Holy of Holies, where Christians offer the new Spiritual Sacrifice — the Eucharist of Christ's Body and Blood. This Entrance is symbolised by the procession around the Baptismal font. To understand its significance we might reflect that this procession mirrors the same one outside the Church at the Paschal Vigil.

The rite of baptism/chrismation is completed with the so called 'Rites of the Eighth Day', which include the removal of the Holy Chrism and the tonsuring—the cutting of the hair which is the first offering of the candidate to God. The eighth day is the day Christ rose from the dead, the day "beyond time" during which the newly baptised experiences Bright Week as "the 'epiphany' and the gift: the experience of the new life as truly not of this world, the gift of the Church *in statu patriae*, in her heavenly fullness, as truly the gift of the Kingdom."⁸

⁸ Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit*, p. 123.

To summarise, Holy Baptism traces the candidate's ongoing journey from death to life in Christ and confers the Holy Spirit to make it possible to reach the final destination of that journey in the Kingdom of God. In this regard baptism has a close affinity with the Holy Eucharist which should follow on directly from baptism in order that the newly baptised might receive first Holy Communion. If baptism begins the Christian journey toward the Kingdom, the Eucharist is also divine food for the same journey. Thus together "baptism and the Eucharist remain the cornerstone of the sacramental life of the Church. Baptism confers being and existence in Christ and leads the faithful into life, while the Eucharist continues this life."⁹ Yet without the Eucharist, baptism is incomplete; and without baptism, receipt of the Eucharist is impossible. There is then a certain bipolarity – a movement between the two poles of baptism and the Eucharist – not merely in the past history of each Christian, but in the continuing reality of a sustained personal commitment to the Crucified Christ who has become the Risen Christ and leads the Church to holiness and the bright dawn of the new age of the Kingdom.

Homiletics

12b: Objectives of Teaching and Preaching

The ultimate objective of teaching and preaching is quite simply, but profoundly, for each of us to become one with God – the deification of the teacher, the preacher and the listener. This process of transforming ourselves is a lifelong process in which we learn to listen to others, as well as God.

Teaching and preaching share certain common objectives, yet, as noted in the previous lecture, they also have unique objectives that differentiate them from each other. The process of learning to teach or preach requires considerable prayer, listening, reading, reflection and experience. This small course is only a beginning, yet there is so much information available that it is often difficult to know where to turn in order to grow. Therefore, each of the objectives set out below has been linked to one further source that could be useful to encourage personal growth. It might be worthwhile to choose one specific objective of particular interest and follow up that objective by committing a certain amount of time each week. However, such an approach should not be so excessively structured that the action of the Holy Spirit on the preacher is restricted. Whatever approach to learning is

⁹ Tamara Grdzeldze, "Church (Orthodox Ecclesiology) in John Anthony McGuckin (ed.), *The Concise Encyclopedia of Orthodox Christianity* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell), p. 103.

adopted by a prospective preacher, the advice of St. Paul to Archippus in Colossians 4:17 is essential: “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

In learning to preach, sustained study of the Bible and the early Church fathers will be essential. For example, it is often necessary to consider how the Church fathers have interpreted a specific passage, making use of *the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*,¹⁰ as well as the extensive commentaries of many Church fathers. The work of Joanna Manley, especially *The Bible and the Holy Fathers for Orthodox: Daily Scripture Readings and Commentary for Orthodox Christians*, is often helpful.¹¹ As noted in the final paragraph of the previous lecture, considerable care must be taken in applying the words of the Church fathers to different problems in different cultures. Preachers learn from experience how the Holy Spirit is guiding their minds to bring forth a message of meaning to their listeners.

Seven Shared Objectives of Preaching and Teaching

1. Set an objective: If we wish to learn to teach or preach, we need to set specific objectives that are in keeping with the Bible. If we don't know where we want to go, we won't know when we get there. In *Rapt: Attention and the Focused Life* (New York: Penguin, 2009), Winifred Gallagher points out that “your life — who you are, what you think, feel, and do, what you love — is the sum of what you focus on” (p. 1). This is perhaps a bit misleading for us as Christians, because who we are is based on the reality that God has created us, but she is right that “staying focused on a goal over time” will not guarantee that we will achieve that goal, but it is “a crucial step in that direction” (p.3). The difficulty is that in the midst of so much information and so many demands on our time, we need to remain attentive to the specific objectives to which we each believe the Lord is calling each of us.

2. Develop an appropriate attitude to achieving that objective: Once we have decided on an objective, it is appropriate to be convinced that we can, with God's help, achieve it. Our attitude toward an objective matters a great deal, because if we are convinced we are going

¹⁰ Thomas C. Oden (General Editor) with individual editors for each volume of these Ancient Christian Commentaries on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, (1998-2014). However, it should be noted that this ecumenical project “is designed to serve Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox lay, pastoral and scholarly audiences.” An important consequence of this approach is that numerous controversial statements from the Church Fathers are not presented, especially on the nature of authority in the Church.

¹¹ Johanna Manley (Compiler and Editor), *The Bible and the Holy Fathers for Orthodox: Daily Scripture Readings and Commentary for Orthodox Christians* (Menlo Park, CA: Monastery Books, 1993).

to fail, we will fail. In *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (New York: Ballentine, 2006), a Stanford University psychologist, Carol S. Dweck, points out that intelligence is not fixed, but develops; and if we think we can achieve an objective we usually will, as long as we do not behave like adolescents who “mobilise their resources, not for learning, but to protect their egos” (p. 58). In practice, those teachers and preachers who assume that they and their listeners will succeed consistently do so. God gives us the means to respond to His calling, as St Paul knew well.

Build trust: It takes much work and prayer to learn to trust ourselves, to trust others and to trust God. “Often, we make commitments to ourselves – such as setting goals or making New Year’s resolutions – that we fail to fulfil. As a result, we come to feel that we can’t even fully trust ourselves. If we can’t trust ourselves, we’ll have a hard time trusting others” (Stephen M. R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006, p. 12). Therefore, the first person we need to trust is ourselves. Covey suggests that it is essential to: (1) Make and keep commitments to yourself; (2) Stand for something; and (3) Be open” (pp. 66-72). We need also to beware of the danger of judging others, because “while we tend to judge ourselves by our intent, we tend to judge others by their behaviour” (p. 76). Ultimately, we learn to trust God and acknowledge the truth of Psalm 2.12: “Blessed are all they that put their trust in God” (KJ version).

3. Communicate to a specific audience: In both teaching and preaching, we need to consider our audience carefully and make sure our message and how we deliver it are appropriate for that audience. All of the future talks and group activities for the rest of this course are linked to learning how to be in tune with our audience, “our constituency.” At times, this is difficult; and much of the work of the Harvard Negotiation Project has dealt with issues of communication, especially Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen’s *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* (London: Vikings, 2011). For any particular sermon, teaching or conversation we need to ask ourselves what is our objective and then reflect on how best “to address the issue and achieve [our] purposes” (p. 233). “A tree firmly planted by streams of water” only “yields its fruit in its season” (Psalm 1:3), and so we must be clear when and what to teach and preach, because although “a word in season” is good (Proverbs 15.23 RSV), it is often difficult to discern when the season is of the Lord’s making and not our own.

4. Seek to make a difference: Anyone who is preaching and teaching according to God’s will

knows that success is not to be defined in terms of wealth or power or fame. However, as Jerry Porras, Stewart Emery and Mark Thompson have suggested in *Success Built to Last: Creating a Life that Matters* (New York: Penguin, 2007), objectives do need to be personal: “If you want Success Built to Last, then Create a Life that Matters (to you)” (p. 216). This often means setting “big goals” and engaging “completely in the work at hand”; but with the recognition that “anything worth doing can’t be done alone” (pp. 169, 202). There is considerable value in their suggestions that we each need to focus on things we can control (p. 143) and that personal stories often make greater impact than exhortations (p. 171). We do not teach and preach as automatons, but as people who pray and think and seek to make a difference to our own lives and to the lives of others.

5. Seek learning that lasts: A major obstacle to both teaching and preaching is that whatever is said is often not remembered. A recent study has shown that what we hear performs very poorly in terms of memory against what we see and touch.¹² That is why it is helpful to reflect on the 12 principles for effective adult learning set out by Jane Vella in *Learning To Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002, Rev. Ed., pp. 1- 27). Her work has been set in a Christian context and linked to a week-long course at High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, sponsored by SIL/Wycliffe Bible Translators that focuses on working in teams of two to present learning material in 40 minute sessions, with a focus on LASTS – Learned-centred education, action with reflection, solving problems, teamwork and self-discovery/self-direction.¹³ The workshop is aimed at training trainers; and there are no formal prerequisites for taking the course except a desire to learn and the hope of inspiring oneself and others.

6. Try to learn more about Jesus Christ: In our teaching and preaching, we are in the situation of Zaccheus, who was “small of stature” and “climbed up into a sycamore tree” because he was “trying to see who Jesus was” (Luke 19.2-4). When we seek Jesus, His response to us is the same as His response to Zaccheus – to look up, to see us, and to tell us he is coming to our home today (Luke 19.5). Tito Colliander has set out what might be called “The Zaccheus Principle” in *Way of the Ascetics: The Ancient Tradition of Discipline and Inner Growth* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003, pp. 86-91). For our group activity linked to Lecture 2, we will read about Zaccheus, both for Colliander’s advice and as an

¹² Bigelow J, Poremba A (2014) Achilles’ Ear? Inferior Human Short-Term and Recognition Memory in the Auditory Modality. PLoS ONE 9(2): e89914. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0089914. Link: <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0089914>

¹³ <http://eurotp.org/uk/session.php?sessionid=274>

example of a beautiful sermon on the text of Luke 19:1-10.

Unique Objectives

A. Teaching

1. Become a self-improver: That is the central theme of Rob Barnes, Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of East Anglia in *Positive Teaching, Positive Learning* (London: Routledge, 1999) in which he sets out six beliefs about teaching: “(1) Ultimately, negative thinking is wasted energy; (2) Negative thinking feeds on itself; (3) Negative thinking is unnecessarily stressful; (4) Positive optimistic attitudes can be developed; (5) Pupils can take responsibility for becoming positive; and (6) Feedback and action are necessary ingredients of improvement” (p. 3). In brief, we are each responsible for our own learning and our own teaching, yet we also should recognize that we “need feedback to improve learning;” and this is best developed by encouraging students to ask questions. Thus “creative tension” between the teacher and the learner is a necessary aspect of all learning (p. 149), just as there is at times creative tension between whom we are now and whom God wants us to become.

2. Ask for God’s help: A good prayer for Christian teachers is set out by St Paul in the opening chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians: “We ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will, with all the wisdom and understanding that His Spirit gives, so you will be able to lead the kind of life which the Lord expects of you, a life acceptable to Him in all its aspects, showing the results in all the good actions you do and increasing your knowledge of God. You will have in you the strength based on His glorious power, never to give in, but to bear anything, joyfully, thanking the Father who has made it possible for you to join with the saints and with them inherit the Light” (1:9-12). Many teachers will find helpful the third edition of *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, in which the coverage of Orthodoxy has been supervised by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware.¹⁴

B. Preaching

1. Be touched by the Word: The writer, David Bradley, in his essay “Bringing Down the Fire” in William Zinsser’s *Going on Faith: Writing as a Spiritual Quest* (New York: Marlowe, 1999; pp. 84-105) reflects that: “I believe to become a better writer I have to try to become a

¹⁴ This reference work of nearly 1,800 pages originally published as *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Third Edition, 1997, was published in paperback in 2007 at a very reasonable price by Hendrickson Publishers in Peabody, MA, USA. The treatment of saints, councils, theology, the Church Fathers and individual topics and books of both the Old and New Testaments is outstanding.

better person, just as I believe that the best preacher is not the saint but the person who allows himself or herself to be touched by the word, even as he or she transmits or interprets itThe truth, I hope, is that we come to both a book and a service of worship with the same hopes – that we'll learn something, yet, but, more important, that we'll be touched by something" – by God (p. 104).

2. When preaching, be a waiter, not a chef: This was the advice of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Saginaw, Michigan, Ken Untener (1937- 2004) in his useful book, *Preaching Better: Practical Suggestions for Homilists* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999). He pointed out that he and many preachers readily accept their role as waiters in bringing the Bread of Life that is the Eucharist, to their congregations, but they expect praise for delivering good sermons, when they are, in fact, simply waiters delivering the Bread of Life that is the Word of God (pp. 128-130). He suggests that a prayer from the Roman Catholic Mass applies equally to sermons and might be prayed privately by a homilist before each sermon: "Blessed are you God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer ... which you have given, and which human hands have shaped. May it become for us the Bread of Life." That is the nature of preaching: God gives the Word to which we listen and then seek to shape, so that we and our listeners can understand that Word. The clear implication of this approach is that the effective preacher will already be immersed in the Bible – the Old and New Testaments and the deuterocanonical writings – ready to search for which verses are relevant to the sermon in hand, as well as how those verses then guide the sermon to become a Spirit-filled communication to others. Therefore, prayerful use of an analytical concordance of the Bible is often helpful for cross references of Biblical verses and to identify the meaning of both Hebrew and Greek words.

Conclusion

Preaching "creates a relationship between persons," between the speaker and the listener:

But preaching is not any speech; it is speech under the authority of God, and the communication of that authority is as important to preaching as speech itself. The sense of that authority carries with it the conviction, both for the preacher and the hearer, that the things of God are communicated through preaching.¹⁵

It is Jesus Christ Himself who is the Preacher and the Teacher who guides us each of us into His Kingdom.

¹⁵ "Preaching," in F. L. Cross & E. A. Livingstone (eds.), *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), pp. 1317-1318.