

## PREACHING AND TEACHING AT MASS

Through Lifelong Faith Formation all persons from children through adulthood in our parish engage the same topic each month at an age-appropriate level in Religious Education and Adult Formation. “Whole community catechesis” promotes intergenerational conversation and reflection of *faith seeking understanding* (the very definition of "Theology"). To serve adult education in our community on a consistent basis, a mini-teaching of three minutes is presented after the homily at all weekend Masses once each month. The teaching authority of the Church calls for adult catechesis to be given highest priority. Faith formation is for everyone. Each generation needs adults who both know and live their faith so that they may pass on the faith to the next generation. Passing on the faith is called *Tradition* and we all need to open our hearts to our Catholic Tradition, both Scripture and Teaching. Adults can no longer fit into their First Communion suits and dresses. In the same way, the teaching we received as children is no longer adequate for adults. If we adults are unable to explain our faith or answer questions about our faith to our children or others, we will be unable to share our faith with them. And, most adults for whatever reason do not come back to our parish during the week to receive additional adult education and formation. To fill in such a huge gap, the brief monthly Catholic teachings at Mass is an effort to serve the common good of our people who need to receive more adult education. To continue our education, formation, reflection, and discussion on these topics at home with family members and others, there are also further suggestions on our Website under *Shepherd's Teachings*. Our Bishops (USCCB) ask pastors and parishes to reinforce this priority in the document *Our Hearts Were Burning within Us* (1990) and the more recent anniversary document *Go and Make Disciples* (2009). We as a parish today are imitating the same model for Catholic teaching that the late Bishop Kenneth Untener had used in Michigan during weekend Masses that he celebrated. Pastors miss a great opportunity if they do not reach out and teach the greatest number of adults that they shepherd on Sunday when most are present. Liturgically speaking, there is an important difference between a homily and a teaching. A homily is based on the written Tradition of the Bible and the preacher gives an exegesis and application of the text of the Scripture from the readings. This keeps us from falling into fundamentalism. On the other hand, teachings are part of the oral Tradition of the Catholic Church and are based on the teaching authority of the Church that goes beyond Scripture. Thus, it would not be good to substitute a teaching for a homily. We need the homily on the written Tradition as well as a teaching on the oral Tradition. To accomplish this it is entirely appropriate to offer both at Mass. It is in keeping with the many different Rites that are frequently celebrated after the homily in the Catholic Church. For example, all Sacraments of the Church can and are celebrated at Mass: Baptism, First Eucharist and Anointing. And, we can also celebrate the Teachings of the Church after the homily as is often done during times of Parish Missions or missionary speakers. It then is an extension of the Homily, sometimes called a Sermon on a particular topic. The various Rites celebrated at Mass are what determine the time of the Mass. Anyone who watches the Pope's Masses on television can see this. Of course, he's the Pope! His example does remind us however not to be concerned about time at Mass since the sacred mysteries we celebrate touch a heavenly reality that knows no time. He gives homilies and teachings at all Masses. And, let us not be discouraged by people who leave Mass early, even after Communion. We cannot condemn them. They may have very legitimate reasons that we know nothing about.