



Guidelines for Children's Homilies

Greetings fellow Homilists!

Thank you for your commitment to this church and to the spiritual development of our little ones in the parish. Engaging their spiritual life is a rewarding, but difficult task. I want each child to know the love of Jesus Christ from an early age. It will help them as they get older and face questions and spiritual uncertainties.

It is a fun endeavor to work with children. It is also a matter of great importance that we offer the best of ourselves each time we preach and share a lesson. I believe that a sermon should be well prepared, regardless of the audience's age and I ask that my fellow homilists focus on the same goal.

As I am still relatively new to this parish, I had a few opportunities to do the Children's Homily. I have also seen the Children's Homily done a couple of times by other parishioners. I have enjoyed it immensely.

Still, I am always looking to build on what we do well in order to strengthen our parish. I have been praying about how I have seen Children's Homilies done in other parish contexts and want to add some of their insights to our own experience.

Below you will find some guidelines for Children's Homilies that I believe fit with my mission for the parish community and how we worship together. They will first display the basic outline or ideology behind giving a sermon. Following that you will see available resources and how to approach the sermon with these guidelines in mind.

I hope you find this resource both helpful and empowering. If we work together, I am certain our children will grow in spiritual maturity and be more at home with us in worship.

With love and prayers,

Fr. Alex +

Basic Outline:

- A Children's Homily is never just for the children. All conversations should be directed to the parish as a whole (in volume, eye contact, engagement), even if the focus and questioning is geared toward the children who are present.
 - Worship involves everyone so everyone should be able to see and hear what is going on.
 - Often times, the adults get more out of Children's Sermons than the "Adult Version."
- **Biblical**
 - This is a time to teach about Christ not simply ethics or good behavior.
 - Present good theology even if it's in a simplified form.
- **Fun**
 - A child may feel scared and will not vocally engage if you do not set a relaxed tone. Always introduce yourself and thank them for being with you today. This may require you to take on a role that is different from how you approach children in a professional capacity.
 - Have children face you, not the congregation (that way they do not feel that everyone is looking at them).
 - Humor goes a long way.
 - They are listening and might engage verbally if encouraged.
- **Interactive**
 - Visuals, props, questions back and forth, personal story telling all help children apply the lesson being offered to them.
 - You should be directly engaging them, not reading to them from a script. They might tune out otherwise.
- **Christ Centered**
 - One can find Jesus or the promise of Jesus in the Old Testament.
 - How might we find Christ in the reading or the love of God?
- **Short**
 - Most children have short attention spans, which Sunday School teachers know well.
 - Keep the lesson to **5 minutes. You can gauge where you are by practicing.** All preachers are expounding on God's Word in some small manner so we should practice.

Resources:

- In order to know the readings for the Sunday you will preach, you can click on the link below or Google *The Lectionary Page*.
 - www.lectionarypage.net
 - Click on the Sunday you will preach.
 - If there is an option for readings, we are using Track 1.
 - After reading through each lesson, pick one that resonates with you and brainstorm how you can express that in its most basic element.

- You are encouraged to research what others have done on a particular reading for children and there is a wealth of information to help you plan a short children's homily.
 - Either Google "Children's Sermons and the reading" to search for results.
 - **Or check out these trusted websites.** They have many lessons that are short, fun, engaging to both children and adults, and involve visuals. (simply search for the applicable reading on each site...sermons4kids is the most popular)
 - <http://www.sermons4kids.com/>
 - <http://www.childrenssermonsonline.net/>
 - <http://childrensermons.com>
- It is okay to use a prewritten sermon outline. It is like a lesson plan that a teacher needs to follow.

Approaching the Sermon: (5 minute lesson)

- Of Sunday's readings, choose 1 lesson.
 - You will need to provide a simple background of the story or focus on a verse that relates to what you wish to talk about.
 - Some children heard the lessons before because they are sitting in the congregation.
 - Some children will not because they were in Sunday School before the announcements.
 - Find the nugget you wish to talk about, share it, and apply with your lesson.
- Invite the children to sit on the ground facing the altar, not the steps...so they can focus on the teacher and not the many people in the congregation.
 - The teacher can sit on a stool or on the steps facing the children and the congregation.
- Use online resources and your own ideas on how to visualize the lesson with a prop or an idea.
 - Simple analogies work as an educational hook.
- When you explain a story or a prop always try to engage the entire congregation.
- Ask questions.
- Provide a quick take away lesson.
- End in prayer and invite the children to go back and sit with their parents/guardians.