

Homily

Definition of Homily

Homily is a sermon or speech that a religious person or priest delivers before a group of people to offer them [moral](#) correction. The primary purpose of this speech is not doctrinal instruction, but spiritual edification. Simply, homily is a public [discourse](#) on a moral or religious subject. Priests read it from the Bible, or other religious text, to give an insight into the exact meanings of the scriptures. Afterward, they relate it to the lives of followers.

Examples of Homily in Literature

Example #1: *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (By Jonathan Edwards)

“He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty to subdue a rebel that has found means to fortify himself ... So 'tis easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that anything hangs by; thus easy is it for God, when he pleases, to cast his enemies down to hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down.”

This is a popular American sermon in which Edwards has emphasized the idea of a Great Awakening. The underlying idea is that God has given a chance to humanity to rectify their sins, as the will of God has kept them away from the depths of hell.

Example #2: *Al-Bukhari, Hadith 1623, 1626, 6361* (By Muhammad)

“O People, lend me an attentive ear, for I know not whether after this year, I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and TAKE THESE WORDS TO THOSE WHO COULD NOT BE PRESENT HERE TODAY.

Beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion...All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety (taqwa) and good action ...”

This is the most famous and last sermon or *Khutba* of the prophet (P.B.U.H), which he delivered on Friday, ninth Dhul Hijjah (12th month of Islamic year), in mount Arafat’s Uranah Valley. He directed this message to all of humanity, that they are accountable to God for their deeds.

**Example #3: *Message to California’s Proposition 41 in Los Angeles in 1984*
(By Father Bill Messenger)**

“Perhaps many of you grew up during the depression. If so, you know what it means to be poor. I did not grow up during the depression, but I grew up in a poor family. I can remember one Christmas when both of my parents were out of work, and we had no money. Concerned parishioners brought Christmas baskets to our house. It was a humbling and difficult experience for my parents. The year before, my father had helped to distribute baskets to other poor people. Now it was our turn.”

In this homily, the priest is sharing his personal experience, to allow the readers understand the meanings of his homily and scripture.

Example #4: *Holy Bible, Matthew 24:42-51* (By Deacon Winton DeRosia)

“There is a [fable](#) that tells of three apprentice devils who were coming to earth to finish their apprenticeship. They were talking with Satan, the chief of the devils, about their plans to tempt and

God.” But Satan said, “That will not delude many, for they know there is a God ... The most dangerous of all delusions is that there is plenty of time.”

Deacon Winton DeRosia delivers this homily on a website “First Sunday in Advent.” This sermon is about the temptations of Satan, and how he uses human beings for his purpose.

Function of Homily

Usually, religious figures deliver homilies in churches, mosques, temples, at mass gatherings, at funerals, and at baptisms and wedding ceremonies. Its main purpose is to convey a moral lesson to the people. Besides teaching moral education, it awakens people’s conscience, calls them to repentance, and nourishes their faith. Another purpose is to interpret the lives of the people in such a way that they could reconcile with God Almighty and with one another. Besides this, priests use different persuasive techniques to appeal to the listening congregation.