



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**

**Step-by-Step Walk Through the Mass
Do This in Remembrance of Me, Part 25:
A Deeper Look at the Homily
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This week, we look more closely at the Homily. As the Diocese of Peoria teaches, the homily “serves as an integral link between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Before the apostles recognized Jesus in the ‘breaking of the bread,’ he explained the Scriptures to them, ‘filling their hearts with a burning desire.’ The homily strives to kindle a fire of love for God and His Church. As a ‘bridge’ it draws us deeper into the mysteries we celebrate—most especially the mystery of the most Holy Eucharist” (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 9). So, as you can begin to see, the homily is really packed with a number of important goals!

Inspiration from the Church Fathers

One of the earliest written descriptions of the Mass is from St. Justin Martyr, who was writing a little earlier than 165 AD. As he describes the prayers and meaning of the Mass, I am always struck by how similar they are to our celebrations today. It is a great testament to the guiding work of the Holy Spirit and continuity of our Catholic faith and liturgy. When St. Justin describes the homily, he talks about how the leader exhorts the people to imitate the good things they have just heard. All these centuries later, preachers are still following this same pattern. The priest may use different kinds of homilies for different circumstances, taking into account what the people are like, what they know already, what kinds of involvement they have, what types of concerns are currently happening on the local level, etc. All of these elements will affect both what the faithful need to hear and how well they will understand it and live it out each day. No matter what the circumstances, and no matter what the background of the people is like, all homilies really have one thing in common: Jesus Christ who died and rose for us and our life in him. A wise old seminary professor once said, “If you never say anything else in the pulpit except Jesus loves you and wants you to be with him, the main essentials will always be in every homily.”

A Bridge Between the Two Halves

So, our focus should always be on Christ, his love for us, and what that means in our lives. We focus on Christ’s four-fold presence to us at every Mass: he is present in the Word of God, in the priest, in his assembled people, and especially in his Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist in a most unique way. We focus on Jesus through the Scriptures and God’s loving Word to his people. We focus on Jesus dwelling among us, offering himself for our sins, rising in triumph, and continuing to be with us through the Holy Eucharist. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1346, states: “The liturgy of the Word and liturgy of the Eucharist together form ‘one single act of worship’; the Eucharistic table set for us is the table both of the Word of God and of the Body of the Lord.” It is important to remember that the Mass is not just a sequence of unrelated events: it is a perfect unity in Christ. The first half helps us get to know God (and ourselves), nourishing our faith in God; the second half helps us unite with him in body and soul. The hope of the homily, then, is to help bring these two halves together so that the faithful can go out into the world and really live the life of Christ.