

FAITH Catholic GUIDELINES FOR HOMILIES

Revised August-2015

SET-UP

We request that all authors use the following font, type size and margins. This will approximate the margins and type of the books. References to line count in these guidelines is based on these standards.

Font: Arial Size: 11 Margins: left .75; right 3.75

LENGTH

Weekday homilies should be 400-450 words. **Sunday and major feast** homilies should be 450-500 words. Paragraphs should be no longer than 10-12 lines.

FOCUS SENTENCE

Each homily is to be introduced by a one-sentence Focus Sentence. This should be no longer than 2 lines long. This sentence is to summarize the take-home message of the homily. It is often used in bulletins and such to give the theme of the day. Those who write commentaries, as well as homilies, should not use the same Focus Sentence for both.

STYLE

Use the New American Bible (2000-2001 edition) when quoting from Scripture; italicize the quoted material. Material based on other translations or versions will be rewritten to conform to this translation. This is the version used in the Lectionary. NOTE: If you use a quotation from a non-biblical source, please cite the author and the book for copyright purposes and verification.

We use Associated Press (AP) Stylebook for most grammatical editing, the Catholic News Service Stylebook for church-related terms; and the Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition, for spelling preferences.

Note this exception to AP Style: Spell out all numerals, such as twenty-four and twelve. Avoid abbreviations since the words of your commentary will be spoken: eg. Father, not Fr.; Saint, not St., etc.

Our style is to capitalize God or words that mean God, such as God the Father, God the Son, Holy Spirit, Our Lord, etc. Lowercase personal pronouns for God, such as he, him, thee, thou.

Use the third person or first person plural. Do not write in the first person. If sharing a personal experience or story, use the third person style (and include a parenthetical explanation for our records).

Use the third person or first person plural. Do not write in the first person. If sharing a personal experience or story, use the third person style (and include a parenthetical explanation for our records). All words of a homily must be able to be spoken by any homilist, without having parishioners ask for more specific details. Homilies are to be written for oral delivery, rather than to be read. Authors are encouraged to read their homilies aloud as part of their self-editing process to make sure they are meeting this goal.

It is appropriate to write about saints on their solemnities and/or feast days/obligatory memorials; however, do not write about the saints on optional memorials.

Authors also need to keep in mind that our homilies are used by parishes, schools and other institutions primarily throughout the United States and Canada. Details that are specific to a geographic region, time zone, etc. will be edited to make them as universal as possible. Most homilies are delivered by priests, so authors also need to be sensitive to this in their writing. We use inclusive language, having the homilist include himself in most instances in any call to action. However, pronouns referring to God are masculine.

WRITING LEVEL

Authors need to be sensitive regarding the theological understanding of the majority of people who will be listening to our homilies. The majority of Catholics have had little or no formal Catholic catechesis since Confirmation and/or graduation from a Catholic High School. Phrases such as *Pauline principles*, *Lucan letters*, and *eschatological thinking*, will almost

always end up being edited out – not because they are incorrect, but because such phrases often make the listener feel ignorant. Authors who can take complicated thoughts and make them easier to understand are sorely needed in the world. All our material must reflect mainstream Catholic teaching. We ask our authors to: *use your gifts and talents to educate, inform and enlighten in a meaningful way, the stories of our faith and the history of the Church.*

Our mission is to help the word of God flow through your writing to the ink on our pages into the hearts of all who hear.

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