

LAY PREACHING

On November 14, 2001, the Latin Church members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved complementary legislation for canon 766 of the Code of Canon Law for the dioceses of the Latin Church of the United States.

The action was granted *recognitio* by the Congregation for Bishops in accord with article 82 of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* and issued by decree of the Congregation for Bishops signed by His Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Prefect, and His Excellency Most Reverend Franciscus Monterisi, Secretary, and dated November 27, 2001.

Complementary Norm: Preaching the Word of God is among the principal duties of those who have received the sacrament of orders (cc. 762-764). The lay faithful can be called to cooperate in the exercise of the Ministry of the Word (c. 759). In accord with canon 766 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops hereby decrees that the lay faithful may be permitted to exercise this ministry in churches and oratories, with due regard for the following provisions:

If necessity requires it in certain circumstances or it seems useful in particular cases, the **diocesan bishop** can admit lay faithful to preach, to offer spiritual conferences or give instructions in churches, oratories or other sacred places within his diocese, when he judges it to be to the spiritual advantage of the faithful.

In order to assist the diocesan bishop in making an appropriate pastoral decision (Interdicasterial Instruction, *Ecclesiae de Mysterio*, Article 2 §3), the following circumstances and cases are illustrative: the absence or shortage of clergy, particular language requirements, or the demonstrated expertise or experience of the lay faithful concerned.

The lay faithful who are to be admitted to preach in a church or oratory must be orthodox in faith, and well-qualified, both by the witness of their lives as Christians and by a preparation for preaching appropriate to the circumstances.

The diocesan bishop will determine the appropriate situations in accord with canon 772, §1. ***In providing for preaching by the lay faithful the diocesan bishop may never dispense from the norm which reserves the homily to the sacred ministers (c. 767, §1; cfr. Pontifical Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of the Code of Canon Law, 26 May 1987, in AAS 79 [1987], 1249). Preaching by the lay faithful may not take place within the Celebration of the Eucharist at the moment reserved for the homily.***

As President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I hereby decree that the effective date of this decree for all the dioceses of the Latin Church in the United States will be January 15, 2002.

Given at the offices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, DC, on December 13, 2001.

Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory
Bishop of Belleville
President, USCCB
Reverend Monsignor William P. Fay
General Secretary

Canon 762: Sacred ministers, among whose principal duties is the proclamation of the gospel of God to all, are to hold the function of preaching in esteem since the people of God are first brought together by the word of the living God, which it is certainly right to require from the mouth of priests.

Canon 766: Lay persons can be permitted to preach in a church or oratory, if necessity requires it in certain circumstances or it seems advantageous in particular cases, according to the prescripts of the conference of bishops and without prejudice to can. 767, par. 1.

Canon 767, par. 1: Among the forms of preaching, the homily, which is part of the liturgy itself and is reserved to a priest or deacon, is preeminent; in the homily the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian life are to be explained from the sacred text during the course of the liturgical year.

Canon 772: par. 1: In the exercise of preaching, moreover, all are to observe the norms issued by the diocesan bishop.

Norms for the Diocese of Oakland:

1. Only a priest or deacon with faculties may preach the homily following the Gospel at Mass. No exceptions.
2. A qualified lay person or non-ordained religious may be invited to speak following the distribution of Communion at the end of Mass, in order to offer testimony or give witness in support of the teachings and mission of the Catholic Church. No one may be invited to speak (following Communion) in opposition to Church teaching or promote partisan politics.
3. Qualified lay persons or non-ordained religious may be invited to speak at Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, or other services outside of Mass.