

Understanding the kerygma

In the initial efforts to launch our Go Make Disciples evangelizing initiative, the word, “kerygma” comes up often.

Meaning “proclamation” in the original Greek, the kerygma is the essence of the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ distilled to its shining essence.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Simon Peter stands up on Pentecost morning, addresses the assembled crowd, and proclaims that this Jesus, whom they crucified, God has made both Lord and Savior.

To simply affirm that Jesus is Lord is to assert the kerygma.

We did so liturgically last Sunday on the Solemnity of Christ the King; the sovereignty of Jesus relativizes all human power and orders it to the ultimate good of human salvation.

An ‘elevator speech’

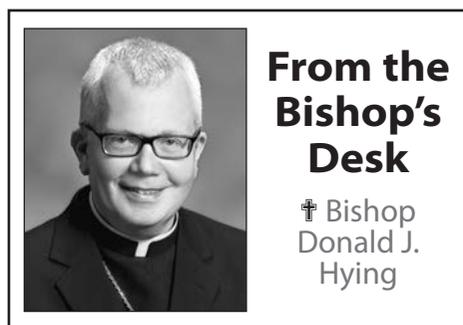
Another way to understand the kerygma is the proverbial “elevator speech.”

If you had five minutes to witness your Catholic faith to someone, how would you express it?

Which components of the Scriptural narrative summarize God’s action of creation and salvation? Where do we fit into this divine plan? What should be our response?

Our Catholic elevator speech will be uniquely our own, as we share our personal experience of the love of Christ and the importance of our faith, but four central movements should be common to every proclamation of the kerygma.

They are: The creation of the world as an act of sheer divine grace; Original Sin, as man’s fall from full rela-



tionship with God and the entrance of sin and death; the whole Christ event as God’s merciful response to humanity’s predicament; our active embrace of Catholic discipleship as our response to the Lord’s saving invitation.

During these weeks of Advent, I will reflect on each of these four essential parts of the kerygma.

The kerygma and creation

Philosophy, the study of wisdom, begins with wonder, expressed as a fundamental question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?”

To make it more personal, have you not at some moment mulled over the astounding fact that you are here?

Why and to what purpose do I exist?

Through the convergence of thousands of factors, each of us has come to be. Our brief yet beautiful life on this planet is sheer grace.

When we ponder creation, we behold a world, indeed a cosmos, of such astoundingly intricate design, cyclic harmony, and extraordinary beauty, that our minds and hearts refuse to conclude that all of this won-

der is just some sort of cosmic accident.

A providential, beneficent, and almighty power is at work here.

God did not have to create the world, the universe, or us.

Perfect in Himself, the Lord does not need us; our existence is not necessary to Him. Yet He did so. Why?

The only possible answer is sheer love. God wanted to create the universe in its spinning galaxies, mysterious planets, expansive oceans, and stalwart mountains with us human beings as the crown of that creation.

His love is so infinite and powerful that it overflows into the handiwork of creation.

The divine fingerprints are everywhere, if we have the vision to see.

The functional complexity of the human body, the simple beauty of a sunrise, the persevering cycle of the seasons, and the stunning diversity of plants and animals all point to a divine intelligence at work.

The poetic narration of the six days of creation in Genesis teaches us that God made everything out of nothing, that all which exists only does so as an act of His will, that God finds creation fundamentally good, that man and woman are created in the divine image, and that God rested on the seventh day.

Existence as a ‘gift’

This first part of the kerygma is essential for us to understand the rest.

God made us in His image with a will, heart, soul, mind, and body, so that we can enter into relationship with Him, in

the fullness of the Trinitarian life.

Our existence is a sheer gift, nothing deserved, willed, or planned by us.

We live, move, and breathe only because we participate in the very Being of God and without Him, we would fall into nothingness.

Our life then is not a random accident. We are not simply highly-evolved animals.

Our human nature is not plastic matter that we can manipulate at will. The world and other people do not exist simply to satisfy our selfish pleasure.

We are children of God, destined to live forever, here in this world for a very short time to fall in love with the Lord, discover the beauty of our existence in Christ, and to do the work that God has prepared for us from all eternity.

When we discover that everything is a gift from God’s hands and heart and that our life only makes sense in relationship to the Lord, the rest of the kerygma narrative takes on greater purpose and meaning.

Our souls are precious to God, and He desires our happiness and salvation more than we do.

This journey of life is a pilgrimage to the Father’s House, which means that human history in general and the particulars of our lives in detail are going somewhere, that creation is fraught with the grandeur of the divine, as God’s love story unfolds down the pathways of this mysterious, beautiful and grace-filled world.

Advent communal penance services in the Diocese of Madison

• **Holy Angels Parish, La Valle:** Wednesday, Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m.

• **Holy Family Parish, Waterloo:** Tuesday, Dec. 15, 7 p.m.

• **Nativity of Mary Parish, Janesville:** Saturday, Dec. 19, 9:30 a.m.

• **Ss. Anthony & Philip Parish, Highland:** Monday, Dec. 7, 7 p.m.

• **St. Joseph Parish, Edgerton:** Wednesday, Dec. 16, 6 p.m.

• **St. Luke Parish, Plain:** Sunday, Dec. 6, 6 p.m.

• **St. Maria Goretti Parish, Madison:** Thursday, Dec. 10, 7 p.m.

• **St. Mary Parish, Bloomington:** Wednesday, Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m.

• **St. Mary Parish, Palmyra:** Wednesday, Dec. 9, 6:30 pm.

• **St. Mary Help of Christians Parish, Sullivan:** Wednesday, Dec. 9, 6:30 p.m.

• **St. Patrick Parish, Janesville:** Wednesday, Dec. 9, 6:15 p.m.

• **St. Peter Parish, Madison:** Friday, Dec 4, 6:30 p.m.

• **St. Thomas Parish, Montfort:** Monday, Dec. 14, 7 p.m.

BISHOP’S CALENDAR

Bishop Donald J. Hying

Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2020

National Association of Catholic Chaplains Episcopal Advisory Council meeting

Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020

Region VII Bishops’ meeting

Sunday, Dec. 6, 2020

Mass and speak to diocesan seminarians, Camp Gray, Reedsburg

Advent reflection evening for men, Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Church, Sun Prairie

Monday, Dec. 7, 2020

12 noon

Celebrate Mass, Holy Name Oratory, Holy Name Heights, Madison

6 p.m.

Presbyteral Ordination of Deacon Kumud Chand, CJD, Holy Name Heights Oratory, Holy Name Heights, Madison

APPOINTMENTS

Msgr. James Bartylla, Vicar General, announces the following priest appointment and deacon assignments made by Most Reverend Donald J. Hying, Bishop of Madison, effective Friday, November 20, 2020

• **Rev. Fr. Michael Radowicz**, to Presbyteral Advisor to the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, from Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, and remaining as pastor, St. Bernard Parish, Madison.

• **Deacon Christopher Schmelzer**, to Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, with any parish deacon assignment remaining.

• **Deacon Jim Hoegemeier**, to Associate Director of the Office of the Permanent Diaconate, remaining as Associate Director of the Apostolate for Persons with Disabilities, and with any parish deacon assignment remaining.

Msgr. James Bartylla

Msgr. James Bartylla
Vicar General



For more times, locations, and information, contact your parish or go to <https://www.madisondiocese.org/penance-reconciliation>