

Together we form the Mystical Body of Christ!

How long should the Homily be?

What's your understanding?

What's your preference?

I'm aware of **two big Parishes** in Birmingham where the homilies are very short.
Some people travel there so they can attend the shortest Mass around.

I'm not going to tell you the **names of those Parishes** ...

you'll have to find out for yourselves ... maybe they're on Google!

Scripture gave us **an example** of **how long** a homily might be in our **First Reading** today. There the **Prophet Nehemiah** tells us that **the Priest Ezra** "*read plainly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read*" and **we** hear that he did this "*from daybreak till midday*"!

Daybreak (6 o'clock) ... till **mid-day** (noon). That sounds like about 6 hours!

How would you like that ... **a 6-hour homily?**

By that standard, the homilies of **Deacon Tim & I** would be considered extremely short!

I think that **the concern** that **some people** have regarding **the length of the homily** ...
is an indication of ... **how hungry they are**.

Not how hungry they are ... in Mass ... for **food** ...

but **how hungry they are** ... coming to Mass ... for **the Wisdom of God**.

I **know what it's like** to be hungry for the Word of God.

For **countless years** before Priesthood, I was in the pews like you

And I remember looking forward to **Father** giving us the word ...

and **then** breaking it open to apply it to **my life**.

I went to Mass **hungry** ... and I left feeling fed!

I clearly remember attending Mass at Blessed Sacrament in Birmingham during the years that **Fr. Matthew Brennan** and **Fr. Charlie Cross** were there.

They would preach for half an hour ... and I'd be sad when they stopped for the day.

I came hungry ... I was being fed ... and I wanted them to continue.

It's kind of like going out to a nice restaurant for a **special occasion**.

As you drive over to the Summit to go to **Season's 52** or **Cheesecake Factory**, you'd be **hungry** and **full of expectation** over how well you will be fed ...

and **you** wouldn't be wondering about **how long the dinner would take!**

The guideline of the Church is **weekday** homilies ... **2 – 3 minutes**
Sunday homilies ... **10 – 12 minutes.**

But **the word of God** is so rich ... there's so much to say ... and so little time.

As **Priest**, I've been charged by the Bishop ... and more importantly by God ...
To pastor all of you to the **Kingdom of Heaven** ... on a road that is very narrow.

While a few of you go to **Daily Mass** ... most people only go to Church on **Sunday**
... which means they only hear **around 10 minutes of preaching** in a whole week.

That's not very much time ... for such an important journey.

Both Deacon Tim and I do a good deal of preparation in prayer and study and
draw heavily on the inspiration of Holy Spirit to guide us in our preaching.

Our goal is to speak His words ... not ours ... to you.

Sadly, many **Priests** and **Deacons** are judged solely on their homily.

Is that fair?

Each Priest and **each Deacon** has been given **unique gifts by God.**

They **each** have **their own personality, life experiences** and **seminary formation.**

So you'd expect to hear different **insights** and be fed in different ways.

The important thing is to come hungry; and if you do, the **Holy Spirit** will feed you!

Now, the Mass is more than the **Homily** ... it is a combination of many parts!

It's the **Scripture readings**, the **Eucharist**, the **Prayers**, the **Responses**,
the **Songs**, the **Blessings**, the **Collection**, the **Exchange of Peace**, the **Silence**,
the **Reverence** and more ... in addition to the Homily.

In the same way ...

The Church is more than the **Pope** ... it is a **combination of many parts!**

It's the **Bishops**, the **Priests**, the **Deacons**, the **Religious Brothers** and **Sisters**, it's
the **Church buildings** and **School buildings**, it's **religious Art** and **Architecture**,
it's the **History** and the **Tradition**, and most importantly it's... the **People of God.**

That's you ... and **you yourselves** are ... a **combination of many parts!**

Each of you are **unique!**

You're **big** and you're **small**, you're **old** and you're **young**, you're **educated** and
uneducated, you're **strong** and you're **weak**, you're **rich** and you're **poor** ...

You're of different sizes and **colors** and **nationalities.**

And all together you make up... the **Mystical Body of Christ!**

When Jesus was here **2000 years ago ...**
we had among us ... the Physical Body of Christ.

At the **Last Supper**, Jesus instituted the Eucharist ... so that to this very day ...
we have among us ... the Sacramental Body of Christ.

And as a result of Jesus sending the Holy Spirit in Baptism ... to this day ...
we have among us ... the Mystical Body of Christ.

We, the People of God make up ... the Mystical Body of Christ!

St. Paul says: "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body."

How about that?

We're all different and yet ... all together we make up ... the Body of Christ!

So it's very important that **all of us** are **united and working together**
to form this most beautiful reality ... the Mystical Body of Christ.

In our **Second Reading** today, **St. Paul** gives us a **powerful analogy** to help us see
how every human being has an **important role** of the **Body of Christ**.

He speaks of the human body and **how** it's a **composite** of many different parts ...
with **each part** performing a specific role that is helpful to the whole body.

He then asks, "*If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be?*"
And "*If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?*"

Our human bodies are a **marvelous network** of greater and smaller body parts,
each performing their own function, for the **good** of the **whole body**.

As **Paul** says, "*God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended.*"

Now **since all** the **big parts & little parts** are needed for the **good** of the **body**,
the **eye** cannot say to the **hand**, "*I do not need you.*"

just as the **head** cannot say to the **feet**, "*I do not need you.*"

All the various parts are needed to make up the **human body!**

And **it's here** that **Paul** calls us to see that **together** as **human beings**,
we also make up a body ... the **Body of Christ!**

He says, "*You are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.*"

What **great dignity** this is that **each of us** make up a part of the **Body of Christ!**

That means that no one has the right to say to another person, "*We don't need you.*"

No, **each person** was chosen by God for some role in the **Mystical Body** of Christ.

As **Paul** says, "*God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended.*"

That's **one of the reasons** why **God** commanded us to gather together each week in **Church** ... for it's here that we get to see the **other parts of our body** ...
and we're reminded that we're **just one of a whole community of people** ...
who make up the **Body of Christ!**

Look around and see **how different** we are ...
see **the variety** that God has designed into **His Church**.
That's the way God made us, **different in size and shape and talents**,
but **each one an important member** of the **mystical body of Christ**.

That's the message that we keep hearing from **Pope Francis**.

Each time he visits a country ... he not only goes to visit the **Leaders** ... but also to **those on the fringes of the community** ... the **poor**, the **lonely**, the **sick** the **homeless**, the **hospitalized** and the **imprisoned**.

He's doing what **Isaiah** prophesized and **Jesus** fulfilled ...
He's going to bring glad tidings to the poor!

For to him, **all of them** are members of the **One Body of Christ**.

And just as **our personal body** works best when **all the parts of our body** are united
and working together ...

So too, **the Body of Christ** works best when **all the members** are united and are
working together.

All people are part of **The Body of Christ** and **all** contribute to its wellness.
Paul says, "*If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it!*"

Never are we more united than during the reception of **Holy Communion**
There **in the Eucharist** we are **one** ... one in **Him** ...
and that makes us **one** with **one another!**

Experience **the oneness** as you partake the consecrated **bread** from **the same loaf**,
and drink the consecrated **wine** from **the same cup**

As we continue in **this New Year** ...
let's contemplate **Paul's words**:
"You are Christ's body, and individually parts of it."

And then **open our hearts** to treat each and every person with **love and care** ...
knowing that all together ... we make up ... **The Mystical Body of Christ!**