

SUGGESTIONS FOR LECTORS AND PREACHERS

Basic Principles of Public Speaking

Your primary purpose is to speak in such a way that everyone in your audience can *understand* you: not merely to *hear* your voice, but understand every word. The most beautiful words ever spoken, the most lofty, inspirational ideas will be lost if your audience does not understand what you are saying. Your duty is to:

1. PROJECT
2. ENUNCIATE
3. SPEAK SLOWLY
4. USE PAUSES, INFLECTIONS AND EMPHASIS SINCERELY AND INTELLENTLY.

1. By *projection* is meant the act of throwing your voice forward: actively using an open mouth, your tongue, teeth and jaws to force your voice outward. The microphone cannot amplify what it does not receive. Do not depend on it to make your voice understandable: if you mumble, the mike will amplify your mumble. If you use only the upper ranges of your voice (a “little girl” voice), that is what will be amplified.

2. By *enunciation* is meant to act of articulating words clearly and distinctly. When we speak in public, we use a voice different from the one we use in private conversation, when others may stop us and ask questions about our words or meaning. In public, we have a greater responsibility: we speak in such a way that our meaning is clear, and our words convincingly convey our thoughts. (A word of caution: do not irritate your listeners by over-articulation: an undue emphasis on the letter T, for instance: IT is noT necessary To cross every T you encounTer!)

3. A law of physics reminds us that sound travels in waves, just as light does. The larger the room, the more people in your audience, the *slower* you must speak, so that the waves of sound have time to reach the ears of your listeners. Listen to yourself - tape your voice as you deliver your words: listen to others, time yourself, time others. Of course, speaking too slowly is just as aggravating/frustrating/annoying as speaking too fast.

4. Don't be afraid of pauses, if the reading/homily calls for them. Don't neglect to use emphasis either. Just be careful lest, after emphasizing a particular word or phrase, you then drop your voice so that the rest of the sentence is lost. You are not simply reading; you are *proclaiming*. There is a great difference, and anyone who ministers this way is honored and privileged. Our dress, our manner, our delivery should give testimony to our reverence and appreciation.

5. WHEN YOU PROCLAIM OR PREACH THE HOMILY, LOOK UP AND OUT AT YOUR AUDIENCE.

(Prepared by Sister Mary Fisher, O.P., former high school and college speech and drama teacher, and one who served by preparing lectors in parish churches in the Archdiocese of Detroit.)