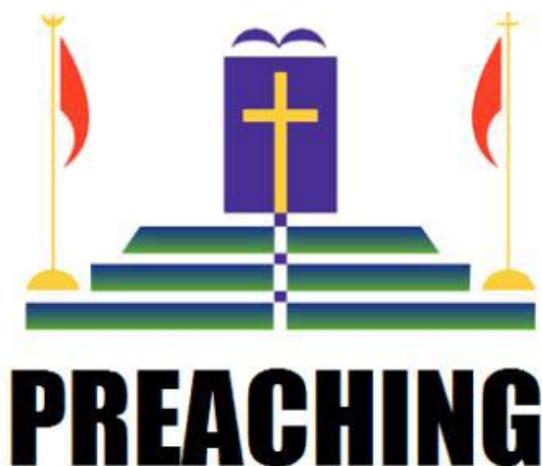


THE PREACHER AND THE PEOPLE IN THE PEW



RECENTLY WE HAVE GIVEN A LOT OF ATTENTION to the responsibilities of the preacher - to be focused, articulate, scriptural, as well as inspiring, motivating, challenging and uplifting. The preacher also needs to pay attention to the hopes and joys of the congregation and hold them in prayer. The people in the pew are to be reminded of the importance of the Word of God in their lives and are encouraged to offer feedback after the preaching event.

The people in the pew also have a responsibility. Buddhist teacher, Jack Kornfield, said that "the quality of our presence determines the quality of our lives." This could also apply to the members of the congregation.

Looking up at the preacher is very important. Homily time is not a time to pray the Rosary, read one's favorite Novena prayers, chat with a neighbor, leaf through the Hymnal or take a nap.

Congregational members can learn to leave their distractions at the door. "Did I turn off the oven before I left the house?" "What will I serve for dinner when the guests come?" "Did I lock the door?"

If one has a problem with the content or delivery of the homily, he/she can find a way to discuss it with the preacher or with the liturgical Committee, ask questions or make some suggestions for improvement.

Remember the preacher too needs the energy of your presence, your interest, support and prayers as well as your challenge. On any given Sunday, you can find some people are listening as if their lives depended on it. Others are less than impressed and even turned off by the homily.

Consider this. Maybe God is waiting to surprise you if you come with a listening heart and an open mind. Preachers and congregants have the ability to offer each other strength, encouragement and life.