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University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



Spreading the Word

07.10.2008 | Catholic, Campus and Community In his 42 years as a priest, the Rev. Christopher Conlon, S.M., has written legions of homilies — "probably somewhere over 4,000," he said.

Now, as part of a team of authors on the book *Living Liturgy 2009: Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities* (Liturgical Press, 2008), his experience as a homilist is helping priests and liturgists around the world to make the Scriptures and rituals meaningful for Catholics.

"The Sunday liturgy is the main contact the average Catholic has with the Scriptures and is much more than just fulfilling an obligation," said Conlon, an adjunct professor of religious Studies and UD's Marianist liaison to the School of Engineering and School of Business Administration. "It is really a wonderful opportunity to experience how the word of God can still nourish and strengthen us in our daily life in today's world."

The book, published each year, provides reflections, history, music and other resources for each Sunday and high holy day of the liturgical year, which goes from the first Sunday of Advent, usually in early December, to the Feast of Christ the King, usually in late November.

Conlon, who was ordained in Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1966, gathers with his writing colleagues — Sister Joyce Zimmerman, C.P.P.S., and Sister Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D. de N. — for all-day meetings three or four times each month from January through May. They're proofreading the 2010 edition now and will start working on the book for 2011 in January. They spend about three hours on each week's liturgy.

"We reflect on what seems to us to be a major theme of each week's Sunday Eucharist and then reflect on how the other readings feed into that theme and how the theme can be expressed in the many aspects of the celebration," Conlon said.

For a typical Sunday Mass at UD, Conlon meets with two or three students early in the week to plan the theme and music. He spends about an hour toward the end of the week putting the homily together. With *Living Liturgy* on his desk and the hundreds of hours he committed to the book, "this should be much easier now."

Even with the book, he tailors his homilies to his college-student congregation.

"I have been working at UD for 21 years now, and I have, I think, a pretty good sense of the various patterns of a normal academic year — the periods of ups and downs or excitement and fatigue," he said. "I try, therefore, to speak to these experiences and to give examples — often coming from the students I am working with in preparation."

Conlon said he doesn't have a favorite homily per se, but his favorite Gospel readings are the parables of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:1-32) and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). His favorite songs: Richard Gillard's *The Servant Song* and Dan Schutte's *City of God*.

All four, he said, address growing together as a community that cares.

That's the Catholic, Marianist mission — and what the University of Dayton is all about.

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