

ENQUIRE WITHIN

Question: *Now that you are alone as a preacher in the parish, Neil, do you find it difficult to think of something new and interesting to say every week and does it take a long time to prepare sermons?*

Answer:

Well, do I find something new and interesting to say every week? I ought to be asking you that question...!

If you look at the Sundays of 2006, you will see that I preached on 44 Sunday mornings. This does not including mid-week festivals and evening services, so I probably prepared about 50 sermons in total, that is roughly one a week.

The other dates were covered as follows-
29th January – Geoff Edwards of the LDBS
26th March- Suzanne Streckmann from Germany
7th May- Rev. James Alcock (I was at a wedding)
25th June – Bishop Pete Broadbent (Confirmation)
6th August – Rev. Don (holiday cover)
13th August- Revd. Don Davis (holiday cover)
17th September – Archdeacon Rachel Treweek
12th November- Rev. Don Davis (Remembrance Sunday when I was at the War Memorial)

So, the congregation heard 7 different preachers on eight different occasions, spread throughout the year, in addition to my voice as a constant throughout the same period.

As usual, there are swings and roundabouts. When there were four potential preachers, its true that the congregation was treated to constant variety and I would preach no more than twice a month. This was less of a demanding schedule in terms of preparation. On the other hand, the preparation of a regular once a Sunday or even

twice a Sunday sermon is a discipline which may easily be accepted. There is something very creative about reaching deeply into the scriptures and prising out of them things of real contemporary value and interest. I do enjoy this aspect of my work and look forward to the challenge found in the preparatory study and then the task of making it all accessible, or as accessible as possible.

In the once a week scenario, the preacher builds up a rhythm and a style which makes for better communication with the congregation than if on a less frequent basis.

I don't normally find it difficult to prepare sermons because, after all, I am dealing with the foundation documents of our faith. If I can't something of interest and value in these wonderful narratives, parables and

teachings, week by week, then I am in the wrong job!

Sometimes I sit down to prepare a sermon and it all just flows, effortlessly. The problem then is to reduce the words so that the sermon lasts no longer than 10 minutes if possible. At other times, but rarely, I do feel stuck and uninspired. In these times, there are plenty of resources to help, and I do use these resources, either in my books or on the www.

Interpreting the scriptures is one of the joys of the parish priest's life. I feel that when I am feeling involved in some deep issue or difficult matter in my own life that then I find the special inspiration to preach sermons which are very close to the spirit of Jesus himself.

Neil Richardson

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TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.