

## **An Homily on Homilies**

We've had the "Eurovision Song Contest", with its emphasis on backing and the prostitution of the English language. Norman Wisdom suggested a "Eurovision Hymn Contest" with a luxury trip across the Sea of Galilee as first prize. Why not a "European Sermon Contest"?

The preacher, like the teacher, should be an actor. He uses voice, expressions and mannerisms which are not really his - he must *appear* extrovert even if he is introvert.

I was brought up a Methodist since my father is one of their ministers, and his sermons are always in the top ten! Later I had to make a personal choice, Methodist (non-liturgical with sermons) or Anglican (liturgical with sermons.)

It appears the discrepancy in sermon standards - why I believe, Methodists are more entertaining, informative and thought-provoking than Anglicans - is derived from the Ordination Services of the two denominations. The Anglican Church ordains its adepts to the Ministry of the Sacrament and the Word; the Methodist Church ordains theirs to the Word and the Sacrament. Hence the Methodists have more training in Homiletics.

### **My sermon formula:**

1. Opening introduction, leading to
2. Text - not necessarily Biblical.
3. Always make three - and only three - distinct points
4. Build up to an obvious climax - close Bible - preferably slam it shut on an high note.
5. Quickly bring to a close

### **Howard's Hints:**

- a. Never read a sermon.
- b. Use the voice - powerfully or emotionally etc.
- c. Occasionally thump the pulpit - to emphasise a point and to ensure people remain awake.
- d. Use frequent illustrations, preferably comic.
- e. Above all, avoid the usual ecclesiastical clichés – invent your own!
- f. The three points (3 above) serve a variety of purposes:
  - They help the preacher to understand what he is trying to say.
  - They help the congregation to understand what he is trying to say.
  - They give an indication of how much longer he is going on, to those who do not understand what he is trying to say.

Of course, the answer is, "Do away with sermons in their accepted form." In my view, they are indefensible. In these enlightened days, how is it one man can say what he likes and go unchallenged? Either keep the sermon and have a discussion group after each service, or have a lecture and discussion in place of a service.

