

Michael Pasquarello III. *We Speak Because We Have First Been Spoken: A Grammar of the Preaching Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009. 158 pages. \$12.24.

The church has struggled from the beginning with the question, how do we (or should we) train and educate, or form those whom God has called and sent into the world to teach and preach? This debate is analogous to a debate in classical rhetoric. Did one become a good orator by learning and developing one's argumentative skills? Or, was one formed and educated to be a good person so that one would then be a good speaker? The church asks the same questions. Do we teach people to be preachers by educating them in Biblical Studies, History, and Theology? Or, do we enter people into a period of spiritual formation in order to grow as a good person who will preach well?

In *We Speak Because We have First Been Spoken*, Michael Pasquarello opens with Augustine's reflection that preachers are to be "a living sermon." This work then explores the ways that we help preachers become those living sermons in what Pasquarello describes as the "grammar of the preaching life" (2). He joins the centuries old debate with the observation that the answer lies in both/and, not either/or. We cannot focus on one or the other, educating/training or forming preachers. Rather, we must be about both educating and forming, "the modern functional divide between theology and preaching is overcome by the attentiveness of faith in the in the incarnate Word through the grace of the Spirit, who transforms a preacher" (2).

While Pasquarello does argue that a grammar of the preaching life must involve three things: "attention/contemplation, the integration of theology and practice, and communion/participation" (2), the primary focus of this book is to argue for and examine the spiritual and moral formation of the preacher. Pasquarello believes that the education of preachers has become so focused on the academic dimensions of theological education that the spiritual formation has been sorely neglected. To preach Christ we must know Christ. To proclaim the Good News, preacher's lives must have been transformed by that news. Only then, he argues, will preachers be able to invite their congregations to walk that same path. The issue, therefore, is how to develop a pedagogical approach that unites "prayerful attentiveness to God and a life ordered to the vocation of preaching" (15).

After describing the contemporary approach to preaching which seeks "to train individuals who perform tasks efficiently" (35), i.e., modernity's turn to the subject, Pasquarello seeks to make a turn back an approach that centers on spiritual formation. He wants preachers to direct all of their attention on God; to "know God rightly and love God truly" (133). Preachers must focus themselves on God as the source of life, of their speaking, and practice "the integrity of preaching . . . the joy of praising and knowing God" (39). Pasquarello begins by first examining the wisdom of three early preachers and their approach to the preaching life: Paul, Irenaeus, and Augustine.

The second half of the book is devoted to the Dominican approach to educating the preacher and in particular the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Thomas understood that theologian and preacher were one and that "the 'preaching life' is a theological life that is engendered by contemplating God through prayerful study of Scripture, infused by divine grace, and transformed by the virtues of faith, hope and love. In the end Pasquarello seeks to define "good" preaching, not as effective, entertaining preaching that packs the pews, but rather, "the fruit of attentiveness to the Word through the Spirit's grace by which we are transformed to know and speak the truth in love" (126).

I would close this review with three observations. First, Dr. Pasquarello offers homileticians and preachers a careful, thoughtful challenge. Will preachers be willing to devote as much time to prayer and meditation as they do to Bible study and exegesis? Second, I suggest that his claim will be more challenging for some than for others. Many religious communities have not neglected the spiritual formation of the preachers. Finally, Dr. Pasquarello presents us with a plethora of theologians' and preachers' reflections on the preaching life. That is a plus, but it is also a negative. There were times when I lost my way in the many quotations and longed to hear more from the author than from the many resources.

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