

Maurice J. Nutt CSsR, *Down Deep in My Soul: An African American Catholic Theology of Preaching*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2023. 240 pages. \$24.49.

Maurice J. Nutt's *Down Deep in My Soul: An African American Catholic Theology of Preaching* is a comprehensive, engaging, and helpful aid to any preacher inside or outside of the Catholic context. In his book, Nutt aims to articulate the gifts and promote the resources found within the Black preaching style for those who will preach in African-American Catholic settings. From the African-American slave experience to the current struggles of racial injustice, Nutt articulates the origins and emphasis of Black spirituality and how it still has powerful effects today. His book shows the ways Black preaching, a cornerstone of the Black spiritual experience, is a gift to not just the Black community but to the church at large. Through church documents and church history, Nutt wields a compelling argument of the unique ties of Catholic and Black culture in ways that bring new life to the homiletical conversation and form a Catholic theology of preaching that could be useful for priests, professors, scholars of homiletics, as well as the average Catholic parishioner interested in learning how to preach the gospel within their daily context.

For priests, Nutt offers a compelling argument for how the Black preaching tradition could aid the current need for better homiletical practice within parishes. A key part of his recommendation addresses homily preparation and execution. To address the impact and need for good preaching within the Catholic context, he offers tools and techniques that are staples of the African-American preaching tradition, revealing insights into better use of the lectionary, addressing sermon structural concerns, and encouraging the use of Black literary sources as methods of successful homily preparation. Nutt uses examples including dialectical and tonal techniques that hone compelling and prophetic preaching not often seen in the wider Catholic context. In doing so, he shows how dynamic preaching of the Word can make the Eucharist a moment of better-recognized celebration for everyone in the pews.

For teachers/scholars, this book offers a survey of the core curriculum of Black homiletical practice. Nutt succinctly covers David Buttrick, Eugene Lowery, Henry Mitchel and other homiletics essentials while putting them in conversation with names like W.E.B. Du Bois, bell hooks, and James Cone. He clearly knows the basis of homiletic practice as he outlines the core structures of narrative practices and the aspects needed to bring a Word not easily forgotten. With this Black homiletical knowledge, he also articulates how Black spirituality uniquely ties into the Catholic experience naming how documents like *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and *Fulfilled in Your Hearing* (the U.S. Bishops 1982 document meant to improve the state of preaching in the Catholic Church) promote the need for better preaching. His inclusive coverage of the topic, both ecclesial and evangelical, makes this a thoroughly researched look into the practice of preaching in the Catholic context that would make this book an asset to any preaching classroom syllabus.

Lastly, for the edification of the average Catholic, Nutt tells the tale of Black Catholic history weaving in stories of resilient parishes, prominent Black Catholic voices, and anecdotal examples from Pope Francis's pastoral preaching style. He brings into contemplation a way to find one's unique voice that goes beyond the clerical bounds, even including a section on when and where lay preaching is beneficial within the Catholic context. This book is sure to help any Catholic wanting to preach more powerfully as well as help any Catholic church enthusiasts wishing to learn more about what makes a good sermon open their ears in new ways to the

homily at their local church. The author clearly aims to prepare all people to evangelize in ways that can be effective both inside and outside of the walls of the local parish.

As a Black Catholic student of theology and education, I found this book not only engaging, but an accurate depiction of the unique gifts and unique struggles of the Black Catholic reality. Chapter by chapter, Nutt describes relevant stories, ecclesial documents, and community-based insights that are often untold assets of the Black and Catholic reality, a small population within the Church with a great impact. This book could be an asset to any classroom, home office, or church office interested in a dynamic theology of preaching not yet named within the Catholic context. This book is the articulation of a Black Catholic theology of preaching that many of my homiletic classes have been waiting for, and I'm grateful that students can learn from it in the years to come.

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