

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PREACHING
by James Forbes
(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989, 111 pages).

Certainly one of the most charismatic Dominicans preaching in Latin America today is a senior Dutchman named Baltasar Hendricks. When Fray (as we Dominicans here are accustomed to call ourselves) Baltasar discharged his duties as regional Promoter of the Dominican Family, he gained the ambiguous reputation of an unsinkable enthusiast. As Dominic was said to have spoken only to God or of God, Hendricks wrote prayers to Dominic and booklets about him. Once Hendricks' successor commented sardonically that he could not be expected to truck Dominican literature in suitcases wherever he traveled like Fray Baltasar. And to hear Baltasar Hendricks preach! My one experience left me in admiration of person penetrated with the Spirit of compassion.

In the terminology of James Forbes, author of *The Holy Spirit and Preaching*, Baltasar Hendricks is a sterling example of the "anointed preacher." Forbes uses this term to denote the homilist who possesses a "fundamental awareness of God's appointment, empowerment and guidance in our calling to the work of the kingdom." The anointed preacher comes to this realization through a thorough grounding in prayer much like an oak will lay its roots deep as it stretches its branches to the heavens in proclamation of God's glory.

Although solidly based, the anointed preacher does not hesitate to make a leap of faith. Christian preaching must not become bogged down in rational analysis as it should not hyper inflate with lofty truths. No, the preacher must connect reality to the beliefs that transcend what is normally visible to the eye. If another arboreal analogy could be permitted here, we might think of the preacher's role at times as swinging through the trees of a jungle. The anointed preacher boldly grasps the twine of faith to lead the community out of a sinful situation to salvation over an underbrush of doubt and deception.

A term which Forbes does not use in his presentation but might exploit is "enthusiasm." The roots of this word are telling: en theos -- in God. We preachers should establish our ministry in God as source by focus on the revealed Word, as sustenance through continual prayer, and as end by envisioning how the dry bones in Ezekiel's valley of death might rise up. These three themes delineate the contents of Forbes' work. It is, of course, precisely the work of the Spirit to place us in God.

A pitfall of enthusiasts is the tendency to reject hard work for banal spontaneity. Forbes decries such a progression in preaching. He writes, "...I do not believe the anointing of the Holy Spirit relieves us from the responsibility of thoughtful diligence in exchange for magical toil-free preparation." As Jerome Robinson used to quote Clarence Rivers, "Spontaneity is always well-rehearsed." Truly effective preaching is never winged but always meditated, elaborated and practiced to drive the Word home.

The Holy Spirit and Preaching transcribes the author's lectures on preaching at Yale in 1986. Its oral style is not directed toward an intense reading. Furthermore, it does not attempt to theologize about the Holy Spirit but simply depicts the Spirit's role in the ministry of Jesus. There may be more profound treatments of the subject. Nonetheless, this little volume definitely assists preachers in their reflection on the Holy Spirit.

----reviewed by Carmen Mele, O.P.