

Study Guide: Interview with Monsignor Joseph Reilly

Monsignor Joseph R. Reilly was interviewed for The Wisdom Figures of Preaching Interview series (a part of Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology's Preaching as Hospitality Formation Program) on April 17, 2026, in Lewis Hall.

Monsignor Reilly is the current president of Seton Hall University. He served as the Rector/Dean at Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology from 2012 to 2022.

What does "Hospitable Preaching" mean to you?

- Monsignor Reilly reflected on his mentor, Fr. John Doherty's hospitable preaching:
 - He had the unique ability to be present to people from the pulpit.
 - He would preach from the aisle.
 - He could read the crowd.
 - He was attentive to his church.
 - He was someone who understood people and their needs ("he met people where they were.")
- An important component of preaching is giving the message of Christ, and the life that comes from that, uniquely to the Gospel.
- Monsignor Reilly enjoys being with his weekend parish for the last 35 years.
 - He can speak from his own reflections, no paper needed.
 - He can reflect on the community's personal experiences (he personally knows those who lost someone, he knows if a family is struggling, and he has baptized his friends' babies).

Responses to the Wisdom Figure Questions

1. How have you prayed with the Scripture in preparation to form your homily?
 - Monsignor Reilly's method:
 - He takes some time, before the Lord, reading the Scriptures before the week.
 - In the beginning of the week (Monday and Tuesday), he will sit with the readings for the upcoming Sunday.
 - He prays a holy hour.
 - He reads all the Scriptures.
 - He takes notes.
 - He lets his experiences influence his homily.
 - His life in faith isn't separate from what he's preaching to people in the community.
 - The Lord uses Monsignor Reilly's own experiences and his faith to understand what he wants to share with people.
2. What lessons have you drawn from the Gospel reading that helped you invite, welcome, share, and offer compassion?
 - Monsignor Reilly reflected on the Emmaus passage (Jesus is walking with the Apostles)

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- This reading impacted his life. He continues to find it encouraging.
- Monsignor Reilly also reflected on St. Paul's letter to the Phillippians
 - "I wish to know Christ and the power flowing from his resurrection."
 - The reading helped him in his life.
 - He tries to go deeper into his own relationship with the Lord.
 - He finds strength, encouragement, and inspiration.
- 3. How would you describe your relationship with parishioners? What compelling stories have you heard from parishioners testifying the impact of your hospitable preaching?
- He enjoys being in community for 35 years in Bayonne.
 - It is a wonderful gift for him as a person, priest, and preacher.
- Monsignor reflected on preaching funeral mass:
 - The funeral is "a gift to welcome his parishioner into heaven."
- 4. How have your parishioners inspired you in your preaching ministry?
- His parishioners are affirming, encouraging, and forgiving.
 - Parishioners are accepting if you have a bad day, your homily is long, or your homily is disjointed.
 - Parishioners are patient with him.
- Humility is important. As a preacher, you can always improve on things.
 - Listening to feedback is important. People who love you can challenge you in a way that is uplifting and won't cut you down.
- Parishioners made him a better person.
 - A deeper believer
 - A better preacher
- Monsignor Reilly learned:
 - "To be a good priest, you need to be a good person first."
 - "As priests, we have more in common with the people that we are serving and preaching."
 - The greatest gift we have is life and faith.
 - He is both a priest and friend (an important connection to make).
 - "Your priesthood is your people- be with the people."
 - Grow in the capacity to be an effective preacher- the human perspective is a common one that we all share.
- 5. What three lessons of prayerful preparation and/or hospitality might you have for those preparing for ordination and for those preparing to give retreats, days of recollection, and spiritual presentations?
- Prayer is important.
 - Connect with the Lord through prayer.
 - Preach the Word of God.
- Everyone is busy, but find the time to pray.
 - Holy hour, find a time to disconnect.

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- “Some part of the best part of your day needs to be given to God.”
 - Monsignor Reilly follows a morning routine of prayer.
- The Gospel is already written.
 - It is God’s revelation, His living Word.
 - Connect with the Holy Spirit and bring life to it.
 - God does the heavy lifting, so preachers don't have to make it seem like they must change the world or save the world.
 - Preachers should try to represent the Lord in a way that is life-giving.

To view the video of Monsignor Reilly as a Wisdom Figure of Preaching, click [here](#).