Anatomizing Pope Francis' pandemic homilies: Discourse parts and types in focus

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Abstract

In times of crisis, the role of religious leaders becomes paramount in providing solace and guidance to their followers. This study undertakes a comprehensive analysis of Pope Francis' homilies during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on their discourse structure and text types. Employing a descriptive-qualitative approach rooted in discourse analysis, the study examines ten randomly selected homilies from an official Vatican compilation. The analysis reveals a consistent structural pattern comprising an introduction, narration, proposition, argumentation, pathetic, refutation, and conclusion. Furthermore, it discerns that the homilies predominantly exhibit characteristics of factual text, particularly the expository genre, elucidating theological insights and offering practical counsel. However, the study acknowledges limitations such as sample size and linguistic constraints, underscoring the need for careful interpretation of findings. These insights highlight the persuasive and pastoral efficacy of religious discourse during crises and emphasize avenues for future research and practical application in crisis communication and pastoral ministry.

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1. Introduction

In times of distress and tribulation, individuals naturally seek leaders who can provide guidance and inspiration. Research in psychology and sociology has extensively explored the dynamics of leadership in crisis situations, highlighting the critical role leaders play in shaping collective responses and fostering resilience within communities (Lombardi et al., 2021; Southwick et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2022). In the same way, various research on charismatic leadership has accentuated the importance of inspirational communication in galvanizing followers and instilling hope amidst adversity (Jamal & Abu Bakar, 2017; Men et al., 2021). With that, Pope Francis, the current head of the Roman Catholic church, assumes the weighty responsibility of shepherding his over a billion followers worldwide in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of distress and tribulation (Weinberg et al., 2020). His pivotal role as a guiding figure during this crisis is underscored by the unique platform his position affords him, enabling the dissemination of solace, wisdom, and moral guidance (Powell, 2017; Sousa, 2020). Previous studies have already highlighted religious leaders' vital role in times of uncertainty, serving as bastions of moral support and fostering communal resilience (Omerovic, 2017; Yibeltal et al., 2024). Thus, the role of Pope Francis as a spiritual leader extends beyond doctrinal teachings to encompass pastoral care and moral leadership, particularly during moments of global upheaval and existential uncertainty. It is also worth noting that his messages of compassion, solidarity, and hope resonate not only with Catholics but also with individuals of diverse faiths and beliefs (Ravitz, 2015), underscoring the universal appeal of moral leadership in times of crisis.

These messages of compassion, solidarity, and hope could be delivered through homilies, the primary medium through which Pope Francis communicates his teachings and offers spiritual guidance (Powell, 2017; Sousa, 2020). During liturgies (i.e., the public rites of the Catholic church), priests (e.g., the pope) often give sermons called homilies that have a religious, spiritual, or moral theme (Powell, 2017) which is "a vivid and joyful experience of the spirit, a consoling holy discourse with God's word, and a continual source of renewal and advancement," as stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Fernandes, 2015). Rooted in centuries-old tradition, homilies serve as a means of imparting divine teachings and inspiring believers to lead virtuous lives (Broadus, 2014; Buchiu, 2022; Lemana, 2023). Serving as exhortations of the word of God and conduits for spiritual enlightenment and transformation, homilies offer believers a pathway to encounter the divine, find solace in

times of distress, and embark on a journey of personal and communal renewal (Brockhaus, 2020; Reis, 2020). Hence, as integral components of liturgical worship, homilies embody religious teachings' wisdom and enduring relevance, inspiring believers to live lives of faith, integrity, and compassion.

Despite the extensive scholarship on religious discourse, there remains a notable gap in the analysis of Pope Francis' pandemic homilies in terms of discourse structure and text types. While numerous linguists have examined religious communication using diverse theoretical frameworks and textual corpora (see Adedun & Mekiliuwa, 2009; Capaldi, 2017; Ferrara, 2014; Guzik, 2018; Hopkins, 2010; Karanja, 2014; Mansouri et al., 2017; Szudrowicz-Gartska, 2012), studies have yet to be undertaken by systematically investigating organization of discourse parts and the identification of text types in the homilies delivered by a religious leader during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This qualitative discourse study aimed to bridge this gap by comprehensively analyzing Pope Francis' pandemic homilies. By analyzing the sequence of discourse parts such as introduction, narration, proposition, argumentation, refutation, and conclusion, we can discern how Pope Francis constructs his messages to convey moral teachings and offer spiritual guidance to his followers. This understanding is crucial for grasping the effectiveness of his leadership and pastoral care during the pandemic. Furthermore, studying the types of homilies delivered by Pope Francis provides valuable information about the content and focus of his messages during the COVID-19 crisis. Different types of homilies may serve varying purposes and address specific spiritual needs of the faithful. By identifying the predominant text types used by Pope Francis, we can gain insights into the motifs and theological perspectives emphasized in his homilies. This knowledge enables us to assess the relevance and applicability of his teachings to the contemporary challenges faced by individuals and communities affected by the pandemic. Moreover, understanding the organization and text types of Pope Francis' homilies during the pandemic contributes to broader scholarly inquiries into religious discourse and leadership in times of crisis. This knowledge enhances our understanding of religious rhetoric and pastoral ministry and informs interdisciplinary efforts to promote social cohesion, ethical leadership, and collective resilience in the face of global challenges.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the supposition of Toczydlowski (1949) in his study which delved into the structural composition of the homilies of St. Chrysostom. For him, every speech, whether sacred or profane, in order to be called "successful" must be built up of the following parts: introduction or exordium (the part of the speech where the speaker introduces himself or his topic, or where he draws the audience's attention so that they are receptive and open to learning what he has to say); narration or explanation (the part of the speech where the speaker provides background information or defends his stance.); the proposition (where a statement or assertion that expresses a judgement or opinion is declared or implied); the argumentation or proofs (typically follows a framework that divides the arguments into distinct sections and may be followed by a restatement of those sections); the pathetic (it is where the speaker may do the stirring of the passions); the refutations (it is where he answers any remaining objections or difficulties before concluding); and the conclusion or peroration (it is the wrapping up stage used to rouse the crowd's enthusiasm). Notwithstanding, Toczydlowski (1949) asserts that while all these parts may occur in one speech, they need not all occur nor strictly occur in the order he presented. Accordingly, when it is important to clear away prejudices or misconceptions, a part, or even the whole of the refutation may be placed right after the introduction. Also, the pathetic may occur almost anywhere, and even several times in the same speech (Toczydlowski, 1949).

Moreover, to analyze the text types of the homilies being studied, it is imperative that a text is well elucidated. According to Wilson (2012), a text is a constructed object. It is innately communicative and is part of an ongoing discourse produced, received, and interpreted by various social actors and agents (Rhiney, 2010). Isnaini (2014) refers text to as any written record of a communicative event that may involve oral language like in a sermon or homily, a casual conversation, a shopping transaction, or written language like in a poem, a newspaper, advertisement, a novel, etc. Furthermore, it consists of more than one sentence, and these sentences combine to form a meaningful whole to convey a complete message (Lee, 2001; Isnaini, 2014). Anderson and Anderson (1998) state that texts are pieces of spoken or written language created for a particular purpose, and can be classified into

different types that share certain structural and functional elements that have developed conventionalized patterns with a high level of usage. These types – literary and factual – are assigned on the basis of external criteria such as intended audience, purpose, and activity type, that is, it refers to a conventional, culturally recognized grouping of texts (Lee, 2001).

A literary text is defined as a wide variety of creative writing that leads to the appreciation of the cultural heritages and covers those spoken and written texts that explore and interpret human experience, usually in such a way as to evoke in the reader or listener a reflective, imaginative and/or emotional response (Isnaini, 2014). Furthermore, a literary text may be a narrative, drama, and response text. According to Rebecca (2003), the narrative text type is a tool to help humans to organize their ideas and explore new ideas and experiences in the forms of novels, short stories, myths, legends, science fiction, fantasy, fables, cartoons, stage plays, film scripts, television scripts, radio scripts, role plays, letters, and conversations. This text type may consist of four parts: orientation, complication, resolution, and conclusion (Isnaini, 2014). Meanwhile, drama is a literary text that depicts action via dialogues of acting characters and authorial notes, i.e., description of the physical action of actors, place and time circumstances, etc. (Isnaini, 2014). It could be in a form of film scripts, daytime dramas, plays, improvised performances, and street theatre. Last but not least, the response text is used to describe a written piece that offers an individual's response (judgment, opinion, reaction) to a piece of literature, such as a book, film, or poem (Anderson & Anderson, 1998; Isnaini, 2014).

The second main type of text according to Anderson and Anderson (1998) is called a factual text like an explanation, procedure, exposition, information report, recount, and discussion. Isnaini (2014) refers to factual texts as those texts that present information, ideas, or issue so as to inform, instruct, and enlighten the reader or listener. An explanation is a text which explains processes relating to forming of natural, social, scientific, and cultural phenomena (Anderson & Anderson, 1998). On the other hand, the procedure is a text that shows a process in sequence from beginning to end. It is used to indicate how something gets finished by going through a series of steps in sequential order, which is its social function. The term "instruction text" is frequently used to refer to this type of document (Anderson & Anderson, 1998). Meanwhile, another kind of factual literature is known as an exposition. It is utilized in the process of advancing or justifying an argument, as well as in the

presentation of a certain point of view; hence, the act of stating one's viewpoint with regard to a matter and arguing one's case for or against it is known as exposition. Text types such as advertising, editorials, debates delivered orally, and legal defenses are all examples of exposition (Isnaini, 2014). Another factual text is called an information report. Anderson and Anderson (1998) state that an information report is a piece of text that presents information about a subject. Its purpose is to categorize and/or characterize the subject by making use of data regarding the subject's components, actions, and characteristics. In addition, a recount is another kind of factual literature that is a piece of writing that retells past events, most of the time in the order in which they took place (Djuharie, 2008). Its social function is to provide the audience with a description of what occurred and when it occurred. Lastly, a discussion is a sort of factual text that is used to investigate a subject from more than one point of view. In this section, the arguments and supporting evidence for each of the perspectives are presented to arrive at a conclusion (Anderson & Anderson, 1998; Isnaini, 2014).

2.2. Analysis of religious discourses

Previous studies showed that there have been analyses of religious discourses like homilies and sermons that provide various methodological insights and employ different analytical frameworks. For example, Hopkins (2010) determined the patterns of meaning in the sermon language of women preachers, recognized the struggle of women preachers, and noted how that struggle might be reflected in their lives and work. Examining the sermon language of women preachers and looking for patterns of meaning evident in the language employed by the women preachers as they attempted to adapt to the traditionally male-dominated occupation of preaching, Hopkins (2010) concluded that each of these women preachers utilized narrative structure, and that women preachers utilized their sermon language to construct significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, sign systems, and knowledge.

Employing a socio-pragmatic study about the discourse of Friday sermon in Indonesia, Saddhono (2011) analyzed the structure of the sermon's discourse, the selection and composition of its topics, the form and functions of its codes and code-switching, the form of its speech acts, and the characteristics of its language and specific terms. The study revealed that the Friday sermon contained oral discourse, which had a regular and typical structure; the strategies of the composition of the topics included quotation, storytelling, and

use of popular expressions; the forms of the codes and code-switching involved Arabic, Indonesian, Javanese, and English languages; the utterances of the sermon contained all forms of speech acts; various terms appeared in the sermons indicating that the Friday sermon functioned as a register or usage of language in a particular field. In the same way, studying the conversational features and discourse strategies in select sermons of a pastor from Nigeria, Akhimien and Farotimi (2018) presented findings of their study showing that the sermons were characterized by conversational features such as feedback (call-response, adjacency pairs, openings and closings), repair mechanism, and selection of next speaker. The study further revealed the presence of non-verbal conversational features such as pauses, smiles, laughter, and raising of the hands and head. The study concluded that the speaker carefully combined these features to enhance his audience involvement and to trigger his desired response from the audience.

Adam (2017), in his study with a focus on using credible persuasion in religious discourses, i.e., sermons, claimed that although persuasion seemed to be present in virtually all text types and registers, in many ways, it was the religious discourse that utilized persuasion as one of its pivotal instruments to convince the audience of the veracity of the doctrine presented through it. His paper explored scripted sermons, particularly sermon titles and opening passages, in terms of the persuasive strategies employed. The main emphasis was placed on how particular linguistic realizations of persuasion enhanced the credibility of the message. In the same manner, Essuman (2016) presented a pragmatic analysis of Ghanaian Anglican sermons. Examining how meaning was conveyed and interpreted in sermonic discourse, the study revealed that background assumptions and knowledge shared by preachers and congregations in sermon delivery accounted for how meaning was constructed and inferred by participants in the discourse. It was concluded that the interpretation of meaning in sermon delivery was not determined by linguistic contexts only nor dependent on textual resources; rather, it was dependent on other situational and contextual factors.

Meanwhile, to parse the structure of a religious discourse of Pope John Paul II, Szudrowicz-Garstka (2012) employed a discourse analysis to examine one of the pope's homilies addressed to young people in Toronto, Canada in 2002, during the celebration of World Youth Days. The study also aimed to provide a brief insight into understanding discourse and present a suitable tool for its investigation. The findings showed that the

homily and its structure could be described using the application of ten case markers, i.e., situationality, emotions, recent history, remote history, general knowledge, juxtapositions, direct intertextuality, guidelines, dangers, and teaching. Using the same research approach to analyzing texts, Karanja (2014), focusing on Catholic homilies from Queen of Apostles Seminary Church in Ruaraka Nairobi, conducted a discourse study whose aim was to find out what made disparate sentences hang together as well as the tools used by homilists to knit together their messages. Further, the study also aimed to find out the role of the topic as a coherence principle and how the principle organized the speech into a coherent whole, as well as to assess how meaning was conveyed in concrete situations. The study found that topic was the strongest coherence principle used by homilists to achieve relevance and by the congregation to interpret what as relevant and what was not relevant. The study recommended a further study on the relevance of prosody in homilies.

On the other hand, the sermons of selected Pentecostal churches in Lagos were considered by Ekeoha (2015) as the corpora in examining the linguistic forms and functions of rhetorical strategies and their persuasive value in these religious discourses, with the aim of the study which was to understand the language of Nigerian Pentecostalism fully. Data showed that metaphors, rhetorical questions, and proverbs were the linguistically explicated forms of rhetorical strategies for persuasion in Nigerian Pentecostal sermons. It was recommended that awareness of these linguistic forms was essential for an understanding of the language and rhetoric of Nigerian Pentecostalism.

This review of related literature, although insightful, brings out a conspicuous gap in the scholarship concerning Pope Francis' pandemic homilies, particularly in terms of discourse structure and text types. Despite the abundance of research on religious discourse, there is a distinct absence of systematic analyses focusing on the organization of discourse parts and the identification of text types within the homilies delivered by Pope Francis amid the COVID-19 pandemic. While previous studies have explored religious communication utilizing various theoretical frameworks and textual corpora, the specific examination of Pope Francis' homilies during this critical period remains underexplored. This gap highlights the need for research to fill this void and provide insights into how Pope Francis communicates with his global audience during times of crisis.

3. Methodology

Discourse analysis (DA) served as the research methodology for this study's descriptive-qualitative approach. DA conducts a deep and thorough investigation of the transmission of information since it attempts to characterize and explain language events in emotions, cognitions, situations, and cultures. (Budd, 2005; Gee, 2005).

Pope Francis's homilies given during the pandemic served as the corpus for this analysis. These homilies were taken from an e-book titled *Strong in the Face of Tribulation: The Church in Communion - A Sure Support in Time of Trial*. The selection of this e-book was based on its status as the official compilation of the Pope's pandemic homilies. As reported by Brockhaus (2020), this e-book encompasses Pope Francis' homilies, prayers, and other messages delivered from March 9 to May 18, 2020, throughout the coronavirus lockdown in Italy. Published by the Vatican and edited by the Dicastery for Communication of the Holy See, it serves as a record of the Pope's communications during this unprecedented period. Additionally, Reis (2020) highlighted in Vatican News that the aforementioned e-book aims to provide a small gesture of assistance to everyone, guiding them in recognizing and embracing God's presence and compassion amidst pain, suffering, solitude, and fear.

The study commenced with the approval of protocol AL-GS 35-12-2020 by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) at the University of the Immaculate Conception in Davao City, Philippines. Subsequently, the researchers acquired the e-book. To qualify as a corpus for analysis, a homily must have been delivered by the Pope during the pandemic and possess an official English translation. A bowl containing strips of paper bearing the titles of all eligible homilies was prepared; from these, 10 were chosen at random out of 24. Fugard and Potts (2015) referenced research by Braun and Clarke (2013), who suggested that 10 texts would suffice for discourse analysis. Each randomly selected homily was assigned a unique code, and their sentences were numerically segmented for analytical purposes.

This study considered Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach to qualitative data analysis. Their framework consists of three essential components: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drafting and verification. In particular, the process began with data reduction, where the researchers randomly selected 10 homilies. The chosen homilies were then subjected to numerical segmentation for analytical purposes, facilitating the

organization and categorization of the data. Subsequently, each homily was carefully analyzed for discourse parts and types vis-à-vis the theoretical frameworks employed in this study. Finally, the researchers synthesized the data to draw meaningful conclusions. This process involved cross-referencing the findings with established theoretical frameworks and engaging intercoders in applied linguistics to ensure the accuracy and validity of the analysis. The researchers also employed a reflective commentary method to document personal insights, emerging patterns, and theoretical justifications throughout the analysis process. Ultimately, these steps culminated in the formulation of comprehensive conclusions that shed light on the structure parts and types of Pope Francis' pandemic homilies.

4. Findings and Discussion

Table 1
Structural Composition of Pope Francis' Pandemic Homilies

Structure Elements	Indicator	Description	Sample Excerpt & Source
Parts of the Discourse	Introduction/ Exordium	Relation to the Topic/ Scripture	Last Sunday we celebrated the Lord's resurrection; today we witness the resurrection of His disciple. It has already been a week, a week since the disciples had seen the Risen Lord… (H6S19AET)
	Narration/ Explanation	Facts about the Subject and the Position	What does Jesus do in the face of this timorous lack of belief? He returns and, standing in the same place… In life we go forward tentatively, uncertainly, like a toddler… (H6S19AET)
	Proposition	Assertion/ Judgment/ Opinion	The hand that always puts us back on our feet is mercy: God knows that without mercy we will remain on the ground... (H6S19AET)
	Argumentation/ Proofs	Outlined Supporting Details	Let us go back to the disciples…Thomas can now touch them and know of Jesus' love… In those wounds, he touches with his hands God's tender closeness… There, every doubt is resolved... (H6S19AET)
	Pathetic	Passions/ Virtues	We need the Lord, who sees beyond that frailty an irrepressible beauty… (H6S19AET)
	Refutations	Objections/ Difficulties	You may object: "But I keep falling!" …(H6S19AET)
	Conclusion/ Peroration	Appeals & Invitations	To everyone: let us not think only of our interests, our vested interests. Let us welcome this time of trial as an opportunity to prepare for our collective future… (H6S19AET)
Text Type	Factual Text	Exposition	It takes three things to make a true prayer. The first is faith…The second condition that Jesus teaches us is perseverance…And the third thing that God wants in prayer is courage… (H3M23ML)

Parts of the Discourse

To present a methodical examination of the overall structure of the homilies, the sixth homily, as an example, is deconstructed below:

> *Last Sunday we celebrated the Lord's resurrection; today we witness the resurrection of his disciple. It has already been a week, a week since the disciples had seen the Risen Lord, but in spite of this, they remained fearful, cringing behind "closed doors", unable even to convince Thomas, the only one absent, of the resurrection. (H6S19AET)*

This passage represents the brief exordium of the sixth homily. Here, Pope Francis affirms that the introductory portion of the homily will garner the favorable attention of the congregation or audience. He does so by citing Easter Sunday, the most significant event in the Christian calendar since it marks the resurrection of Jesus from the grave and the eradication of sin and death forever. This is done to attract the attention of the audience, rather than to enlighten them. He then transitions to a second episode involving Thomas, a biblical character who appears to play an important role in the sermon.

The following statements from H6S19AET comprise the next part – the narration or explanation. In the following lines, Pope Francis exemplifies the use of scriptural reference by illustrating the connection between the Scripture quoted and the topic of the sermon. He employs the device dialektikon, that is, he begins with a question and then elaborates on the response. This allows him to demonstrate how the subject of the homily is developed from the text and how it relates to the text. Consider the following excerpts:

> *What does Jesus do in the face of this timorous lack of belief? He returns and, standing in the same place, "in the midst" of the disciples, He repeats his greeting: "Peace be with you!" (Jn 20:19, 26). He starts all over. The resurrection of His disciple begins here, from this faithful and patient mercy, from the discovery that God never tires of reaching out to lift us up when we fall… (H6S19AET)*

In the following stage, Pope Francis makes a clear proclamation of his idea or the primary move he intends to make – a proposition. It is the method by which the Pope initiates the process of ventilating the message of the Scripture and making it relevant to the audience by means of a declaration or an assertion that reflects his judgment based on the passages that have been read. In H6S19AET, the proposition states:

> *The hand that always puts us back on our feet is mercy: God knows that without mercy we will remain on the ground and that in order to keep walking, we need to be put back on our feet. (H6S19AET)*

The statement, which includes the proposition of the discourse, acts as the transition stage before Pope Francis introduces the body of the homily, which includes the component argumentations or proofs. The proposition is contained within the statement. This maneuver brings together the premise with the primary body of the homily, so keep that in mind as you read on. However, the pope opts to not reveal the body immediately as he presents first a refutation. Here, he shows the use of the device prokataleipsis, wherein he manifests anticipation of objections and to which he then gives a response by using counterarguments. Observe the following statements:

> *You may object: "But I keep falling!" The Lord knows this and He is always ready to raise you up. He does not want us to keep thinking about our failings; rather, He wants us to look to him. For when we fall, He sees children needing to be put back on their feet; in our failings, he sees children in need of his merciful love… (H6S19AET)*

The main body of the homily that encompasses the use of argumentation or proofs follows. As mentioned in the introduction, Thomas appears to have been the core of the message. Here, Pope Francis makes it appear that Thomas's experience with Jesus is a perfect scenario to exemplify the mercy of God that is able to lift his people during times of fear and doubt:

> *Let us go back to the disciples… To them, who were wounded within, he shows his own wounds. Thomas can now touch them and*

> *know of Jesus' love and how much Jesus had suffered for him, even though he had abandoned Him. In those wounds, he touches with his hands God's tender closeness. Thomas arrived late, but once he received mercy, he overtook the other disciples: he believed not only in the resurrection but in the boundless love of God. And he makes the most simple and beautiful profession of faith: "My Lord and my God!" … There, every doubt is resolved; there, God becomes my God; there, we begin to accept ourselves and to love life as it is. (H6S19AET)*

The most moving part of the discourse follows after the argumentations or proofs are presented. The elaborate and insightful manner of stirring the passions intensifies the essence of this part – the pathetic. In conjunction with the points explicated in the main body of the homily, Pope Francis accentuates a few relevant passions, starting off with fear. He points out that in the middle of human trials presently being experienced, the Lord sees our situation and we are able to appreciate his goodness and feel joy:

> *Dear brothers and sisters, in the time of trial that we are presently undergoing, we too, like Thomas, with our fears and our doubts, have experienced our frailty. We need the Lord, who sees beyond that frailty an irrepressible beauty… As the Letter of Peter said, this is a reason for being "filled with joy, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials". (H6S19AET)*

The passions, like love and compassion towards others, specifically during the present pandemic the world is recuperating from, are also significantly particularized:

> *Now, while we are looking forward to a slow and arduous recovery from the pandemic, there is a danger that we will forget those who are left behind. The risk is that we may then be struck by an even worse virus, that of selfish indifference. A virus spread by the thought that life is better if it is better for me and that everything will be fine if it is fine for me. It begins there and ends up selecting one person over another, discarding the poor, and*

sacrificing those left behind on the altar of progress. The present pandemic, however, reminds us that there are no differences or borders between those who suffer… This is not some ideology: it is Christianity. (H6S19AET)

In the final part of his discourse, Pope Francis delivers the conclusion, also known as the peroration, which is the section of a speech that is intended to excite the audience. This section is reflected in the sentences that follow in the form of a powerful impression. Instead of presenting any novel concepts, Pope Francis highlights and confirms the experience that Thomas had while contrasting it with the state of affairs in the world today.

In that community, after the resurrection of Jesus, only one was left behind and the others waited for him. Today the opposite seems to be the case: a small part of the human family has moved ahead, while the majority has remained behind. (H6S19AET)

He then injects a refutation to the implication of the above-mentioned statements and cites St. Faustina's experience of talking with the Lord to address the objection:

Each of us could say: "These are complex problems, it is not my job to take care of the needy, others have to be concerned with it!" Saint Faustina, after meeting Jesus, wrote: "In a soul that is suffering we should see Jesus on the cross, not a parasite and a burden... She said, "Lord, they often abuse my goodness". And Jesus replied: "Never mind, don't let it bother you, just be merciful to everyone always" … (H6S19AET)

In the end, appeals to the audience or applications are used as punctuation throughout Pope Francis' sixth homily. This section consists of a petition or an entreaty to personally respond to the truth in a way that will be acceptable to God. This is the step that brings the wisdom and understanding that the homily imparts to the listener's consciousness. The homily's dénouement goes:

To everyone: let us not think only of our interests, our vested interests. Let us welcome this time of trial as an opportunity to

> *prepare for our collective future… let us accept mercy, the*
> *salvation of the world. And let us show mercy to those who are*
> *most vulnerable; for only in this way will we build a new world.*
> *(H6S19AET)*

A magnanimous Pope Francis is inviting the audience to disregard selfishness, and encouraging them to embrace the present situation as an avenue to show kindness and empathy. Here, he mentions again Thomas that like him, may mercy be received by others as well, and the same must be shared with the rest of the world.

It is realized throughout the course of the study that to compose a homily, the following are its fundamental parts: introduction or exordium, narration or explanation, proposition, argumentation or proofs, pathetic or stirring of the passion/s, refutation, and conclusion or peroration. Furthermore, the findings reveal that in the homilies of Pope Francis, the introduction functions as the brief exordium of the discourses. Pope Francis uses this section to captivate listeners rather than to impart information. According to Beng (2007), an effective opening serves two purposes: attracting new listeners and getting the congregation excited about the sermon. For Cheong (1996) and Alamis (2013), this section piques the listeners' interest, gets their thoughts in order, and wins the favor for the preacher.

Narration or explanation also appears to be another part found in all of the homilies of the Holy Father. The sixth homily projects how the bridging of the read passages (most especially the Gospel) and the subject of the homily is done. Through the use of a captivating question and an immediate answer, Pope Francis is able to narrate certain points from the readings and eventually explain his position, a part he also used to intensify the audience's attention. Bozant (2019) writes that since the word "homily" means "explanation" in Greek, it must essentially comprise a part wherein there is a drawing out of the meaning of the passages in Scripture, and then applying these meanings to the current situation in which the faithful find themselves. Alamis (2013) adds that since most homilies want to get the attention of the audience, the usual strategy is to include the listeners in narrating a particular situation, a move that attempts to gain the involvement of the audience.

A proposition is one part of the homilies of Pope Francis which is considered the main teaching and thrust of the religious discourse, i.e., homily. As presented, Pope Francis

is directly stating his proposition that it is the hand of God that provides his people with mercy – mercy that will sustain their strength and their reason to go on in life. In his homilies, Pope Francis, the supreme pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church and the church's primary educator on matters of faith and morals, is able to make authoritative claims about the relevance of the readings to the lives of the audience. Alamis (2013) in a study finds out that in a homily, a proposition, which she labels the 'central move' in the text, is a vital process used by the preacher by which the message of the Scripture used is made relevant to the audience. With the same contention, other authors like Mead (2008), White (2017), Hughes (2018), and Bozant (2019) insist on the essentiality of a proposition in every sermon or homily. For them, a proposition is the summary of the preacher's message or the essence of the sermon derived directly from the summary of the text of Scripture by the sermon is driven. Meanwhile, argumentation is another essential part of the homilies of the Holy Father. Here, he presents proof to elucidate his proposition. For example, he cites the experience of Thomas's experience with Jesus' appearance after the resurrection and describes it as God's tender closeness and boundless love. He makes it clear through this example that this part of the discourse is the deepening method a preacher uses in order to provide details and heighten his point of view regarding the stated proposition. It is through this move that the proposition is united with the main part of the homily, according to Toczydlowski (1949). Furthermore, it is a means of persuading an audience to follow the priest's claim based on the Scripture, as how Cheong (1996) and Alamis (2013) explain it. Consequently, Brown (2003) and Youngkwang (2018) assert that argumentation is greatly important in preaching as it lays the foundation for the audience to respond to the truth of the Bible.

The *pathetic* is another part of the discourse found in Pope Francis' homilies. Pope Francis utilizes this part to bring out and deliver passions to his audience like love and compassion. These passions imply that the Holy Father uses the most moving part of the discourse – the *pathetic* – to present in an elaborate and insightful manner the passions, values, or moral teachings communicated in words and images familiar to the congregation. The *pathetic*, as a part of the discourse, intensifies the purpose of delivering a homily before an audience. As for Powell (2017) and Sousa (2020), a homily is a reflection or a moral exhortation that challenges, informs, directs, and brings Scripture to bear on the real lives of

God's people. Landry (2020) supports that through these values, a homily does not just give "us something to think about, or to lead us to make a minor change in our life – it is to form us to become more like Jesus Christ and bring about the heart-to-heart dialogue between God and his people." Also, the results of the research show that the *pathetic* can be used virtually anywhere, and even multiple times inside the same sentence. It means that in other homilies, the pathetic was also found after the introduction, in the argumentation, or even in the conclusion. These results constitute justification for the framework of Toczydlowski (1949) which suggests that passions may be highlighted anywhere in a homily.

On the other hand, refutation is demonstrated in the homilies of Pope Francis through the use of *prokataleipsis*, through which he responds to an anticipated objection with the use of counterarguments, which are based on the Scriptures rather than on human reasoning. By presenting refutations in his homilies, Pope Francis shows mastery of the points he wants to convey, competence in the manner through which he is to deliver the homilies, and brilliance in thinking "beyond the box". According to Illie (2009), in order to successfully refute an argument, the speaker must first have a thorough comprehension of the argument on all levels, including its literal meaning and its pragmatic implicatures. Moreover, results also reveal that refutations, like the pathetic, could also appear anywhere in the discourse, even right after the introduction when it is important to clear away prejudices or misconceptions, as Toczydlowski (1949) asserts. Likewise, the findings of the study back Nordquist's (2019) assertion that in a speech or an essay, a refutation can be found in the first body paragraphs, the middle body paragraphs, or the last. This indicates that the refutation part could be placed wherever it makes the most sense in the text's logical structure.

Considered the ending of a homily, a conclusion or peroration comes logically last in the homilies. Pope Francis concludes his homilies by offering practical applications of the gospel and praying that his listeners may respond appropriately to the truth in order to serve God. In the same vein, this section serves to restate the significance of the truths presented in the homily by providing a concise summary of the main points. In consonance with the study of Alamis (2013), a conclusion entails an entreaty to signify an appeal and worship to God, and an invitation to conversion. Moreover, the conclusion of the homily succeeds when it inspires a response, i.e., not a verbal response, and makes an offer for the future (Beng, 2007; Landry, 2020).

In general, this study is an attestation that a homily of Pope Francis may consist of the following parts: introduction or exordium, narration or explanation, proposition, argumentation or proofs, pathetic or stirring of the passion/s, refutation, and conclusion or peroration, though not strictly arranged in the given order. Nevertheless, Cheong (1996) and Alamis (2013) contest that no typical pattern or sequence of the sermons is defined; the organization of the parts has been found to be rather dependent on the topic and length of the sermons.

Text Type

Pope Francis in his homilies so in effect, could create a sense of connection with his audience made use of the most apposite text type to be considered. Texts are composed for a wide range of reasons, each of which calls for a unique compositional structure and set of criteria to follow. Text types are another name for these various kinds of written expression. There are two primary text types, namely literary and factual, and several text types fall under each of these two categories.

After the sedulous scrutiny of the sample homilies of Pope Francis, results show that all of them are generally categorized as factual texts. It has been determined that H1S3MET all the way up through H10F27ML have provided information, thoughts, or difficulties with the intention of informing, instructing, and enlightening the audience. To be more particular, it has been determined by everyone that the homilies are expository in character. Each of Pope Francis' homilies is an example of the expositional genre of nonfiction writing, in which the author explains and provides evidence to support an argument or stance (spoken or implied) with respect to a section or passages from a particular day's mass readings. Excerpts from H3M23ML are an exposition of the Scripture that interprets and applies particular passages in the readings. In the following sample statements, Pope Francis, based on the amalgamation of the themes in the readings, clearly states his proposition first, that is, there are requisites to compose a "true prayer", then elaborates each of these requisites in the body. The third homily conveys:

> *It takes three things to make a true prayer. The first is faith… Faith in prayer… The first condition for true prayer is faith. The second condition that Jesus teaches us is perseverance… Faith and*

perseverance go together because if you have faith, it is sure that the Lord will grant you what you ask. And the third thing that God wants in prayer is courage. Someone might think: it takes courage to pray and to stay before the Lord. It does... This virtue of courage is so necessary, not only for apostolic action but also for prayer. (H3M23ML)

Another example to present an exposition is found in H1 which states:

Jesus is the shepherd – this is how Peter sees Him – who comes to save, to save the sheep which had gone astray: they were us... The good shepherd listens to the flock, guides the flock, takes care of the flock... He was meek. One of the signs of the good Shepherd is meekness. The good Shepherd is meek... He has something to hide, because meekness makes itself seen as it is, without defending itself. In addition, a good shepherd is tender; he has that tenderness of closeness, he knows the sheep one by one, by name, and he takes care of each one as if it were the only one, to the point that when he returns home tired after a day of work, and realises that one is missing, he goes out to work again in search of that one, and carries it back home with him, on his shoulders... (H1S3MET)

The same manner to present an exposition is observed in H9F8MET. In the said homily, Pope Francis puts forwards a position, presents points about it, and explains them. He is observed to have detailed the meaning of the readings. As so, he sheds light on the Bible's meaning by elucidating its literal text or deducing its full import from its original setting. Consider the compressed excerpts from H9F8MET:

They are the three paths of the consolation of the Lord... The Lord consoles in closeness. And He does not use empty words; on the contrary, He prefers silence... A second path of Jesus' closeness, of Jesus' way of consoling, is the truth: Jesus is truthful... He tells the truth... He says so simply and gently, without wounding... And

this is the third movement. Jesus consoles in hope… He is the first to go and open the doors, the doors to that place, through which we will all pass, at least we hope… This is the truth: it is a bad moment, of danger, of death. But do not let your heart be troubled, stay in that peace – that peace – that is the basis of every consolation. (H9F8MET)

As expositions, the homilies of Pope Francis provide his audience with the view wherein the passages in the readings are truthfully interpreted, with consideration given to both its immediate and broader biblical contexts through citing other verses related to the theme and fortifying them with applicable and relatable human scenarios.

In consideration of the findings, it is revealed that all homilies of the Holy Father in this study unanimously fall under one type of text according to the taxonomy of Anderson and Anderson (1998). In his desire to build a connection with his audiences through his language in the homilies, Pope Francis utilizes a factual text type, more purposely and precisely, in a form of an exposition. An exposition persuades a reader or listener by presenting an argument or a proposition. By taking a point of view and justifying it, the speaker asserts it (Efendi et al., 2018; Islami et al., 2018; Kurniawati & Kurniawan, 2017; Muslimin, 2019). In view of that, all of the Holy Father's homilies contain the essential ingredients or elements in order for them to be expositional in nature, manifested by advancing and justifying his arguments, putting forward a particular point of view, and stating a position or proposition supported by proofs with respect to the passages from the readings. From these findings, what could be deduced is that Pope Francis, through expository texts, assures that his points in every homily are derived from the readings, with the most gravity given to the Gospel. Therefore, in most cases, the text type to which homilies belong allows the message to find its sole source in Scripture. More specifically, the message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis in order to convince his audience, with whom he wants them to empathize with the emotions and reasons, and to support the action. Indeed, a homily or a sermon exposes biblical truth by expounding the Scriptures (Allen, 2017; Stott, 1982). Here, the expositor is also an exegete — one who analyzes the text carefully and objectively. In the same vein, preachers are expositors who willingly stay within the boundaries of the text and do not leave until they have surveyed its

entirety with its hearers (Chapell, 2005; Raymond, 2017). Furthermore, through expository preaching, the discourse explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture, and takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible, and therefore calls for attention to be given to biblical doctrine and ensures the highest level of biblical knowledge for the congregation (Charles, 2020; Dever & Gilbert, 2012; Keller, 2016; MacArthur, 2005; Merida, 2016; Mohler, 2008).

5. Conclusion

In light of the findings regarding the structure of Pope Francis' pandemic homilies and their text types, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the analysis of homily structure reveals a consistent pattern across Pope Francis' discourses. The homilies typically comprise several key parts: introduction, narration, proposition, argumentation, pathetic, refutation, and conclusion. While these parts may not always follow a strictly sequential order, they collectively serve to captivate the audience's attention, explain the scriptural passages, present the main teaching, provide evidence, evoke emotions, address objections, and conclude with practical applications. This structured approach allows Pope Francis to communicate his messages during times of crisis. Secondly, the examination of text types demonstrates that Pope Francis' homilies predominantly fall under the category of factual texts, specifically expository in nature. Each homily serves to inform, instruct, and enlighten the audience by explaining and supporting arguments or stances with reference to passages from the daily mass readings. The use of a factual, expository style denotes that Pope Francis is able to deliver authoritative teachings grounded in scripture, guiding believers in their faith and moral journey.

This study then contributes to the theoretical understanding of religious discourse, providing scholars with insights into the organization of homilies and their textual characteristics. This understanding can drive further research in fields such as linguistics, religious studies, and communication, enriching academic discourse on the dynamics of religious communication and its impact on believers. Practically, the findings can be applied in pastoral care settings, empowering religious leaders to enhance their sermon delivery and better address the spiritual and emotional needs of their congregations. By adopting a structured approach similar to Pope Francis', clergy members can effectively provide guidance, solace, and encouragement to their communities, especially during challenging

times. Finally, the identification of text types and discourse structures in Pope Francis' homilies can serve as educational resources for faith communities. By studying and reflecting on these homilies, believers can deepen their understanding of scripture, strengthen their faith, and find guidance for navigating life's challenges. Overall, these findings extend beyond academic discourse, offering practical insights and resources for religious leaders, communities, and individuals seeking guidance and inspiration in times of crisis.

While this study sheds light on the structural composition and text types of Pope Francis' homilies, several limitations must be considered. Firstly, the analysis was confined to a specific set of homilies delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially restricting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Moreover, the subjective nature of discourse analysis and text classification introduces the possibility of interpretational bias, despite efforts to maintain consistency. Additionally, the reliance on English translations may have overlooked nuances present in the original languages, and the modest sample size limits the breadth of insights. Furthermore, the study's focus on structural elements neglects broader socio-cultural and theological contexts that could enrich our understanding of religious discourse. Moving forward, addressing these limitations in future research through larger and more diverse samples, multilingual analyses, and contextualized approaches could offer a more comprehensive understanding of religious communication dynamics.

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