

MAPPING IDEA & LITERATURE FORMAT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Fire of the Word amid the Information Deluge: A Theological Reactualization of Jeremiah 20:9 for Contemporary Preachers

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: September 10, 2026

Revised: October 13, 2026

Accepted: October 21, 2026

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.52970/grmilf.v6i4.2721>

ABSTRACT

The digital ecosystem has expanded the space for Christian proclamation while simultaneously creating information overload, reactive communication, and pressure to remain visible in the public sphere. This article reinterprets the prophetic experience of Jeremiah 20:9, particularly the metaphor of the "fire of the Word," as a spiritual foundation for discernment among contemporary preachers. Using a qualitative literature-based approach with pastoral exegesis as its primary analytical framework, the study integrates the theology of Revelation (Dei Verbum), Thomas Aquinas's virtue ethics (prudentia and humilitas), contextual theology, and a decolonial perspective. The conceptual findings suggest that authentic proclamation depends not primarily on the ability to produce religious messages, but on the preacher's willingness to receive the Word that first corrects, purifies, and transforms his or her life. Prudentia provides a framework for discerning the truth, timing, manner, context, and possible consequences of proclamation, while humilitas helps prevent the preacher from becoming the center of the message. The decolonial perspective broadens attention toward the faithful and local communities as active subjects of mission. Based on this theological synthesis, the study proposes the Fire of the Word Discernment Model, consisting of five movements: listening to the Word, personal transformation, discernment through prudentia, attentive reading of context and community, and mission grounded in veritas, humilitas, and caritas. However, the proposed model is a conceptual framework derived from theological and literature-based analysis and has not yet been empirically tested or validated.

Keywords: Jeremiah 20:9, Word of God, Discernment, Spirituality of the Preacher, Prudentia.

I. Introduction

The development of digital communication has changed how people access information, build relationships, and express their religious experiences (Akbaryadi, 2026; Bingaman, 2023; Rahmi & Hariani, 2023). Digital platforms are no longer merely channels for sharing messages; they have become environments that shape attention, habits, perception, and the ways people interpret reality (Bingaman, 2023; Siburian & Rizki, 2026). In Indonesia, this transformation can be understood through the concept of Homo Digitalis, which describes people whose everyday lives and relationships are increasingly intertwined with digital spaces



(Taneo, 2024). These changes present the Church with both opportunities and challenges. Digital media allow the proclamation of the Gospel to reach people beyond geographical and institutional boundaries, but they also raise questions about how preachers can maintain spiritual depth and theological responsibility amid the demands of online communication (Dicastery for Communication, 2023; Taneo, 2024).

One challenge concerns the abundance and constant circulation of information in digital environments. This condition can fragment attention, encourage immediate responses, and leave less room for reflection and discernment (Dicastery for Communication, 2023). Preachers may also feel pressure to remain visible, responsive, and productive online. When posting frequency, audience engagement, content design, and popularity become central concerns, the time devoted to sustained engagement with the Word may be diminished. These pressures can shift attention from the spiritual formation underlying proclamation toward the public performance of religious communication (Dicastery for Communication, 2023). The problem is further complicated by algorithms that organize content around users' preferences and may reinforce religious filter bubbles, limiting encounters with different perspectives and deepening polarized communication (Andok, 2023). The challenge, therefore, is not simply how to use digital media to communicate the Gospel, but how preachers can remain spiritually grounded and discerning within an environment that continually demands their attention and visibility.

This challenge invites a deeper reflection on the relationship between the preacher and the Word. The fundamental question is not only what should be proclaimed, but whether the Word has first spoken to and transformed the person who proclaims it (cf. Paul VI, 1975) (Paul VI, 1975). Jeremiah's experience in Jeremiah 20:7–13 offers a biblical foundation for examining this relationship. Faced with rejection, ridicule, and suffering, Jeremiah reaches a point at which he wishes to stop speaking in the name of the Lord (Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia [LAI] & Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia [KWI], 2023). Yet he describes God's word as a fire shut up in his bones, something he cannot contain (Jer. 20:9) (Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia [LAI] & Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia [KWI], 2023). This image suggests that proclamation begins not with the preacher's desire to speak or gain recognition, but with an encounter with the Word that has already challenged and taken hold of the preacher's life. The preacher is thus called not merely to communicate a message but to allow the Word to shape personal life and Christian witness (Benedict XVI, 2010). This understanding is consistent with Dei Verbum, which presents Revelation as God's self-communication and invitation into communion rather than merely the transmission of information about God (Konsili Vatikan II, 1965). Receiving the Word consequently entails a response expressed through conversion and witness (Konsili Vatikan II, 1965; Paul VI, 1975).

However, an intense spiritual experience does not automatically ensure that every impulse to speak is appropriate for public proclamation. The preacher must still consider what should be said, when and how it should be communicated, and what consequences it may have for others. Thomas Aquinas's concept of *prudencia* provides a framework for making practical judgments in light of the good and the circumstances of a particular situation, while *humilitas* directs attention to the preacher's motives and guards against using religious proclamation to pursue personal recognition (Aquinas, 1948). These considerations are especially relevant in digital environments, where visibility and audience responses can become prominent measures of communication. The spiritual impulse to proclaim must therefore be accompanied by moral discernment, so that the message is not only sincerely expressed but also communicated responsibly.

Discernment also needs to account for the social and ecclesial context in which proclamation takes place. When the preacher is understood primarily as a clerical figure or holder of formal authority, the experiences and contributions of lay people may receive insufficient attention (Parker, 2024). A decolonial perspective invites questions about whose voices are heard, whose experiences are considered significant, and whose contributions remain marginal in theological and pastoral life (Carvalhaes, 2021; Tom, 2022). In this article, decoloniality does not imply rejecting the Magisterium or ordained ministry. Rather, it broadens the understanding of participation in the Church's mission by recognizing the faith experiences of local communities and the role of the laity through baptism and the gifts they have received (Carvalhaes, 2021; John Paul II, 1988). Catechists, retreat facilitators, community preachers, and lay people who bear witness in

everyday life are therefore also part of the contemporary practice of Christian proclamation (John Paul II, 1988). This perspective highlights that responsible proclamation requires not only personal transformation and ethical judgment, but also attentiveness to the people and communities among whom the Word is shared.

Although these discussions provide important insights into digital communication, the spiritual formation of preachers, moral discernment, and participation in ecclesial life, a key gap remains in how these perspectives can be brought together to explain the formation of Christian preachers in digital culture. Studies of digital religion have addressed challenges such as information overload, algorithmic filtering, and filter bubbles (Andok, 2023; Bingaman, 2023). Biblical and theological reflection, meanwhile, emphasizes the preacher's relationship with the Word, while Thomistic ethics provides resources for understanding practical judgment and humility (Aquinas, 1948; Benedict XVI, 2010). Contextual and decolonial approaches further direct attention to local experiences and participation in the Church's mission (Carvalhaes, 2021; Tom, 2022). The research gap addressed here is not the absence of these individual perspectives, but the lack of an integrated framework that connects the transformative encounter with the Word, ethical discernment, and attentiveness to local communities within the specific challenges of digital proclamation. In particular, the article brings Jeremiah's image of the Word as a fire within the prophet (Jer. 20:9) into dialogue with Aquinas's concepts of *prudencia* and *humilitas* and a contextual-decolonial understanding of preacher formation.

To address this gap, this article asks: How can Jeremiah's experience of the Word in Jeremiah 20:9, Aquinas's concepts of *prudencia* and *humilitas*, and contextual-decolonial reflection be integrated into a framework for Christian proclamation in digital culture? In response, the article develops the Fire of the Word Discernment Model, which connects the reception of the Word, personal transformation, ethical discernment, attentiveness to local communities, and public witness. The article's contribution lies in bringing these dimensions together as a connected process of preacher formation, rather than treating digital communication, spirituality, moral judgment, and community participation as separate concerns. The model offers a theological and pastoral framework for reflecting on proclamation in digital culture, including the participation of lay preachers. It is not intended as a technical guide to digital media use or as an empirical assessment of the effectiveness of online preaching.

II. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Religious Communication and the Formation of the Preacher

Digital communication has become an important setting for religious expression and engagement. As Bingaman (2023) observes, digital environments influence not only how information circulates but also how people direct their attention, form relationships, and interpret experience. Taneo (2024) similarly situates contemporary life within the experience of *Homo Digitalis*, in which digital interaction is increasingly woven into everyday relationships. These perspectives help explain why digital media should not be treated as neutral instruments that simply extend the reach of an otherwise unchanged message. They shape the conditions under which religious messages are encountered, interpreted, and shared. For Christian proclamation, this development creates a tension between expanded access and the quality of spiritual engagement. Digital platforms make it possible to reach audiences beyond conventional ecclesial settings, yet the continuous circulation of content can encourage rapid reactions and constant demands for attention. The Dicastery for Communication (2023) highlights the importance of responding to digital culture with discernment rather than relying solely on technical adaptation. Andok (2023) adds a related concern by examining how algorithmic environments can reinforce filter bubbles and narrow encounters with alternative perspectives. Taken together, these concerns suggest that digital proclamation must be evaluated on more than its visibility or audience reach: it also requires attention to the formation of the person who speaks and to the quality of the relationships the message fosters.

However, information overload and filter bubbles do not fully explain the theological problem facing preachers. They describe features of the communication environment, but they do not, on their own, establish how a preacher should respond to these conditions. The question of formation is therefore central. If digital culture encourages constant production and immediate reaction, the preacher needs a way to preserve space for listening, reflection, and moral judgment before speaking. The relevant issue is not whether digital media should be used, but how their use can remain grounded in the spiritual and ethical responsibilities of proclamation (Dicastery for Communication, 2023).

2.2. Jeremiah 20:9 and the Word as a Transformative Encounter

Jeremiah 20:7–13 provides a biblical foundation for understanding proclamation as a response to an encounter with the Word. Jeremiah's lament reveals the personal cost of prophetic speech: rejection and suffering lead him to consider remaining silent. Yet the Word becomes like a fire within him, impossible to contain (Jer. 20:9) (Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia [LAI] & Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia [KWI], 2023).. This image places the prophet in a complex position. Jeremiah does not speak from personal confidence or a desire for public recognition; he struggles with the burden of a Word that has claimed his life. The significance of this passage lies in the relationship between reception, personal struggle, and proclamation. The Word is not simply information that the prophet possesses and subsequently delivers. It confronts the prophet, challenges his intentions, and sustains his witness even when speaking becomes difficult. This reading supports a conception of proclamation in which the preacher is first a recipient of the Word before becoming its witness. It also offers a critical counterpoint to communication practices that place immediate production and public visibility at the center of religious activity.

This understanding is consistent with Benedict XVI (2010) emphasis on the preacher's relationship with the Word and with Dei Verbum, which presents Revelation as God's self-communication and invitation into communion rather than merely the transmission of information about God (Konsili Vatikan II, 1965). Paul VI (1975) likewise connects Christian witness with the life of the person who proclaims the Gospel. These perspectives converge on the conviction that proclamation cannot be reduced to the ability to formulate or distribute a message. It must also reflect a life that has been shaped by what is proclaimed. Nevertheless, Jeremiah's experience should not be interpreted as suggesting that the intensity of an inner conviction automatically validates public speech. The prophetic image establishes the formative power of the Word, but it does not eliminate the need to consider the truth, timing, manner, and consequences of proclamation. The movement from receiving the Word to speaking it therefore requires a further dimension: practical and ethical discernment. This is where the biblical perspective can be brought into dialogue with Thomistic moral theology.

2.3. Thomistic Prudentia and Humilitas in Proclamation

Thomas Aquinas's account of prudentia offers a framework for understanding how conviction is translated into responsible action. As a virtue of practical reason, prudentia enables a person to deliberate about what should be done in pursuit of the good and in light of concrete circumstances (Aquinas, 1948). Applied to Christian proclamation, it directs attention to questions that cannot be answered by enthusiasm alone: whether a message is appropriate, when and how it should be delivered, who may be affected, and what consequences may follow. Aquinas's discussion of prudence in the context of moral virtue also provides a basis for distinguishing genuine discernment from impulsive or poorly considered action (Aquinas, 1948, pp. II–II, q. 47). Where prudentia concerns the quality of practical judgment, humilitas draws attention to the disposition of the person making that judgment. In proclamation, humility challenges the temptation to use religious speech as a means of securing status, admiration, or personal influence. It encourages the preacher to approach the Word as something that must be received faithfully rather than manipulated for self-presentation (Aquinas, 1948). The two virtues thus address related but distinct dimensions of proclamation:

prudencia concerns how to act well, while humilitas helps orient the preacher away from self-exaltation and toward faithful service.

These concepts are particularly relevant in digital settings, where the visibility of religious content can become closely associated with audience response. Yet the purpose of bringing Aquinas into this discussion is not to suggest that every concern about online communication can be resolved through individual virtue alone. Digital environments also shape participation, visibility, and whose voices receive attention. Personal discernment must therefore be considered alongside the social and ecclesial contexts in which proclamation takes place. Thomistic ethics contributes a framework for evaluating the preacher's judgment and motives, but it needs to be placed in dialogue with perspectives that attend more directly to community experience, unequal visibility, and participation in ecclesial life.

2.4. Contextual Theology, Decolonial Reflection, and Local Communities

The formation of the preacher also raises questions about the relationship between ecclesial authority and the lived experiences of local communities. When proclamation is associated primarily with ordained ministers or formal religious officeholders, the contributions of lay people may receive insufficient attention (Parker, 2024). This concern becomes especially important when Christian witness takes place across diverse social and digital settings, where faith is expressed not only through formal preaching but also through teaching, community leadership, retreat facilitation, and everyday relationships. Decolonial reflection provides a way to examine the assumptions that shape whose voices are heard and whose experiences are treated as theologically significant. Carvalhaes (2021) and Tom (2022) invite attention to the ways power and inherited structures can influence theological and ecclesial life. In the context of proclamation, this perspective encourages consideration of whether the experiences of local communities are genuinely heard or merely treated as audiences for messages formulated elsewhere. It also raises questions about who is recognized as a participant in theological reflection and Christian witness.

This approach does not imply that the Magisterium or ordained ministry should be rejected. Rather, it broadens the discussion by recognizing that the Church's mission also involves the participation of the laity through baptism and the gifts they have received (Carvalhaes, 2021; John Paul II, 1988). Catechists, retreat facilitators, community preachers, and lay people who bear witness in everyday life all contribute to the practice of proclamation (John Paul II, 1988). Their experiences matter because proclamation is not received in an abstract social space; it takes place among people whose histories, concerns, relationships, and local circumstances shape how the Word is heard. Contextual and decolonial perspectives therefore add a communal dimension to the formation of the preacher. Whereas the biblical and Thomistic perspectives foreground the preacher's encounter with the Word and the ethical quality of subsequent judgment, contextual-decolonial reflection asks whether that discernment remains attentive to the people among whom the preacher serves. It helps prevent formation from becoming exclusively an individual spiritual exercise detached from the experiences of the community. At the same time, attention to local experience does not replace theological discernment; it informs how the Word is interpreted and communicated in particular circumstances.

2.5. Integrating the Perspectives: The Fire of the Word Discernment Model

The perspectives discussed above illuminate different but related dimensions of Christian proclamation. Jeremiah 20:9 provides the biblical image of a Word that takes hold of and transforms the prophet. The theological understanding of Revelation in Dei Verbum, together with the emphasis on Christian witness in Benedict XVI (2010) and Paul VI (1975), reinforces the view that proclamation must arise from a lived relationship with the Word. Aquinas's concepts of prudencia and humilitas explain why this encounter must be followed by careful judgment and a disposition oriented toward faithful service (Aquinas, 1948). Contextual and decolonial perspectives, in turn, direct attention to the experiences and participation of local

communities (Carvalhaes, 2021; Tom, 2022). These perspectives should not be treated as interchangeable. The biblical account provides the theological starting point; Thomistic ethics clarifies the moral and practical dimensions of discernment; and contextual-decolonial reflection draws attention to the social relationships, voices, and experiences that shape proclamation. Their integration is useful precisely because each addresses a dimension that the others do not fully cover. The resulting framework connects personal transformation with ethical judgment and communal attentiveness, rather than treating spirituality, morality, and context as separate concerns.

III. Research Methods

3.1. Sources and Selection Criteria

The study relies exclusively on documentary sources, which function as the primary analytical data. These comprise Jeremiah 20:7–13; Church Magisterium documents relevant to Revelation, proclamation, and Christian witness; Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*; and secondary literature addressing pastoral exegesis, digital religion, contextual theology, decoloniality, and public theology (Aquinas, 1948; Snyder, 2019). The sources were selected purposively according to their relevance to the research question and their contribution to one or more of the study's analytical dimensions. Jeremiah 20:7–13 serves as the biblical point of departure, while Magisterium documents provide an ecclesial framework for interpreting Revelation and Christian witness. Aquinas's writings inform the ethical-spiritual analysis, whereas secondary literature supports the contextualization of the findings in contemporary ecclesial and digital settings.

Source selection was guided by three criteria: (1) direct relevance to the interpretation of Jeremiah's prophetic experience and the metaphor of fire in verse 9; (2) substantive contribution to the theological, ethical, contextual, or public-praxis dimensions of pre-proclamation discernment; and (3) relevance to the development or critical examination of the proposed conceptual model. Materials that did not contribute meaningfully to these dimensions were not used in the analytical synthesis. Biblical and authoritative theological texts were considered in light of their respective interpretive roles, while secondary sources were assessed according to their conceptual relevance to the study. The review is thematic and purposive rather than a systematic review designed to identify every publication in the field. Its purpose is to bring selected biblical, theological, and contextual perspectives into dialogue to address the research question. The literature-search and selection process should therefore be understood in relation to this interpretive objective rather than as a quantitative screening procedure.

3.2. Theoretical Framework and Analytical Procedure

Pastoral exegesis was selected as the primary framework because the study begins with a biblical passage and seeks to interpret its significance for the formation and practice of contemporary preachers. The other perspectives were incorporated because they address complementary dimensions of the research problem. Thomistic virtue ethics provides resources for examining practical judgment and the disposition of the preacher; contextual-decolonial reflection directs attention to local experience, participation, and the distribution of voice; and public theology connects theological interpretation with the broader social and communicative context of contemporary proclamation. These frameworks were selected for their complementary analytical functions, not because they are interchangeable or assumed to provide an exhaustive account of all possible theological approaches. Their integration enables the study to move from biblical interpretation to ethical reflection and contextual application. The analysis proceeded through four complementary layers:

- a. Biblical-Exegetical Layer. Jeremiah 20:7–13 was interpreted as a unified account of the struggle associated with the prophetic vocation. Particular attention was given to the metaphor of fire in verse

9 and its relationship to the prophet's struggle, the experience of the Word, and the continuation of prophetic speech. The interpretation was considered in relation to the Church's principles of biblical interpretation (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1975). This layer established the biblical themes that informed the subsequent ethical and contextual analysis.

- b. Thomistic Ethical-Spiritual Layer. The biblical themes were examined through Aquinas's account of *prudencia* and *humilitas*. Particular attention was given to the aspects of *prudencia* relevant to pre-proclamation discernment, including *memoria*, *docilitas*, *providentia*, *circumspectio*, and *cautio*, together with *humilitas* as a virtue relevant to the preacher's disposition (Aquinas, 1948, pp. II-II, q. 49; 161). The analysis considered how these concepts could clarify the transition from receiving the Word to making responsible judgments about its proclamation.
- c. Contextual-Decolonial Layer. The biblical and ethical insights were considered in relation to the lived experiences of the faithful and the role of local communities in Christian proclamation. This interpretation drew on Bevans's contextual theology, (2002), Sunarko's reflection (2022), and decolonial perspectives attentive to local experience and participation (Carvalhaes, 2021). The purpose of this layer was to examine how discernment could remain attentive to the concrete circumstances of communities and avoid treating proclamation solely as an individual or institutionally defined activity.
- d. Public-Praxis Layer. The preceding insights were brought into dialogue with digital culture and public theology to consider their implications for contemporary proclamation and the Church's engagement with society (Riyanto & Erdian, 2021; Taneo, 2024). This layer connected the theological synthesis to the communicative conditions in which preachers operate, including the challenges of visibility, audience engagement, and public witness.

3.3. Synthesis and Model Development

The synthesis followed a progression from textual interpretation to conceptual integration. First, the biblical-exegetical analysis established the central themes of Jeremiah's experience of the Word. Second, these themes were examined through Thomistic ethical concepts to identify their implications for the preacher's judgment and disposition. Third, contextual-decolonial reflection was used to consider the relationship between discernment, local experience, and participation in the Church's mission. Finally, the public-praxis layer related the resulting insights to the contemporary context of digital communication. The four analytical layers were compared through their respective contributions to the research question: the biblical layer clarified the formative encounter with the Word; the Thomistic layer addressed ethical discernment; the contextual-decolonial layer emphasized attentiveness to communities; and the public-praxis layer considered the implications for contemporary proclamation. Themes were retained in the synthesis when they contributed to these analytical concerns and could be related to the study's central question. The resulting connections provided the conceptual basis for organizing the Fire of the Word Discernment Model into five movements: listening to the Word, self-transformation, discernment through *prudencia*, attentive reading of context and community, and mission grounded in *veritas*, *humilitas*, and *caritas* (Aquinas, 1948; Benedict XVI, 2010).

3.4. Interpretive Consistency and Methodological Scope

Because this is a documentary theological study, it does not involve human-participant sampling, empirical measurement, or conventional research instruments. The analytical data consist of biblical, ecclesial, and scholarly texts selected for their relevance to the research question. Interpretive consistency was supported by relating the analysis of the biblical passage to the same four analytical dimensions throughout the study and by examining how the theological concepts informed, complemented, or qualified one another. The distinction between textual interpretation, theological reasoning, and contextual application was

maintained to make the progression from source analysis to conceptual synthesis explicit. The resulting model is a theological and pastoral proposal rather than an empirically validated instrument. Its contribution lies in integrating biblical interpretation, virtue ethics, contextual-decolonial reflection, and public praxis into a framework for understanding pre-proclamation formation. The study does not claim to establish the model's effectiveness through field testing; instead, it provides a conceptual foundation that may inform subsequent theological discussion and future empirical investigation.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. Testing the Fire of the Word: Confronting Weariness and the Religious Ego

Jeremiah 20:7-13 shows that a prophetic vocation is not always accompanied by confidence, optimism, or satisfaction at seeing the message well received (Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia [LAI] & Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia [KWI], 2023). The text instead presents a prophet under pressure because of the task entrusted to him (Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia [LAI] & Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia [KWI], 2023). Jeremiah's desire to stop speaking can be read as an experience of weariness in living out his vocation. As a pastoral illustration, a similar experience may be familiar to catechists, community ministers, or local parish leaders who face criticism, indifference, or conflict in ministry. In Jeremiah's case, however, the Word does not function as an escape from difficulty. Precisely when he wants to stop, he experiences the word as a fire continuing to work within him (Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia [LAI] & Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia [KWI], 2023). The basis of the vocation is therefore not public approval, but fidelity to the Word that has been received.

This experience requires a clear distinction between the fire of the Word and the religious ego (Aquinas, 1948; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia [LAI] & Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia [KWI], 2023). The religious ego can use Scripture to correct others, seek self-justification, or reinforce group positions without allowing the Word to correct the preacher himself or herself (Benedict XVI, 2010). By contrast, the fire of the Word works first within the preacher before becoming a message for others (Benedict XVI, 2010; Paul VI, 1975). The intensity of speech or emotion therefore cannot serve as a measure of the preacher's spiritual depth (Aquinas, 1948). Before inviting others to reconciliation, the preacher needs to examine personal bitterness; before calling for humility, the preacher must ask whether the ministry is truly directing people toward the Word or toward the preacher's own image (Aquinas, 1948; Paul VI, 1975).

The analytical significance of Jeremiah's experience is that prophetic persistence and personal transformation belong together: the Word sustains the vocation, but it also places the preacher under its judgment. This interpretation provides the biblical starting point for the proposed model. It does not establish that all preachers experience vocational weariness in the same way, nor does it demonstrate the effects of spiritual formation in contemporary ministry. Rather, it offers a theological lens through which the relationship between vocation, suffering, and fidelity can be examined. Compared with an understanding of proclamation centered primarily on the delivery of religious content, this reading places greater emphasis on the formation of the person who proclaims it. The distinction is important for the subsequent discussion of digital communication, where public visibility may become more prominent than the less visible process of spiritual formation.

4.2. Communication Asceticism in the Age of Homo Digitalis

The abundance of religious information creates a paradox: access to homilies, reflections, and biblical quotations continues to expand, yet more information does not automatically produce a corresponding growth in faith and character (Bingaman, 2023; Dicastery for Communication, 2023). Information can be received quickly without necessarily becoming a lived response, whereas the Word calls for an existential response from the person who hears it (Konsili Vatikan II, 1965). The expression "information deluge" in this article therefore refers not only to the quantity of messages but also to the difficulty of sustaining attention

and allowing meaning to deepen amid a constantly moving stream of information (Dicastery for Communication, 2023). Homo Digitalis needs to be interpreted theologically because digital space has become part of how people relate to one another and form identity (Taneo, 2024). Digital space should therefore not be treated simply as a "new pulpit." Unlike communication in a physical setting, where audience and context are relatively clear, a digital message can be excerpted, redistributed, and received by people never imagined by the original communicator (Dicastery for Communication, 2023). This situation requires preachers to exercise even greater discernment before communicating a message.

In this situation, silence regains its pastoral significance as a space for pre-proclamation discernment (Dicastery for Communication, 2023). Here silence is neither a meditation practice pursued as an end in itself nor merely a form of mental relaxation. It is a spiritual pause that helps the preacher resist immediate reaction, listen first to the Word, examine motivation, attend to context, and consider the likely impact of the message to be communicated (Dicastery for Communication, 2023). The discipline of not publishing immediately can therefore become a form of digital asceticism that supports maturity in proclamation. A preacher formed by the Word is measured not only by the ability to speak, but also by the ability to listen and weigh matters before speaking (Aquinas, 1948; Paul VI, 1975). The contribution of this discussion is to connect the challenges of digital communication with the spiritual and ethical formation of the preacher. The concerns surrounding information abundance and digital communication provide the contextual problem (Bingaman, 2023; Dicastery for Communication, 2023), while the theological perspective developed here interprets silence as a deliberate pause within the process of receiving and discerning the Word. This extends the discussion beyond the question of how religious content circulates by asking how preachers can respond to digital conditions without allowing the demand for immediate communication to displace reflection. Silence and delayed publication are therefore proposed as pastoral practices, not as empirically demonstrated solutions to information overload. Their appropriateness will depend on the communication setting, the message, and the needs of the community.

4.3. Prudentia and Humilitas: The Preacher's Interior Discernment

If Jeremiah 20:9 provides the biblical ground for the prophetic force of proclamation, Thomas Aquinas provides a structure for discerning how that force should become action (Aquinas, 1948, pp. II-II, q. 47; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia [LAI] & Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia [KWI], 2023). Spiritual zeal that bypasses ethical reflection can become hasty or imprudent action. Prudentia, as *recta ratio agibilium*, helps the preacher determine the right action in concrete circumstances so that truth is not merely spoken, but communicated responsibly (Aquinas, 1948). Five integral elements of prudentia help the preacher test a decision before acting (Aquinas, 1948, II-II, q. 49):

- a. Memoria: helps the preacher learn from experience and avoid repeating patterns of communication that have previously wounded or divided a community (Aquinas, 1948, II-II, q. 49, a. 1).
- b. Docilitas: requires openness to correction and a willingness to learn from the experience of others (Aquinas, 1948, II-II, q. 49, a. 3).
- c. Providentia: helps the preacher consider the foreseeable consequences of a message, including whether it is likely to build up, help, or instead add to the burden of those who receive it (Aquinas, 1948, II-II, q. 49, a. 6).
- d. Circumspectio: trains the preacher to attend to the concrete circumstances of the audience, including age, culture, life experience, and the situation of the community (Aquinas, 1948, II-II, q. 49, a. 7). As a pastoral illustration, a biblical quotation or video clip shared in a parish WhatsApp group may be received very differently by someone who is grieving, experiencing family conflict, or facing economic pressure. The same truth therefore still requires a manner of communication sensitive to the listener's circumstances.
- e. Cautio: invites the preacher to anticipate risks, including the possibility that a digital message may be

removed from its original context or used to intensify conflict (Dicastery for Communication, 2023).

These elements are complemented by humilitas, which helps prevent ministry from becoming a form of self-promotion (Aquinas, 1948). Digital engagement metrics can tempt preachers to treat public attention as a measure of spiritual success if they are not carefully discerned (Dicastery for Communication, 2023). Humilitas places gifts in their proper perspective: the preacher is a servant who directs people toward Christ rather than toward himself or herself (Aquinas, 1948). Veritas safeguards the truthfulness of the message, while caritas ensures that truth is communicated for the good of others rather than used as a means of belittling or wounding them (Aquinas, 1948). The analytical contribution of this section is to specify how the formative encounter with the Word can be translated into practical judgment. Jeremiah's experience establishes the theological importance of a Word that takes hold of the preacher, whereas Aquinas's account of prudentia provides a vocabulary for examining how the preacher should act in particular circumstances. Humilitas adds a concern for the disposition and motivation of the person making that judgment. These concepts are complementary rather than interchangeable: prudentia concerns the quality of practical judgment, while humilitas addresses the preacher's orientation toward personal status and service. This integration advances the proposed model by connecting spiritual conviction with deliberation about context, consequences, and motivation. It also places limits on the interpretation of prophetic zeal: sincerity or emotional intensity alone cannot establish that a message is appropriately communicated. The five elements of prudentia are used here as analytical resources for contemporary pastoral situations, not as a measurement instrument or a validated checklist. Their practical value in particular digital and ecclesial settings remains a matter for further examination.

4.4. Decolonial Reframing of Proclamation: From Hearers to Doers of the Word

A decolonial perspective helps to critique overly one-directional patterns of pastoral communication in which the preacher is positioned as the only one who speaks while the faithful merely receive material (Carvalhaes, 2021; Parker, 2024). In catechesis, retreats, or local community formation, this pattern can appear when material is delivered without sufficient space for the faithful to connect it with their lived experience. Family concerns, work, the education of children, the use of technology, and social relationships can all become important contexts for hearing how faith is actually lived. The decolonial reflection developed in this article therefore does not diminish the authority of Church teaching; rather, it invites preachers to make room for the experience of the faithful as part of the process of listening to and actualizing the Word (Carvalhaes, 2021; Parker, 2024). This change must begin with the preacher. It is difficult to accompany the faithful toward becoming doers of the Word if the preacher's own life is unwilling to be shaped by the Word being proclaimed (Paul VI, 1975). The credibility of a catechist or retreat facilitator depends not only on mastery of the material, but also on coherence between message and life (Aquinas, 1948; Paul VI, 1975). The preacher's personal transformation has pedagogical force because the faithful can see that the Word is not merely teaching material, but something that can genuinely transform a person's life (John Paul II, 1988; Paul VI, 1975).

The faithful who are accompanied dialogically do not remain passive audiences; they are encouraged to become missionary subjects in everyday life: in the family, the workplace, the neighborhood, and the wider social sphere (Francis, 2025; John Paul II, 1988). This does not diminish the distinctiveness of ordained ministry, but affirms the complementarity of vocations within the Church's one mission (John Paul II, 1988). The decolonial reflection offered here therefore concerns more than a change in who holds the microphone; it is a shift from proclamation that produces listeners toward proclamation that forms doers of the Word and new witnesses (Carvalhaes, 2021; John Paul II, 1988). The relationship between this perspective and the preceding ethical analysis is important. Prudentia and humilitas direct attention to the preacher's judgment and disposition, whereas contextual-decolonial reflection asks whether that judgment remains attentive to the experiences and agency of the faithful. The two perspectives thus address different but related dimensions of responsible proclamation: one examines how the preacher discerns, while the other broadens the field of

discernment to include the people and communities among whom the Word is proclaimed. The proposed model extends this dialogue by treating community participation not as an optional addition after the preacher's personal formation, but as a dimension that informs the interpretation and communication of the Word. This does not imply that local experience replaces Scripture or Church teaching. Rather, it places the experience of the faithful within the process of contextualizing and living out the Word. The discussion offers a theological and pastoral rationale for dialogical formation; it does not establish that this approach has already produced measurable changes in participation, mission, or community life.

4.5. The Fire of the Word Discernment Model

The synthesis of Jeremiah's experience, Thomistic ethics, contextual theology, and decolonial reflection produces the Fire of the Word Discernment Model, which maps pre-proclamation formation through five interconnected movements:



Figure 1. The Fire of the Word Discernment Model

- Listening to the Word (Auditus Verbi). The preacher first takes the position of a listener. Silence serves as a space for listening and discernment before speaking, rather than as a separate goal of meditation (Benedict XVI, 2010). This movement draws primarily on the biblical-exegetical analysis, which identifies the Word as something the preacher first receives rather than independently produces.
- Self-Transformation (Metanoia). The Word is allowed to correct the preacher's motivations, relationships, and way of life before the preacher calls others to change (Paul VI, 1975). This movement develops the implication that reception of the Word involves a response in the life of the preacher, rather than remaining an intellectual or communicative act.
- Prudential Discernment (Prudentia). The preacher considers the timing, manner, medium, audience, pastoral consequences, and risks associated with the message to be communicated (Aquinas, 1948, II-II, q. 47; q. 49). This movement translates the ethical analysis into practical questions about how a message should be communicated in specific circumstances.

- d. Contextual-Decolonial Reading. The preacher creates space to listen to the lived reality of the faithful, recognize their burdens and hopes, and give due place to the faith experience of local communities in the process of actualizing the Word (Bevans, 2002; Carvalhaes, 2021). This movement incorporates the contextual-decolonial analysis by extending discernment beyond the preacher's individual judgment to the circumstances and participation of the community.
- e. Mission with Integrity (Missio). The preacher enters into mission grounded in veritas, humilitas, and caritas, so that proclamation does not end with the preacher but helps the faithful grow as witnesses to Christ (Aquinas, 1948, II-II, q. 109; q. 161; q. 23; John Paul II, 1988). This final movement represents the intended orientation of the preceding movements: proclamation becomes public witness shaped by truth, humility, charity, and attentiveness to others. It is a theological aim of the model, not a demonstrated outcome of the present study.

The sequence expresses a conceptual relationship rather than a rigid or empirically verified progression. Listening, transformation, discernment, contextual reading, and mission are presented as distinguishable but interconnected dimensions of formation. In practice, contextual listening may prompt further reflection, and a difficult pastoral situation may lead the preacher back to listening and discernment. The model therefore offers an organizing framework for theological reflection and pastoral formation rather than a claim that all preachers must experience five discrete stages in a fixed order. The model's principal theoretical contribution is the integration of four dimensions that the present discussion examines separately: the transformative encounter with the Word, ethical judgment, attentiveness to local communities, and public witness. Its distinctive emphasis is not that these concerns have never been discussed in earlier theological work, but that they are brought together here as connected dimensions of pre-proclamation formation in digital culture. The biblical perspective supplies the theological starting point, Thomistic ethics clarifies practical discernment, and contextual-decolonial reflection broadens attention to community experience and participation. The public-praxis perspective then relates this synthesis to contemporary communication conditions (Aquinas, 1948; Benedict XVI, 2010; Bevans, 2002; Carvalhaes, 2021; Taneo, 2024).

4.6. Implications for the Church, Society, and Theological Scholarship

From the perspective of public theology, the preacher's spiritual depth should have consequences for the life of the Church and the common good (Riyanto & Erdian, 2021). In this study, however, these implications are normative recommendations derived from theological synthesis, not measured effects or demonstrated outcomes. Their practical relevance depends on how the model is interpreted and applied in particular ecclesial, cultural, and digital contexts.

- a. For Church Formation: the formation of catechists, community preachers, retreat facilitators, and Church media teams should combine communication skills with spiritual formation, Scripture, silence for discernment, and the practice of reading context carefully (John Paul II, 1988; Paul VI, 1975). In this way, lay people are not positioned as substitutes for the clergy, but as partners in the Church's one mission according to their baptismal vocation (John Paul II, 1988). The model may serve as a framework for reflection or curriculum development, provided that its application is adapted to the participants' roles, formation needs, and local ecclesial circumstances. Its effectiveness in improving formation has not been assessed in this study.
- b. For Wider Society: preachers who have matured in discernment should be better able to foster religious communication that is calm and responsible, avoids amplifying hoaxes, hatred, or polarization, and continues to respect the dignity of others in a plural society (Francis, 2025; Riyanto & Erdian, 2021). These are intended ethical orientations rather than outcomes demonstrated by the present research. Whether the model contributes to more responsible public communication would require further investigation in actual pastoral and digital settings.

- c. For Theological Development: this study shows that pastoral exegesis can be brought into productive dialogue with Thomas Aquinas's moral theology, contextual theology, decolonial perspectives, and public theology without displacing Scripture from the center of the analysis (Parker, 2024; Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1975). Its academic contribution lies in integrating these fields into a single model of preacher formation that can be tested further. The model is offered as a framework for further theological discussion and critical assessment, not as proof that the proposed integration resolves all tensions among these traditions or is universally applicable.

Because the model was developed through a literature-based study, its principal limitation is that it remains conceptual (Snyder, 2019). The analysis supports a theological rationale for the model's five movements, but it does not establish their empirical effectiveness, universal applicability, or causal influence on preaching practices. Future research can test the Fire of the Word Discernment Model empirically among catechists, community preachers, retreat facilitators, family pastoral ministers, or Church media ministers. Such research would help determine how listening to the Word, personal transformation, discernment, contextual reading, and mission are actually experienced at the grassroots level (Carvalhaes, 2021; Creswell, 2009). Empirical assessment should also consider differences in ministry roles, local cultural contexts, and forms of digital communication, rather than assuming that one pattern of application will be equally appropriate in every setting.

V. Conclusion

Jeremiah 20:9 provides a strong basis for rethinking the spirituality of the preacher amid the digital information deluge. The fire of the Word does not primarily signify bold speech, rhetorical force, or emotional intensity; it points to the Word that first works within the preacher. Through Thomas Aquinas's *prudentia* and *humilitas*, this prophetic force receives a framework of discernment that helps the preacher consider truth, timing, manner, context, motivation, and the consequences of proclamation. Contextual and decolonial perspectives broaden attention toward the faithful as subjects of faith and mission without erasing the distinctiveness of ordained ministry. The Fire of the Word Discernment Model summarizes these findings in five movements: listening to the Word, self-transformation, discernment through *prudentia*, attentive reading of context and community, and mission grounded in *veritas*, *humilitas*, and *caritas*. As a conceptual, literature-based study, this research has not empirically established the model's applicability, conceptual coherence in practice, or contribution to preacher formation. Future research could employ qualitative case studies or pilot implementations within local Church formation programs involving catechists, priests, and other pastoral ministers. Data could be gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observations of formation activities, and participants' reflective journals to examine the model's comprehensibility, the coherence and interconnection of its five movements, its contextual relevance and practical feasibility, and its perceived contribution to ethical reflection and proclamation practices. Where appropriate, a mixed-methods design could complement these findings with pre- and post-formation assessments, while avoiding the assumption that any observed changes are attributable to the model alone. Such investigations would help determine whether and how the model can support the formation of preachers and encourage the faithful to become doers of the Word and witnesses in everyday life.

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