



**NATIONAL PASTORAL INITIATIVE  
FOR LIFE AND THE FAMILY**

**Suggestions for Homilies and Prayers of the Faithful**

**“I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly.” ~John 10:10b**

When Jesus reminds us that he came that we might have life, he does so in the context of laying down his own life for our sake. Defending life in our country and even in our faith communities can cause division, fear of judgment and limit our relations with others. Yet Jesus continues to offer abundant life to all, and invites us to be one with him in receiving, protecting and nurturing life.

Proclaiming the “Gospel of Life” is unavoidable if the Good News is to be incarnated in the lives of his disciples. Why not take up the challenge to include some element of the culture of life each Sunday in your parish, and whenever possible in your daily life? To be consistent with “the Gospel of Life”, we need to do it in a way that inspires unity, and dissipates fear and judgment. All of us, ordained and lay, are called to open others to the kind of relationships that make discipleship truly life-giving.

Each week, you will find here suggestions for a homily, a prayer of the faithful or an insight which can be used to foster the abundant life that Jesus came to bring us. These suggestions can also be easily adapted for family and personal prayer, or for presentations when participating with other groups or organizations. Every parish and each of us individually, are invited to make Christ’s life abundant, relevant and approachable for all.

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**March 31 / April 1, 2018 – THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD (EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT / EASTER SUNDAY)**

**Homily Idea:** *Don’t look for the living among the dead.*

In the Gospel for both the Vigil and the morning Mass, the disciples go to the tomb to find Jesus, and they are told “He is not here.” It’s completely confusing; shouldn’t the dead be where we left them? But Jesus has risen. The destruction and devastation we have come to expect from death have been undone by the Resurrection. Jesus is not dead but raised, and seeking consolation at the tomb is no longer the answer. Alleluia is our song of praise. Even and especially here where we expected death, God has worked new life, beyond our wildest imaginings. Lent is over and we enter into the 50 days of Easter. We’ve been praying, fasting, and giving alms, entering into sacrifice as a road to new life. Don’t go back to habits that brought you death...there is no life in the tomb. Move forward into the new life of Easter, forever changed by the road that brought you here, closer to the risen Jesus!

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the strength to look forward, to find life in new ways of living, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Risen Jesus, help us to keep our eyes facing forward, into the future you have promised. It is so easy to look back, to be drawn back into the familiarity of what we have known. Draw us into Resurrection and the way things can be, that we might taste and see the new life you are working again here and now. Amen. Alleluia!

## April 8, 2018 – 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER (or OF DIVINE MERCY), Year B

**Homily Idea:** *Life flows from faith, so believe and ask for deeper faith.*

In the first reading, we hear about the great faith of the early believers and how their faith allowed them to live in community, caring for each other well. In the Gospel, this is juxtaposed with Thomas' doubt. In the wake of doubt, Thomas asks for what he needs -- more faith -- and God gives it. If we want to live lives of generosity, peace, joy, and service, we need to have faith. So the answer to our inevitable doubts, and those of Thomas, is more faith. We ask God for more of it, so God's life can flow in and through us more.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For an increase in our faith, and of faith throughout the world, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Saint Thomas, pray for us in our doubt, that we might have your courage to ask for faith. Intercede for us that our doubts may lead us to ever deeper faith and more faithful lives. Amen. Alleluia!

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## APRIL 15, 2018 – 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year B

**Homily Idea:** *Find life in admitting what you have not known.*

Peter's words in the first reading are some of the earliest proclamations of repentance after the Cross. Preaching to the community that handed Jesus over to death, Peter offers mercy for sin. In the Gospel, the disciples on the road to Emmaus do not recognize Jesus until He is gone. In both cases, there is ample opportunity to kick oneself, saying, "We should have known." But they did not know, even if they might have, and often neither do we, until it is too late. The miracle is that God shows up for us whether we recognize Him or not. What a gift! Denial, justification, continuing in ignorance, wallowing in shame, or any other tactic we use to avoid repentance robs us of life. Do not add more sin to the first by refusing to see now or refusing grace. When you realize what you might have known, admit it, turn back and revel in the grace God offers us now that we know.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the humility to admit we did not know, and the humility to receive grace now, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Jesus on the road to Emmaus, thank you for coming to us even when we are unable to see and recognize you. Give us the grace to trust that it is enough for us to see you in hindsight. Help us receive your grace when our eyes are finally opened. Amen. Alleluia!

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## APRIL 22, 2018 – 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year B

**Homily Idea:** *Adoption offers us life.*

"Beloved, see what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God." Each and every one of us has been adopted as the daughters and sons of the Almighty God. This is a massive thing to be and to speak because adoption always follows a loss. Spiritually, we have all sinned and fallen short of being God's people, and He has redeemed us with the blood of His only Son. He has offered us healing and wholeness in the face of brokenness. It would have been easier to give up on us, but God offers us adoption through His Son, our Brother. All adopted children have experienced the loss of first parents, and they have been offered life and love, healing and wholeness by adoptive families, and by the gift of courageous birth families. In a world where abortion is a choice that appears (falsely) to erase a surprise pregnancy, we must do more to proclaim the gift of

adoption. *If there are those in the community who have been involved in abortions, they also are called to be the adopted daughters and sons of God. It is not, and it is never, too late to receive the forgiveness, healing and wholeness God desires for us.*

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the healing we need as God's adopted children, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God our Adoptive Father, teach us to grieve the losses and brokenness of our sin that has drawn us away from you and from life. Help us to claim our identity as your adopted children, that we might come to know the grace, joy, and life found in you. Amen. Alleluia!

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## **APRIL 29, 2018 – 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year B**

**Homily Idea:** *People change, and God will give the broken another chance at life.*

Saul tried to join the disciples at Jerusalem, and they were afraid of him after his persecution of Christians before his conversion. It was reasonable that they were afraid, and perhaps it was God's will they reject him, so Paul would go out to evangelize the Gentiles. That said, it should not surprise us at all that God would use Paul. No matter what we have done, how far we have strayed, when we turn our hearts back to God, when we abide in Him, He will use us. *And He will use others, perhaps even others who have hurt us.* The imprisoned, the convicted, the accused are rarely treated with dignity in our world. They are condemned and cast aside while they serve sentences, often for the rest of their lives. We may not be able to be reconciled to those who have hurt us directly, or to receive their gifts, and that is understandable, but it is not okay for us to condemn for life those who are broken. God is constantly asking for our conversion and as soon as we turn, He will look for ways to use us.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For conversion, our own and those who have hurt us, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of the broken, you keep asking us to turn to you. Help us to turn. Help us to pray for those who have hurt us, that they might turn too. May we never ignore your call for us to come back to you, and may we never participate in condemning others to a life without repentance. Amen. Alleluia!

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