



**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.

August 6, 2017 – TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD

Homily Idea: *We worship the King of Glory who chooses to enter into life with us; we need to enter deeply into the glory our own lives.*

It is tempting to spend all our time fixated on God in heaven, especially as described in the first reading. Maybe if I could just skip to that part, please? Peter wants to set up camp on the mountaintop of the Transfiguration. It is normal to desire to stay on the mountaintops of our faith lives, where we feel and see God so clearly. But Jesus invites Peter and us back down the mountain into our ordinary lives. Jesus is here as well as there. Saint Peter reminds us in the second reading: “You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” Jesus is walking with us through the ordinary moments of every day. There is glory in the dishes, the traffic, work and learning, and returning home to rest -- helping us to see Jesus right here with us, where we are.

Prayer of the Faithful: For eyes to Jesus in all His glory in the midst of our own lives, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, the Beloved, walk down the mountain with us and open our eyes to see you. Help us to resist the urge to check out of our lives, to distract ourselves, to be addicted to being busy. Wake us up to the glory that is all around us all the time. Amen.

August 13, 2017 – 19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Life in the silence.*

We live in a noisy and distracted time. There may not have ever been any other kind of time, but we do so struggle to find and enjoy silence, don't we? In both the first reading and the Gospel, after all the chaos, the miracles and the big shows of nature, there is a blessed silence, where we recognize God. It is absolutely essential for the Christian disciple to seek out silence. It needn't be 40 consecutive days or a monastic life, but moments of attentive and intentional silence where we show up for God, who is always showing up for us. It could be found by leaving the radio off in the car, by going for a walk before turning on the TV, by staying in the bathroom for two extra minutes, or charging your phone in the kitchen instead of beside your bed. Where will you seek silence this week? And what will God speak to you there?

Prayer of the Faithful: For silence to find us, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the silence, speak to us in the quiet. Teach us to welcome the noiseless spaces which we are tempted to fill. Help us to welcome the discomfort of having nothing to do, of setting down our distractions, and of sitting before you as we are. Meet us in the silence, O God, we pray. Amen.

August 20, 2017 – 20TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *God's life is meant for you and for everyone else.*

One of the more challenging parts of the Gospel is the universal salvation Jesus is offering. We are human in so many ways, and we draw dividing lines all over the place, often without realizing it. When we hear the news, we take one side; when we are in a new social setting, we try to find a group where we "fit"; when someone does something wrong, we want justice for the victim and punishment for the offender. God's way is bigger. There is justice and truth, and both are meant to set us all free in love. That means there is no "them" and "us". There are only us, all called to abundant life. The Canaanite woman is used to being compared to the dogs. To her, it doesn't matter if the grace she gets is leftover. She knows it was meant for all God's people. Isaiah prophesies that even before the coming of Jesus, God had a heart for non-Israelites. And Paul is mourning because the Jewish people of his time don't recognize Jesus, while at the same time inviting the Gentiles to remember the Israelites belong too. When you imagine heaven, whom do you imagine *won't* be there? Someone you're angry with? Someone who belongs to a different political party? Someone who wounded you? It is God's greatest desire that we will all be reconciled to Him and each other. Let's spend this week praying for the people we find hardest to love.

Prayer of the Faithful: For all people to be reconciled to God and each other, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of all people, draw us into your way of loving. Help us to stop drawing lines in the sand and in our hearts. Expand our hearts to make room for all your people. Give us the virtues of curiosity, understanding, and selflessness. Teach us to long for the unity you desire. Amen.

August 27, 2017 – 21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *The life you live in Jesus matters.*

Peter, in the Gospel, and Eliakim, in the first reading, are given keys. While we know Peter's keys are a symbol of the authority of the papacy, both Peter and Eliakim have something to teach us at the personal level. Both Peter and Eliakim have received the gift of faith (imperfectly as humans do), and their faithfulness becomes a door for others to walk through to faith. In this sense, we all hold keys. We are all invited to meet Jesus, to recognize Him, and then to help others find the door. The rules we live by, the God we bear witness to, the picture of faith we paint – all these are the way we open or close the door. How will we use our lives this week to open the door of faith to others? If the door is closed, is it because God asked us to close it, or because we have closed our hearts to God?

Prayer of the Faithful: For the grace to live lives that act as an open door of faith for others, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of flesh and blood, you took on our skin, our humanity, to save us. In your image we live, bearing witness to you. Let our lives open doors, inviting others into your Kingdom. Teach us to be responsible with the power and possibility that come with following you. Amen.