



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.

February 3, 2019 – 4TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Abortion (and persecution) is a fear response to God’s plan for life being different from our plan.*

When Jesus proclaims He is the Messiah, the people of His hometown drive Him out of town and intend to kill Him. It is a fascinating parallel to the first reading from Jeremiah, which proclaims how God has a plan for His people in their mothers’ wombs. For Jeremiah’s people, this prenatal plan is meant to inspire courage for a prophet to speak words that others find difficult to hear. Isn’t it interesting that Jesus’ community also struggles with this, to the point they would have killed Him? They are afraid and cannot see a way to trust that God’s plan is bigger and better than theirs. We believe every single person, from the moment of conception, is created with a purpose and a plan. That means we are called to wrap support and hope around mothers (and fathers and babies) regardless of the circumstances of conception. It also means that people we disagree with are also part of God’s plan, and that hatred, violence, and condemnation are affronts to the dignity of human life. The radical truth of our faith is that no amount of disagreement, discomfort or fear justifies violence or taking another’s life.

Prayer of the Faithful: For reverence and respect for every human life at every stage, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of purpose, you have called us into being from the moment of conception, weaving your plan for the world with a particular plan for each of our lives. Give us courage to protect the lives of the unborn, and to honour the dignity and calling of each person for all the days of their lives, especially those we find difficult to love. Amen.

February 10, 2019 – 5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Abundant life requires reflection and repentance.*

In both the first reading and the Gospel, Isaiah and Peter struggle with their own sinfulness when God asks something of them. Isaiah has a vision of God purifying his lips, and Peter argues with Jesus' instructions to put down the nets, only to pull in a huge catch and then apologize. God is going to call us to do His work in spite of our sinfulness. The question is will we let God forgive us so we can get on with transforming the world with His love? The second reading reminds us that Jesus died for our sins to reconcile us to eternal life in God. Who am I to refuse that gift?

Prayer of the Faithful: For reflection and repentance, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, Savior, Friend, you have called us in the midst of our brokenness to change the world with love. Help us to receive your mercy that we might be imperfect instruments of your amazing love. Amen.

February 17, 2019 – 6TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *A blessed life involves suffering.*

Perhaps it wasn't only our generation that bought into the lie that blessedness means material wealth and the absence of suffering? Jeremiah, the Psalmist and Jesus all go to considerable lengths to remind us the experience of blessing may coexist with poverty, pain, rejection, misunderstanding or longing. They even go so far as to suggest there is blessing in these uncomfortable and undesirable realities. Any time we catch ourselves thinking God has abandoned us because we are in pain, we have an invitation to return to the Beatitudes for an attitude adjustment. The woes Jesus speaks are not a curse but rather a warning. When we place our trust in material comfort, we build a house on shifting sand. We risk losing our faith in God, humanity and the world if we build a life on the false security of wealth, full bellies, or the constant expectation for happiness. Blessing is available in all seasons and experiences; we can put our faith in God's promises.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the strength to receive God's blessing in our suffering as well as in our joy, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of blessing, help us to receive what you offer to us in every season of our lives. When we cannot see you through our pain, open our eyes and hearts wider. Give us the courage to trust your presence and blessing in our suffering as well as our joy. Amen.

February 24, 2019 – 7TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *What kind of life would be inspired in others if disciples were known as people who lived mercy?*

The story of David's mercy in the first reading is beautiful; it would be an amazing thing if our neighbours witnessed us making similar choices. Jesus is calling us to be people who see opportunities to return evil with evil and choose love instead. This doesn't mean we are doormats or are to ignore injustice; it means that when we can name and see evil at work, we return it with a love that invites another way. What if our neighbours experienced us giving second and third chances, practising the hard work of forgiveness, setting boundaries with love, or refusing to judge? What kind of abundant life can we proclaim by *living out mercy* with our children, our spouse, our parents, our neighbours, and our enemies?

Prayer of the Faithful: For mercy for ourselves and each other, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of mercy, show us how to beware the possibility of vengeance and to choose reconciliation. Teach us to see opportunity for self-righteousness as a temptation to sin. Reveal in us your capacity to set down our anger and our arms so there is room for forgiveness, peace and mercy. Amen.