



**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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**July 2, 2017 – 13<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A**

**Homily Idea:** *Children are a gift to bring us life.*

Our culture has a strange way of talking about kids: Do we “want” them? How many are we going “to have”? Can we really “afford” more? The Church has always taught that children are a great gift. In the first reading, a wealthy woman and her husband make space for Elisha the prophet when he travels. When thinking about how to honour their generosity, Elisha announces that God will bless her with a son, when her husband is in old age. As people of faith, we need to be mindful of how we think, speak about, and approach children. It can often be scary for couples to think God might bless them with more children. And it can be especially painful when we long to be parents but that blessing doesn’t seem to be happening. Many parents fear what might happen if their teenagers become parents prematurely. Sometimes, noisy children make it hard to focus in Mass. Some of our neighbours may seem to have more children than they can care for, which puts pressures on our social systems. We must remember that children are always and ever a gift, not only for their families but for the whole community. We have work to do, shifting the way we think about children, in our churches and our society.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For a world that welcomes and celebrates every child into abundant life, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Jesus, you called the little children to yourself. Transform our attitudes and shift our focus, that we might always see children as a gift of life. No matter how little sleep we

might get, how many daycare spots might be needed, or what the circumstances of conception might be, help us to celebrate and share the gifts of children in a way that transforms our world. Amen.

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## July 9, 2017 – 14<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *Life with Jesus should not be weighted and burdened; He wants to give you rest.*

Have you ever met any Christian martyrs? Not the kind who have died courageously defending their faith from violent persecution, but the kind who are always drowning under the weight of a battle with evil, complaining and nailed to their cross? Of course a life of faith demands much of us, but the gift Jesus has promised us in following Him is that He will give us rest and carry the weight of our burdens with us. This is the mark of faith in the Resurrection -- that we carry our crosses with joy and hope, alongside Jesus. People should not find us complaining and drowning in despair. Christians should have a reputation for being people who are prayerfully, joyfully, and faithfully casting their cares on Jesus, working and trusting that God is doing the heavy lifting. If this is hard for you, practise asking Jesus for the rest He has promised, call a spiritual director, or make time this week for reconciliation. He wants to give us life with rest.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the courage to let Jesus give us rest, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Jesus, you have promised us easy yokes and light burdens. When we are quick to take on the weight of the world, whisper your invitation of rest into our weary hearts. Remind us that life with you does not need to feel like drowning, if we but cast ourselves into your arms. Teach us to receive your rest. Amen.

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## July 16, 2017 – 15<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *God is extravagant with the gifts of life.*

The first reading and the Gospel point to the connection between nature and God's powerful word of life. Just as God created potential for new life with every ray of light, seed, and drop of water, God's words have powerful potential to bring us new life. God does not force plants to grow in thorns any more than He forces His words into conversion in us, but He reminds us that we have choices to hear Him. It doesn't matter if our hearts have been sandy, filled with rocks, or choking under weeds in the past. God's words are poured out extravagantly, just like the potential of nature. The question is will we create some good soil in our hearts and lives to let God's word grow in us?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For good soil in our hearts in order for God's word to take root, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of abundant life, keep speaking your words into our hearts. Help us to prepare good soil in our hearts, that your words be planted deep in us. May your life grow in us, as we make more room for you. Amen.

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## July 23, 2017 – 16<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *We can offer life by becoming good and forgiving, like God.*

The three readings offer us challenging words, inviting repentance and trust in the God who saves us from our sin. We cannot earn salvation, because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." That said, however,

the Psalm is key this week. We have hope because God is good and forgiving. As we navigate a world full of people in need of God's salvation, we would do well to remember that people need to encounter God's goodness and forgiveness in and through us. We can be signs and expressions of God's mercy and forgiveness when people fall short. The good news is that hell is guaranteed to no one. We can choose to be forgiven, reconciled, and changed.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For goodness and forgiveness, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Good and forgiving God, teach us to trust in your goodness and fall into your mercy. And then, challenge us to share what you have given to us with all those who stumble. Amen.

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**July 30, 2017 – 17<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A**

**Homily Idea:** *Material wealth is not God's currency in life.*

We are often a people more shaped by the world than by the Gospel, and our attitudes about money and material possessions often are the first to betray us. Solomon, a great king and wealthy leader, asks God for wisdom. Elsewhere the Scriptures caution us that it is easier for a camel to walk through the eye of a needle than for the wealthy to be saved. This is because when our material needs are so abundantly met and exceeded, we can forget to rely on and ask God for the salvation we cannot earn but must receive. How many of us doubt ourselves because we lose a job, don't earn as much as a neighbour, or think we have disappointed God because we don't have the material things we wish for? The Gospel reminds us that the pearl of great price is not a thing, but a conviction that we can trust God to take care of us in all things. If we keep our eyes fixed on God, then everything else falls into place. The world is not fair, not materially equal, and certainly not yet the Kingdom of God. No material wealth or lack of it can prevent or guarantee us security. God is in the world and calling us to Himself within whatever is our reality. He can be found and clung to from wherever you are.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For trust in God, rather than money or stuff, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of abundant life, teach us to trust you in both riches and poverty. Detach our hearts from money and material wealth. Help us to trust in your grace as the currency of life. Amen.