



**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.

May 7, 2017 – 4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year A

Homily Idea: *Jesus is the answer for the sinfulness that has grown in our lives.*

Like the crowd that surrounds Peter, it is easy to be overwhelmed by our own brokenness in comparison with the Resurrection. The crowds, overtaken with shame at the price of their sinfulness, ask Peter, “What should we do?” Peter tells them to repent, and receive the new life Christ offers. This is our answer too. No sin is too bad to be forgiven, no shame too large to be wiped clean. If you've had an abortion, hurt the people you loved, been drowned by addiction, run away from responsibility, denied Jesus – this Resurrection is for you. If you've been lying to yourself, been paralyzed by selfishness, been too afraid to say yes to God – it's time to repent. If you have cheated yourself or others, forgotten who (or whose) you are, refused to honour the lives of others – choose now to receive the life God wants to give you and to flow through you. It's Easter. This is the season to turn to Him, to allow His Death and Resurrection to be your new life too.

Prayer of the Faithful: For freedom from the sin that robs of the life Christ offers us by His Death and Resurrection, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: O God, who walked out of the tomb, hold us tightly as we turn away from the tombs of our own sin. Give us courage to let go of the trappings of death, to face our shame with your forgiveness, and to walk into new life and light by your grace. We are forgiven! Amen. Alleluia.

May 14, 2017 – 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year A

Homily Idea: *Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.*

For many of us, Christianity was chosen for us before our birth. Sure, we had the opportunity to profess it for our own and, if we are at a Sunday liturgy today, most of us have chosen to be here. But that doesn't mean that we don't frequently take this choice for granted, or allow our faith to be just another part of who we are. Jesus promises that if we believe in Him, our lives will be changed by Him, that God will act in and through us in the same (and even greater!) ways than He acted in Jesus. Are you giving yourself so completely that God can work miracles through you? Are you letting Jesus form the way you live, letting His truth be your truth, and His life be your life? Or do you have some work to do, again, letting God have all of you?

Prayer of the Faithful: For lives given over completely to Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, our life, whisper into the places in our hearts and lives that we have not surrendered to you. Gently show us where we refuse to follow you, and help us to turn ourselves over completely. We long for your life! Amen. Alleluia.

May 21, 2017 – 6th Sunday of EASTER, Year A

Homily Idea: *God's commandments offer us life.*

Following rules is not typically understood as a path to happiness in our culture. Rules might bring us safety (hopefully we see the value in not using our phones while we drive), or keep us free from punishments (we want to live without tickets or prison), but we don't generally expect laws to make us happy. Maybe it is surprising, then, that this is exactly what Jesus is telling us – do what the Father commands and you will find a life of joy. So perhaps you disagree with some of the rules, or maybe you just resent there are rules? What if you looked at your relationship with the rules differently? What if you asked God what you might receive by choosing to follow His commandments? Freed from jealousy, would you want more love? If you weren't busy chasing idols, would you have more time? If you stopped killing your own happiness, might you have hands open to receive God's joy? If your life isn't perfect now, would you be willing to try life God's way?

Prayer of the Faithful: For the willingness to follow God's commandments and the humility to receive the life that comes from Him, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God, who offered us a law that can set us free, teach us to find you in following your instructions. Make us humble enough to trust that your law will always bring us freedom. Amen. Alleluia.

May 28, 2017 – SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD, Year A

Homily Idea: *For the sake of the world, we must never forget that our lives are a continuation of Jesus' life.*

We worship God who came to us, in Jesus, to offer new life to His people. As Jesus ascends into heaven, His disciples get scared and need to be reminded that Jesus intends for them to keep doing what He did with them in life. God anticipated our fear and doubt and sent Jesus to show us, to encourage us, to send us out again. Our hurting world is also waiting for Jesus, and He says to us as He said to the first disciples, "Go and make disciples of all nations... I will be with you always." We are not alone and, even now, we are being sent again to

share the good news of Jesus in our world. By the miracle of the Spirit, our lives become a continuation of God's saving work in Jesus' life. Someone in your world needs to be reminded that Jesus is with them – through you. Do not be afraid!

Prayer of the Faithful: For God's encouragement to lift our doubts and send us out to the world, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Holy Spirit, draw near to us. Whisper God's promises into our doubts and fill us with the courage to let Christ act in and through our lives. Send us out of our doubt into the lives of service you have prepared for us. Amen. Alleluia.