



**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.

July 5, 2015 – 14TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *We are to be signs of life, even to those who reject us.*

In the first reading, Ezekiel is invited and called to speak to his own rebellious people, to be a voice that proclaims God’s presence and faithfulness, whether the people will hear him or not. How many of us have family members or friends who have rebelled against faith? Jesus himself is rejected in his hometown, “amazed at their disbelief.” In both cases, God continues to call them to be prophets of God’s abundant life. How do we go, sent out to the rebellious unbelievers so they will “know that there has been a Prophet among them”? We must go as God’s joy-filled people, proclaiming with our lives a humble trust that God’s way leaves us filled with compassion, patience and joy; where our weakness can become, as Paul promises, an avenue for God’s power. Self-righteous rejection of those who reject us simply isn’t an option, if we desire to follow Jesus.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the willingness to be loving witnesses among those who have rebelled against God, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the Prophets, speak through our lives. Give us the courage to witness to your grace even in circles where you have been long abandoned. Help us bear witness to your faithful and eternal desire to bring us all home to you. Amen.

July 12, 2015 – 15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *Abundant life in Jesus exists in all circumstances ... and materialism blinds us to abundant grace.*

It is tempting on a Sunday like this to preach the “prosperity gospel” – where the faithful can test their faithfulness against their material blessings – but that is a perversion of the texts. These three readings are a profound critique of our cultural materialism. Christians can know abundance of life and grace in all circumstances, but that does not mean we will be rich, healthy, accepted, loved or materially well-off. It means we will redefine our identity as the adopted children of God, called from and to unlikely places, and capable of shaking off the evil that threatens to cling to us in a broken world. When we approach life with a spiritual focus and practice, we are reminded that grace transforms every ordinary moment into an extraordinary opportunity for growth, transformation, resurrection or love. This is abundant life – never to be abandoned in our suffering, to be satisfied with what we have, not to doubt our worth. What has God provided in this moment that we have been unable to see because we have our eyes set on what we do not have?

Prayer of the Faithful: For humble trust that abundant life is available to us in what is, and the courage to receive that life from God here and now, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Adopted Father, you have chosen and called us even in our brokenness. Transform our vision that we might see your abundance in what is. Free us from our materialistic longings, and reveal to us the grace of being satisfied with what we have. When we are knocked down by the world’s rejection, teach us to shake the dust off our feet and to ground ourselves deeply in your inheritance – a grace that lies just beneath the surface of all reality – your ever-present love. Amen.

July 19, 2015 – 16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *Life depends on seasons of rest and detachment from it.*

Jesus took the disciples away to rest, to be fed and nourished after their work spreading the Gospel. Alongside the Sabbath teaching of the Old Testament, Jesus bears powerful witness to just how much our lives depend on seasons of rest. Then, in the same passage, Jesus reminds us this rest is not to become an idol. We can be called away from rest to respond in love to the needs of those around us. Our call is to discern well, to plan for adequate times of rest so when the duty of the moment calls us out of that rest, we can respond lovingly to the needs of others. For parents with young children, adults with demanding jobs, people with ambition, it can be very difficult to make time for or even to choose rest. For young adults, students, the retired or unemployed, it can be easy to get lost in idle time, such that it is not restful or rejuvenating, or not to see when our rest makes others work without a break. How is God challenging you to rest, to provide opportunities for rest to others, or to step out of your rest to respond? Make an effort this week to find new life in rest, for yourself and for someone else. It doesn’t have to be something large: let the dishes wait, clean something up for someone else, make a meal and share it, say no to something that makes your life too busy.

Prayer of the Faithful: For a willingness to rest in God and allow Him to restore us, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the Sabbath, draw us into your presence and teach us to rest. Restore our weary souls, nurture us out of our busy-ness, and teach us to live without rushing. Amen.

July 26, 2015 – 17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *There's enough food, and love, and life for all of us. Hoarding is not a part of the Gospel.*

These miracles of loaves and fish, of the multiplying of food, are not so much about material abundance as they are about spiritual mindsets. When we think there isn't enough, our scarcity mentality becomes a reality. We start to hide what we have, to be content to watch others go without, while we protect ourselves with a false sense of security that we will be okay while others perish. When real crises hit (famines, natural disasters, major winter storms, etc.), hoarding and storing for ourselves rob us of our humanity if our bellies are full while we ignore others. Jesus challenges us, as God has done for all of salvation history, to trust that we will survive or suffer together. When we are together, we live as one body and one spirit, graced by the trust we are all loved, and all worthy of having our basic needs met. Where are we hoarding, resisting a call to share what we have been given? Where have we failed to believe the needs of others are as important as our own?

Prayer of the Faithful: For minds, hearts and lives that bear witness to God's abundance for all people, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of loaves and fish, you have nourished our bodies and our souls with your gifts of food in times of hunger. As we encounter the hungry, lonely, imprisoned and poor people in our communities and our world, remind us their souls and ours depend on faithful and joyful generosity. Make us more human by our willingness to share even what is most precious to us. Amen.
