



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.

April 7, 2013 – SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (Sunday of Divine Mercy), Year C

Homily Idea: *Jesus brings life in the midst of doubt.*

As we celebrate the 50 days of Easter, we would do well to spend some time with the Thomas inside ourselves and those in our world. We all have moments of doubt, and that doubt can seem a threat to faith itself. But Jesus responds to doubt with blessing. Jesus meets Thomas precisely in his doubt, just as he meets us in ours. Some days, and maybe for most of our lives, we believe effortlessly. Jesus reminds us we are blessed when this happens. But if we find ourselves or our neighbours lost in doubt and afraid to trust, we do not need to fix anything. We need to wait for Jesus to show himself, to bring life into our fear. The mother who years later doubts that God can forgive her after an abortion; the faithful father who isn’t sure he believes in God anymore; the soldier who has witnessed too much suffering to find goodness in the world – God will show himself and bring life, if we, like Thomas, will face our doubt and ask God to show us his life.

Prayer of the Faithful: For endurance to wait on God in times of doubt, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of faithfulness, help us embrace our doubts as part of the journey of faith. When we encounter doubt in others, allow us to be witnesses to your faithfulness, waiting patiently with those who feel alone. May we ask, with Thomas, for what we need, trusting you will meet our needs in your time. Amen.

April 14, 2013 – THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year C

Homily Idea: *The Way of Life is Jesus.*

Most of us run from suffering and embrace ease. This is normal, and even a healthy response to external stimuli. But when we become disciples of Jesus, our lives get turned upside down and re-oriented. Our focus shifts to the Kingdom, and this puts us out of step with the rhythm of the rest of the world. When people shout condemnation to criminals, we are asked to shout love. When others spend money and time on themselves, we are asked to offer our lives for others. This is not the way of suffering. Nor is it the way of seeking material blessing for our faithfulness. It is the way of Jesus, and it is the fulfillment of life. When Jesus says he will put a belt around us and take us where we would not go, he is asking us to follow him, to the Cross and through to Resurrection. Jesus is not just an example. His path becomes our path too.

Prayer of the Faithful: For strength to follow Jesus on the way of life, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of life, soften our hearts to your way, that our lives may be a witness to a world longing for your love. May we have courage to walk with open hands and hearts to the places where we would rather not go. Amen.

April 21, 2013 – FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year C

Homily Idea: *We find life when we are willing to let it go.*

In the first reading, we come face to face with the reality of the early Christians: faith in Jesus could result in death. We have learned what God needs us to learn in life when we discover that dying cannot take away our life. Most of us will not be called to martyrdom, but we will all be asked to let go of everything. In the end, we will all be asked to surrender our very lives. How are you practising letting go of the things that give you life? When we skip dessert, take a simple “stay-cation”, embrace discomfort, allow conflict to surface, or give away a prized possession, we detach just a little bit from our death-grip on life. When we practise this in small ways now, we prepare ourselves for the end of our lives, when we will give over life itself. When we do, we will find God’s life awaiting us.

Prayer of the Faithful: For grace to let go into God, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the Resurrection, lead us through the Cross, into the tomb and into resurrection. May we choose small ways to let go of the things we mistake for life, that we might find the fullness of life in you, we pray to the Lord.

April 28, 2013 – FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR C

Homily Idea: *Will the world recognize Jesus in the way we live love?*

How many of your neighbours want what you’ve got? Not your car, your house, your garden or your commitments, but your joy, your faithfulness, your love? Paul and Barnabas can’t stop talking about it. John professes a vision of God making all things new. Jesus was begging his disciples to see (even before the Resurrection) that the world will know him by our love. Pope Francis’ early days as Pope have been a living witness to what it means to live what we believe. In a world sceptical of faith and critical of religion, now more than ever they need to see Jesus in the way we live.

Prayer of the Faithful: For lives that reflect the life and love of God, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, you call us to a faith of action as well as conviction. May we live in such a way that people can see you in us, and may our hearts be set on living in your love. Amen.
