



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.

August 3, 2014 – 18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *The miracle of God’s life is that what we have becomes enough.*

It would be easy to interpret this week’s readings as the gospel of prosperity: that those who follow God will have their material needs met. This often gets extended beyond needs. We can catch ourselves believing that being good means we are entitled to good health, easy and peaceful relationships, and material wealth. We then look at people who have less, and make subconscious assumptions they have somehow earned their situation by a lack of faithfulness. All this is a misinterpretation. The life God gives us and calls us to is a miracle wherein what we have becomes enough. In the midst of struggle and illness, want and need, frustration and misunderstanding, we grow to see and trust God’s presence even there. This is wealth and health and richness of life, when we know deeply in every moment the words of the Psalmist: “You open your hand to feed us, Lord, and satisfy our needs.”

Prayer of the Faithful: For gratitude and satisfaction for everything God gives, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Multiplier of Loaves and Fish, help us to see your miracles at work in our lives. Show us how you are providing for us, caring for us, and leading us, even while we resist you. Teach us to be satisfied with what you offer, and to offer it back to you, that you might multiply our efforts once again. Amen.

August 10, 2014 – 19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *God's life shows up in silence.*

Words, noise, images ... our senses are constantly assaulted. It's no wonder we hope or expect God will show up with a bang. But the life God desires for us is found more often than not in silence. In taking soup quietly over to a sick neighbour, in sitting with a grieving family without words, in unplugging for a few hours and taking time to listen to God. Are you feeling as though God is absent? Wishing God would intervene to fix something? Angry God hasn't already made it right? Chances are, peace will rise from some silence.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to listen and look for God in silence, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Humble God of Silence, fill us with a desire to find you in the quiet. When we arrive there, transform us by your gentleness. In a world filled with rage and demands, problems and quick solutions, draw us into the calm before the storm and after it, and help us follow you. Amen.

August 17, 2014 – 20TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *God's life is not just for you; it's also for the person you least want to share life with.*

These readings show beautifully the way in which God's universal plan for salvation has evolved in human understanding. The first reading is from Isaiah, an admonishment to the Israelites that being the Chosen People is not enough. God's people are the people who follow His commands. This was not a common or popular way of thinking. The second reading illustrates that the early Christians struggled with the same concern, particularly with including Gentiles in Jewish ritual. The Gospel shows Jesus' interaction with a Canaanite woman. Jesus is both the promised Messiah for the Israelites **AND** the Saviour of the World. Jesus is offering us eternal life in and through our Church, but He didn't come only for us. The beggar we ignore on the street, the irritating co-worker, the enraging politician, the pedophile prisoner, our worst enemy: all of these were created for life. If your salvation plan depends on the exclusion of someone else, you're not as close to Jesus as you need to be.

Prayer of the Faithful: For forgiveness of our desires to exclude others from God's life and mercy, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Saviour of the World, expand our hearts to love as you love. Forgive our judgement, hatred and exclusion. Change our hearts and our lives, that we might desire and work for the life and love of all God's people. Amen.

August 24, 2014 – 21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *God's life has to be discovered by each of us, one person at a time.*

How easy spiritual life would be if we could just make the right choices for everyone, wouldn't it? Jesus' admonition at the end of this week's Gospel is not a call to secrecy. His desire for the disciples to keep their knowledge to themselves is His wisdom in knowing that titles and arguments are unlikely to change opinions. Jesus' identity and power is a threat to the Roman authorities and the high priests of His own time. Still today, the freedom offered by Christ is a threat to our governments, our economic systems and our neighbours. Telling people who Jesus is and how they should live is as ineffective today as it was then. In order to encounter the new life God has for us, we all have to meet Him for ourselves. Thus, in sharing Him with others, we are invited

to follow Him, to become the people He created us to be, and to speak about how we have been transformed, instead of how others ought to be.

Prayer of the Faithful: For our lives to be an authentic witness to the love, mercy and power of Jesus Christ, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Incarnate Jesus, you came to us in flesh and blood that we might know you ourselves. Continue to meet us in the moments of our lives. Transform us ever more deeply into your image, that through our lives others might meet you face to face, as we have. Amen.

August 31, 2014 – 22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Suffering and loss are a part of the Life we live in God, not signs of Satan's power.*

When Jesus calls Peter "Satan", He makes an important distinction for us as the people of the culture of life: the difficulties we will encounter in our lives are not evidence God has abandoned us or that we are on the wrong path. Difficulties are not the evil in the world; our aversion and resistance to them is the evil. Our job is to walk faithfully where God leads us, even to the point of loss, suffering and eventually death. This does not mean that we seek out or glorify suffering, but are called to face it with God when it is clearly placed in our path. God does not waste our suffering and loss. The same God who raised Jesus from the dead to work out our salvation turns our losses and our suffering into new life. The tiny hints of Resurrection are our confirmation during and after difficulties that we have walked faithfully through our challenges. Avoiding struggle, though it seems easier, is not Resurrection -- it's just avoidance. If Peter's experience is a guide, it just might be a temptation to sinfulness.

Prayer of the Faithful: For strength to face difficulties when we would rather resist and avoid them, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Risen Jesus, teach us how to walk with you through the crosses of our lives and anticipate resurrection. Show us when the temptations to avoid hard things are in fact our giving in willingly to evil. Give us courage and faith to follow you wherever you lead. Amen.
