



**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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**August 7, 2016 – 19<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C**

**Homily Idea:** *The reward we await is life, not wealth, perfection, affirmation or lack of suffering.*

The prosperity gospel is rarely preached overtly in Catholic parishes, but it sneaks in subtly just the same. Most of us persist in an adolescent belief that if we do what God tells us to, we will be rewarded with health, prosperity, peace, and simple happiness. I do the right thing, and then God will give me what I want, like a transaction at a store. But faith is not a currency that can be traded for a good life. Faith is a way of living that allows us to see and know the living God, so that in the midst of blessings and dangers we are secure in the promises of God working Resurrection and new life in all things. As the second reading puts it, “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” That is to say, faith is continuing to follow God precisely in the midst of struggles, rather than rejecting our faith because the struggles seem to be a sign God has abandoned us. God has not promised us a life without bumps, but a meaningful life in the midst of the bumps, with the promise He is at work in them.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the grace to receive the life we are living as the fruit of our faithfulness, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of life, you have given us life as a gift in and of itself, for us to walk alongside you as you continue to redeem the world. Help us see our struggles as part of your

struggle to make your love known among your people. Help us reject any sense that our faithfulness has earned us wealth or ease in this life. Teach us to be faithful to you in every season, trusting in your goodness always. Amen.

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### **August 14, 2016 – 20<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C**

**Homily Idea:** *Life will require us to cry out to God for help, who answers us, even if not the way we hope.*

When was the last time you uttered the desperate and simple prayer “Help”? Life offers us so many situations where we come face to face with sin, inability, fear, failure and pain. It is an act of faith, in the midst of these circumstances, even if we aren’t sitting trapped at the bottom of the cistern like Jeremiah, simply to cry out to God for help. The Gospel is not an endorsement for us to justify creating division in self-righteous anger. Instead, it is a reminder to the faithful that following Him will bring us face to face with evil and set the world on fire with love. When we find ourselves facing division and impossible circumstances, when we have reached the limits of what we can do, we are invited to cry out to God whose help will come, even if (when) it looks different than we could have imagined.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the courage to ask God for help, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Spirit of God, you came to set the world on fire with your love. We are overwhelmed by the impossibility of restoring the earth to peace, or even just speaking kindly to the person sitting next to us. Come to us and whisper “Help” in our souls, that we might cry out to you who can do immeasurably more than we can ask for or imagine. Amen.

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### **August 21, 2016 – 21<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C**

**Homily Idea:** *A life of faith is hard, and we need to encourage each other.*

“You’re doing a good job. Your desire to please God does please Him. I know it is hard, and you can do it!” These phrases may sound like things you say to the children in your lives, but we don’t stop needing to hear them when we grow up. The road is narrow, and the chosen people whined a lot. The discipline of a life of faith can seem like a drag, but it truly is not. Your efforts to love your family are not going unnoticed. Doing your best at work. Trying to be more patient. Cheerfully picking up a mess someone else made. These are the little things that transform your soul with God’s help. Your life is the place God is healing you, slowly, one moment and day at a time. You can do this; you can keep following Jesus, because when you look back later, you’ll be so grateful you kept going now.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For perseverance to live a life of faith, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Jesus in sandals, you walked the road of life and knew the struggle of living faith. Walk with us when we have grown tired. Help us hear your voice in the encouragement and gentle touches of our brothers and sisters in faith. Strengthen us as we commit ourselves again to following you with our whole lives. Amen.

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**August 28, 2016 – 22<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C**

**Homily Idea:** *God's way of life is a little way.*

These readings remind us of Saint Therese of Lisieux's "little way". Discipleship is not a grandiose path. It's a small and winding path through a forest into the dark places of your own soul. If you want to be faithful, you will be made humble and small, we read in Sirach. The second reading reminds us that the kingdom of God is not a large and opulent destination resort, but a flame and a voice, a gathering of the Spirit in the promise of heaven. When Jesus is at a banquet where everyone is watching to see who will be the greatest, He draws our attention to the lowest and the least. Where are you being called to humility, to love in small unnoticed and unappreciated ways? Do you need to do more laundry? Do you need to stop wishing for someone else's job or fame? Is it time to stop complaining about things that don't matter? What are the little ways that you could practise loving that would deepen your humility and let God lead you into the small and petty places where you like to hang out?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For humility and a love of being small, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of the Nativity and the Cross, of breath and tongues of fire, you have buried the mysteries of life in the small and humble. Take us with you to the small places in our world and in our souls, and teach us to choose the little way of love. Amen.

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