



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.

December 7, 2014 – 2ND SUNDAY IN ADVENT – Year B

Homily Idea: *God’s life is patient, not slow.*

Salvation history unfolds over thousands of years, gradually being revealed to individual persons and peoples in time. The Church changes at a snail’s pace, making subtle shifts and adjustments over generations. It is easy to become irritated with this pace, especially when we want God to show us the next steps in our own lives. In the second letter of Peter, we get a beautiful Advent message: “The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.” That family member who doesn’t come to church anymore? God is patient. The woman sitting outside your office, begging? God is patient. Your own challenge with selfishness? God is patient. This week, what is one tiny change you can make with patience, allowing God to work transformation in your life on His time?

Prayer of the Faithful: For patience with God and with each other, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of patience, show us your wisdom in time, that we may grow to expect your action on your time. Teach us to be gentle and patient with ourselves. Make us receptive to your timing in others. Help us see the long view when we are caught in the frustration of waiting. Amen.

December 14, 2014 – 3RD SUNDAY IN ADVENT – Year B

Homily Idea: *“Your life is not about you.”*

This famous quote from Mother Teresa is echoed in John’s words in the Gospel. When John the Baptist is questioned about who he is, he gives a beautiful response: “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord.’” For most of our lives, our egos are trying desperately to lay claim to who we are, to make ourselves important and significant. As we wait for the Infant Jesus to come, we are reminded our lives are all about Him. When we receive Him, we are moved to rejoice, to serve, to pray, to share, and to live fully. We are His, so our lives can be about Him and His people. That is the freedom He came to give to us.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to let go of our lives and allow them to point to Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

Prayers for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, you will come among us once again to give us your very life. May your life’s gift inspire us to make our lives a gift to you, over and over again. Amen.

December 21 2014 – 4TH SUNDAY IN ADVENT – Year B

Homily Idea: *Let life be done in me.*

Mary’s yes is the model for all of us as disciples of her Son. No one else in history has carried the Son of Man in quite the same way, but all of us are invited to do so in our own way. What is fascinating about Mary’s yes, and instructive, is she gives herself over to whatever life brings. This is very different from how our culture thinks about life. Our world gives us the impression life is our possession, that it is in our control, and that it is our job to manufacture it the way we want it. When that impression fails us, we can be tempted to think we are the victims of our lives. That also is false. Mary’s life happened in her, and she gives this Life her consent: “Let it be done to me, according to your word.” Whatever happens this Christmas, this coming year, in this lifetime, let God be at work in me, and may I be fashioned according to His word.

Prayer of the Faithful: For willingness to let God’s life work in us, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Mother Mary, pray for us, that we might be inspired by the way you received your life and God’s. Draw us close to your Son, that we might trust Him with our lives, as He learned to trust His Father by His trust in you. Amen.

December 25, 2014 – CHRISTMAS / THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Homily Idea: *We find life.*

The final line of the Gospel for midnight Mass is a wonderful point for a pro-life Christmas homily: “So they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the child, lying in a manger.” That child is the long-awaited Messiah, an infant King, mighty Counsellor, the Prince of Peace. His birth was not planned to the last detail, and his parents did not expect him. His first visitors were not doting grandparents. His first trip was an emergency flight into Egypt as a refugee. Being pro-life does not mean every child is planned or wanted, that every elderly person is easy to care for, that peace will come without a price. Being pro-life is being certain we will find the joy of life in the most unexpected, unplanned, and maybe even unpleasant circumstances, and ready to give

assistance to those seeking life desperately. This Christmas season, where is God showing you the Infant Jesus, lying in a barn, surrounded by the smell of animals, crying out the miracle of life?

Prayer of the Faithful: For faithfulness in continuing to seek God's life in every place for all people, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Infant Jesus, hold us to you with the power of a newborn's vulnerability. Draw us to care for your people with the same desire we have to calm a crying baby. Teach us to seek and find your life in all things. Amen.

December 28, 2014 – FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH – Year B

Homily Idea: *Families are meant to provide a context for God's life.*

The first and second readings are landmines for preachers, giving specific directives for how family members ought to fill their roles. Some families are grieving the death of a parent this Christmas; others are checking a child into rehab. A message of hope for us and our families emerges in the Gospel. As Jesus is presented in the temple, he affirms the lifelong hope of Simeon and Anna to see the Messiah. As Mary and Joseph return home to Nazareth, they set out to raise the Son of God without a manual, just like every other set of parents (and step-parents) in history. The Gospel tells us "The child grew and become strong, filled with wisdom." This is the context that families are called to provide – a place where each member can grow and be strengthened, where we can all learn wisdom. We will not do it perfectly but, with God's help, we can be closer.

Prayer of the Faithful: For our families to become ever more clearly a place where each member can grow in strength, love and wisdom, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Heart of the Holy Family, you were nurtured with love by your parents, grandparents and community. Teach us to nurture one another the way you were nurtured. Remind us of our role in helping each other become the people you created us to be. Amen.
