



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.

February 2, 2014 – THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD – Year A

Homily Idea: *Wonder and awe at the miracle of children.*

The Gospel today is a sign of how we honour the gift of life by the way we approach children. As Simeon delights in finally receiving the Messiah, as was promised, and Anna prophesies about Jesus’ future, Mary and Joseph were “amazed at what was being said about him.” Mary and Joseph counted his fingers and toes, heard him cry, fed him and rocked him to sleep. Though they knew he was extraordinary, they did not know how this would come to be. While no other child is the Messiah, every other child is a child of God, brimming with the promise and purpose given by God. Every parent is amazed at the gift of their child, though maybe not in every moment! This week, honour the gift of life by taking time to wonder and awe at children. Noisy kids in your pew? Smile and thank God for the promise of our future and His hope for our world. See tired parents at the grocery store? Offer them encouragement by delighting in their kids. Don’t have kids at home? Offer to spend an hour with a child, and let your wonder allow the parents to see their child anew.

Prayer of the Faithful: For gratitude for all that children call out of us and give to us by their joy, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, you were cherished for the miracle of your birth, and for the promise and hope you offered to all people. Help us to see you in every child, especially those who suffer and are in need of our care and protection. May we delight in the promise you offer us in children.

February 9, 2014 – 5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Share God's abundance for God's glory.*

The prophet Isaiah cuts through any misguided sense we might have that caring for ourselves is the way of salvation. When we clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and bring in the homeless, we find light and healing. We should not be motivated primarily to do these things out of fear, but out of love – because it is in so doing that we find God's light and healing. This is what it means to say that Jesus is the way of salvation. God does not give us the gift of salvation like a magic pill; He offers us the example of the way of redemption. When we give the very gift of life to those most in need, we find the way God gives us life, here and in the world to come. The Gospel seals the message this week: you do your good works not to be seen by others, but that God's glory will be seen. This is the way of life and of living.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the humility to walk in the way of Jesus, so God's glory will be revealed by our living, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of glory, thank you for showing us the way to you in Jesus, your Son. Give us courage to walk in His footsteps, feeding those who hunger and welcoming those in need. May we find you in these footsteps, and may others dare to join us on that path toward you. Amen.

February 16, 2014 – 6TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Life is a gift that comes when the Law is the desire of our hearts and an expression of love.*

Oh how easily we become people of the rules, or people who abandon them in the so-called name of love! Both of these positions are wrong, and Jesus calls us out of our comfort zones. This week's Gospel is all about how the Law finds its fulfillment in love. The answer is yes. Papal commentators continue to be perplexed by the way Pope Francis is an image of mercy and love, while continuing to affirm the traditional teaching of the Church. Pope Francis understands the Law guides us *and* it must be written on our hearts. This is the most transformative way to follow Jesus. Strive for obedience to the Law, and a heart utterly captivated by the mercy and love of Jesus when you fail to live up to the law. Call on His mercy and receive it. Take the example of human trafficking. It is always wrong to buy, sell or enslave a human being. We never, ever get to change this teaching. Those afflicted by this sin must be forgiven in our midst, and offered God's healing and hope.

Prayer of the Faithful: For obedience to God's laws, and lives of merciful love, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Spirit of God, transform our hearts of stone, that we might find your life in embracing every good thing you have offered us.

February 23, 2014 – 7TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Honouring life by honouring the body.*

All too often we treat our bodies like accessories or even inhibitions to the spiritual life, but the second reading reminds us our bodies are "God's temples." They are a place where we find God and seek Him. Indeed our bodies – our whole selves – belong to God. Our lives are a witness to the presence and love of God; our bodies are signs of the God made flesh in Jesus. How you treat your own body is a sign of your reverence. Think about the way you treat the church – coming in quietly, genuflecting, being respectful. How are you treating your body? Are you getting enough rest? Are you putting in healthy food? Do you take time to exercise and play?

Your body is a temple of the Spirit; how you treat it is how you treat God. Your body is a sign to the world of God's presence; your witness will tell the world what you believe about God's body!

Prayer of the Faithful: For reverence for the life we live in and through our bodies, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Embodied God, teach us reverence for our flesh and bones! Help us to be attentive to our hunger and thirst, our weariness and our energy, that we might find you dwelling in us and witness to you by how we care for the gift of human bodies on earth. Amen.
