



**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 5, 2017 – 5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Life for us is intended to bring more abundant life for all.*

It can be tempting to look out for our own and to close our eyes to the people who suffer but who aren’t “our” responsibility. Both Isaiah and Jesus speak words to convince us otherwise. God’s work is to free the prisoners, feed the hungry, care for the sick, and bring light to each and every person on the earth. Having received the light and life God offers, we have been asked to join Him in that work, rather than hoarding God’s blessings for ourselves. We are called to feed the hungry -- by not wasting food at home, by buying groceries or giving money for others, by volunteering with meals on wheels or at a soup kitchen, by inviting our neighbours to eat with us, and by accepting the invitations of others, especially to meals that are simple and spontaneous. We are called to care about the millions of people stuck in refugee camps around the world, whose lives and homes have been overtaken by violence and war, and which are further put on hold by immigration processes that treat the suffering primarily like security threats. We can give life by donating money internationally, by advocating politically, by supporting local refugees, and by facing our own prejudices. We are called to stop before we buy more things we do not need, and to ask how God is asking us to use our financial blessings to give life to a hurting world.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the generosity to share the life we have been given, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of abundant blessing and justice, you have poured your grace upon the world. Make us agents of your life, sharing generously the life we have been given, and receiving the life that can be found in each of your people. Amen.

February 12, 2017 – 6TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: Our lives are a participation in our own salvation or destruction....

This week could be a Sunday of fire and brimstone, but instead it is an opportunity to be filled with wonder and awe at the way God has designed our freedom -- and allows us to participate in our redemption or to choose our destruction. As Sirach puts it, "Before each person are life and death, good and evil, and whichever one chooses, that shall be given." Hell is not somewhere that God sends bad people, but the isolation and suffering we experience when we reject love, forgiveness, mercy and grace. Heaven is a reward only inasmuch as peace, joy, love, and communion are the consequence of choosing to receive and participate in a life of sacrificial love and ongoing conversion to become the people God created us to be. Commandments and rules are a guide for us to choose life, an invitation to participate in the redeeming work God wants to do in each of us. Have you fallen short lately, chosen wrong? Choose again. He is ever offering us a chance to choose again, to be forgiven, to start over. This might be a good week for dusting off your shoes and making your way to reconciliation.

Prayer of the Faithful: For an unquenchable desire to participate in in how God is healing and saving us, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of wisdom and mercy, you created us free that we might choose love. So often we fall short and participate in hurting ourselves and each other. Give us hearts that long to participate in your healing and redeeming work. Help us to choose love. Amen.

February 19, 2017 – 7TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Our bodies and lives are a temple where God lives and others can find Him.*

In the second reading, Paul reminds us that "you are God's temple and God's spirit dwells in you." We know this means our bodies are good and we must treat them with dignity and respect. But it also means our bodies and the way we live in them become living, breathing and moving temples of Christ's presence in the world. Every week we come here and eat Jesus' Body and Blood, in the hope we will become what we eat. Out there, in the world, when we leave this church, the way we respond when someone strikes us or sues us, the answer we give when someone asks for our money or help – all of these actions in and through our bodies and the way we live are a potential encounter between the other person and God who dwells in us. Will you let your body be a temple where others can meet Him and encounter His life and grace by your actions, attitudes and words?

Prayer of the Faithful: For our bodies and lives to be living temples for God to meet His people wherever they are, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the temple, you had the Israelites carry you through the desert, and have made a home for yourself in the Eucharist. As we eat and drink your Body and Blood, make us living temples, walking out into the world to carry you to the people you long to touch and love. Amen.

February 26, 2017 – 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Homily Idea: *We have more life when we let God take care of us, instead of trying to take care of ourselves.*

When we get worried or obsessed about how we are going to take care of ourselves or our family in an uncertain future, we make idols of the gifts God gives us. We get stressed out and isolated, and we can be tempted to say, like Zion, “The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.” God never forgets us, or leaves us, but He does not give us a guaranteed future and life of perfect security either. In the absence of that security we crave, we can interpret what we have been given today as insufficient. It’s a vicious cycle of disbelief: God hasn’t given what I want, therefore I can’t trust Him. Faith asks us not to worry about our lives, but to receive with gratitude what we are given for today. The best, most abundant life we can live is grounded in doing our best with what we have today, and trusting God will provide what we need for tomorrow, when tomorrow comes.

Prayer of the Faithful: For trust that God will take care of us tomorrow if we focus on today, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God, who cares for the birds of the air, help us to believe you will also provide for us. Teach us to trust in you, and to live without worry or obsession about our futures. Amen.
