



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.

January 1, 2014 – THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD – Year A

Homily Idea: *Words have the power to give life.*

The psalm captures the essence of the readings for this feast of Mary, the Mother of God: “May God be gracious to us and bless us.” We are all ever longing for God’s blessing. As human beings we need words, and ways of thinking, that communicate this blessing of God’s life in us. In the first reading, God gives Moses the words of blessing that “put God’s name on the children of Israel.” They will be marked as God’s. In the second reading, Paul reminds us we are sons and daughters, rather than slaves. In the Gospel, while the shepherds spill the Nativity words all over the world, Mary holds the words up in her heart and treasures them, signs she has chosen life. When we use the word foetus instead of baby, prisoner instead of person, victim instead of survivor, we deny life through language. Babies were made for being born and growing. People were made for reconciliation and forgiveness. Survivors bear witness to the resurrection of God. Give life with your language this year.

Prayer of the Faithful: For lips that speak life-giving words, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God, who spoke creation into being, make us abundant with our language, spilling life into every word we speak. May we bless as you bless, and hold up your words and promises as the greatest treasures of our lives. Amen.

January 5, 2014 – EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, Year A

Homily Idea: *Light shines in the darkness and does not destroy the darkness.*

The Magi travel from the East and go first to Jerusalem, seeking the birth of the king. It is interesting that the very ones who honour Him also tip off Herod to His presence. All three readings point to the way in which Revelation is limited and that some people do not know what to do with it. As people who defend and protect life, it can be maddening that the whole world does not see and celebrate the gift of life in all its forms. Yet everyone did not recognize Jesus. In fact, Herod murdered as many infant boys as his army found, just to try to prevent Jesus from becoming King. The light of life shines even here amid the culture of death. Our job is to bring gifts and honour it wherever it is, following the faithful footsteps of the Magi.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the faithfulness to keep our eyes fixed on the light in the darkness, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of abundant gifts, show us where you want us to pour out our gifts in celebration of your life all around us. When we see the darkness and fear it is too great, fix our eyes on your light. Help us to walk in the way of the Magi, following the star to the places where you are breaking into our broken world. Amen.

January 12, 2014 – BAPTISM OF THE LORD, Year A

Homily Idea: *What kind of life has come from your Baptism?*

The first reading is an old prophecy, where Isaiah was saying to his people they were the sign of the covenant with God. Throughout salvation history, God used human beings to bear witness to his presence, in Moses and Jacob and Esther ... but the people of Israel continually forgot, until Jesus. He is the one, God himself made flesh, and his ministry is marked and begun with His baptism. John protests, and Jesus insists. From that Baptism, Jesus and the people know He is the beloved Son of God. What difference has your Baptism made in your life? In the lives of the people who witness you? What life has God brought forth from your immersion in the water and the descent of Spirit? Your true life comes from your Baptism for the sake of the world. Get out there and live it!

Prayer of the Faithful: For the grace of our Baptism to change our lives and the lives of others, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Spirit of God, descending on Jesus, make us your people -- in Baptism and now -- beloved sons and daughters, with whom God can be well pleased. May we never take our Baptism for granted, and may we look for new life in every baptised person, Amen.

January 19, 2014 – 2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Be a Servant of Life!*

John might have easily gotten his nose out of joint when his younger cousin was the Messiah, but he does not. He bears witness to Jesus and His mission, happy to serve where God has placed him. Paul, too, gratefully

takes up his role as an Apostle among many saints. The first reading has a great question for us. "It is too small a thing that you should become my servant?" The pro-life mission seems so large. We can burn out quickly, being frustrated it is not going fast enough. This is the culture of life: where babies will be born and the elderly revered and valued, where the sick are visited, and the imprisoned offered healing and hope. We do God's will when we make ourselves humble servants, wherever we are. We can sing with the Psalmist an ode to the culture of life: "Here I am, Lord. I come to do your will."

Prayer of the Faithful: For hearts of humble service, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: John the Baptist, pray for us that we may have hearts of humble service, proclaiming the way to Jesus and rejoicing in our role, no matter how small, in the great salvation story. Amen.

January 26, 2014 – 3RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *God's life brings unity.*

How often have we been agents of division, making our point so others will be wrong or drawing lines in the sand? The mission of the Church to protect and defend life is for all of us, and our opposition is not wrong – they are dying. Paul offers a strong challenge to any of us who justify our self-righteousness -- which is most of us, at least some of the time. Dividing the Church into camps strips the cross of Jesus of its power. We are called to look for areas of agreement, to see what is similar so as to build the future on the sure footing of the things we share. This does not mean we overlook or ignore differences. It means we focus on what we hold in common as the foundational building blocks, trusting Christ will provide the next blocks from His power, rather than ours.

Prayer of the Faithful: For a desire for unity and the courage to seek it out, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you have modelled unity for us in your very being. Teach us to see you in everyone we encounter, and to draw on the pieces we hold in common. Make us humble about our differences, and faithful that you will reconcile us to each other in your time. Amen.
