



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 8, 2017 – EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Homily Idea: *To live in such a way that honours and protects the lives of others.*

The Wise Men set out on a journey following the signs and wonders that pointed them to the birth of a King. They are Gentile leaders, following the signs of other religious traditions. They do not know exactly for whom they are looking, but they set out in trust. When they seek more information from Herod, they are led in the right direction and set up to do harm to the One they seek. After paying Jesus homage, they are warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they go home by another way. We have so many opportunities to seek good information as we trust in God’s plan, and as many opportunities to protect and honour others. Whether supporting a young woman through an unplanned pregnancy, sharing our gifts with those who have less than we have, preventing human trafficking, and not supporting sweat shops or child labour, we can live like the Wise Men, bringing gifts and preventing harm by the way we live.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the strength to live in a way that honours and protects others, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of wisdom, you have placed us in this world and offer us signs and wonders as guides to following you. Teach us to trust the stars you place in our path. Lead us to the mangers that proclaim your presence in the world. Help us to pay attention so we never participate in bringing harm to those who need our protection. Amen.

January 15, 2017 – 2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Our lives are meant to be a light that leads others to Jesus.*

“I will give you as a light to the nations,” writes Isaiah, “that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” We are the gift that God is offering to a broken world, but how many of our neighbours look longingly over at our homes or our churches and say, “Gee, those people are so full of light; I want what they have!” It’s startlingly few these days, and for lots of complex reasons. But there is one reason over which we all have some control: how bright our own lights are. Are we letting God shine light into our lives? Are we looking for God’s light, celebrating it, sharing it with others, allowing God to transform us, and then sharing that with others? Or are we content to let the bit of light we find be just enough for ourselves? Or simply letting the light give us eyes to see something, while we resist letting it drive away the darkness of our own sin? God is offering us as a light to the world. How can we grow this year into the lights God wants us to be for others?

Prayer of the Faithful: For God’s light to shine through us for the blessing of others, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of light, you have chosen us to bring your light and salvation to the world. Make us ever watchful for your light shining in the darkness of our world. When we see it, help us cling to its comfort, instead of the comfort of our sin. Having known your light and life, push us out to share your light for the salvation of the whole world. Amen.

January 22, 2017 – 3RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Our lives are richer, to the point of salvation, because someone shared faith with us.*

This week’s readings are all about evangelization. In the midst of being people who come to church week after week, who are busy like everyone else, who do not face deep threat or persecution for believing, it is easy to take the gift of faith for granted. Furthermore, when people are often disinterested or hostile to hearing about God, it can be easy to ignore our call to be, like Simon Peter and Andrew, “fishers of people.” Someone gave you the gift of faith. They introduced you to Jesus, prayed with you, invited or brought you to church, shared faith and life and struggled with you, forgave you and asked to be forgiven. Take time this week to thank the people in your life who have shared faith with you. Reflect on how you are being called to share that gift of faith with others. Whose life could be blessed by your honest sharing about what God has done for you?

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to share the gift of faith and life in God, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of all Creation, you traveled from heaven to seek us out on earth. You pursue us to the ends of the earth. There is nowhere we can outrun your desire to love us and to save us. Teach us to pursue your people with the same relentless, gentle love. May we never be afraid to tell the stories of what you have done for us. Amen.

January 29, 2017 – 4TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Your life is enough when it is small and simple.*

Created in God’s image for eternal life with Him, it is no small wonder we long for heaven, comfort, peace, completion. Our experience in the world, as Paul says, is that we are foolish, powerless nobodies. We have this false belief that God is mighty, strong, and powerful in ways that make our smallness and incapacity problems. But God is mighty by His patience, strong in His infancy, powerful in His choice to need our love. God chose

what is foolish, weak and lowly to lift us to glory in Him. When we choose to receive what is foolish, weak, and lowly in ourselves and each other, we live God's small and simple way. Beatitude people understand there is much grace in the little things we do every day: returning a harsh word with kindness, doing another load of dishes, resisting procrastination, choosing forgiveness when we would rather hold a grudge. These things often hurt because we cannot see the whole picture now, but we don't need to. Our lives are enough when we live them with simplicity and humility.

Prayer of the Faithful: For contentedness with the small and simple ways of God, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Spirit of simplicity, you speak in the silent and unnoticed spaces of our lives, calling us to change the world in small and seemingly insignificant ways. May we see you in the simplest of our actions, and know deeply that our smallness and incapacity are enough for you. Amen.
