



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 Jesus came to bring to 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.

July 7, 2013 – 14TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Healing, peace and love are the signs of life.*

If these readings make us feel self-righteous, we’ve missed the point. Sometimes, it can be comforting to wallow in righteousness when our Christianity is misunderstood or rejected by our neighbours. When the Israelites are in exile, Isaiah gives them the promise of returning to Jerusalem – the promise of reconciliation with what was lost. When Jesus sends out the disciples, he says they should not concern themselves too much with those who reject their message. It is significant, however, while Jesus acknowledges that rejecting the Gospel is not good for those who dismiss it, he insists we are not entitled to power over evil, even though we might be blessed by having power. Our focus is to be that our names be written in heaven, even now. It’s reconciliation we are after, and which God longs for us. So as we preach the Gospel of Life, we would do well to remember that healing, peace and love are the goal, and wherever possible we should proceed in a way that brings them now. Where it isn’t possible now, we should long and pray for all God’s people to be reconciled to him, now and always.

Prayer of the Faithful: For humble hearts at the service of God’s healing, peace and love, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of Life, draw us into reconciling the world to you. May we be servants of your healing, peace and love by the way we speak your word of life. Amen.

July 14, 2013 – 15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Life in God comes at a cost to us.*

How often am I the one who walks past the suffering on the street? How often do I justify my blindness to those in need? Life, the life God offers us, requires we be born again, over and over again into God's life. Rising again in new life will always be preceded by small deaths that cost us something. For Jesus, the resurrection cost him his very life. For Moses, the new life could not be found in the law alone, but in giving himself over to God who wrote the law on his heart. For the Samaritan, he finds life in letting go of his own agenda, in delaying his travel plans, in giving away his own wealth to care for another. This is a part of why the Church opposes euthanasia and supports universal healthcare – because our suffering offers life to those who care for us. Every human being deserves the chance to be born. All of us are invited, once we are living, to give up our lives for others, that we might truly know the joy and freedom of God's life.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to give up our grip on our own significance, and let go into the dying that brings us new life, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of New Life, show us how to die the small deaths that open our hearts to your life. Make us small, so our hearts overflow with your generosity. May selflessness fill us with compassion, mercy and gratitude for you have loved us first. Amen.

July 21, 2013 – 16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *God's life is found in one thing.*

God honours Sarah's work and rebukes Martha for hers. The lesson of this Sunday is not that some work is more honourable than others. The lesson is that the focus of our life's work will either give us more life or rob us of our life entirely. God gave us life that each moment might bless us, that we might know the joy both of prayer and chores. Life flows from our focus on Christ. So in the tent and in the kitchen, mowing the lawn and singing at Mass, we might see Jesus around us and stop focusing on everyone else. If we want a blessed life, nothing in our current circumstances needs to change except us. I need to keep my eyes focused on the one thing God is asking me to do this moment and then the next. Undoubtedly, God's plan for me will be different than his plan for others. The life God wants to pour out for me will be found, not so surprisingly, in *my* life.

Prayer of the Faithful: For eyes to see the one thing – Jesus -- in the everyday moments of our own lives, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus the Servant, you washed our feet that we might see the sacredness of simple acts of service. We are tempted to rob our service of joy with resentment, bitterness and jealousy. Show yourself to us in the midst of our work, that we might turn our eyes, our hearts and our lives back to you. Amen.

July 28, 2013 – 17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *The God of Life offers mercy.*

This week's readings call to our minds the greatest sinners of history: the nameless and faceless people of Sodom and Gomorrah. When no one righteous could be found among them, they were destroyed. This story is

not about a vengeful God; it is about the heart of mercy. This heart is the heart of God, ever calling us to repentance, and ever prepared to offer us forgiveness. So who is it in our world who is most in need of mercy? How do we show that mercy to the abortionist and the jailer, to the murderer and the pedophile? How are we showing mercy to those on social assistance, and how are we showing mercy to ourselves? How will our neighbours know God if we have failed to witness the Father of Mercy? Who have you failed to forgive? For the sake of life itself, decide now this week that you will offer mercy and forgiveness where you have withheld it.

Prayer of the Faithful: For mercy on ourselves, and forgiveness for those we have denied pardon, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Father of Mercy, remind us of the ways we have failed to love. Allow our own sinfulness to give way to compassion for the weakness of others. Soften our hearts at the first signs of sin's destructive force, so we might offer the forgiveness Jesus taught us by his cross. Amen.
