



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.

July 6, 2014 – 14TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *God eases the burdens of our lives.*

Many of us go through life with a distorted understanding of the Gospel: that prosperity is a reward for faithfulness. This gets extended to all areas of life – if I am following God, then I should have the job I want, a boss who adores me, lots of money, good health and no suffering. When I inevitably encounter a lack of perfection or prosperity, this kind of thinking creates a spiritual crisis: God has abandoned me, and/or I have failed God. God doesn’t promise to remove suffering or trial; he promises to be with us in all things. What a life of faith really offers is the gift Jesus promises us in the Gospel: “Come to me and I will give you rest. My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” We are promised gentle rest in exchange for surrendering the challenges of living to Jesus.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the grace to surrender to Jesus in the midst of trials, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, Giver of rest, draw us near to you, that we might give ourselves over to your care. Help us to surrender the parts of our lives that we believe we don’t deserve, that we might learn from you in every moment. Give us the lightness of knowing you, and help us to stop carrying the heaviness of stress that robs us of your life. Amen.

July 13, 2014 – 15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *Life is fruitful and fertile.*

All three readings and the Psalm this week speak of the fruitfulness of God. While the seed references automatically make us think about biological fruitfulness in Creation, the first reading reminds us that every part of God's life is aiming to bear fruit. Words, work, rest, play – all we do is a participation in God's life, begging to be made fruitful. What is the fruit of your life right now? Are you sowing seeds of discontent, petty revenge, self-protection, and resentment? Where are you sowing seeds of joy, faithfulness, rejuvenation, and trust? What return can you see on the sowing? Being open to God's life should be a part of our whole lives, in our kitchens and offices, neighbourhoods and bedrooms. God wants to give us more life!

Prayer of the Faithful: For a deepening appreciation of the life God pours out all around us, and a desire to participate in nurturing that life, we pray to the Lord.

Prayers for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of seeds and water, make us fruitful wherever we are. May our words sow peace and faith in you. May our actions bring growth and love. May our lives be a witness and an invitation for others to know you. Amen.

July 20, 2014 – 16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *Life has weeds, and God can handle it.*

In this season of Ordinary Time, and in the height of summer, we find perfect summer days marred by rain, wind, and weeds of all kinds. The parables Jesus offer us remind us that evil exists among the good: weeds among wheat, bad apples to torment the good ones. As disciples, we are yeast in the dough, meant to leaven the culture and affect the whole, to be instruments of God's forgiveness, healing and salvation. And yet, even in us there are weeds of selfishness, deceit, fear and doubt. Just as God allows the weeds to grow among the crop, God allows our weaknesses to dwell alongside all the potential we have to serve Him. We will be measured at the end, the evil in us and in the world finally separated from the good. God sees it is good, as it is right now. Will we trust Him to pull the weeds at the appointed time, and give and receive forgiveness in the meantime? Can we appreciate the sunshine and heat, and make the most of the rain too?

Prayer of the Faithful: For patience with the weeds in our lives and a willingness to water anyway, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Holy Spirit, give us courage amongst the weeds. Help us to trust that the good plants can still grow, even when everything is not perfect. Help us to see you in the midst of what is, instead of being blinded by our ache for the perfection of heaven to be realized now. Amen.

July 27, 2014 – 17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *Finding life in what is....*

Everywhere we look, our culture is telling us we don't have enough. Jesus offers us the treasure of faith. No matter what our lives look like today, the treasure is already there. Solomon pleases God because he asks only to see the treasure, to have wisdom to stay focused on it. The letter to the Romans reminds us that once we are called, we are also justified and glorified – the message is that we are good enough to be graced here and now.

God's very life and deepest joy is available to us right now. This is the simplest and most difficult thing about spiritual life. God, help us to let go into what is before us, and to receive all you offer us today.

Prayer of the Faithful: For an attitude of abundance and gratitude for what is, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Creator of this day, help us to see you at work in what lies before us now. Open our eyes to see your blessings, especially where we have been resentful about, irritated by, or closed to our circumstances. Show yourself to us, and help us to cling to your life in us now. Amen.
