



**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.

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**July 3, 2016 – 14<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C**

**Homily Idea:** *Our bodies are good and God will nurture our life in them.*

One of the most counter-cultural parts of Christian faith is our recognition of the goodness of the human body. Our faith proclaims that God will care for our needs like a mother feeds and cares for her baby. In the second reading, Paul points out that it is not the appearance of our bodies that matters (circumcision or not), but rather that God has become human and our bodies bear witness to Jesus. When Jesus sent out His disciples, he sent them out trusting that others would provide for their hunger and thirst, shelter and warm clothing. Our physical needs in the body are signs of our need for God and each other. This week, thank God for your hunger and thirst, your longing and your grief. When you feel your own need and recognize the needs of others, thank God for the way He meets those needs, and for the privilege of helping to meet the needs of others’ bodies.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For reverence and gratitude for our bodies, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Incarnate Jesus, you chose flesh and blood as your own body, and you have borne witness to the sacredness of human bodies. Help us trust in you when we face hunger and thirst, nakedness and need. May we respond generously to the needs of others, sharing what you have entrusted to us for the blessing of all of your people. Amen.

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## July 10, 2016 – 15<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

**Homily Idea:** *Life flows from living like Jesus.*

Many of our neighbours see faith as restrictive and punitive, and many of us endure the restrictions out of a narrow sense of heavenly reward. It's okay, we think, if we have to give up fun now if we get an eternity of fun in heaven. The problem with this line of thinking is we are enslaved by a false belief that heaven later means hell now. The truth is that God invites us to live in the freedom and goodness of heaven now. This doesn't mean we will not encounter suffering and limitations in earthly life – we surely will and do. But it does mean that following God's laws now and living generously and faithfully like Jesus will "bring joy to the heart", as the Psalmist says. Sometimes we get so focused on what God is asking us to give up that we become blinded to what He is giving us. When we follow the law and grow in virtue, we get more freedom, more peace, more patience, and more endurance. When we give what we have been given, we become more generous and less attached to stuff. When we visit the sick or imprisoned, we get the gift of bringing others joy, and realizing we are not the most important people in the world. True life and joy in living starts now and finds fulfillment in eternal life. What life are you failing to see and receive right here and now? This week, ask God to help you see and receive.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For eyes to see and hearts to receive the life God wants to give us in following Him, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of the law, you sent your Son that we might learn to follow Him in a way that gives us abundant life and constant joy. Fill us with gratitude for the gift of faith, and give us the courage to receive the miracle that heaven begins when we live like you. Amen.

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## July 17, 2016 – 16<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

**Homily Idea:** *We serve God when we serve others with our lives.*

The Psalmist's question is so profound, "Lord, who may abide in your tent?" The answer is provided in the whole Bible: all of us, always, as long as we desire to be cared for, and to care for the others. Abraham meets the angels, and gives them water and washes their feet, feeding them and attending to their needs. God allows us to care for Him, in the angels, in his sons and daughters, and then in Jesus. Jesus comes to serve, to make His body and suffering the means for our salvation, and invites us to attend to His need. When we get this, as Mary does and Martha is invited to, we begin to see our life's work is a participation in our own salvation and the salvation of others. We are here, on this earth, to spend our lives learning to love by serving, and receiving service, as God does ever and always in every generation from the beginning until the end of time. In the middle of Ordinary Time and summer, we get the privilege of asking, "God, whom are you calling me to serve? And who is serving me, sitting at my feet and offering their presence and grace as a sign of your care for me?"

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the willingness to spend our lives serving and receiving the service of others with gratitude, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Servant Jesus, you came to serve and receive our service. It is a miracle that our lives are saved by participating in the very same action we receive; it is a reality we live and cannot fully understand at the same time. Give us the grace to live as servants and to receive the service of others. Amen.

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## July 24, 2016 – 17<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

**Homily Idea:** *God loves and offers life to sinners, and we must do the same.*

We are the sinners. That's why we come here, week after week, to worship God who continues to call us and forgive us. Then we are called to go out into the world and love the rest of the sinners with the same reckless abandon. The Gospel is for us, those gathered here to be reminded: despite our sin, we are the adopted children of the Creator of the Universe, who longs to give us every good gift, if only we will allow Him to forgive and heal us. The hard part for us is receiving His mercy and accepting it. In the second reading, we are reminded that Jesus came to do this with us and in us, because it is so difficult for us to believe. Abraham models for us what can happen when we experience God's freeing love. We become advocates, begging for mercy for the most prolific sinners. We begin to love the broken the way God loves them, here and now.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For overwhelming love and mercy for sinners, ourselves and those who offend us most, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Desperate Lover of Sinners, you have died to show us how loveable we are. Teach us to receive ourselves with such unrelenting mercy, and to offer your overwhelming love to those whose sins are the hardest for us to see beyond. Amen.

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## July 31, 2016 – 18<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

**Homily Idea:** *God's life is expressed in the stuff of Creation by not contained by it.*

This week we get a profound lesson in how God's life is related to stuff. All life is found in God and through God, and all Creation is a sacramental sign of God's very life. Our constant temptation is to idolatry – that is, mistaking for God Himself the stuff that points us to God. When we do that, we get mad that the stuff doesn't satisfy us, that we do not have enough stuff, or that others are taking our stuff! God is our dwelling place in all generations, says the Psalm. When we know God is the only person, place and reality that will satisfy us, we rightly attach ourselves only to God. This can allow us to detach from the stuff of Creation, and instead be blessed by it as God intended. A healthy spirituality is life-giving but not life-guaranteeing. We can eat and enjoy a meal without obsessing about calories or indulging greedily. We can soak up the heat of a beautiful day without resenting the coming rain or ignoring our responsibilities. We can use money as good stewards without being irresponsibly extravagant or selfish or hoarding it in fear. Where have we made our dwelling place in stuff, and where is God asking us to dwell instead?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For hearts that dwell in God, and healthy relationships with the stuff of Creation, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of Creation, you have given us life on an earth full of signs of your goodness, power, and mystery. May we always see you in all things, while resisting the temptation to make false gods of the things themselves. Amen.

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