



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.

June 1, 2014 – THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD (Solemnity) – Year A

Homily Idea: *The life God wants for us begins now ... not “when...” and is not just “the next life”.*

When Jesus ascends into heaven, the disciples are at a bit of a loss. Jesus’ lessons often take time to sink in, for the disciples and for us. They are staring up at the clouds, not totally comprehending what it means that the Spirit is with them, and that Jesus will be with them, albeit in a new way. How many of us are avoiding the gifts of a resurrected life? We think, “I’ll be happy when I get a different job, when my kids are a bit older, when we pay off the house, when I’m on vacation....” This is a resistance to the life God wants us to enjoy and grow in here and now. Further, we develop a taste for eternal life only by seeking God in this life. This life you have to live today is not an accident or a test to see if you measure up for life in heaven; it’s a foretaste. If we cannot see the resurrected Jesus in our lives today, we won’t recognize it at the end, either. So, welcome to your life!

Prayer of the Faithful: For recognition of the resurrection God is working in our lives and world today, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Risen Jesus, help us to begin living eternal life today. Help us to know your presence with us now, even as we anticipate the joy of heaven. Teach us to live this life in a way that draws us into eternal life with you. Amen.

June 8, 2014 – PENTECOST SUNDAY (Solemnity) – Year A

Homily Idea: *Life has lots of diversity and one Lord.*

How often do we mistake difference for a lack of blessing – either for ourselves or others? Within our own churches or families, people speak different languages, pray in different ways, prefer different kinds of worship music, preach in different styles, and raise kids with different parenting theories. How tempting it is to rank the differences, to judge and condemn, to declare our way superior or critically destroy ourselves as not measuring up. At Pentecost, the disciples discovered the great unity of Jesus Christ. Every language and culture can understand Him, every gift and activity is needed to make up the whole Body, and every person has been invited to play a role in His mission of salvation. We don't need to be the same to be animated by the same Lord. Life is rich and full of diversity, called and transformed by God into one unifying grace.

Prayer of the Faithful: For expanding our appreciation of the way God uses our differences for His glory, we pray to the Lord.

Prayers for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Creator of the Universe, the multitude of creatures and landscapes and planets proclaim all the diverse ways in which you are. Remind us, when we are small and petty with one another, that each of us was created with a purpose and intention, that you need every one of your people, and that you love us with the same generous heart. Amen.

June 15, 2014 – SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY – Year A

Homily Idea: *Life is a mystery to be enjoyed, rather than a puzzle to solve.*

God is so gentle in his love for us, gradually offering us the lessons and gifts we need in His time. On Trinity Sunday, we are often given more information about the Trinity, left figuring how Three can equal One. God's words in all three readings are so simple: "...merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love..."; "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all"; and "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him." We don't need to figure life or the Trinity out. We need to live into both life and God, trusting that this day and every day is our journey with Him and to Him.

Prayer of the Faithful: For lives contented with the depth of the mystery of life and God, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teach us by our living how to live as you live, drawing ever deeper into our relationships with each other and with you. When we feel lost, remind us we cannot escape your love. When we are overwhelmed with joy, fill us with gratitude that our gifts have come from you. Amen.

June 22, 2014 – SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (*Corpus Christi*) – Year A

Homily Idea: *Are you getting life from the Eucharist?*

Why are you coming here? What makes you show up on Sunday (or Saturday night)? Do you come because your parents made you (now or in childhood)? Do you come because you should, or because you always have? Do you come so you can feel superior to others, or to beat yourself up for your mistakes? God asks you to come

so you can draw life from Him, from his very Body and Blood, life and hope for living the challenges of the rest of your week. This Sunday, and maybe all this week, make a list of the ways you draw life from this celebration. Perhaps life comes from the people who gather here, who love and encourage you. Maybe life comes in the silence, and from the music, which you hum in silent moments throughout the week. Maybe you draw life from the grace you know is present in the Body and Blood of Jesus, and the forgiveness He promises you in the penitential rite. Maybe you draw life from practising patience in the parking lot! Mass is a place we come to restore us to life. If it's not doing that for you, it's time to look at why, and what you can do to receive more from Mass.

Prayer of the Faithful: For an increase in the life that flows through the Eucharist into our lives, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, Body and Blood, we are grateful for the gift of your life and the way it strengthens us to live ours. Teach us to draw on the gift of your Body and Blood for energy, renewal, strength and grace. May we never take the gift of your presence for granted. Amen.

June 29, 2014 – SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES (Solemnity) – Year A

Homily Idea: *God's life will deliver us from imprisonment and slavery.*

The first reading tells us a miraculous story of Peter's being freed from prison by an angel. How many prisoners would hope to be escorted out of prison in such a fashion! How many well-intentioned people have suggested to us that right faith will result in this kind of deliverance from suffering? Occasionally, we do see miraculous healings of disease, the innocent released from prison, or a challenge completely removed. We also know Peter was eventually martyred. All three readings, however, proclaim the spiritual freedom that is a gift of spiritual life. We do not have to be imprisoned by misery and fear, enslaved to habits of sin that eat away at our joy, or spiritually destroyed by illness. You have met saints walking among us, who receive whatever life offers with grace, who refuse to choose misery in the midst of chronic illness, who ask for prayers instead of pity when they are struggling. They do not do these things with greater ease than the rest of us. They do the spiritual work that allows them to be more receptive to God's life and grace. We are not promised a life without suffering. We are promised strength for the whole of the race, if we will be humble and faithful enough to make space for God to deliver us into His way.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the humility and faithfulness to receive God's gifts of grace and blessing in times of suffering and trial, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Saviour of the suffering, teach us to seek your joy and peace in every circumstance. When we are sick and imprisoned, show us the places of blessing in our pain. When we are confused and lost, teach us to trust your promises, even while we feel abandoned. When we would rather give up, whisper the longing for your freedom into our hearts. Amen.
