



**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 3, 2016 – SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Homily Idea: *A litany of the life Jesus longs to give us.*

In the wake of the exile, Ezekiel writes in God’s voice a vision of life for God’s people: God Himself will do what we have failed to do. He will seek the lost, heal the wounds, bring home the homeless, lift up the weak, bring justice to the oppressed, feed the hungry, and give rest to the weary. This is what Jesus dies to give to us, a life that is ordered toward reconciliation, resurrection and hope. This does not mean that as the faithful we will have everything we want, but rather that in the midst of our struggles Christ is meeting us there and transforming us. This is the shelter and safety of His Sacred Heart, for He himself shepherds us. So, what am I doing to do join my heart to His, that others might find his refuge in me? Where have I preferred oppression, hunger, busyness, and self-righteousness to receiving God’s life for me?

Prayer of the Faithful: For lives that reflect the warmth and hope of the Sacred Heart, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Sacred Heart of Jesus, you have sought us out when we were lost, protected us when we were afraid, healed our wounds, and given us food, drink and rest. Send us out into the world with hearts as loving as yours, that our lives might draw others to you. Amen.

June 5, 2016 – 10TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Forgiveness and transformation are as powerful as being raised to life from death.*

While most of us will never witness a dead person being raised to physical life, the juxtaposition of the first reading and the Gospel with the second reading are a powerful witness to the life-giving potential of forgiveness. Paul was dead to God, persecuting Christians in God's name but not knowing the living God. He was called, and controlled, by sin, chosen and choosing wrong. To be called out of brokenness, to receive the Gospel, to be forgiven, and then to become a messenger of the same grace that you have received ... this is the *only* life to which we are all called. It makes us credible witnesses to new life in God. When we understand our own weakness, only then can we see how profound it is that Jesus raised people from the dead. It is as powerful, as profound and as inspiring to witness someone totally changed by God's grace and mercy. Let us be people of forgiveness and transformation.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the transformation we need to be powerful witnesses of God's new life, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, you raised the dead to life in your lifetime, and then were raised yourself. From the beginning to the end, you have been calling us to the transformation that is a witness to your power. Help us receive your forgiveness and your transforming grace, that our lives may be a powerful sign of the new life you offer us all. Amen.

June 12, 2016 – 11TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Debts rob us of life, and Jesus does not lay them on us.*

For centuries, the Church stood opposed to charging interest. While the norm has been relaxed, the spirit of that practice is to acknowledge a universal truth: debts rob us of our life. When the woman comes to spill oil on the feet of Jesus, the religious leaders who have invited Him to dinner are scandalized on two fronts. First, she isn't worthy company, and secondly, Jesus attributes her action to gratitude for the forgiveness of sin, which He has granted her. The Pharisees are totally unaware that Jesus has offered this same forgiveness to them, because He does not expect anything in return, even while He receives our gratitude. The gift of God's love for us is that it does not leave us indebted to Him, but free to love. There are two challenges here for us. First, in what ways am I living indebted and bound by the slavery of trying to pay what I owe: financially, in favours, or through being addicted to work or busyness? Where do I feel like I "have to" do things? That phrasing is a sign of my slavery. Second, whom am I enslaving by holding a debt over them: through unforgiveness; a loan someone cannot ever hope to repay, though I keep resenting them for it; an expectation for someone to be other than who they are? Jesus set us free, by His life and death, and invites us to follow Him. Free people free people.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the grace to forgive debts, and the humility to be grateful instead of indebted when we are set free, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, anointed with oil and graced by humility, set us free from the addiction we have to earning our own way. Show us where we have been gifted, and make us grateful. Strip off our entitlement, and help us follow you in setting ourselves and each other free by the way we follow you. Amen.

June 19, 2016 – 12TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *There is one way to live: picking up the Cross and following Jesus into your life.*

Our lives differ in many ways as Christians. Some are single, some married; some are children, some adults; some are persons of consecrated life or clergy, some lay people; some have pets, and some do not want them or cannot have them; some are born in this country, some born in other countries; and on and on. Yet our invitation to life is the same: pick up the Cross and follow Jesus into your life. Bored, tired, angry? Pick up the Cross and choose the next loving action. Wounded, ill, dying? Pick up the Cross and let others love you in your smallness. The second reading reminds us that, although different, we are all the same in Christ. The first reading reminds us the whole world will look on the one(s) pierced. Your life is a road to Christ, for you and for others.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to pick up our crosses today, and follow Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of love, make our lives a witness to your love. May others know us by our love, and by that love may they be inspired to know and follow you. Amen.

June 26, 2016 – 13TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Life in God will cost us everything.*

The life God has for us is total. While God will dole it out to us in the bite-size pieces we can handle, as soon as we give Him one part of ourselves He will ask for the next part. In both the first reading and the Gospel, an invitation to come and follow receives “just one more thing” in response. The life God has for us cannot be lived with one foot on the shore and the other in the boat. In order to experience the wideness of the sea, we have to set our feet off the land completely. What are you clinging to today or in this season? What is the one more thing that holds your attention and claims space you will not hand over to God? What is He asking you to do with it? As Paul says to the Galatians, “For freedom, Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yolk of slavery.” Lift that last foot off the shore one more time....

Prayer of the Faithful: For the grace to let go of the things that hold us back from following Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, God of flesh and blood, you walked the earth and know well the pain of walking a single path. Your path to the Cross meant you had to let go of your friends, your followers, and your mother. Inspire us by your life, and empower us with your grace to keep our focus on you, that we might willingly let go of whatever keeps us from following you. Amen.
