



**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.

May 3, 2015 – 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year B

Homily Idea: *Life requires room for conversion.*

It’s easy to take this Sunday’s Gospel reading and make it self-righteous: we are grafted to the vine and “they” aren’t – our enemies and irritators, those who are different from us, and those who seem to embrace the culture of death. It seems so black and white, the saved righteous and the damned unrighteous. Enter Paul in the first reading. The early Christians had good reason to be suspicious of him. He had participated in the persecution of Christians and watched the stoning of Stephen. Then God changed his heart. Whoever your enemies are, God desires their conversion, and conversion requires our willingness to forgive and embrace those who have previously been our enemies. Where are you working at your own conversion? And where are you making room to hope for and receive the conversion of others?

Prayer of the Faithful: For the willingness to let go of long-held labels and receive the conversion God is working in and around us, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, graft us ever closer to your vine, that we may extend your branches into the most unlikely places. Help us to withhold final judgement, to invite conversion, and to receive it with welcome hearts. Allow us to see our own growth, that we may be patient with the growth of others. Amen.

May 10, 2015 – 6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year B
(Opening of 2015 National Week for Life and the Family)

Homily Idea: *God's life comes from sacrificial loving.*

How often do we withhold love? We can love others when they believe the right things, stop choosing certain sins, look like us. Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote a beautiful little book called ***Love Alone is Credible***. It would be enough to redeem the world if we, like Jesus, took up our crosses and allowed God to use them to bless and save others. This does not mean we abandon the pursuit of truth; it means we choose love. We use kind words, and work at surrendering our need for control, busy-ness, success, reputation, our own way. We recommit to the people we serve. We pick up the laundry, turn off the lights, clean up a mess we did not make. We offer hospitality to people who challenge us, seek reconciliation, hold tension, wait for the Kingdom, with great love for God and His people. Dying a little, day by day, we choose life by choosing to love. He gives us these commands, not so we will feel superior, think the right things, or even *deserve* heaven: He gives us these commands so we may love one another.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to love at all times, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of abundant love, you modeled for us a love that knows no limits. In our homes, our workplaces, our communities and our world, teach us to follow you in offering your life by imitating your unconditional love. Amen.

May 17 – ASCENSION OF THE LORD
(Closing of 2015 National Week for Life and the Family)

Homily Idea: *“Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”*

Often in our culture, Christians are accused of hypocrisy, failing to practise what they preach. Sometimes this is an excuse for people not to join us, and sometimes it is the truth. The Church is a hospital for sinners, not a collective of the righteous, it is true. And yet, our communities should bear witness to transformational change over time. Our lives should be a reflection of the Resurrection. We should gradually grow in virtue, becoming more patient, loving, humble, forgiving, faithful and generous, by virtue of following Jesus. When Jesus ascends into heaven, the disciples are first confused and unsure about how they will live without Him. Then they go and they live as He lived, trusting He is at work among them. This is our call: to bear witness by our lives to the life of God that begins now and continues on into eternity!

Prayer of the Faithful: For lives worthy of the calling to which we are called, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Ascending Jesus, keep our eyes fixed on heaven, even while we walk the earth. Remind us in each moment of the ways you walked, and of our capacity to be your hands and feet for one another. Amen.

May 24, 2015 – SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

Homily Idea: *Life is meant to be lived together.*

These readings are all about how God is present and powerful when we are gathered together. Struggling with life's challenges? Mental illness? Caring for children? Cancer? Grieving a loss? Unemployed? Or imprisoned?

These burdens were never meant to be carried alone. The disciples were gathered in the upper room, afraid and sad. Jesus comes, on the birthday of the Church, and again to us in our upper rooms where we hide, to say: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." No burden, struggle or brokenness disqualifies. This Church is for us, to live together and, in living, to reach out to others also in need of Jesus' peace, healing and mission. We are not alone – and we need each member to be and become the Church Jesus came to found and fulfill.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the strength to be and become Christ's Body, the Church, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Spirit of the Living God, breathe your life into our souls and our parishes. Make us a fire of love burning brightly for all those in need of your peace and healing. Drive us out of our hiding places, and send us forth to renew the face of the earth. Amen.

May 31, 2015 – SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Homily Idea: *God (in three Persons) is revealed in our living.*

The three readings each serve to highlight one of the Persons of the Trinity. The first reading comes from the early Israelites coming to know God the Father, who brought them out of slavery, made them a chosen people, and gave them the law of life. The Gospel is the encouragement of the risen Jesus to the scared disciples. In their fear, He comes to them, to assure them He has called them and will be with them always. The second reading is Paul's reminder to the Romans that the Spirit of God has transformed them into sons and daughters, worthy of His suffering and glory. Our lives will also reveal to us the tender love of the Father, the encouragement and call of the Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Life is both a gift God has given to us, and the process by which we learn God's love. So go and live, and learn and make disciples. Father, Son and Spirit are still at work in you!

Prayer of the Faithful: For eyes to see the Trinity at work in our living, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you have revealed yourself to your people in history, time and place. Show yourself to us today, in the moments that make up our lives, so our living may be a source and sign of your Divine Life. Amen.
