



**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 1, 2016 – 6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year C

Homily Idea: *Drawing lines between us robs us all of life.*

In the first reading, it’s circumcision that threatens the unity and survival of the early Church. In the Gospel, Jesus makes it clear who is right in these divisive circumstances: those who love all faithfully without exception. We cannot divide God’s people into us (who follow Him) and them (who do not), depending on the issues and hot topics of our day. There are people in our churches who vote for every political party, who struggle with particular Church teachings, who have been hurt by the Church and the world – and we all need Him. Even while we seek to do our best to follow God in the midst of difficult situations and politically sensitive issues, we need to remember that the person on the other side of the debate is also God’s beloved child. We are called to conduct ourselves in such a way that our participation in the world will always invite the Psalmist’s words to be true: “Let all the peoples praise you, O God.”

Prayer of the Faithful: For eyes to see those we disagree with as we see ourselves, as the beloved children of God, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of all people, help us to see you in one another, especially in those we disagree with and find it difficult to love. May we not allow ourselves to divide the world into those who stand with us and those who stand against, but instead yearn for your life for all of your people. Amen.

May 8, 2016 – SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD, Year C

Homily Idea: *Our lives (in our families) are a witness to Jesus' merciful death and Resurrection.*

This week marks the beginning of the National Week for Life and Family, whose theme is My Family: A School of Mercy. These readings don't speak directly to the family or to mercy, but they do talk about the way our lives are a witness to the dying and rising of Jesus, the merciful heart of the Gospel. Jesus trusts us enough to ascend into Heaven, promising to be with us always, as we proclaim the good news with our lives. Most of us live these lives we've been given primarily with our families, practising the dying and rising to new life over and over again in the way we forgive each other, lift each other, hold each other, and care for each other. The more we do this with the people we share our intimate lives with, the more we (and our children, neighbours, communities and world) are transformed by mercy. Whoever makes up your family at this season of your life, make your relationships with them a school of mercy and a witness of the merciful Jesus who gave His very life so that we might live.

Prayer of the Faithful: For homes and families that teach us mercy in such an abundance that it spills over to change the world, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Merciful Jesus, you ascended into Heaven with confidence that our lives could be a witness to your mercy and love. Teach us, in and through our families, to practise the mercy your world so desperately needs. Amen.

May 15, 2016 – SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST, Year C

Homily Idea: *Hope is the antidote for the darkness of life.*

The options for the readings are fantastic. All the options include the Israelites' struggle to understand God who allows suffering in the world, and they even wrestle with the idea of God who causes their hardship! How often do we get angry with the suffering we encounter, and maybe even with God! We're in good company. The second reading challenges us to be people who wait in expectant hope in all circumstances for the Resurrection God has promised. Where we cannot see it, we need to trust it is coming, while we work to restore hope to the hopeless. Our country is settling for allowing people who are suffering through their dying to end their lives with assistance from medical professionals. We cannot sit idly by while the hopeless die without hope. There is great hope and we can bring it. All who are thirsty, Jesus promises us, will drink if we only turn to Him. No matter what trials we are facing, we are invited to lean on Him for rest, and to walk with others, hoping they will find the same!

Prayer of the Faithful: For hope in darkness, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Hope of the world, be light in our darkness. Draw us closer to you in our impatience, give us strength when we are weary. Help us to help each other when we are too tired to go on, when hope seems lost. Never let us give up on you, Jesus. Amen.

MAY 22, 2016 – SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY, Year C

Homily Idea: *Life is relationships.*

At the heart of the Creator of the universe is a "we", rather than an I. All of life, everything that draws breath, everything that grows, everything that gives life – it all exists in relationship to something else. Leaves depend

on soil and water and sunshine. Neutrons need protons and electrons. Heat meets cold and forms a storm. Our lives are lived in relationship – with God, each other, all of creation existing alongside us. Our God is ever and always creating us anew, breathing life and possibility into us through the Spirit, relating to us in the Son. Our relationships are not a distraction from God but a path to understand and know Him more deeply, to love as He loves, to work alongside and be blessed by the gift of never being alone.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the willingness to embrace and enjoy the relationships that make up our lives, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, dwell among us. Help us to rely on God who creates us, God who knows us, and God who is ever with us, firing us into life with one another and all creation. You are a model for us that we are made for each other. Draw us out of ourselves and into the communities that help us to become who you made us to be, for the benefit and blessing of the whole world. Amen.

**MAY 29, 2016 – SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST (*Corpus Christi*),
Year C**

Homily Idea: *God forges our life and bodies out of bread and wine...*

The first and the Gospel readings are not about Eucharist on this feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. They are about the ordinary bread and wine that Christ transforms by his death and Resurrection, as indicated in the second reading. But isn't it wonderful to remember that bread and wine become both the Sacramental Body and Blood for us, while at the same time our meals of bread and wine become flesh and blood, bone cells and brain cells, hair and teeth and eyes? Our Sacraments ritualize ordinary things, declaring them holy and sacred, things like eating and bathing, forgiving and healing, committing and renouncing. Our lives are made up of ordinary and sacred things, created and offered, broken and blessed. This week, take holy water home and bless the ordinary things God uses to make your life holy.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the food we eat to be transformed into bodies, strengthened to serve the Christ we imitate, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of flesh and blood, you have walked among us, eating and drinking and offering yourself as food and drink. Transform us by the food we eat, the company we keep, and the words we speak, that we may become more like you with every breath we take. Amen.
