



## 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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**November 2, 2014 – COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED (All Souls’ Day) – Year A**

**Homily Idea:** *The burden of a life of faith is light.*

On this great feast of all the faithful departed, we are reminded that God has called everyone to new life – through death. This is one of the great mysteries of God’s life. Of course, faith does not preclude us from suffering, but it gives that suffering meaning and prevents us from trying to earn our salvation. Both Gospel options for this day capture this great paradox of life in God: walking by faith is a light burden, and life will emerge when we are willing to let it go. If our faith life is unbearably difficult, we are doing it wrong. If people come to us and then go away more discouraged than before, we are not sharing faith well. Living faith is not miraculously easy, which many of us desire. It is lightened by the freedom we receive from God to let go of what we want and to find joy in what is.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For a lightening of our burdens and a greater trust in the freedom of God, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Spirit of God, you have called us all to life, and shown yourself to us in the many people who have gone before us. Be present to us now, that we may grow in faith and trust, and so walk with Jesus through suffering and death to new life. Amen.

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## November 9, 2014 – DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA – Year A

**Homily Idea:** *God's Church brings life to people inside it – and outside.*

This week's readings are all about what it means to be Church. "Church" is a building and a people, a vessel of Christ and Christ himself. The big challenge in this week's readings is that we are not supposed to be a church turned in on itself. Belonging and participating in our parish life is meant to feed us – but not just us. The temple described by Ezekiel transforms the water that flows under and through it – in order to nurture and heal everyone and everything downstream. What is downstream from our parishes and homes? How are our Church and our domestic churches feeding and healing the rest of our world?

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For our families and parish to be a source of healing and health for our community and our world, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayers for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Creator God, you have called us into being as your Church. Refine and strengthen us to be at the service of the world, allowing our own spiritual growth to be a source of life and love for others. Amen.

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## November 16, 2014 – 33<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

**Homily Idea:** *Life is found in a simple, unique "Yes".*

One line in the second reading is a helpful lens for the first reading and the Gospel: "You do not need to have everything written to you. For you yourselves know that the Lord will come like a thief in the night." The Gospel suggests that God offers us talents and gifts according to our ability, and desires us to use them without fear or competition. We do not need to know how long we will have to use the gifts and life God has given us, because what we have learned by faith will be enough to use them well. The first reading suggests it is hard to find a wife, and by extension a person, who simply does this. God is not asking us all to be Saint Joseph or Mother Teresa. He is asking each of us to become a unique saint, our very own and truest self. We are invited to say "Yes" to the moments of our lives as fully and faithfully as we can. When we do this, we find the Life that God has desired for us all along.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For trust that the moments of our lives and the gifts God gives will be enough to find Him and truly live, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of Life, help us to trust what you have shown us by faith. Teach us to trust that our lives will offer us all we need to find and to follow you. Amen.

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## November 23, 2014 – SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING – Year A

**Homily Idea:** *Living like the Shepherd.*

There have already been months of ads for Christmas purchasing, dates set for Christmas parties, and perhaps the December to-do list is already stressing you out. Over the coming Advent season as we anticipate the birth of Jesus, the Shepherd-King, perhaps it is a great time to reflect on and commit to living like Jesus. He does not ask us to entertain all the relatives with a spotless home and perfect gifts. He has never insisted on putting up the Christmas tree on some "right" date. Our faithfulness is not evidenced by how early our Christmas shopping is done. The Reign of God is found in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and bringing justice to the afflicted. Don't just add a few of these things to your list and add more stress. Think about how your usual preparations deprive the hungry, create more of the naked, isolate the sick and

imprisoned, and create injustice. Perhaps you can change the list so there is less stress and more of Jesus' life in the coming month for you and for those most in need.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the Shepherd to transform our welcoming of Him in the manger, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Shepherd-King, transform our desire for power, wealth and approval into a longing to serve you and others. Make us ever aware of how our lives impact those most in need of our generous service, and give us the courage to change the way we live. Amen.

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**November 30, 2014 – FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT – Year B**

**Homily Idea:** *In the life of God, we are lacking nothing.*

The second reading reminds the early Christians that they lack no spiritual gift. This is also true of us – everything we need for spiritual wealth has already been given to us. The first reading gives us an image that can help us to foster gratitude for what we have: “We are the clay and you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.” The Gospel reminds us it is difficult to stay present to God as He molds us in the present moment. We do not know how long we will have to live the life of faith. Far worse than the impossible poverty we fear is our indifference to the gift in the first place. Jesus reminds us to stay awake and attentive to the work God is doing day by day, moment by moment. Otherwise, all the boxes will lie opened and discarded on Christmas morning, and we will have seen the gifts but not been satisfied by them.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For attentiveness to and gratitude for all we have been given, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Great Giver of all that is, show us how much we have received through your abundant generosity. Satisfy our restless hearts with the assurance of your love for us, that we will grow to desire your potter's hands shaping and molding us. Amen.

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