



**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.

November 1, 2015 – SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

Homily Idea: *Life in God is a celebration in heaven, and on earth.*

This feast day is a celebration of the way that holiness is its own reward – our tradition calls it sainthood. In the Book of Revelation, John sees a vision of the glory that awaits the holy in heaven, a banquet of worship and peace. The Gospel provides an earthly parallel in the Beatitudes, providing a gentle warning that we should not equate following God with a lack of suffering now. In all things, God is worthy of our worship and is working out peace and glory. Our job, as we seek to imitate the saints in heaven by our lives today, is to claim our places as “God’s children now”. Sainthood is not just waiting for you at the end of your life; it has begun now. So go out, and live this week as a saint, offering your worship and your work, your rest and your play in building the Kingdom now.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the longing to live our lives as saints, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the holy, make us your saints, beginning today. Where life is threatened by selfishness, greed, ambition and violence, send us as witnesses to your way of selfless love and peace. Purify our hearts and make us holy, so the whole world may know your Reign. Amen.

November 8, 2015 – 32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *Poverty robs us all of life.*

In both the first reading and the Gospel, we hear about poverty and generosity – through the stories of two widows. For the first, Elijah invites generosity from a starving woman, and her reward for feeding him in spite of her own hunger is that her oil and meal miraculously never run out. In the Gospel, the poor widow is the model of generosity because she gives from what she needs instead of from her excess. Poverty robs us all of our dignity, inviting us to live in fear, as victims of a system that refuses to see and respond to our need. We make others poor when we are selfish, and we make ourselves poor when we refuse to share what we have out of fear God will not provide for us. God has not designed us for poverty, but for generous interdependence. What we have is meant to be shared, always, so all may live. What we need will be given to us. This is the miracle of our salvation: God makes Himself poor and gives us His very life so we might live. This week, what do you need to give away for someone else? And what do you humbly need to receive?

Prayer of the Faithful: For a poverty of fear and selfishness and a wealth of generosity and humble trust, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Generous Giver, you long for us to know the freedom of generosity and trust. Make us poor in fear and selfishness, that we might generously share all we have been given in the service of abundant life for all your people. Amen.

November 15, 2015 - 33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *We are called to be waiting and watchful for signs of life.*

In these last weeks of Ordinary Time at the end of the liturgical year, the Church reminds us that this world will come to an end, and that our call is to be watchful and ready. Often, however, our attention is drawn to the suffering and evil that will mark the end. These readings also invite us to pay attention to the signs of life. God is working out his glory in the new leaves of spring as much as in the dark of night. In the midst of suffering, many who rejected God will turn and cry out for Him. In suffering and fear, there will be great power and glory, and the righteous will help the coming Son to lead others to Him. Every generation sees the violence, evil and suffering in the world, and wonders if it might be the end. It doesn't matter if we are the last generation or not. We are called to be watchful and ready, proclaiming light to all who wander in the dark. Make this a "new year's resolution" for the beginning of the Church year -- to be a prophet of light and hope in the midst of the suffering your friends, families and neighbours are living now, all around you.

Prayer of the Faithful: For hearts and lives alert and watchful to the signs of God's new life in the middle of darkness, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the end of time, you have already worked your victory over sin and darkness. May your Resurrection stand as a witness in the midst of our suffering on earth, and may we be prophets of your new life, now and at the end of time. In faithful trust in your Death and Resurrection, we pray. Amen.

November 22, 2015 - SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING (34TH or Last Sunday in ORDINARY TIME, Year B)

Homily Idea: *Nothing can take away our life in God.*

What are you suffering right now? What are you doubting? What troubles threaten you? Each reading this week is a powerful proclamation of God's power to heal, revive and resurrect you! You may not see it yet, and it may

take days or months or years, but God has conquered death. God's "Kingship is one that shall never be destroyed." He is the "Alpha and the Omega", the beginning and the end, the One "who is and who was and who is to come." For our lives and our struggles and our pain, He was born, and came into the world to testify to the truth, that we would know His glory. Let us cast our cares on Him, cry out at the foot of the Cross, declare our hope in Him and our trust that He will carry us into new life, now and in the future. God authored your life and He will carry it. Make a decision to let Him do it!

As an exercise to make this powerful declaration of faith real on the last Sunday of this Church year, pastors could consider having people write down their cares and offer them before the altar or at the foot of the cross in the church. They could do this at the end of the homily, or put them in the offering plate. These papers could be brought back and used as kindling in the Easter fire, to make the point that the Passion and Resurrection are the anchor and source of our lives.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to cast our lives into God's merciful hands, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Author of Life and Conqueror of Death, take hold of our fumbling lives and make them new. Help us to trust you, to give you our pain and fear, to let go of our death grip on our brokenness. Teach us to give our lives over to you, that we may know your glory, from the beginning to the end. For life abandoned into your hands, we pray to the Lord.

November 29, 2015 - 1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, Year C

Homily Idea: *New life is coming; let us prepare by loving better.*

How often, when something new is coming, do we flake out into survival mode instead of preparing well? "You know what? I'll exercise, eat right and go to bed on time starting Monday." "I will donate to that cause with my next pay cheque and splurge on myself now." "Life is short; I'm eating dessert first." We can wait until after Christmas to let the newborn Jesus come into our hearts again – and He will come, whenever we open the door. But we have a chance now to start preparing ourselves for His arrival. We do not have to survive Advent, arriving at Christmas burnt out and tired. There are lots of things that will call for our attention in the coming weeks: baking, decorating, parties, shopping, wrapping, and eager anticipation. In the midst of the stress that can consume us, what if we make a commitment now to prepare ourselves by committing to loving better during this Advent, preparing? What if we commit to practising patience in the busy-ness? What if we choose not to sacrifice our kindness for those whose gifts we are wrapping? What if we try to bake and shop and decorate with joy, peace, serenity and patience? Would we be more ready to hold the Christ Child? Let's make Advent a life-giving season of joyful and calm preparation, rather than a mad-dash of survival.

Prayer of the Faithful: For a life-giving and loving season of preparation for Jesus' new life, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, you rode to your birth on a donkey, held in the silent safety of Mary's womb. Remind us that we are the mothers and fathers, inn-keepers and census-takers, preparing this world for your arrival. This Advent, help us be mindful of the world we are creating for you to enter into, once again. Amen.
