



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.

October 6 – 27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C

Homily Idea: *Life grows in faithful (rather than hardened) hearts.*

The Gospel begins with the Apostles asking Jesus to increase their faith. Jesus responds by saying that faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains. The implication is that most of us are not moving mountains. In the first reading, when Habakkuk is pleading with God, he receives a response: If I seem slow, then *wait for me*. The Psalm response gives a beautiful suggestion to those who seek rich life in the midst of difficulty: “If today you hear God’s voice, harden not your hearts.” So often, we are so set on the response we want to hear that we cannot hear what God is saying – and this drains life out of us. Life emerges with joy when we work at being faithful – at keeping our hearts soft and open, and accepting the smallness of our faith.

Prayer of the Faithful: For protection against hard hearts, and openness to receive God’s life in what is right now, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of us all, protect us from hardened hearts. Open us to your presence where we are. Help us hear the words you have for us now, instead of hearing silence when you do not speak what we want to hear. Give us your abundant life. Amen

October 13 – 28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *People of life must be healers.*

In his interview a few weeks ago, Pope Francis reminded us that the Church needs to be a field hospital, binding up the wounds of the bleeding and offering healing hope. The Gospel reveals a long-standing truth. Not everyone whose wounds are healed will seek out their Healer with gratitude and faith. But neither Jesus nor Pope Francis suggests we should withhold healing until we see evidence of faith. Go, and bind up wounds, stop bleeding, and offer mercy. Life is the fruit of healing. It is not our job to know which of the healed will find the Healer.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to offer healing wherever we find wounds, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Healer of All, make us healers in your service. Stop us from counting the cost of healing. Give us courage to love the broken and respond to their needs. When we are broken, give us the humility to ask for and receive your healing, in whatever unlikely places it might show up. Amen.

October 20, 29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C

Homily Idea: *Will He find us calling on His name?*

The readings bear witness to the difficulty of maintaining faith in times of suffering and loss. Raised arms were the difference between victory and defeat in the Old Testament battle. In the Gospel, Jesus promises that those who persevere in prayer will be consoled. But when life is difficult, will we continue crying out? Life is not beautiful, praiseworthy, and worth living only when it is easy. We live in a world where some babies die because they are inconvenient for others. Where suffering people are tempted by euthanasia. Where we sometimes accept too easily that soldiers or innocents are unfortunate but necessary losses to win a war. This world needs to hear us crying out faithfully to God. When life is most difficult, it needs to see us faithfully trusting God will offer a way for every baby to celebrate a first day of school, every suffering person to be consoled and be a consolation to others, every threat of war to have a peaceful resolution. Sound too good to be true? It's not, but will He find us calling on His name?

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to keep crying out in the darkness for the God of life to bring us light, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Faithful God, may our disciplined practice of faith sustain us when life is challenging and death seems to have won. Keep us crying out to you in hope. Make our cries a herald of your faithfulness in a world all too often overwhelmed by brokenness. Amen.

October 27, 30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C

Homily Idea: *True life is found in humility.*

The emphasis in the Scriptures on the poor, the broken and the sinner is not intended to glorify poverty, brokenness or sin. It is intended to teach us we are the poor, the broken and the sinful, and that God loves us anyway. When we find ourselves too secure, always right and so sure we have evaded sin, we are deluding ourselves. These are the moments when we're not sure we really need God – until we really do. Then, like the tax collector, we will find ourselves returning with heads hung low, beating ourselves up and crying out courageously for God to have mercy on us, as sinners. We find God and our truest selves when we allow God

and others to love us precisely where we are broken. That brokenness is also where others can relate to us, and we all have a better chance of letting God in.

Prayer of the Faithful: For humble hearts and lives, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Humble God, teach us to love our smallness rather than chase after greatness that will inevitably be outdone by someone greater. Help us to learn the mystery of grace, where sacrifice results in fulfillment, service makes us leaders, and being small makes us great. Amen
