



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 5, 2014 – 27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *The life we give to others is the life that will be given to us.*

In the Gospel, Jesus tells a brutal parable about how workers beat and kill those who go to collect what is owing to the owner of the vineyard. Even the owner’s son is killed. The religious leaders listening to the story suggest that the rightful ending is for the owner to extend the same treatment to the workers. Jesus suggests instead that the religious leaders are in fact the violent workers, from whom the vineyard will be taken. The life we extend to others is the life that will be given to us in eternal life. The second reading gives us a good antidote from becoming arrogant and sinful workers in the vineyard: worry less about what others are doing wrong, and more about following God’s directions to love. Our neighbours need to see our mercy, our peace and our joy. Christians should be known for extending God’s life to all, not withholding it from those who need it most.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the humility to work faithfully and fruitfully in God’s vineyard, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Owner of the vineyard of the Kingdom, show us where we use our positions as Christians to block others from receiving new life. Help us be humble, multiply our fruitfulness, and keep us focused on where you are calling us to be vessels of your new and eternal life. Amen.

October 12, 2014 – 28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *God's life is for all, especially the poor and the lost.*

Today's Gospel is difficult. The end makes it sound as though God will invite the poor and the lost to heaven, and then cast them out to hell if they don't show up properly dressed. But this parable is in the middle of a chapter where Jesus is challenging the religious leaders of his day to stop blocking the road to God's grace. The first reading talks about the banquet God offers us all, and how he will take away our suffering. The second reading is the key: in all things and circumstances, it is possible to be peaceful and content. God is offering this peace to us all, especially those most in need of it. It is our calling to respond to it for ourselves and to offer it to others, without putting constraints on its availability for them. When we find ourselves lost, or encounter others who are lost, we need to be gentle in living life's blessings first, before we worry about the changes which God will work on His time, when we let Him.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the grace to be gentle with the lost, we pray to the Lord.

Prayers for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Giver of life, help us celebrate your abundant generosity, and to see your unconditional offer of life – for all your people. Help us avoid blocking the way of grace for others. Amen.

October 19, 2014 – 29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *Living the life God desires for us without falling slave to materialism.*

It is nearly impossible in our culture not to be captivated by consumer greed: I'll be happy when I have ... the next electronic gadget, a raise, a different job, or better behaved kids. When the Pharisees try to trick Jesus into giving deference to the emperor instead of to God, He turns the situation around. Life isn't about whether the emperor or God is greater or more significant, but rather about letting God order things. It can be tempting to say we don't need material things to be happy, and that we should instead focus on things spiritual. But we were made in the flesh. Our spiritual health does depend on basic human needs being met: food, water, shelter, community and belonging. Without these basic needs, it is difficult to attend to our spiritual lives. The danger of having too much material wealth is we give too much worth to it, and that we think more material riches will make us spiritually satisfied, which they were never designed to do. Where are we hoarding material riches in order to compensate for our spiritual poverty? And how does our doing so deprive others of their basic needs?

Prayer of the Faithful: For freedom from materialism and an increase in simple living, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus born in a manger, show us the way of simplicity. Help us be satisfied with what we have, to ask for what we need, and to share what we have with others. Amen.

October 26, 2014 – 30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *Life for the widows and the orphans*

Contemporary Catholicism has put a great deal of emphasis on the importance of the family and on supporting families in our midst. This is right and good, as families do need much support, while our culture often suggests families are non-essential. At the same time, many in our parishes and communities do not have “traditional” nuclear families with two (opposite-sex) parents and their biological children. Our communities are made up of single people, some wishing for marriage who never found the right partner, widows and widowers, children whose parents never wanted them and neglected or abandoned them, and parents who lost their children to death or nasty custody battles or addiction. The first reading is God’s command for the Israelites to treat “others” as their own, to make family for those who have lost theirs. Our rules for marriage and family life call us to faithfulness and love, but never justify the exclusion of those who have lost family to a broken world.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the willingness to extend our families beyond blood lines, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, Child of the Holy Family, you were blessed with a step-father and a mother who gave you life in a most courageous way. Make our family, our parish and our community a place where all can join us, where widows and orphans, the excluded and the oppressed can find a home among us. Amen.
