



**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 4, 2015 – 27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *Human life depends on life-giving relationships of love.*

Saint Pope John Paul II wrote his *Theology of the Body* based on this Gospel (though he refers to Matthew’s version) and this first reading. Out of our creation, male and female, the great Pope explains, we are made with a longing to recognize God and ourselves in each other. These readings are a deep affirmation of marriage, but not only marriage. They affirm that at every stage of our lives we long to belong, to find ourselves in giving and receiving gifts to one another. Every divorced Catholic in our pews feels condemned by these texts; we should resist the urge to preach against divorce. Instead, preach the good news of our creation for relationship. No matter how broken we or our circumstances seem, we were created to give and receive life in relationships. Maybe you are living unreconciled with someone; maybe you are grieving; maybe you feel as though you have failed at relationships generally. We were all created to make courageous decisions to love as God loves. Though the circumstances might have changed or even fallen apart, our call to love, to recognize the flesh and bones of our neighbours, never changes. Make peace, build love, reach out for reconciliation – make your life a gift this week, and gratefully receive the gifts of others. This is what our life is for!

Prayer of the Faithful: For eyes to see the bone of our bones and the flesh of our flesh, and for the grace to love one another deeply, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of imagination, you have created us in your image, that we might recognize you and ourselves in each other. Give us reverence for your people, and courage to love one another with the faithfulness you have modelled for us. When we fail, remind us we were made to belong to you and to each other, and call us with conviction into new ways of giving life and love. Amen.

October 11, 2015 – 28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *Our life in Christ is a counter-cultural witness to a different kind of wealth.*

Avoid preaching the “prosperity gospel” this week. The readings are not saying we will receive material blessings for our faithfulness, or offering us a trade whereby we get eternal life in exchange for sacrifice now. The reading from Hebrews reminds us that we will make an account to God of our lives, and that God is living and active, heard in word and alive in the Spirit. The Gospel drives home that this account is real and costly, and the rich young man cannot bear it. The disciples get nervous (as many of us do on hearing this text). Jesus promises that the choices we make for the Gospel have their own reward, here and in the next life. But it is the first reading that clarifies God’s understanding of riches: a change in perspective. When we call on God, and we are gifted with seeing the world as God sees it, we know the deep and lasting joy that is the only wealth worth pursuing. When we live out of this wisdom and joy, we are able to detach (if imperfectly) from the distractions of the world. We can be in the world but not of it -- using money but not worshiping it, working hard but not being defined by our work, enduring suffering but not destroyed by it. This is deeply attractive, a witness to the world that draws people to the fullness of life God desires for us!

Prayer of the Faithful: For a deep desire for riches of God’s wisdom and joy, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the Rich Young Man, help us to give you generously the things that keep us from loving you well. Help us to hunger and thirst for you, to stop believing that wealth or fame, esteem or gadgets will satisfy us. Give us opportunities to see the world with your wisdom. Amen.

October 18, 2015 - 29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *If we want life, we have to be willing to lose life.*

The heart of Christianity is the greatest paradox of all: life rises from death. Like the disciples seeking greatness in the Gospel and the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews, we want a resurrection without a cross. But Jesus is both our Saviour and our model: we have the great privilege of participating in His redeeming work by following in the way He walked. This is the way life works in God. We must be willing to lay down our lives freely, in service and suffering, in joy and generosity, even unto death, and then we find the joy of living. This is why euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are so destructive: we need to learn how to die in order to receive the full gift of life. In whatever little deaths or big ones we face, we can trust God will bring new life out of the old one. So we pray with the second reading: “Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need.”

Prayer of the Faithful: For a willingness to find our lives by losing them, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Suffering Servant, whose life saves our lives and shows us how to live, be near to us. Clinging to the lives we have and wish for, we lose sight of the life that awaits us when we surrender to you. Give us grace, mercy and courage to faithfully let go of our lives, so we can find them anew in you. Amen.

October 25, 2015 - 30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *God desires to heal the brokenness in our lives.*

We are all pretty busy clinging to our brokenness. It's safe and comfortable. It takes a great deal of courage, willingness and work to receive God's healing. Still, He is working out our healing and restoration all the time, waiting for us to step into it. When the Israelites had lost everything, Jeremiah proclaims God's desire to gather His people and heal them. Bartimaeus, blind and begging, cries out for Jesus on the road, and Jesus stops and restores his sight. Where are the places that we are content with our brokenness and comfortable in our blindness? God does not work miracles because we tell Him to, or change our circumstances because we would rather the world were another way. But He works healing and freedom in all things and all places. Pray for God's healing. Surrender your will. Go to confession. Ask for help and receive it. Trust that by doing your part and letting go of the outcome, your life can have more healing and more freedom than you can imagine.

Prayer of the Faithful: For healing for ourselves and our broken world, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Merciful healer, reveal to us where we are comfortable and clinging to our brokenness. Startle us out of settling for what is, and give us the grace to hope for what you desire for us. Free us from selfishness, love of comfort, complacency and settling down, and call us into the healing that will see your Kingdom come. Amen.
