



**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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**October 2, 2016 – 27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C**

**Homily Idea:** *The way of life is a small and humble way.*

When we do what God asks, we, like the ancient Israelites, seem to expect that we will be instantly rewarded, glorified, and freed from suffering for our efforts. This week’s readings remind us to stay humble. By focusing on the small and ordinary ways, we can live life generously as a service for others, day in and day out. Habakkuk reminds us to wait longer, Paul insists the way of faith is a gift for us to keep on opening, and the Gospel invites us to receive the gift of faith that is always available to us by simply living faithfully. This life of faith is a simple concept but a life’s work to put into practice.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For lives of humble faithfulness, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of mystery, you have shown us a way to live, simply and in service to one another. Teach us to trust the gifts and graces of simple acts of love in a broken world. Make us humble. Amen.

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## October 9, 2016 – 28<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

**Homily Idea:** *Entitlement robs us of life.*

How often do we notice entitlement in others, bristling when we let someone into traffic ahead of us but get no wave, for example? And then get all out of sorts when someone isn't making space for us, totally oblivious to the same trait in ourselves? The first reading warns us that when we have loved others well, we are not owed thanks. We have simply done what God created us to do. The Gospel reminds us that when others have loved us well, our gratitude extends the blessing. It seems like a contradiction to expect no thanks for loving well but to receive love with gratitude. The double message is our protection from entitlement. All we have and all we give to others is a gift from God. Giving generously without expectation of thanks and always offering thanks protects us from the sadness, resentment and bitterness of entitlement.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For gratitude and generosity that gives the gift of life, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Generous God, you have modeled reckless abundance for us. Teach us to give without expecting in return, and fill our hearts to overflowing thanks for everything we receive. Amen.

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## October 16, 2016 – 29<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

**Homily Idea:** *Life in God depends on prayer*

It is easy to misread these readings so that we falsely believe if we live a life of prayer, God will do what we tell Him to. Tell that to the child whose prayers didn't save his mother from dying, or a nation which prayed but whose children are killed while they lose a war. These readings offer a more accurate picture of prayer if we read a little deeper. When the servants hold up Moses' hands in prayer, the people become attentive to *how* God is working. When the widow continues to cry out to God, she sees *how* God is answering her. We need to pray so that our desires become aligned with God's will and action in the world. The Psalmist says our help comes from God. If we spend more time asking God to help us, and less time telling Him *how* to do that, we find help does come and we have more peace and joy in our lives.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For lives marked by prayer, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Jesus, you prayed with us and for us, and taught us by example to place our trust in your Father. Teach us to trust in you, and draw us to our knees, not so we get what we want but so we get what you want. Amen.

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## October 23, 2016 – 30<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

**Homily Idea:** *God's life is poured out on the humble.*

How many of us think we have all the right answers? Feel smug and justified by the way we live? Secretly (or not so secretly) think we are better than others? Today's tax collectors are addicts, people who are on the brink of bankruptcy, single moms who have been feeding their families by "turning tricks". When we show up at confession and honestly pour out our failings, or finally break down and ask for help because we do not know what to do -- then God can really transform us. Next time you catch yourself doling out advice, starting to write a comment on social media about what is wrong with the world, or writing a letter to the Bishop about what is wrong with the Church, ask yourself first why it bothers you so much. See if the temptation to speak, correct or

act is a deflection from your own weakness. Maybe the most important thing you could do in response to your own outrage is ask God to help you with your own weakness and make a change in your own life.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For eyes to see our own sinfulness and willingness to let God help us, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Jesus, you called Matthew, the tax collector. Help us to see our own weakness and sin before the sins of others. Give us the courage to ask for your forgiveness and mercy. When we encounter the failings of others, help us respond with the same kind of mercy that you show us. Amen.

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## October 30, 2016 – 31<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

**Homily Idea:** *God heals the wounds that rob us of His abundant life "little by little".*

How impatient are we, with God and ourselves, wishing we could have right now all the blessings, all the knowledge, all the healing that God has for us? Paul reminds us that the day of the Lord is already here. God is satisfied with creation as it is today, satisfied that we take one more step towards Him. For days before Jesus came, Zacchaeus has been questioning the way he was living, edging his way up that tree, so that finally, one day, when Jesus arrives, he can give his whole life. The reading from Wisdom reminds us that God's mercy comes in drops, only tipping the scales after many deposits. God corrects and moves us "little by little." If God is not impatient with us, we need not be impatient with ourselves. It is okay that we need time to heal, time to see, time to grow, and time to respond to Him. Abundant life takes a lifetime to appreciate, receive and practise. We can be patient with ourselves and with each other because God is.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the grace and patience to let God heal us little by little, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of mercy, you are tending to our wounds carefully and slowly, pouring out your mercy and grace only as quickly as we can handle it. Help us to be patient with you and with ourselves. Teach us to trust that you will heal us and the whole world in your time, little by little. Amen.

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