



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.

September 1 – 22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: We meet God in the least, and when we are the least.

This week’s readings draw us into humility, an uncomfortable and avoidable place for most of us. The message for life and family is perhaps not so subtle here: the blind, lame, and poor have much more need of God than those with sight, ability, and riches. True life is found in God, and we are invited to serve those most in need -- so we will discover we are also in tremendous need. Spend some time this week finding God’s life and blessing in the “least” moments, when you feel ostracized or left out, when you are cleaning up a mess someone else made, or when you feel like your needs aren’t being met. Find and love God in your own poverty, weakness and inability.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the desire to embrace a life of humility, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the humble, you came among us as an infant, showing us your presence in the weak, the small and the needy. Help us to follow you into the smallest places of our lives, that we might find life in the most unexpected places. Amen.

September 8 – 23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Letting go of life itself.*

Whoever does not hate their family members and even life itself cannot be my disciple? It's hard to believe these ideas come from the mouth of Jesus. But Jesus is asking us to count the cost of following him. He will ask us to give him everything, to give up our very lives, and he doesn't want us to feel deceived. The message for life and family is this: Life is a sacred and beautiful gift, offered freely by God. The task for each person is to offer it back freely. Our efforts for life and family must ensure each baby is born; each child nurtured, loved and allowed to grow; each person's freedom and dignity revered; each ill, hungry, imprisoned and elderly person cared for and loved. At the same time, our efforts must never deny a single person the dignity of counting the cost. Everything we have been given we will have to give up. We can cling, or we can use this lifetime to work at releasing our grip on the life which was never ours in the first place.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the grace to offer our lives back to God, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Generous God, show us how much you have given us, that we might offer it all back to you with grateful hearts. Teach us to detach, with great love, from the gifts you give us, that we might cling only to you, the Giver. Amen.

September 15, 24TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *New life flows from mercy.*

It's a counter-intuitive idea that grace is borne from mercy. Punishment seems to come much more naturally. Yet all three readings show us how conversion and new life flow from mercy. This is God's justice. We will see what is true and good when someone sees precisely when we have lived what is false and bad. Destruction will not allow Israel to love God, but another chance might. After being complicit in the murder of Stephen, God saw the goodness in Paul that allowed him to become the world's most famous and influential evangelist of all time. The Prodigal Son asked for pity and found the Father's mercy. Who needs your mercy in our world? Which abortionist or murderer? Which colleague or friend? Which child or spouse have you been holding captive, in what you think is righteous desire to see justice doled out in the form of punishment? How is that grudge, vengeance or stalemate robbing you of life? Let go into mercy this week.

Prayer of the Faithful: For mercy, for ourselves that we may extend it to others, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Prodigal Father, give us the courage to believe we are worthy of mercy, rather than pity. Give us signs that you have already forgiven us, and release us of the fear-filled desire to deny others forgiveness. Push us firmly into the risk of being hurt, that we might experience the possibility of knowing your joy-filled mercy. Amen.

September 22, 25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Measure and quit measuring.*

We don't learn God's math in school. Or in our offices. Or when we do our taxes. God's math is a paradox -- to measure and quit measuring, so that one plus one can equal nothing and everything. It makes no sense in our heads. It's not supposed to. Most of the time, it makes no sense in our hearts either. It only makes sense when we trust the Author of the math. Count your pennies and spend them wisely, and when your heart is stirred give

it all away. Follow the rules and make time to pray every day. And when children interrupt your prayer time, sing, dance and play with them, and forget your prayer. Work faithfully, and rest faithfully. God's life is in all of it and in none of it. It's not our job to get it. It's our job to live it.

Prayer of the Faithful: For hearts and heads that embrace God's life in everything and nothing, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of strange and foreign math, teach us to seek knowledge and toss it to the wind. Lead us into disciplined work and the reckless abandon of childlike play. Help us to fight for justice and extend perilous mercy. Hold us when we don't understand what you are doing in us and through us. Amen.

September 29, 26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *We only get to say "Yes" for ourselves.*

Have you ever noticed how much easier it is to identify things about others, than it is to identify them in yourself? One of the great mysteries and gifts of our faith is we only get to say "yes" to God for ourselves. The first and second readings cry out, "Alas for **them!**" God is with us in grieving those who are lost, but he gave them the freedom and responsibility to respond. We have been convinced that Christ has crossed the chasm from death to life. The second reading holds the key: "As for you...pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness." Saving work is God's. Our part in it is to say yes for ourselves, deeply and joyfully, trusting God will give to others, perhaps through us and perhaps not, the same generous and abundant signs he has given us.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to live our own faith lives, and to trust God will use them for his purposes, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Spirit of signs, pour out the clues to your presence all around us. Give us eyes to see you, hearts in love with you, voices that proclaim you, and deep trust that your plan for the salvation of the world is being carried out every moment. Amen.
