



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 7, 2014 – 23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *The way of life involves dying to myself for the sake of others.*

How difficult it is for us to die to ourselves for the sake of the community! All three readings suggest that life in community will be challenging, requiring a willingness to address conflict and difficulties when they arise. Often, in our churches, just as in our workplaces, neighbourhoods and even families, longstanding feuds, politics and gossip exist and are nurtured – by us! God desires for us deep joy and peace in our lives, but death is the cost of life. Every battle, disagreement, feud and division requires that we lay down our arms to the possibility we are wrong, that we be willing to die to our own desires for the sake of the communion. Where are we holding onto division? What is it doing to the people God has asked us to love?

Prayer of the Faithful: For willingness to die to ourselves, to end divisions, violence and disunity in our families, parishes and communities, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, you modeled a way of life for us that refused to put any one person’s value above another’s. Where we are holding onto self-righteousness, arrogance, division or violence, convince us of our error. Give us the humility to seek forgiveness, peace and unity, even when it costs. Amen.

September 14, 2014 – EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS – Year A

Homily Idea: *The Cross leads us to life when we go there freely.*

The Israelites in the first reading are such a beautiful image of human fault. No sooner have we been freed by God, then we are complaining. We are easily trapped in victimhood, unable to see the options before us, especially if the options include suffering. This is the counter-cultural message of the Cross. When we walk with open hands into the death of the Cross, a new life waits for us: Jesus has promised. So, when you hear yourself saying, “I have to...”, “I don’t have a choice...”, or “This makes me...”, you are standing in the desert, whining to Moses. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus teach us there is another way. We can walk faithfully into whatever faces us, knowing God is with us and will bring us new life.

Prayer of the Faithful: For freedom from the traps we build to avoid the suffering of the Cross, we pray to the Lord.

Prayers for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, help us to be willing to walk in your way. Show us how to stop resisting what lies before us now. Remove our desire to be victims, and help us to cling to the freedom that allowed you to face the Cross. As we walk through suffering to the new life you live and promise, help us to remember what you have done for us, so that the next challenge will be blessed by our faith in your promises. Amen.

September 21, 2014 – 25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *Employment, just like lifetime faithfulness, does not create increased value in persons.*

Do you ever feel smug about your salvation? As someone wrongs you, do you think to yourself that at least you have faith and will have eternal life, while you glory in someone else’s misery, condemnation or even hell? As you walk by someone homeless, begging in the streets, have you ever fingered your wallet and silently thought that the person sitting there should just “get a job”? This week’s Gospel reminds us that salvation is a free gift. It will be offered to all who will receive it, no matter how late in life, or how awful the sins committed. Those who have jobs and work hard are not more valuable to God than those who cannot hold jobs and who struggle with addiction or illness. Those who follow all the rules and live a full lifetime of faith are not more worthy of salvation than those who struggle to believe and do not know God. Every person is an image of the living God. All are worthy of salvation and dignity. When you are voting, choosing charities to support, engaging in community service, be mindful of the creeping influence of smug judgement. Everyone is worthy of the gifts God longs to give through you.

Prayer of the Faithful: For awareness of and healing from our judgement that others are less worthy of God’s gifts than we, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Spirit of Life, cast out all judgement, self-righteousness and fear in us. Teach us to see your people as you see them, always inviting new life and never condemning. May we be judged according to how we have judged others. Amen.

September 28, 2014 – 26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Homily Idea: *Extending grace and life to the greatest sinners.*

When a pedophile is convicted, a prostitute or john arrested, or a politician accused of fraud, Christians are often among those chanting for a “tough on crime” agenda -- perhaps tougher sentences, less rehabilitative services in prisons, even executions. When Jesus asks his listeners who has done the work of the Father at the

end of the day, it is those who show up for mercy and change their lives. Avoiding pedophilia, prostitution or fraud while you faithfully show up at Mass each week is not what God is asking of you. What are the sins in your life that block you, like the active pedophile, from receiving God's mercy and changing your life? When you look upon the convicted, can you see yourself in them? Do we all strive for a civil justice system that not only asks people to be accountable for their actions, but also offers mercy and the chance for transformation?

Prayer of the Faithful: For mercy and new life for us and for those who are incarcerated, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Christ, arrested, imprisoned and condemned to death, teach us to extend mercy to those who have failed and been convicted. Help us to see our own and others' failures, imprisonment, and just punishment in the light of your mercy, that all might be transformed and changed. Amen.
