



**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 6, 2015 – 23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *God offers life to all – especially the weak, the broken, the hurting and the ill.*

It is often tempting to identify ourselves with those people in the Scriptures who are called to reach out to others in need. The second reading makes it clear how often we fail to live up to God’s call to love the least of our neighbours. But maybe one of the reasons we tend to serve the lowest and the least so badly is because we are so busy trying to convince ourselves and others that we have it all together – that we are not the weak, broken, or hurting people in need of help, mercy and God’s very life? Jesus cannot heal us or fill us with life if we will not admit that we are dying. The second reading reminds us that God has “chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the Kingdom.” We are the poor. We are judgmental, angry, resentful, bitter, selfish, entitled, and vulnerable to all manner of every other kind of sin. Yet God is hopelessly in love with us, actually dying to raise us up. So this week, admit your need, beg for help, and receive the new life that comes from God when you stop trying to hold it all together yourself.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the humility to claim our places among the weak and the lowly, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the lowly, you have died that we might live. Help us to embrace and love our brokenness as you do, so our lives may bear witness to the greatness of your strength in our weakness. Amen.

September 13, 2015 – 24TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *Life in God does not mean the absence of suffering, but a different way of understanding it.*

When Jesus tries to tell the disciples what is going to happen to him, Peter tries to stop him from talking about such things. Jesus responds starkly: “Get behind me, Satan!” It is a godless temptation we have to run from suffering. With faith, we can understand we are not alone in suffering, and that God is near to us in the midst of pain. Though He does not cause our pain, He uses it to recreate anew. This is how it is possible to understand the second reading’s insistence that faith without works is dead. Our suffering is not removed by our belief, but our living through suffering is transformed by our experience and hope that the Resurrection will follow every cross we carry.

Prayer of the Faithful: For faith in God’s presence in the midst of suffering, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus of the Cross, you showed us how to live redemptive suffering. In the midst of life’s challenges, help us to know your presence. Give us the consolation of knowing we are not alone. Help us to wait in steadfast hope for the new life you work in the aftermath of destruction and death. Amen.

September 20, 2015 - 25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *Life is welcomed to the extent that we welcome...children and little ones.*

Anyone who has spent more than two hours with a two-year-old can appreciate the irony, in addition to the idealism, in the last line of this week’s Gospel. While welcoming children is a beautiful image of the gift of God’s life, welcoming children is hard work. Kids require constant attention, guidance and energy; they open our hearts and our minds to wonder, joy and awe, and at the same time challenge our selfishness, rigidity and control. This is an image ripe with spiritual meaning. God asks us to welcome children and little ones because they are like Him – innocent and pure, as well as challenging. Most often, we think of couples being open to life, which is certainly an important part of this teaching. At the same time, to make space in our homes and lives for children goes well beyond biological fertility for young married couples. How many questions a day do parents lovingly endure from their children? How many neighbourhood kids have you encouraged to play on your grass or to pick up your rocks? How many babies have you offered to watch so their mom or dad could catch a nap? How often have you helped out the parents struggling with their kids at Mass? How many teenagers have you encouraged and supported through their challenges? All three readings are about the ways communities struggle to live out love. The antidote Jesus gives us is to love in the way we love children. So find some children this week (yours, or even better, someone else’s) and stay with them long enough to practise loving and welcoming life, even when it is hard to do so.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the desire to love the world with the same desire we have to love tiny babies and busy children, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God and Father, you have loved us enough to make us adopted children. You have invited us to love children and to love like children. In this miraculous contradiction, make us persistent and gentle, curious and content, full of energy and wonder. Amen.

September 27, 2015 - 26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year B

Homily Idea: *Jealousy destroys life.*

If comparison is the thief of joy, then jealousy is the murderer of life. Our world is full of gifted people, given by God and called by Him. We are among the gifted and the called. But if our understanding of our own giftedness and purpose hinges on being unique or better than others, we will become weeds that threaten the fruit that can grow in our communities. When families are trapped in competition, everyone loses. When workplaces are built on individual success over the team, relationships pay the price for the benefit of profits. When ministry is plagued by jealousy, the egos of the ministers trample on the hearts of those in need. Jealousy destroys our ability to receive life, because it insists I must be preserved, protected and upheld above all else. That creates a tower of isolation that chokes out the communion that is life. Gratitude is the antidote. Seek out the corners of your own jealousy this week, and start thanking God for the very person, gift or thing you envy.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to lay down our jealousy and to thank God for what we have and what others have, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of all, help us to remember that “whoever is not against us is for us.” All around us you have placed people who are not against us, whose gifts, talents, abilities and possessions can be caught up the grace you give to build your Kingdom. Root out our jealousy and our fear. Teach us to be grateful and gratefully to receive the gifts you offer through your people wherever they are, especially when the gifts are not ours. Amen.
