



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. Being “pro-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? But 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 pro-life homily idea, a prayer of the faithful or an insight which can be used to foster the abundant life that Jesus came to bring to 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.

January 1, 2013 – SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD, Year C

Homily Idea: *Adoption...a Godly idea*

This week’s readings highlight God’s family. While we often highlight the very real and beautiful love of a mother and her biological Son on this day, the readings challenge us to see a God who chose the people of Israel, who grafted himself to these people by covenant. The birth of Jesus marks the expansion of God’s people beyond the nation of Israel – to everyone, through adoption. The Holy Family is a blended family, a Mother and her Son, a God who is Father, and a faithful adoptive dad in Joseph. This day, this week, this year, countless babies will be conceived and mothers will be afraid to say yes. What are we doing to promote the very adoption that Joseph gifted to Jesus, that God gifts to each of us in making us his own sons and daughters?

Prayer of the Faithful: For scared mothers and eager adoptive parents to find one another with courage and hope, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God, adoptive Father, show us the consequences of our own adoption into your Holy Family. Open our hearts and homes to children in need of home and family. Give us courage to proclaim and support adoption for women who are not able to welcome and care for their babies.

January 6, 2013 – EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, Year C

Homily Idea: *Jesus, Refugee and King*

Behold the light in the darkness! In a baby, we find the most vulnerable creature and most powerful king the world has ever known. When the wise men find Jesus, they pay him homage, pour out lavish gifts, honour him. Then they protect him by not delivering him to Herod. Every day, refugees (of every size and age) pour into our country with great hope that our nation will be light to their darkness. Among them, we find profound potential – actual or future doctors, scholars, labourers – beautiful people whose beauty has been beaten down by violence, fear, poverty or torture.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the refugees in darkness who seek light among us, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Refugee and King Jesus, fill us with conviction to hear the cries of those in need, who see refuge in our compassion and care. By our compassion, may we also have the hope and faith to seek refuge when we ourselves are in need.

January 13, 2013 – BAPTISM OF THE LORD, 1 ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *AIDing the Beloved*

The opening of the first reading reads, “Comfort my people.... Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid.” Many people in our world are broken and in need of comfort. They need to be reminded that their penalty has been paid by the One who died on the cross. Among those who need to hear the good news of Life are those suffering from HIV and AIDS. They are so often judged and condemned, alienated and denied touch. *Evangelium Vitae* reminds us that ministering to persons with HIV/AIDS is a part of the work of the Culture of Life. The second reading echoes human dignity: we are saved because we are beloved, not because we are worthy. As we remember Jesus’ baptism, our hearts are stirred because we, too, are the beloved sons and daughters, and we need the comfort of God affirming the pleasure he takes in us. It is our job to AID in communicating that delight in the beloved to all of God’s people.

Prayer of the Faithful: For those who live with, suffer from and are killed by HIV/AIDS, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Healer of the lepers, bring healing to those plagued by HIV/AIDS. May researchers find cures, may caregivers offer compassion and friendship, and may all people participate selflessly in stopping the spread of this destroyer of life.

January 20, 2013 – 2 ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Abundant Life Requires More Than One*

When Mary asks Jesus for more wine, she knows she isn't capable of doing what Jesus can do. She turns to his disciples and instructs them to do whatever Jesus tells them. Turning water into wine required more than just one. More than Mary, who turns to her Son. More than Jesus, who needed the push of his mother and the help of his followers. Wherever we go in God's name, God will call more than just me. Like Jesus, we do our own part, and then our part is put together with the work and passion of others and connected to the whole. In this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we are reminded just how profoundly we need the gifts of each and every one to participate in proclaiming new life in the world.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the humility and grace to call forth the gifts of others alongside our own, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Abundant Giver, you have poured yourself into your people, but given none of us alone the fullness of your glory. May we follow Mary in calling your gifts out of your people and generously sharing our own.

January 27, 2013 – 3 ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *Reverence for God in the Body*

Our culture is filled with mixed messages about the body: scantily clad on billboards, offensive when breastfeeding in public; proclaiming sex as good, permitting and even celebrating prostitution. This week's second reading uses the metaphor of the body to describe God's people and the value of each person. The reading also celebrates the sanctity of the body and the need to give it proper reverence. When Jesus reads the prophecy in the synagogue and declares it fulfilled in their hearing, it is his body that makes his proclamation so profound. Here, in this man, in his very being, in his body and our presence, God is acting. The same is true for us. That is why we must set captives free, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, respect and love the one with whom we have sex, and love and protect both the mother and the baby during pregnancy.

Prayer of the Faithful: For a greater reverence for God imaged in and really present in each and every human body, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God who took on flesh, reveal to us your presence in our bodies and the bodies of others. Show us your face in the homeless. Make us to

feel your touch in a hug. Feed us by the food on our tables. Give us courage to be your Body here and now.
