



**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.

December 6, 2015 – 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, Year C

Homily Idea: *People of life proclaim God is coming – to save us and to invite us to turn toward Him.*

Both the first reading and the Gospel cry out that God is coming among us. How our world needs God to come! Baruch and John proclaim the Lord is coming, anticipating the birth of the Messiah, the promised Jesus. Both prophets are a bit ambiguous though: are we to make the path straight, or is it God who will flatten the mountains and fill the valleys? The answer is yes. When we see brokenness in the world, violence and discord and hatred, we are called to work toward a less broken world, and to trust that God is bringing about His Kingdom in our midst. During Advent, we are called to be prophets of Jesus – He is coming, again, to save our world now. How will we respond to the threats of terrorism, the needs of refugees, the consumerism of retail Christmas, the busy-ness of December? Will people hear us proclaiming life, modeling repentance, drawing close to welcome a Child with joy?

Prayer of the Faithful: For the grace to proclaim Jesus’ coming again, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, in the womb you trusted Mary to prepare the way for your birth among us. As we prepare to welcome you again this Christmas, speak your words into our hearts and lives, that by our preparation for your birth, we might proclaim what still needs to be made ready if our world is to become more like your Kingdom. Soften our hearts, calm our fears, and give us courage to proclaim your coming in our broken world.

December 13, 2015 – 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT, Year C

Homily Idea: *When we live simply, we can simply live.*

The second reading and the Gospel this week offer a prescription for Christian life: do not worry, pray with gratitude, be gentle, be satisfied with what you have, do not take from others. When we live simply, we can simply live and invite others to do the same. Wake, pray, prepare, serve, give thanks and rest. We do not need to be victims of busy-ness, judgment, or anger. This week, let's live in a way that allows God to give us His peace.

Prayer of the Faithful: For simplicity in the way we live, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the meek and the simple, strip away the complexity we make for ourselves. Free us from the things we think we should do, and turn our minds and hearts to what you ask of us. Help us to let go of worry and anxiety, judgment and resentment, anger and self-righteousness. May we faithfully embrace trust, gratitude, simplicity and contentedness. Amen.

December 20, 2015 – 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, Year C

Homily Idea: *Life is renewed by hope.*

Very often, life's challenges seem too much to bear. We are weighted down by the problems we face and tempted by despair. Hope is a lifeline that God offers us: while we carry crosses, we need to keep our eyes fixed on the Resurrection. For Micah, the promise of a Messiah sustains the Israelite exiles. (This prophecy is quoted in Matthew's Nativity story.) In the letter to the Hebrews, the writer reminds us that God wants our faithful living, rather than our sacrifices and burnt offerings. Doing God's will today is our hope. In the Gospel, Mary and Elizabeth rejoice when John leaps with joy at the sound of Mary's voice. Mary believes in God's promise despite what Joseph might think or do, and Elizabeth believed in spite of years of infertility. This week, Jesus comes among us again, to bring the hope of a baby to a world heavy with suffering. Let us put our hope in Jesus.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the hope that the Christ Child brings, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, Infant of hope, make our souls leap at the sound of your name. Draw us into the hope of your coming among us. Help us to see you in the midst of the burdens we carry, that we might trust in the promise of your life. Amen.

December 24/25, 2015 – SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Homily Idea: *God chooses life with us.*

All of the readings for all the various Christmas liturgies proclaim the same mystery. God not only authors life and pours out grace in the midst of it, he chooses to join us in our lives by becoming one of us. Jesus enters into life that we might do the same. Whatever the circumstances of your life right now -- grief or joy, struggle or success, faith or doubt -- Jesus has lived it himself, and he longs to live it with you. Choose life with Jesus! Let Him be born again in your heart. Allow Him to enter into your moments and give you the life for which you were created.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the grace to receive Jesus, who longs to be born again in us, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of Incarnation, you chose life with us in Jesus, and over and over again you choose life in us. Soften our hearts and open our hands to receive you, that we might touch the miracle of living with you and in you. Amen.

December 27, 2015 – FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

Homily Idea: *Our family life is holy.*

These readings are full of the stuff of ordinary and holy family life: struggling with infertility, receiving the gift of a child after many years of struggle, practising the compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience of bearing with one another, losing each other and being found. The Holy Family is nothing other than a Virgin mother, a humble stepfather, and the Son of God. They seek safety in Egypt, get separate from one another in Jerusalem, grieve Joseph, and face the Cross together. If their family is holy, then our family can be too.

Prayer of the Faithful: For our holy families and the commitment to grow holy together, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, you show us the witness of faithful love when God calls us together as a family. Bless our families as holy. Strengthen us to love faithfully and patiently. Draw us close to you, and make us like you. May we be holy and become holy, so that we be a blessing to each other and for the world. Amen.
