



**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.

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**October 1, 2017 – 26<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, Year A**

**Homily Idea:** *Life isn’t fair – but God is.*

“It’s not fair!” You’ve probably heard a child or two say this in your lifetime, but so did the ancient Israelites. God reminded them through the prophet Ezekiel that He is fair, even when life isn’t. It is so easy in our churches, families, and worlds to cite examples of injustice. But how often can we ourselves become agents of injustice, judges of others’ circumstances, or executors of blame or revenge? How often, having done the “right thing”, have we hoped God will measure out suffering or punishment on others? In the Gospel, Jesus is speaking to those of us who whisper or yell to God, “It’s not fair!” Who are the contemporary “prostitutes” and “tax collectors” you hope will be given their due, far away from your eternal home? The same mercy that is offered to us will be offered to them. This is what it means to be fair, and to be pro-life: to believe deeply that God’s unconditional invitation to forgiveness is available to everyone. Our invitation is to see injustice – even when it hurts us – and hope deeply for mercy for all involved.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For hearts that yearn for mercy more than for getting our own way, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Fair and loving God, teach us to hope all people will receive and practise love and forgiveness. Help us to stop keeping score and to let you judge, guarding our hearts against suspicion and negativity. Keep us focused on being witnesses to your unconditional love and mercy. Amen.

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## October 8, 2017 – 27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *True life is measured by fruitfulness, rather than status, being right, or having wealth or power.*

We are a people who want assurance, and insurance, that we are saved. But salvation is not something we earn, attain or secure. True eternal life (otherwise known as salvation and heaven) is the fruit of how we receive God's gift and participate in nurturing the gift to grow in us. In the first reading and the Psalm, we are reminded that God has made the vineyard the people of Israel. This is prophecy that reminds us that no material thing – no church building, set of rules, or perfect performance – can earn us what God has planted within and for human hearts. Saint Paul tells us not to worry about anything. We must simply focus on whatever is good. Plant seeds of time, energy, money and life into what is good. No status, no track record of being right, no amount of wealth or power can protect us from being measured by the fruit of our lives. All this is to say that we cannot earn, attain or secure a place in heaven. The Kingdom of God will come to those who, one day and one decision at a time, give the gifts of their lives away in love. We are all capable of tossing the gifts away, hoping to take a shortcut back later. This week, Jesus reminds us to return to love, to place our security only in God's invitation to love.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For fruitful lives that trust in God alone, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Saving God, you've offered us the gift of eternal life. Rather than earning or buying a place, you've invited us to participate in building your Kingdom of love. Keep us focused on doing your good work. Lead us away from the temptation to believe we are secure enough to stop living love. Amen.

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## October 15, 2017 – 28<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *Wealth and privilege can lead us to feel entitled to life, and actually prevent us from receiving God's life.*

The opposite of entitlement is not hard work; it's faithful detachment. The mentality "work hard to earn what you receive" is simply a morality spin on a prosperity story. This narrative we live in has been established and reinforced by lots of cultural and economic factors, but it isn't the narrative of the Gospel. The banquet in Jesus' parable is a lesson for us in radical humility and generosity. We have all been invited; God does not judge us against the standards of worldly success as the king does. Saint Paul holds a key to spiritual life: "I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." When we faithfully detach from the material stuff of our lives, we recognize we are simply asked to love God and each other – when we have much and when we have little, when we are joyful and when we are suffering. Hard work, wealth, and privilege do not make us immune to suffering. Faithful detachment allows us to use whatever gifts and circumstances we've been given to bless others. That's enough.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For faithful detachment, instead of entitlement, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Generous God, you've prepared a banquet and invited us all. Help us remember we have not earned a place at the table. Teach us to attach ourselves to you alone, that we might use the gifts we have been given to share your life and generosity with all we meet. Protect us from believing we have earned your favour, and help trust that we can do all things through you. Amen.

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## October 22, 2017 – 29<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *Abundant life requires us to grow up and follow the rules with love.*

Tax evasion hardly seems like a sin against life, but it is. When Jesus tells the Pharisees to give the coins to Caesar, he is asking us to understand that we belong to God and to each other. In the Roman empire, ultimate loyalty for each citizen was to the emperor. When we live in community, we develop laws that are (hopefully) grounded in the common good. If our health care, education, roads and other services are provided by taxes, then cheating on those taxes hurts not only us but others. If we disagree with the laws or taxes, we can participate in the dialogues, political systems, and community agencies that work together to set and review those things. A failure in one part of the system does not justify our cheating the whole. In following God, we hope for the abundant life He gives. But we cannot expect to receive mercy and love from God when we deny our responsibility to Him and through Him to others.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For honesty in giving to God and others what is theirs, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of the law of love, you have shown us that love is the fulfillment of the law. Soften our hearts against cynical resistance to legitimate authority. Give us faith in working together for the good of all people. Protect us from selfish justification and apathetic indifference. Amen.

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## October 29, 2017 – 30<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *Love is really the answer to the most difficult questions and circumstances in life.*

So often, when love is proposed as the solution to a problem, it is followed by a “but”. Love is enough for a marriage, *but* it will also take hard work and good people. Love is what people in difficult circumstances need, *but* we don’t want to leave them confused in thinking their behaviour is okay. The heart of the Gospel is that love of God and our neighbours is enough to save us from sin and evil. God’s love is not easy, clean, or quick. The story of God’s love began with Creation, was revealed in time and history, hit its heart with the life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, and continues now. God’s love led to Crucifixion and Redemption by His rising from the dead. If it is enough for Jesus, maybe it is also enough for us – even if this is hard, messy, and long. This means getting rid of the “buts”. Love is enough for marriage, *and* it will take much work and virtue to grow it. Love is what people need when life is painful and hard, *and* we need to love in truth and not enable damaging behaviour. We never get to justify unloving behaviour with “buts.”

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For love to be the guiding force in everything we do, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Loving God, you have offered us your love as the fulfillment of the law and the greatest commandment. Teach us to choose love when it is most difficult, when it requires sacrifice, and even when we want there to be a different way. Amen.