



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 3, 2017 – 22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Life with Jesus is a proclamation against violence and injustice, even and maybe especially when this is uncomfortable and costs us something.*

When Jeremiah bemoans he has been enticed or seduced by God, he does so because falling in love with God has made him an outcast when he speaks the truth in the face of injustice and violence. But, having fallen in love with God, he can no longer ignore, or worse, benefit from the systems of violence and injustice that cause people to suffer. As Christians, especially in a world that is seeing increased racism, ignorance of the poor, and selfish individualism, we too should be aware of how uncomfortable the Gospel should make us. Having fallen in love with God, we should be outraged at the suffering of His people, concerned about the poor, engaged in relationship with people who are different from us, and aware of the privileges we have been given that others lack. If the Gospel isn’t pushing you to the edges of discomfort, to the point where from time to time you feel yourself giving your life away to take up the Cross, you need to ask God to help you see, and listen to what He wants you to do differently. Following Jesus will cost us our lives, or our comfort will cost us our salvation.

Prayer of the Faithful: For hearts so in love with Jesus that we are compelled to speak up against every injustice, even when it costs us something, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God who entices us, you long to love us completely. Help us to be drawn totally into your love, so we are compelled to love the world with your passion for justice and peace.

Help us make our homes, our communities, and our world a reflection of your Kingdom, now and forever. Amen.

September 10, 2017 – 23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Repentance is an act of love which brings life.*

Repentance gets little air time in our world. It has fallen out of fashion after an era of using guilt too readily as a motivation for faith. That said, repentance was never the problem. Repentance is the act of turning toward God after we have turned away. Repentance takes great courage. It is an act of love which says that right relationship matters more than being right. Repentance saves our lives, keeps us from staying trapped in the prisons of self-righteousness, unforgiveness, selfishness, and pride. The second reading clarifies that the Ten Commandments make sense only when understood as a fulfillment of the command to love. Repentance acknowledges when we have failed to love and takes us a humble step back. The Sacrament of Reconciliation does not exist to shame you – it exists to give you a concrete way to turn around, to choose love again. Life flows from the confessional and out of every single act of repentance you make. Love boldly this week. Make a point of saying you are sorry as many times as you can. Turn around and choose love and life again and again.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the grace to repent, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of gentle correction and everlasting love, whisper to us your call to turn around. Help us to look for the places we have failed to love. Give us the courage to choose again, to turn back to you and receive the life we have rejected by our failing. Teach us to love the act of repenting, of turning back to you again and again. Amen.

September 17, 2017 – 24TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Unforgiveness rots out our capacity for life, in this world and in the one to come.*

Anger and unforgiveness are poisons that rot out our capacity for life. As long as our hands and hearts are full of anger and unforgiveness, we have no space to hold onto love, peace, and joy. Sirach says, “Does anyone harbour anger against another, and expect healing from the Lord? If one has no mercy toward another like oneself, can one then seek pardon for one’s own sin?” This points out the problem with our sinful thinking. In fact, we often do expect (wrongly) that God should heal us while we refuse others healing. We often fail to see that the person to whom we deny mercy is like us in any way. As long as we persist in believing these lies, we close ourselves to the mercy, healing, and life Jesus longs to give us. Where have you been harbouring anger, denying mercy, persisting in unforgiveness? Give it to Jesus before the Eucharist today, and ask for the life you’ve been refusing.

Prayer of the Faithful: For forgiveness for ourselves and for those we find hard to forgive, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Forgiving God, draw us into your mercy and help us extend it to others, without concern for what we all deserve. Make us aware of our resistance, and give us the courage to forgive 77 times and still more. Amen.

September 24, 2017 – 25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Comparison and jealousy steal our life's joy; generosity restores it.*

God's ways are not our ways, and God asks us to seek Him instead of the comfort of doing it our way. When, like the workers hired first in the day, we look at what others receive and feel cheated, we only cheat ourselves. Would we not want everyone to receive the best God has to offer? God's way of life and love for all isn't fair – it's ridiculous. None of us have earned life, mercy, joy, or love, and yet each of us has tasted these things as pure gift. Comparison (about grades, salaries, vacations, clothing, toys, vehicles, jobs, identities) steals our ability to see the gifts we have been given. Jealousy is a rejection of your own worth, a choice to live in scarcity instead of abundance. Where do you fall prey to comparison and jealousy? This week, precisely in those places, choose to practise generosity. Compliment the people with whom you normally compare yourself. Make a list of what you have that you don't see when you are comparing yourself and coming up short. Where you feel jealousy, give something away that will bring someone else joy. God is abundantly generous. When we live that way, we become more like Him, and the positions of first and last give way to simply loving.

Prayer of the Faithful: For generosity to take the place where comparison and jealousy have lived in us, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of abundant generosity, fill us to overflowing with your generosity so there is no space in us left for comparison and jealousy. Help us give freely without counting the cost, and to reject Satan's temptation to believe that we aren't enough. Amen.