

**NATIONAL WEEK FOR LIFE AND THE FAMILY**  
**MAY 12-19, 2013**

**OPTIONAL RESOURCES FOR LITURGIES AND PRAYER**

The National Week for Life and the Family, May 12-19, 2013, begins with the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord and concludes with the Solemnity of Pentecost. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) provides the following proposals as options to mark the beginning and conclusion of this week, and for linking it with the rest of the Church year with a special recap on Trinity Sunday. Each parish, following the directions of its Diocesan Bishop, may adapt or use the following suggestions and options for liturgies and prayer services:

- I. [Suggested prayer for individual and group use, in parish bulletins or as separate leaflets to be distributed](#)
- II. [A vigil for life and the family, with adoration and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament](#)
- III. [Homily notes \(based on \*Evangelium Vitae\*\) to assist in preparing the vigil for life and the family \(number II above\);](#)
- IV. [Suggestions for the Sunday Mass of the Ascension, May 12 \(homily suggestions and prayers of the faithful\)](#)
- V. [Suggestions for the Extended Vigil Mass of Pentecost and for Sunday Mass, May 18-19 \(homily suggestions, prayers of the faithful, prayers for groups or for personal and family use\)](#)
- VI. [Suggestions for a vigil and the Mass of Trinity Sunday, May 25-26 \(homily suggestions, prayers of the faithful, prayers for groups or for personal and family use\)](#)

I. **Suggested Prayer for Individual and Group Use, in Parish Bulletins or as Separate Leaflets to be Distributed**

We adore you,  
Father of Jesus Christ, our Father.  
Source of all communion,  
bless and protect our families  
so that they may be places  
of true communion between spouses  
and of abundant life shared  
by parents and children.

We contemplate you,  
Artisan of all perfection and of all beauty.  
Grant us just and dignified work,  
work which provides our families  
with the food we need and  
enables us to collaborate with you  
in building up the world.

We glorify you,  
Cause of our joy and celebration.  
Guide our families along the path of  
happiness and rest,  
that they might taste even now  
the perfect joy promised  
by the risen Christ.

Thus our days of work and of fellowship  
will reflect the love and light  
which Christ your Son has revealed to us  
and which the Holy Spirit  
helps us to discover.  
We will then live happily as your family,  
journeying together toward you,  
who are God – Father, Son and  
Holy Spirit – for ever and ever.  
Amen.

*(Adapted from the prayer of the World Meeting of Families in Milan (May 30 to June 3, 2012).*

## **II. A Vigil for Life and the Family, with Adoration and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament**

*“Jesus’ attitude is striking: we do not hear words of scorn, we do not hear words of condemnation, but only words of love, of mercy, which are an invitation to conversion.... Let us never tire, let us never tire! He is the loving Father who always pardons, who has that heart of mercy for us all. And let us too learn to be merciful to everyone. Let us invoke the intercession of Our Lady who held in her arms the Mercy of God made man.” – Pope Francis, Angelus Message, Saint Peter’s Square, Sunday, March 17, 2013*

The following outline has been prepared as a vigil for May 11, preceding the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. It may also be adapted as a prayer service on Ascension Sunday or for use later during or outside the 2013 National Week for Life and the Family.

### Opening Hymn and Procession:

*Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness* (Catholic Book of Worship [CBW] III, #582)

### Welcome and introduction:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Tonight, we gather to pray for each human life and all human life;  
to thank God for the Incarnation of his Son  
and for the gift of Life.

We ask the Lord for protection over every human being called into existence.

Through readings, intercessions,  
adoration and Benediction,  
we prepare our hearts and minds  
to be the prophets of life in our world.

We celebrate God's gift of life; we praise and thank God who creates us, sustains us and brings us to new life.

This vigil will be followed by a period of adoration for those who are able to remain with us.

Opening prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty and ever-living God,  
who bring salvation to all and desire that no one should perish,  
hear the prayers of your people,  
and grant that the course of our world may be directed by your peaceful rule  
and your Church rejoice in tranquility and devotion.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings:

1) The Birth of Jesus, Luke 2.1-7

*Intercession:* O God, your Son Jesus, born of a woman, knows our frailties and our need for care. With this in mind, we pray for all babies aborted and for the mothers who are in need of support and guidance, we pray to the Lord: **R.**

2) The Good Samaritan, Luke 10.25-37

*Intercession:* Loving God, you sent your Son who worked to end injustice in the world. We pray for those who suffer the indignities of poverty, homelessness and abuse, we pray to the Lord: **R.**

3) The Crucifixion, John 19.23-35

*Intercession:* Almighty God, your Son died on the cross and had life torn from his body though he was perfectly innocent. We pray for children and their families who live in countries afflicted by war and natural disasters, we pray to the Lord: **R.**

4) The Resurrection, John 20.1-10

*Intercession:* O God, the Resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, was your shout for joy to the universe; the raising of his voice. We pray for all those whose ministry it is to proclaim the dignity of the human person to all, we pray to the Lord: **R.**

5) The Ascension, Luke 24.46-53

*Intercession:* Almighty God, your Son opened the minds of the disciples to understand the Scriptures. Send your Spirit anew upon us so that, in his name, we too can proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all the nations, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

Homily: For homily suggestions, see part III.

Procession:

The presider will light a taper from the Paschal Candle and people will come forward to light a taper and return to their seats.

Procession song:

*Wait for the Lord* (Taizé) (CBW III, # 319)

Presider, when the procession is finished:

We are called to be the Light of Christ in our world.  
We pray for every fragile life that is threatened with extinction through  
abortion, murder, war, euthanasia, famine and other atrocities.  
May our fidelity to Jesus' way of life  
lead to a universal resolve  
to protect the sanctity of life in all circumstances.

And now, let us ask Mary to intercede to this end.

Let us pray.

O Mary, bright dawn of the new world,  
Mother of the living,  
to you we entrust the cause of life.  
Look down, O Mother,  
upon the vast numbers of babies not allowed to be born,  
upon the poor whose lives are made difficult,  
upon all men and women who are victims of brutal violence,  
upon the elderly and the sick,  
upon those killed by indifference or out of misguided mercy.  
Grant that all who believe in your Son  
may proclaim the Gospel of life  
with honesty and love  
to the people of our time.

Obtain for them the grace  
to accept that Gospel  
as a gift ever new;  
the joy of celebrating it with gratitude  
throughout their lives;  
and the courage to bear witness to it.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The text for the above prayer is adapted from the concluding words of Evangelium Vitae*

Lord's Prayer:

Let us pray for all people and the entire world in the words Our Lord taught us: Our Father....

Sign of peace:

As a commitment to be people of life, let us share the sign of peace. *Exchange of sign of peace*

Hymn:

*I Sing a Maid* (CBW III, #462)

Transitional prayer:

Lord, we have come before you to pray for an end to sin and death.  
We know that only you have the words of eternal life.  
Bless us with patience, wisdom and perseverance  
to bring your light into all darkness.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Invitation to period of adoration and Benediction:

To everyone who came out tonight,  
thank you for your prayers and presence.  
I invite those of you who are able to stay  
to join us for a period of adoration and Benediction.

*If there is not to be a period of adoration with Benediction, the vigil may be concluded at this point with the following blessing and dismissal:*

*Bow your heads in prayer for God's blessing. May Almighty God bless you and strengthen you as his disciples of the Good News of Life, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Go in the peace of Christ, celebrating God's gift of life. Thanks be to God.*

Hymn:

*Pange Lingua* (CBW III, #68, first verse in Latin, the rest in English)

Exposition:

If there is to be exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the celebration is to follow any liturgical directives that may have been issued by the Diocese.

While the song is being sung and if there is to be solemn exposition and Benediction, the presider will put on the humeral veil, bring the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle, and set up the monstrance and candles on the altar with the assistance of the acolytes.

Adoration (20-25 minutes)

Charcoal is lit for the incense.

Hymn:

*O Salutaris* (CBW III, #689; possibly two verses in English and then in Latin)

Benediction

Presider: Let us pray.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
in this most wonderful sacrament  
you have left us the memorial of your passion.  
Deepen our reverence for the mystery of your Body and Blood  
that we may experience within us  
the fruit of your redemption.  
You live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

The worshippers are blessed in silence with the Blessed Sacrament.

Presider:

Blessed be God.  
Blessed be his holy name.  
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.  
Blessed be the name of Jesus.  
Blessed be his Sacred Heart.  
Blessed be his Precious Blood.  
Blessed be Jesus in the sacrament of the altar.  
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Consoler.  
Blessed be the Mother of God, Mary most holy.  
Blessed be her holy and immaculate Conception.  
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.  
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.  
Blessed be Saint Joseph, her chaste spouse.  
Blessed be God in his angels and in his saints.

Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

### **III. Homily Notes (based on *Evangelium Vitae*) to assist in preparing the vigil for life and the family (number II above)**

The following homily notes are based on the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* of Blessed John Paul II. They were prepared for use with the preceding vigil for life and the family and draw on the four readings used in that prayer vigil. However, they may also be easily adapted for other occasions.

1. From the moment of conception, the unborn child begins to participate in the life and purpose of God.
  - “The life of every individual, from its very beginning, is part of God’s plan” (*Evangelium Vitae* [EV], 44),
  - John begins to prophesy even from the womb: “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb” (Luke 1.41).
  - The unborn child is also a sign and symbol of:
    - our creation
    - our call to be a loving and faithful community
    - our need for God and others
    - God’s creation as a process, rather than an instant.
  
2. First reading: The Birth of Jesus – The Incarnation completes our understanding of the reverence for human life. The Incarnate birth of Jesus is the great joy of all people: “I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2.10-11).
  - “The source of this “great joy” is the birth of the Saviour, but Christmas also reveals the full meaning of every human birth. The joy which accompanies the birth of the Messiah is thus seen to be the foundation and fulfilment of joy at every child born into the world” (EV, 1).
  - Our respect for life, and our work to protect it, begin (if only sequentially) with the advocacy and ministry that allows the conceived to be born into the world for the sake of the world – just as Jesus was.
  
3. Second reading: The Good Samaritan – Extending our care for the unborn throughout the whole of life. “I came that they might have life and have it abundantly” (John 10.10). “Society as a whole must respect, defend and promote the dignity of every human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person’s life” (EV, 81).
  - For John Paul II, in *Evangelium Vitae*, the whole of the Gospel is the “Gospel of Life”, of life birthed and lived in the abundant grace of God.
  - There are many threats to life in our world. Those included in EV are: Abortion, euthanasia, poverty, hunger, endemic disease, violence, war, murder, torture, genocide, slavery, prostitution, disgraceful working conditions, subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, the selling of persons, the death penalty, human sterilization, and hostility to conception.
  - There are also many fronts on which we take up the call as Christians to proclaim and build up the “Gospel of Life” (from EV), both in our direct ministry and in our involvement in political and social advocacy: Receiving and raising children as gifts

from God, adoption, foster parenting, caring for the elderly, caring for those with disabilities, providing shelter and refuge to women and children in need, providing places for addiction rehabilitation, responding to the call for disaster relief, doing medical research to find ways to treat and cure illness within the womb until natural death, working to reduce poverty, protecting the whole of God's creation in the environment, educating about God's plan for human life, caring for the mentally ill, providing and working in care centres for persons with AIDS, establishing social welfare systems, providing marriage and family counselling centres, caring for the dying and their families through palliative and hospice care, and through organ donation.

4. Third reading: The Crucifixion – We all share in the redemptive work of the Cross of Jesus.

- “A consistent ethic [of life] does not say everyone in the Church must do all things, but it does say that as individuals and groups pursue one issue, whether it is opposing abortion or capital punishment, the way we oppose one threat should be related to support for a systemic vision of life. It is not necessary or possible for every person to engage in each issue, but it is both possible and necessary for the Church as a whole to cultivate a conscious explicit connection among the several issues. And it is very necessary for preserving a systemic vision that individuals and groups who seek to witness to life at one point of the spectrum of life not be seen as insensitive to or even opposed to other moral claims on the overall spectrum of life. Consistency does rule out contradictory moral positions about the unique value of human life. No one is called to do everything, but each of us can do something. And we can strive not to stand against each other when the protection and the promotion of life are at stake” (Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, “A Consistent Ethic of Life: Continuing the Dialogue,” March, 1984).
- The struggle to defend human life is embodied by Jesus who offers his life for the sake of the life of the world. We are called to no less, as the unified Body, the Church, than to be a prophetic witness to the dignity and value of human life.
- “Grant, therefore, that we may listen with open and generous hearts to every word which proceeds from the mouth of God. Thus we shall learn not only to obey the commandment not to kill human life, but also to revere life, to love it and to foster it” (EV, 51).

5. Fourth reading: The Resurrection – Cultural change emerges from individual commitment.

- “In a word, we can say that the cultural change which we are calling for demands from everyone the courage to adopt a new life-style, consisting in making practical choices – at the personal, family, social and international level – on the basis of a correct scale of values: the primacy of being over having, of the person over things. This renewed life-style involves a passing from indifference to concern for others, from rejection to acceptance of them. Other people are not rivals from whom we must defend ourselves, but brothers and sisters to be supported. They are to be loved from their own sakes and they enrich us by their very presence” (EV, 98).
- This new way of living is a resurrection image for us on two levels:

- First, in the Church, we must strive to be a people of hope and unity as we proclaim the “Gospel of Life”. In-fighting is one of the most destructive forces against our effective proclamation of and participation in the work for life.
  - Our world will be renewed one person at a time: the conversion God is calling us to participate in is a relational reality, calling us deeply into the hope that all suffering and destruction can be redeemed. Our work is to commit ourselves to the life-style changes that proclaim life and invite others to do the same.
6. After the reading of the Gospel of the day, the following text of Blessed John Paul II can be used as a commissioning (from the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 79):

We are the people of life  
because God, in his unconditional love,  
has given us the Gospel of life  
and by this same Gospel  
we have been transformed and saved....

We have been sent....

On our journey we are guided and sustained by the law of love:  
a love which has as its source and model the Son of God made man,  
who by dying gave life to the world.  
We have been sent as a people....

Together we all sense our duty to preach the Gospel of Life,  
to celebrate it in the Liturgy and in our whole existence,  
and to serve it with ... programs and structures  
which support and promote life.

May we proclaim the Gospel of life  
with honesty and love  
to the people of our time,  
to the praise and glory of God,  
the Creator and lover of life.  
Amen.

*(Based on no. 79 and the conclusion of the Encyclical of Blessed John Paul II on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life, Evangelium Vitae)*

#### **IV. Suggestions for the Sunday Mass of the Ascension, May 12**

*“What does it mean to follow Jesus on his journey to Calvary, toward the Cross and his Resurrection? ... He spoke to everyone, without distinction: to the great and the humble ... the powerful and the weak. He brought God's mercy and forgiveness. He healed, consoled, understood. He gave hope. He brought to all the presence of God who cares for every man and woman as a good father and a good mother cares for each of their children....*

*[F]ollowing Jesus not only with moved hearts, means learning to come out of ourselves ... in order to meet others, in order to go toward the edges of our existence, to take the first steps towards our brothers and sisters, especially those who are farthest from us, those who are forgotten, those who need understanding, consolation, and assistance.” – Pope Francis, General Audience, March 27, 2013*

Homily suggestions:

Jesus leaves us that we might find him – in each other.

God is life itself: the current of a beating heart, the whisper of breath, the surrender of death. Through his life, death, Resurrection and Ascension, Jesus taught us about the sacredness of humanity and God’s love for his people. When Jesus ascends into heaven, his followers are afraid they will be alone. But Jesus must leave them if they (and we) are to find him among us.

It is in our families we are first introduced to God’s presence among us. In the tender touches of parents, siblings and grandparents, we discover we are beloved. If this tender love is absent, we discover our longing for it in painful ways. Life was made to be imagined, cradled and nurtured in the family. It is the place we learn to love, and from which we offer love to the world. In all its various forms – from traditional families to single parents and blended and adoptive families, to intergenerational families, to the families created by friends and neighbours when biological families fail – families give us the strength and identity from which to love.

Jesus establishes the Church as a new kind of family – God’s family. He charges his disciples to go out and make disciples of all nations, to bring all of God’s children into his family. Then he leaves, ascending into heaven and leaving the disciples worried they will never be able to be a family without him. While his disciples cling to him and we cling to our loved ones, Jesus reminds us all that we need to love each other into the life that awaits us in God. Jesus’ death and Ascension remind us that God is present to us in life and beyond it.

In this Week for Life and the Family, we are invited to celebrate all the ways God is pouring out his very life in our lives and our families, even while we acknowledge fear, suffering and even death around us. Jesus has poured out his life for us, and his life continues to be poured out in one another. It is for us to celebrate this by our living.

Prayers of the faithful:

With gratitude for the life we have been given and the people who make up our families, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

That the Spirit of God come upon us and calm our fear when life overwhelms us, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For our Church to be experienced as the loving family of God, where all are welcome, forgiven and loved, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the love of the Father to surround and strengthen fathers and mothers of every kind and at every stage, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

That every child in the world will be imagined, wanted, welcomed, celebrated and enjoyed, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the countries of the world to protect and empower families and their special role in bringing new life, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

**V. Suggestions for the Extended Vigil Mass of Pentecost and for the Sunday Liturgy, May 18-19**

*“The Paraclete, who gives different charisms to each of us, unites us in this community of the Church, that worships the Father, the Son, and Him, the Holy Spirit.... The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church through his life-giving and unifying force: out of many, he makes one single body, the Mystical Body of Christ. Let us never yield to pessimism, to that bitterness that the devil offers us every day; let us not yield to pessimism or discouragement.... Christian truth is attractive and persuasive because it responds to the profound need of human life ....”* – Pope Francis, Audience with the College of Cardinals, March 15, 2013

1. The Extended Form of the Vigil Mass can be found in the CCCB edition of the Roman Missal, beginning at page 425.
2. The readings for the Extended Vigil of Pentecost can be found in the CCCB Lectionary for Sundays and Solemnities, page 421. Please note that the Lectionary was published several years before the Missal and there is a discrepancy. The Missal refers to only four readings. It does not contain the former first, fourth and fifth readings which are part of the seven original readings found in the Lectionary.
3. Homily suggestions for the vigil:

The Church is born, planned by God, anticipated by his people, brought into life in faith, and exists to bear witness to the God of Life – in and through our lives.

Like the Easter Vigil, the Pentecost Vigil invites us to trace the action of God through history. Tonight we anticipate the birth of the Church, the longing of God to quench our thirst with his very self. As a couple can dream about a baby long before conception actually occurs, the vigil readings are the anticipation of God’s people finding the fullness of life in the Church. Our lives find their fullness when they are connected to God’s life, through the Church. Our families find this fullness in the same way, by being and becoming domestic churches, places where our lives are anticipated, prepared for, brought into being and nurtured into faith in Jesus. When we do this well, we do it not only for our own family members but for our neighbourhoods and communities, as well as for the whole world. Single, religious, ordained or married, our vocation as God’s people is to offer to the rest of the world the same life that God has given us. During this Week for Life and the Family, spend some time thinking about how you are going to

anticipate, nurture and celebrate life and families in your home and community. May we speak about the family with the same wise words of the Spirit of God: “I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world, and delighting in the children of Adam” (Proverbs 8.30-31; from the first reading for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Year C)

Homily suggestions for the Sunday liturgy:

Our fearful excuses deprive us and others of Life.

When the Spirit descends on the disciples in the upper room, they burst forth, proclaiming the good news in every language. No one will be deprived of the good news. No illness, no culture gap, no sinfulness – nothing stands in the way of hearing the Word, who is Jesus. How often are we standing in the way of the Spirit who is trying to proclaim the good news? “I’d give money to that beggar, but she’ll just spend it on drugs.” “I’d offer forgiveness, but he raped someone I love.” “I’d tell you about Jesus, but you and I don’t speak the same language – or maybe we do, but you wouldn’t understand.” Our excuses get in the way and keep us from truly living the life that God offers us. These excuses are fears that keep us locked in the upper room. Let the fire of the Holy Spirit touch you, rest on you, burn away the excuses, and send you forth!

4. Prayers of the faithful:

With gratitude for the gift of creation and our very lives, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For forgiveness for the ways we have scattered our unity in our pursuit of faith, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the courage to meet God on the mountains of our lives, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For an ever-deepening desire to rejoice with God in the wonder of his people on earth, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For ears to hear the prophets of our own time, who call us to witness to a world in need of God, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the breath of God to bring life to our dry bones, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the fire of the Spirit, that our fears may be burned away and that the Spirit may lead us into the fullness of life, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For hearts set on heaven and lives that bear witness to eternal life, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

With hope for our families and our world, that we might be counted among the adopted sons and daughters of God, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the whole Church and each of our families as domestic churches, that we offer the living water of Jesus to all who are thirsty, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

5. Prayers for groups or for personal and family use:

*Use the adaptation of the prayer from the World Meeting of Families in Milan (see part I), or the following:*

Father of mercy, bring us face to face with our own weakness when we are tempted to judge others. May we find peace and life in allowing you to be the merciful judge of us all.

**VI. Suggestions for a Vigil and for the Mass of Trinity Sunday, May 25-26**

*What matters is “the good of every person upon this earth! ... How many poor people there still are in the world! And what great suffering they have to endure! ... [I]n many of your countries you can attest to the generous activity of Christians who dedicate themselves to helping the sick, orphans, the homeless and all the marginalized, thus striving to make society more humane and more just. But there is another form of poverty! It is the spiritual poverty of our time, which afflicts the so-called richer countries particularly seriously. It is what my much-loved predecessor, Benedict XVI, called the ‘tyranny of relativism’, which makes everyone his own criterion and endangers the coexistence of peoples... There cannot be true peace if everyone is his own criterion, if everyone can always claim exclusively his own rights, without at the same time caring for the good of others, of everyone, on the basis of the nature that unites every human being on this earth.” – Pope Francis, Audience with the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, March 22, 2013*

Dioceses and parishes may wish to connect the Week for Life and the Family with the rest of the Church year by organizing a vigil with vespers on May 25, the Saturday before Trinity Sunday. Similarly, themes and concerns from the Week for Life and the Family can be recapped during the Mass for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity as part of the homily and prayers of the faithful. If it is decided to have a prayer service instead of vespers, the vigil provided as part II could be easily adapted.

1. Homily suggestions for the vigil:

Life must be protected, nurtured and defended at each and every stage of life.

The readings for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity highlight the “pregnancy” and birth of Creation, the sufferings of life, and the glory of the resurrection. We are reminded of the many struggles and opportunities that life presents. Consider re-reading *Evangelium Vitae* in preparation for this homily (see also the homily notes in part III). When Blessed John Paul II called for us to build a culture of life, he did not focus on just a few moments when human life is particularly vulnerable. For the late Pope, examples of our opportunities to minister to life are all-encompassing: receiving and raising children as gifts from God, adoption, foster parenting, caring for the elderly, caring for those with disabilities, providing shelter and refuge to women and children in need,

providing places for addiction rehabilitation, responding to the call for disaster relief, doing medical research to find ways to treat and cure illness within the womb until natural death, working to reduce poverty, protecting the whole of God's creation in the environment, educating about God's plan for human life, caring for the mentally ill, providing and working in care centres for persons with AIDS, establishing social welfare systems, providing marriage and family counselling centres, caring for the dying and their families through palliative and hospice care, and through organ donation. We follow Jesus our Lord and Mary his Mother in offering ourselves to God and to others at every moment of life, in suffering, joy and death, as witnesses to the miracle of life.

2. Homily suggestions for the Sunday liturgy:

Life and love are a mystery to be drawn into.

Just as we never fully understand the mystery of the Trinity, we also fail to understand the mystery of life. Sometimes, we need to stop trying to figure it out and let ourselves be captivated by the mystery. From the very beginning, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have lived in relationship with one another. By the generosity of God, Three in One, we are invited into that relationship of love – rather than simply asked to try to understand it. When we love people well, we learn that we are never finished learning more about each other. In fact, in the deepest friendships and family relationships, there is always more to discover with and in each other. God's mystery of life and love begins in the relationship of love in the Trinity and spills over among us. Let our hearts and minds be captivated by caring for and rejoicing in the good of others, of each and every human life, and for all creation.

3. Prayers of the faithful:

For the most vulnerable in our world: the unborn, the imprisoned, the lonely, the sick and the poor, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For those who suffer at the hands of others, who are at the mercy of natural disasters, and who suffer alone in the silence of their souls, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the rich, the able and the strong to be able to receive the gifts of the poor, the marginalized and the weak, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the deep and unconditional love of God the Father as we seek to love his world, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the obedience and strength of Jesus as we offer our lives for others, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

For the wisdom and openness of the Spirit as we breathe deeply the gift of life and love, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

With gratitude that we have been invited into the mystery of God's very life, we pray to the Lord. **R.**

4. Prayers for groups or for personal and family use:

*Use the adaptation of the prayer from the World Meeting of Families in Milan (see part I), or the following:*

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, animate our living. Help us to forget ourselves, to get caught up in the mystery of your love and life. Let us never forget the need to care for the good of others. Never let us take for granted the mystery of life.