



## 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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#### FEBRUARY 2, 2020 – THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

**Homily Idea:** *Our children are gifts for us to nurture, and to offer back to God.*

Helicopter parenting, living vicariously through our children, and otherwise attempting to control their lives goes against the Gospel of Life. Mary and Joseph offer a powerful witness to parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, godparents, and other friends of children on this Feast of the Presentation. Children are God’s beloved souls, each with a unique calling and mission. Our role, as adults in their lives, is to receive children as gifts, to pray for them and nurture who they are as distinct persons to the best of their ability, and then to present them, day by day, back to God. We are responsible for how well we love them, how fervently we pray for them, how faithfully we serve them, but *not for the outcome of their lives, or for the choices they make in the freedom God has given to them.* May we love them well, and stand in awe and wonder at their capacity, and also at the directions they will go that we could not go ourselves.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the faith to care for our children and entrust them to God’s care, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Mary and Joseph, you took Jesus to the Temple to present Him to God, a sign of what you would do as parents over and over again in loving Jesus. Pray for us, that we might follow your example, and that we might commend our love for the children in our lives to your beloved Son for purification and for strength in loving children well. Amen.

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## FEBRUARY 9, 2020 – 5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *Justice work is essential to our witness to the dignity of human life as a light for all nations.*

How many of our neighbours think of Christians as the most generous and responsive people they know to human suffering? So often, our reputation is hypocrisy. While our declining reputation can be infuriating, when we do so much so well, often our reputation is well earned. In a world where Christianity is looked on with skepticism, our witness becomes even more important. Isaiah reminds us where to start: share your bread, shelter the oppressed, clothe the naked, and do not turn your back on your people. When people ask why you are tithing, why you give from your own need, why you keep forgiving, be prepared with an answer: God in His mercy has given us everything and so we strive to follow His example. If we care for people's souls, we will care also for their bodies, striving to build God's Kingdom here on earth, "that they may see ... good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the generosity and commitment to justice that bear witness to the dignity of human life, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of justice, you have called us to give from what we have received for the benefit of all. Loosen our grip on what we cling to out of fear, and give us hearts to care practically for all those who suffer. May our witness inspire others to come to know and follow you. Amen.

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## FEBRUARY 16, 2020 – 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *Sometimes we choose death because it is more comfortable than choosing life.*

The first reading from Sirach has such a compelling and strange reminder: before us are life and death, good and evil, whichever we choose will be given to us. It's strange, isn't it, to think that when offered these choices anyone would freely choose evil and death? But we do, and the Gospel reading tells us why, albeit in a strange way if we read it literally! When Jesus says, "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away," He isn't suggesting literal mutilation of the parts of our bodies or souls that give into temptation. He is reminding us that sin takes root in our habits and attitudes, and often death and evil come to feel more comfortable than life and goodness. We become blind to what is good when sin gets familiar and we cling to the things that hurt us. How often do we regret a vindictive or angry word but seem unable to choose silence or kindness? Yet what we choose is in fact what we get. When we find this happening to us and we are given the grace to see where we have been choosing death, we get to choose again. Get to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, see a counsellor, apologize to those you've hurt, and do the work that will support God's rooting out your attachment to sin. Choose life!

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For the courage to choose life when it means letting go of our attachment to sin and death, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Baptised Jesus, you whisper over each of us the words your Father spoke over you: "This is my Beloved; with you I am well pleased." May we be people who hear you speaking this over us, who believe it, and who proclaim it over all your people wherever we find them. Amen

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## **FEBRUARY 23, 2020 – 7<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A**

**Homily Idea:** *A witness to profound peace is a witness to God's very life.*

Moses proclaims in the first reading that God is asking us to be holy as God is holy, and that we are never justified in sin if or when our brothers and sisters behave badly. This is easy to say and hard to live. When Jesus says we are not to offer resistance to evil people, He isn't telling us to become doormats. He is asking us not to return evil with evil, but to respond with the loving actions of prayer, extending love and generosity to enemies, and to offer kindness in all situations, even while we recognize and work against evil taking root in ourselves and the world. Peacemaking is not passive or easy, but it is our calling to witness how God works.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For peaceful and loving responses to evil in our world, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Holy God, help us to follow you in responding to evil with perfect love. May our witness effectively build your Kingdom of mercy and love. Amen.

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