



**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.

JANUARY 1, 2020 – SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

Homily Idea: *Treasure God’s gifts for you in your heart.*

Part of what makes Mary such a beautiful example of faith is that she receives God’s plan and gifts for her. She hears the things the shepherds and prophets say about her Son and she ponders them. Mary holds the curious promises like a treasure in her heart. So many of us are afraid of God’s plan, doubt it when we don’t understand, or try to replace it with a plan of our own. Instead, we can follow Mary’s example of faith and hold God’s gifts with wonder. We can turn them over with the eyes of faith, hold them in our hearts like treasures, and trust God is holding us the same way He held Mary and Joseph and Jesus.

Prayer of the Faithful: For trust to treasure God’s plan in our hearts with Mary, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Mary, Mother of God, you held God’s plans for you with wonder and awe. May we walk in your example, storing up God’s promises like treasures, especially when we do not yet understand. Amen.

JANUARY 5, 2020 – SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, Year A

Homily Idea: *What is good and true and beautiful in every culture comes from God and honours God.*

There is a great deal of racism and violence in the world right now, even here in Canada. The visit of the Magi to Jesus serves as an important antidote to racism, and grounds us in Church teaching on inter-religious dialogue and human dignity. Catholic faith proclaims there is only one God, and everything in every culture that is true, good and beautiful comes from God and honours God. The Magi, believed to have come from cultures and religious perspectives other than those of Mary and Joseph, bear witness to inter-religious and inter-cultural friendship and honour. God desires us to learn from each other, to be respectful, and to honour what is good, even and especially in those who are different from us.

Prayer of the Faithful: For opportunities to meet and learn from people who are different from ourselves, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the star, the Wise Men from afar recognized your glory and came to you in the manger. May we look as hard as the Magi to find you, especially when you lead us to places and people we have not expected. Amen.

JANUARY 12, 2020 – FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Homily Idea: *Belonging is for everyone.*

The readings present two challenges to belonging in our faith community which we still encounter today. First, that we aren't good enough somehow (because our history hasn't been really Christian, or before then really Jewish). Secondly, we are too good (which is what John said of Jesus). Peter's line at the opening of the second reading is really the key, however: "God shows no partiality." Isaiah's reading indicates that God always meant His special relationship with Israel to be a blessing for all nations, and Jesus' death and Resurrection opens the covenant beyond the circumcised. Jesus is baptized not for the forgiveness of sins but as a participation in the universality of belonging to God's family. Our faith is not just for us. It is meant to be a gift to the world, offering God's love and belonging to all people, by our care and, should they choose, by baptism with Jesus.

Prayer of the Faithful: For all people longing to belong, 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 your people wherever we find them. Amen.

JANUARY 19, 2020 – 2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *It is too small a thing to be good; we are called to be a part of God's saving plan for the world.*

John the Baptist proclaims Jesus as the Messiah. Paul reminds the church in Corinth of their sainthood. Faith is always about more than just what is good for us. It is always about all of God's people too. We live in a world where people sometimes feel as though it is enough to be good people. Of course, being good, making good choices, being a force for good is very pleasing to God. But goodness alone is not the end God has in mind. He intends to draw the whole world to Himself and asks us to do it with Him. The goodness is ordered toward the eternal reconciliation of all people and creation. As Isaiah says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob ...; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to

the end of the earth.” Our faith never ends with us, but will always call us out in service to those hurting and most in need.

Prayer of the Faithful: For dissatisfaction with a faith that serves only ourselves, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of Jacob and Israel, John and Paul, and each of us, make us dissatisfied with a faith that serves only ourselves. Draw us deeply into your desire to be reconciled with the whole world. Complicate our lives with the conviction to work toward peace and healing with all people. Amen.

JANUARY 26, 2020 – 3RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Life in God draws us into a diverse unity, not division.*

In the Gospel, Jesus calls four men: Simon (Peter) and Andrew, James and John. Each of them sets down his net and follows Jesus. By the time the second reading was written, people had begun to follow Jesus’ first followers and they had preferences, as we all do! Some of us prefer Pope Francis’ witness while others loved Pope Benedict’s theology. Some of us try to serve the poor as did Saint Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa), at the same time others try to pray as did Mother Angelica. Saints and Popes, teachers and preachers all point us to Jesus. We need people of faith to teach and inspire us but, ultimately, we all follow Jesus. The diversity of charism, prayer, devotion, service, and practice in the Church needs to be held in unity. Otherwise, we give into the temptation to division, which detracts from our ability to participate in God’s loving and healing the world.

Prayer of the Faithful: For respectful unity in a gloriously diverse Church, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God, you have called your people by name and each images you in unique ways. Draw us to the saints living on earth and in heaven to help us along the way. Protect us from demonizing those whose methods and inspirations differ from our own. Draw us into a unity that celebrates diversity and transcends differences. Amen.
