



**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.

MARCH 1, 2020 – 1ST SUNDAY OF LENT, Year A

Homily Idea: *Our virtue is as (and more) significant than our sin for the life of the world.*

Here we are in Lent. These opening Sunday readings are a beautiful reminder for us to turn away from sin so we can choose righteousness. Our sacrifice and discipline need to turn us toward renewed life because “just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s righteousness the many will be made righteous.” God’s best plan for redeeming our sinfulness is one person’s virtue. Our turning back to God, and away from sin, is not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of the world. Every act of virtue, every sacrifice, and every effort to turn from sin is a window for God’s grace to be multiplied for the world in and through our participation in divine life. Let’s use this Lent to bring more life into our lives and into the world.

Prayer of the Faithful: For a turning toward God that changes our lives and the world, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, you saved us by your righteousness. Draw our Lenten promises into your redeeming love for the world. May our sacrifices be a participation in new life for the world. Amen.

MARCH 8, 2020 – 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT, Year A

Homily Idea: *God is sending new life into the world, as it is right now.*

The miracle of the Transfiguration is that the disciples are granted a spiritual vision of their present reality. Right there on the mountain, Jesus is communing with the Saints. He does this whether or not the disciples see it, but the vision is shocking. The first reading is no less shocking: God promises Abraham a great nation from his yet childless bloodline. God is working miracles of new life in every generation and, if we had eyes to see it, we too would be transfixed. As it is, our responsibility in faith is to lean into the promise that God is working miracles through our right-now life, whether or not we can see it. If your life is in a hard season or your Lenten sacrifices seem already overwhelming, lean in with faith – this is the stuff of ordinary and extraordinary miracles.

Prayer of the Faithful: For faith in God working miracles of life in the moments of our lives, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Transfigured Jesus, help us trust in the extraordinary significance of our ordinary lives. May we have hearts that trust you are at work when our vision fails us, and eyes to see when you grace us with sight of your work. Amen.

MARCH 15, 2020 – 3RD SUNDAY OF LENT, Year A

Homily Idea: *How long will the signs of life sustain you?*

The miracle at Meribah and the conversation with the woman at the well are such beautiful mountaintop moments. But what happens to the Israelites and the woman in the hours and days that follow? After such significant signs, most of us find our faith wanes. We lose our sense of God's closeness, and the mundane reality of living every day makes us forgetful, or worse, entitled. Signs and wonders, moments of intimacy with God, and other mountaintop experiences are not going to be our everyday experience. In between these gifts, we are called to faith that God is at work. In the second reading, Paul reminds us that "hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts." How are you leaning into hope at this stage in Lent, trusting that God is working out a resurrection yet to come?

Prayer of the Faithful: For hope to sustain us between the mountaintop experiences of faith, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of water from stone, and grace at a well, soften our hearts with hope that you will bring about the new life we long for, especially when we struggle to see what you are doing. May we be filled with hope now and always. Amen.

MARCH 22, 2020 – 4TH SUNDAY OF LENT, Year A

Homily Idea: *He has life for those who can admit they cannot see.*

Everything about this Gospel comes down to who we identify with. As we read, it is so easy to love the blind man in the story, and the blind man in us. We want to be healed and celebrated for God at work in us. But where are the Pharisee corners of our hearts, where we delight in our own privilege and refuse to see the ways that our blessings cause hardship for others? Who do we make fun of, belittle, or feel better than? Whose are the stories we ignore or rewrite to suit our comfort? The truth is that all of us, on this side of heaven, are both the blind man in need of healing, and the Pharisee trying to block the healing work of Jesus. Until we can identify with the Pharisee, we will remain unhealed by our own self-righteous choosing.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage and humility to admit we need to be healed, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Healing Jesus, touch our wounds with your healing hands. Help us to see where we need you, and prevent us from restricting the healing work you offer others. Shape us to love your people, sinners and saints. Amen.

MARCH 29, 2020 – 5TH SUNDAY OF LENT, Year A

Homily Idea: *How God longs to walk into the graves of our lives and restore life!*

From Ezekiel's prophecy to the raising of Lazarus, God was foreshadowing the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. Since Jesus' death and rising, God has been working the same story over and over again. He brings new life out of ashes. Our Lenten sacrifices are meant to bring us face to face with our own insufficiency, so we can practise relying on Jesus who will work new life out of every death. Whether your pain is currently rooted in a spiritual practice or in a deep season of suffering in your life, our promise is proclaimed in the Psalm: "With the Lord there is steadfast love and the power to redeem." Rest easy, beloved children of God. He is with us in the graves – in the losses, pains and dying of our lives, loving us without end. And He will waste none of it in working out new life by the Spirit, if we can keep walking with Him through the crucifixion in love.

Prayer of the Faithful: For trust that God is with us in every grave, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Steadfast Spirit, grow in us awareness of your constant love and movement. Help us to walk through shadows and graves, close to your love and undying in our trust that you are at work for our good and the good of the world. Amen.
