



**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.

MAY 3, 2020 – 4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year A

Homily Idea: *Repentance is the way of life.*

When we fall short of what God asks of us, we can be overwhelmed by shame, hide in fear, plagued by guilt. We have all kinds of coping mechanisms to deal with these feelings: justification, avoidance, indifference, self-righteousness, and hardening, just to name a few! The way Jesus has taught is repentance: to turn back to Him with love and simply say we are sorry, allowing ourselves to be loved precisely where we feel the most vulnerable. It’s a narrow gate, not because God wants to limit those who come, but because it requires so much courage to choose repentance and forgiveness. It is the only response that offers us true life. We can trust our broken hearts to the One who loves us and wants to set us free.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to repent and let ourselves be loved, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, the Good Shepherd, you offer us forgiveness as soon as we ask. Help us to turn toward you when we have failed, and to receive your mercy with gratitude. Amen.
Alleluia!

MAY 10, 2020 – 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year A

Homily Idea: *True life is learning to let God be enough for you, as He appears to you today.*

For as long as there have been people, there has been difficulty in trusting in God. We are always looking for another sign, irrefutable proof we have found God. The thing about faith is it requires us to place our trust constantly in God, however He manifests Himself. For Thomas and Philip in the Gospel today, they are asking for a roadmap and a sight of the Father. Jesus reminds them He, Himself, is the presence of God for today. Abundant life invites us to let God be enough for us, in whatever form He shows Himself today. Sometimes it is a neighbour's kindness or the words in a devotional. Sometimes it might be the way the light pours in the window, and sometimes we may not feel like we saw Him at all. It takes a lifetime of practice to keep allowing God to be enough for us, on God's terms.

Prayer of the Faithful: For faith that allows God to be enough for us, however He shows up today, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Present Father, you have promised we will never be alone. Teach us to put our trust in you, to scour our world for signs of your presence, and to trust you are with us even when we struggle to see and feel you. Amen. Alleluia!

MAY 17, 2020 – 6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year A

Homily Idea: *We never suffer alone when we embrace abundant life.*

From time to time, it is tempting to think faith should offer us special protection from suffering. Today's readings remind us that while healing and freedom from suffering are sometimes a gift we receive (like those healed in Samaria), God has promised we will never be alone in the world. The Gospel assures us the Spirit is with us, that we will not be left as orphans, that God will reveal Himself to us when we seek Him. When life is hard, it can be difficult to feel this promised presence, especially when we desire for the suffering to be taken away. The second reading reminds us that we get a choice in how we suffer, whether we choose the good even when it is hard, or suffer the damaging effects of choosing sin, alongside circumstances that bring suffering. When we embrace the abundant life God offers, we choose to trust in the promise we are not alone in pain – even when it is difficult to feel that. We surrender ourselves in trusting God will use our pain, as He used Jesus' suffering, to bring new life through death.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the strength to embrace God's presence and life in the midst of suffering, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Spirit of Truth, draw close to us in seasons of suffering and help us to know your presence. Protect us from believing lies, giving into temptations, and despairing. Give us the strength to trust that the Father who loves us will bring Resurrection and new life from the hardest of circumstances. Amen. Alleluia!

MAY 24, 2020 – THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD (Solemnity)

Homily Idea: *We need constant perspective shifts to see the life God has for us.*

In the first reading, angels appear to the disciples to ask why are they looking up at the sky. In the Gospel, the disciples are looking at Jesus and doubting Him. Our first responses to God's action often include confusion,

doubt and uncertainty. This is completely normal – the call is to let God change us, challenge us, transform us. When we persist in faithfulness, following Him despite our fumbling first responses, our hearts are enlightened, we come to fine hope, and we delight in the riches of glory that come as we see things God’s way. It is often the case that we can laugh at our first response when we later understand differently what God was up to that we could not see.

Prayer of the Faithful: For the desire to have God shift our perspective towards His plan for our lives, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of Eternal Vision, open our eyes to see your ways, our hearts to turn toward your way of life. Help us to be gentle with our own and others’ doubts and confusion, and to have mercy and good humour when our eyes and hearts are opened. Amen. Alleluia!

MAY 31, 2020 – PENTECOST SUNDAY (Solemnity)

Homily Idea: *Unity in diversity is the way of life.*

In the first reading, we have a beautiful image of the birthday of the Church: people of different languages, cultures, backgrounds and experiences gathered together to follow Jesus and take His love to the world. Today, we are a massive international community of Catholic believers, and many other Christians as well. Catholic means universal, drawing in all of God’s people. Still, we know there are people in our churches who pray differently than we like to, who have different opinions on things in the Church and in the world, who wear different clothes, or parent differently. On this birthday of the Church, it is wise for us to reflect on and remember that being members of the same Church does not mean we are all the same. We should be challenged to build communities of love that make space for our differences, and strive to love the way God loves.

Prayer of the Faithful: For a Church at home and internationally that celebrates our diversity and draws us into deeper unity in Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God in Three Persons, our Church is an image of your diversity and your unity. Help us celebrate and seek to understand our differences, and to be witnesses to unity in the midst of great and beautiful diversity. Amen. Alleluia!
