



**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.

---

**AUGUST 2, 2020 – 18<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A**

**Homily Idea:** *God’s life is for all, and we can extend it to others or deny it to them.*

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah reminds us that God desires for all to have abundant life, for each person’s hunger, thirst and need to be met abundantly – without need to pay, without demonstrating the “right behaviour”, without earning the gifts of life. In the Gospel, Jesus challenges the disciples beyond the reality they can see: “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.” The miracle is there is enough for us all, if we will do things differently than we have. Today’s world is challenging: addictions, poverty, unequal distribution of resources, greed, politics – so many things threaten the lives of God’s people. Will we be agents of getting food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, homes to the homeless, and relief to the suffering, or will we use excuses, apathy, and self-protection to stand in the way? It’s not about politics – it’s about following God who extends life to all.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For willingness to be agents of God’s unconditional love – and life – for all people, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of the hungry, teach us to give to those most in need. Blind us to the excuses we use to measure worthiness, in favour of seeing all your people as destined to abundant life. Shake us out of our complacency and self-protection, that we may never stand in the way of others' receiving what they need to thrive. Amen.

---

## **AUGUST 9, 2020 – 19<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A**

**Homily Idea:** *The Word of Life can be quiet and tremendously difficult.*

Have you ever noticed Elijah hides when he hears God's voice? Or that Peter only walks on water because he doesn't believe Jesus and asks for proof of His identity? We have such strange responses to God's Word of Life! And here is the beautiful thing: Jesus keeps speaking to us. We do not need to be afraid or ashamed of our responses; we need to tune our ears, eyes and hearts to keep listening and watching for God's word for us. When Jesus simply tells Peter to come, Peter steps out, but then becomes afraid. Jesus is there to catch him, and names the doubt so Peter can move past it. It has always been hard for people to hear, and then to trust the still small voice. As Mother Teresa advised: listen anyway. Today is the day to hear and respond – however imperfectly – to God's constant Word of Life.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For ears to hear and hearts to follow the Word of Life, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of the silence and of the storm, help us hear you. Whatever word you give to each of us, teach us to respond without judging our instincts, trusting you will catch us and keep calling us back to you when fears and doubts creep in. Help us walk on the waters of our own stormy seasons, because you are with us. Amen.

---

## **AUGUST 16, 2020 – 20<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A**

**Homily Idea:** *God is not okay with the systems that oppress people and deny them abundant life.*

There is profound challenging happening in this difficult Gospel reading. The interplay between Canaanite and Israelite cultures and notions about animals' place in the household, belonging in the Kingdom of God, and the primary place of those on the margins – these are all at work. Jesus' comment about the dogs is not a divine affirmation of hierarchies of grace, but rather a divine challenge to the systems that keep people down. The Canaanite woman rises to the challenge and claims her place among the saints, and Jesus proclaims the truth of her knowledge that salvation is not for a select few. In the midst of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, water crises on reservations, human trafficking, lack of housing, addictions, and poverty, it is profoundly clear God is not okay with the systems that keep some people begging while others live comfortably or lavishly. God is at the margins, asking all of us to be agents of healing, health and love for those most frequently ignored and excluded.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For outrage at injustice, and action that heals and liberates those who suffer, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of the last and the least, pull us to the margins where we will see and be outraged by the suffering of your people. Transform our outrage into action that walks alongside the suffering to support their healing and freedom, as well as our own. Amen.

---

## AUGUST 23, 2020 – 21<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *Abundant life is being worked in and through the lowly and the imperfect.*

Have you ever experienced a loss within yourself – of a job or status, of reputation or role – and felt your faith entitled you to have kept your position? Or have you watched as someone with a less than perfect past was elevated to leadership and felt superiority? Today's readings remind us we are all sinners, and that God uses our failures just as surely as He uses our gifts. In the midst of the abuse crisis, we cannot use this truth to gloss over the sins of our leaders at the expense of the pain or lack of protection of victims or potential victims. The readings are intended to remind us that our losses can be God's gains, and that our own recognition of and repentance for our sin makes us more pliable to God, rather than less. We must sink deep into God's mercy, allow our self and others room to make mistakes, and be available for God to work in and through us, even while we make every effort to protect ourselves and each other from harm.

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For trust in God's work through lowly and imperfect people, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** God of imperfection, you allow us to fall and others to rise. You work through our weakness as well as our strength. Give us humility to believe you can make life rise from our ashes, and give us the strength to name our own sin and that of others in order to protect those victimized by sin. May your will be done in our rising and our falling, without exception. Amen.

---

## AUGUST 30, 2020 – 22<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

**Homily Idea:** *There is life for us even in humiliation and longing.*

When He reprimands Peter with "Get behind me, Satan," Jesus calls out a particularly powerful lie that most of us believe at a deep level: that humiliation, suffering, longing and lack are signs of a lack of God's favour. In God's Kingdom, these realities are part of our human existence, and mechanisms God uses for good. When Jesus begins to prepare His followers for His own suffering and death, they resist. When Peter tries to proclaim Jesus is above these realities, Jesus rebukes him and acknowledges this resistance is a temptation that can become an obstacle to trusting in the way God works. Jesus is not suggesting these realities are pleasant or even fully good, but is challenging Himself and us to be open to the divine life at work in all of human existence. If we are experiencing something, God can use it for good, *if we will surrender it to Him.*

**Prayer of the Faithful:** For surrender to God's power and life in the midst of humiliation, suffering, longing, and lack, we pray to the Lord.

**Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families:** Transforming God, give us the gift of surrendering to your life-giving power in the midst of humiliation, suffering, longing, and lack. Help us depend on your strength in the midst of adversity, giving over our resistance to your Resurrection. Amen.

---