



**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.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2020 – 23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Life flows from facing difficulties with love.*

These readings present some of the most difficult parts of following Jesus: naming and calling out sin and failure within our communities. We are called to be people who pursue deep faithfulness in living with integrity and virtue. There are two parts to this work. The first is more implicit in the second reading and the Psalm. We need to be mindful of ourselves first, being attentive to keeping our hearts open and tender, yet watching for our own temptations and sins against love and the Commandments. If we have not checked our own sinfulness and aren’t open to being corrected by others, then we need to start there. Then, and only then, when we see challenges or sin in others, we can be tempted to avoid confrontation because it feels “nicer”. Love, however, does not avoid speaking directly about it, first privately, then with others if needed, and finally breaking off a relationship, always with the aim of drawing us all closer to Christ in love. Most of us need to practise, so we are in good company!

Prayer of the Faithful: For wisdom, humility, and love in seeking to root out our own sin and confront the sin of others, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Lord God, you have called us to have and nurture tender hearts. Help us see our own shortcomings with compassion, and see and speak out to call others deeper when Love invites us to do so. Amen.

SEPTEMBER 13, 2020 – 24TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Forgiveness is a path to life.*

The opening lines of the first reading remind us that anger and wrath can be very destructive when we hold on to them. Designed to warn us about danger, anger and wrath are emotional responses that call us to address challenges, rather than being emotional places to camp out or live in long-term. What is the solution? The readings this week suggest that mercy and forgiveness are key. This does not mean letting injustice take over, allowing abusive people to walk all over victims, or repressing our anger. Jesus is asking us to participate in God's merciful way of being, even while we change unjust systems and situations, set healthy boundaries, and do the work of healing wounds. When we walk through life addressing the challenges we face, we can feel anger and respond to it, moving through it towards the mercy and forgiveness that set us – and others – free.

Prayer of the Faithful: For wisdom to feel anger and respond to it, so we can move through pain towards forgiveness in God's time, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Merciful God, we have been blessed by your steadfastness in love. Teach us to be slow to anger as you are, and to respond to it with wisdom, that we may move through it towards mercy and forgiveness. Amen.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2020 – 25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *God's life is available to us all – in the ways we each need it.*

The Psalm is a comforting refrain when we hear it spoken to us: "The Lord is near to all who call on Him." But what about when it is spoken to someone we find hard to love? The Gospel invites us to consider that God takes everyone's side, and desires good for each of us according to our unique situations and needs. When we look at the world through this divine lens, Isaiah's words are significant: "My ways are higher than your ways." God's way is abundant life for everyone. This week, look for the places when you feel entitled to more (gifts, ease, grace) than your neighbours, or the places where you resist believing that God desires to bless you. What can you do to participate in God's nearness, for yourself and for others?

Prayer of the Faithful: For trust in and gratitude for God's generous abundance, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Generous Giver, you have poured out life and grace in all things for all people. Teach us to stop hoarding your gifts, and to choose to participate in your abundant generosity. May we grow in our conviction that your grace is enough. Amen.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2020 – 26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year A

Homily Idea: *Abundant life is both belief and right action.*

Most of us find it easier to talk about doing the right thing than actually to do it, and the readings affirm we are not alone in this tension! Being human makes us dependent on God's mercy, as we are just as capable of vice

as we are of virtue. Right here, in the midst of our humanity, Jesus asks us to be people who live faithfully and who are humble enough to turn around and choose again when we get it wrong. If we want abundant life, it is not a one-time decision and then a get-out-of-jail-free card. It is a lifetime of choosing the good, and choosing again when we fail. This week, look for one place where God is asking you to choose again, or to examine whether and how your actions line up with your belief. Turn gently in the direction God is asking you to go.

Prayer of the Faithful: For strong faith and transformed lives, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Living Word, you have spoken life into being and walked among us. You have revealed to us a faith that is alive in our hearts and carried forward through the work of our hands. Help us receive the life you have promised both in our convictions and the way we live. Amen.
