



**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 10:10

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. Being “pro-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? But 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 suggestions for a pro-life homily idea, a prayer of the faithful or an insight which can be used to foster the abundant life that Jesus came to bring to 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, 2021 – SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

Homily Idea: *Our lives have meaning when we say yes to what God asks of us.*

As the first disciple, Mary’s example is powerful because it is so particular. No one else in history has agreed to carry the son of God in her womb. And yet, each of us is called, just as Mary was, to love the people of God entrusted to us, to say yes to the mission that is ours. The reading from Galatians reminds us that we are not slaves to this mission but adopted children of a living God who loves the world in and through us. In Luke’s Gospel, as the shepherds find Jesus lying in a manger, we hear the phrase, “And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” Following Mary’s example, the Holy Mother of God, let us take a moment to reflect and receive the amazing plans God has for each of our lives. How will you say yes to the treasure that is your call in this life?

Prayer of the Faithful: For reverence for and wonder at all that God has asked of each one of us, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Redeemer God, you came to us as a child, born of a woman. In your great humility and meekness, you have held and kept us, shone your light upon us, and been gracious to us. You have looked on us with kindness and given us peace. As we contemplate Mary’s gaze on her newborn child, give us wonder at the particular call that is our own. Give us the grace and courage to welcome you just as she did. Amen.

JANUARY 2, 2021 – SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Homily Idea: *Together, let us journey to adore the miracle of life.*

The gospel acclamation captures such an important part of the gospel of life today: “We saw his star at its rising and we have come to do him homage.” We live in a time when we expect good things to come to us. Too often, we feel entitled to receive what we want and long for. The abundance of food, water, shelter, peace, and stuff can make us blind to the miracles. Do we see when Jesus is pouring out grace for us? Do we practice wonder and awe, and gratitude? Do we return at the end of every blessed day to give praise and thanks to the Author of Life? May we pour out gifts in return for the gifts we have been given, that all might come to know Him.

Prayer of the Faithful: For a heart of worship in the face of the miracles, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of wonder and awe, point us to your miracles. Help us to see them and never take them for granted. May we return with worship and praise to give you thanks, and return your gifts with giving hearts and lives, we pray to the Lord.

JANUARY 9, 2022 – THE FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, Year C

Homily Idea: *Through our baptism in Christ, we become heirs in hope of eternal life.*

Today, we remember an extraordinary moment in the life of Christ. It is an encounter with John the Baptist, God the Father, the Holy Spirit, Jesus and his many followers. While Jesus’ baptism was symbolic in that he was without sin, it was a moment that God’s voice proclaimed Christ as beloved son. Through our own baptism, we live and die and rise again in Christ, becoming adopted sons and daughters, heirs in hope of eternal life. God our Father says to each of us, “this is my beloved son and daughter, in whom I am well pleased.” The baptism of Jesus reminds of our identity and mission; who we are and who we belong to. We are reminded that we are indeed a child of God, redeemed by Christ and made a member of His family. And what does this mean for us? Our mission then is to honour, love and serving those around us, especially those who are forgotten and on the margins. We are sustained through prayer and the sacraments, encouraged to be co-creators with God in building up the Kingdom of God on earth, a kingdom of compassion, justice and love.

Prayer of the Faithful: For a renewed hope in eternal life, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus Christ, beloved son of the Father, transform, restore and heal our relationships within our families, friends and communities. Renew our trust in you and your plan for our lives. May we continue to recognize moments in our lives where the Holy Spirit acts and encourages us to love God and our neighbour more humbly and deeply. Amen.

JANUARY 16, 2022 – 2ND SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *In my family and in my life, do I remember to turn to Jesus in moments of celebration?*

We often turn to God when we are in trouble, in the form of a plea or a request. But how often do we turn to Jesus in moments of celebration? In his first public miracle, Jesus chooses to manifest His glory by blessing a wedding and enriching a feast. The presence of Jesus in the wedding, along with his mother and disciples, is an indication of the value Jesus gave to marriage and family life. Family life is sacred when the love of God is shared and experienced. Let us not forget that we were made for joy, that to enter our true Christian vocation is a celebration. St. John Chrysostom wrote, “Laughter has been implanted in our soul, that the soul may

sometimes be refreshed". We all will certainly face hardship at some point in our lives and Christ's presence will be a steady force for us. Although, let us also remember to celebrate the great joys of life with Christ, to find repose and remedy in laughter and friendship. "The Joy of the Lord is our strength" (Nehemiah 8:10) – let our joy be founded on the hope that transcends all things, believe all things, and welcomes the ways in which Jesus wants to let the wine of gladness overflow in our lives. Let us sit at the feet of Mary and learn to truly listen, and "do whatever He tells you", that is always ordered to the good of the soul and fullness of life.

Prayer of the Faithful: For renewed joy and celebration in our families, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Lord Jesus, you prepare a table for us and your cup overflows. Teach us to do your will in our lives and to proclaim your wonderful deeds you achieve within and for us. Help us to find ways to celebrate you within our families, even in small and simple ways. We pray to the Lord.

JANUARY 23, 2022 – 3RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *We are one body, yet too often we overlook those who are marginalized and forgotten.*

The Scriptures open our hearts to understand God's preferential care and compassion for the sick, the suffering, the dying, the destitute. Jesus has come to heal, restore and make all things new. However, as it is in the world, it is easy to be overwhelmed by all the suffering and injustice we incessantly see. True and meaningful progress can only begin to take place when we go out to those who are most forgotten in our society. We must listen to their stories of distress, abandonment, and misfortune. In these encounters, the Spirit of the Lord is present and anoints our conversations, discernments and decisions. What can I do in my family this week to bring glad tidings to both the materially or spiritually poor?

Prayer of the Faithful: For those who suffer and who are broken hearted, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the broken hearted, help us to continue to listen and be open to the Spirit, not letting ourselves be discouraged. May your Spirit and your Life refresh our souls and enlighten our eyes. Let us set aside time to pray with the Scriptures in our own personal way and together in our families. We pray to the Lord.

JANUARY 30, 2022 – 4TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *When have I ignored or rejected God's word offered by someone close to me?*

"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" – today and every day the Scripture is being fulfilled should we have the ears to hear and the eyes to see. The Word of God is alive, as it has been in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Jesus spoke in the synagogue, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place." Are we able to hear and receive words of wisdom, caution and consolation from those around us? Are we open to people who it's hardest for us to hear from? To see reality as it is, we must start with the hardest reality of all to face—that of sincerely seeing ourselves—to see that we are little, poor and humble. Only then can we hope to look upon our neighbour with humanity, with tenderness, and for the true dignity instilled in their very being, with reverence for the God who dwells within. This type of deep self-knowledge, awareness of our gifts and shortcomings, and this profound love of the other transcends division, misunderstanding, disagreement. This is how we prepare our hearts to receive the "words of the prophet", the word of truth and life in our hearts, and there may it grow and flourish.

Prayer of the Faithful: For openness to humbly receive words of wisdom, caution and consolation, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the prophets, help us to listen to your word. Infuse in our families, friendships and communities' deep bonds of trust, honesty and tenderness. Help us to be open to a culture of encounter and dialogue wherever we find ourselves. Amen.