



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.

February 3, 2013 – FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *We are beloved...before we are born and when we find ourselves rejected.*

The paradox of the readings today offers a beautiful message about life. Each person is the beloved child of God. The Lord knows us in the secret of the womb and has a plan for our lives. While it can be a difficult and dangerous journey to bring a child to birth, some of the most significant pain of our lives comes from doubting our belovedness outside the womb, when we are rejected, cast off or wounded. Jeremiah and Jesus were formed in the secret of their mothers, protected and loved into life. But the gift of birth does not shield them from rejection by the very people they were sent to serve. When we lose a job, receive a diagnosis for an illness, suffer in many ways – will we cling to the promise that we are as beloved in this moment as we were in the womb? Will we recognize the beloved in the other, no matter how broken, and prophesy about the dignity and value of every human life at every stage?

Prayer of the Faithful: For the courage to believe we are God’s beloved children, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God, lover of us all, show us the depth of your love for us. When we are tempted by self-hatred, deprecation and insult, may we hear your still small voice of love inside us. When we see people being rejected, doubted, written off or abandoned, give us courage to name and protect each of your beloved children. Amen.

February 10, 2013 – FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

Homily Idea: *A lifetime of second chances.*

Jesus called sinners throughout salvation history: Isaiah, Paul, Peter, and me. It is normal we feel unworthy of the work God might ask us to do. But we are in good company. Our God offers us a lifetime of second chances. This week, consider those who have been locked up and condemned in our society. As defenders of life, we have to be able to look into prisons and see potential saints. To offer hope of reconciliation and healing is not to discount any wrongs that have been done. Hope is the conviction no one can be reduced only to their sinfulness. God is calling each and every one of his people – me, a sinner, and the inmates filling our prisons. The world needs each of us to respond with Isaiah and say “Here am I; send me.”

Prayer of the Faithful: For healing, reconciliation and hope for us and for those in prison, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: Jesus, prisoner and abolitionist, set us free from the bonds of sin and condemnation. Open our hearts to the power of forgiveness. Set us free of our judgement, hatred and grudges. Make us agents of your reconciliation, forgiveness and healing. Help us set prisoners free. Amen.

February 13, 2013 – ASH WEDNESDAY, Year C

Homily Idea: *Life in ashes.*

One of the greatest gifts of faith is Christian paradox: things that should be opposites are actually able to co-exist in faith. As we mark ourselves with ashes, we see life has deeper meaning when we remember it began and will end with dust. We find life only when we have the humility to repent of our sin and surrender. When we finally let ourselves grieve the death of a loved one; when we offer long overdue forgiveness; when we stop fighting and accept what lies before us, then Life rises from ashes.

Prayer of the Faithful: For eyes to recognize the life that is in the ashes, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of ashes, mark us with the dust of the earth, that we might walk on it through our lives with reverence and humility. When we feel lost and broken, help us to surrender ourselves to the ashes, that we might find life. Amen.

February 17, 2013 – FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT, Year C

Homily Idea: *The life-giving power of lament.*

In the midst of the desert, Jesus puts his trust in the Father and resists the temptations of the devil. As Moses speaks to his people, he reminds them the God they worship brought them out of slavery. Christian life does not remove the desert struggles from our lives. We shouldn't try to pretend there is no difficulty in being joyful. The Psalmist reminds us God goes to the desert with us. When we are scared, tempted, unsure and desperate, to cry out to God is an act of faith, even if we are angry at God. We need to be willing to go with others into their desert places, as a sign of God's presence there, even when we can't change anything.

Prayer of the Faithful: For faith that cries out to God in the deserts we find in our own lives, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of the desert, fill our hungry hearts with faith in you. When we feel alone, help us see you there with us. Give us the courage to cry out to you. Amen.

February 24, 2013 – SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT, Year C

Homily Idea: *Prayer allows us to see with God's eyes.*

Life is filled with all kinds of challenging circumstances. Like Abraham, many people have tasted the hopelessness and disappointment of infertility. Paul recognizes the pain and misunderstanding of living in faith in a world that is indifferent. When Jesus takes his friends to pray on the mountain, everything changes. They see Jesus beside Moses and Elijah. Reality is transfigured, and the disciples have a glimpse of what God is doing through his Son. Prayer nourishes the life God gives us -- because it allows us to see reality with God's eyes, and allows us to be changed by encountering the Lord who gives us life.

Prayer of the Faithful: For a deeper commitment and openness to prayer, we pray to the Lord.

Prayer for Bulletins, Small Groups or Families: God of transfiguration, transform us in prayer. Give us a desire to pray, the discipline to make good intentions a reality, and hearts willing to trust what you show to us in prayer. Amen.
