

***ctkAlive!* Scripture Study**

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020—A Cycle Readings



Photo Courtesy of [Gaelle Marcel](#)
on [unsplash.com](#)

Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, you will find links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

Caution: Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter's path. Instinct says, "Leave the reflection and chase after that link!" Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links. Exception: In the course of these reflections, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.

Opening Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

A Prayer of Thanksgiving in Hard Times

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Sometimes, Lord, when life gets me down,
it's hard to find things to be thankful for.

Open my eyes to see the gifts you've given me in my life.
Thank you for loving me enough to come to earth and die,
so we can live together forever. Amen.

Source: [Crosswalk.com](#) — Crosswalk adapted this content from an online article
"[5 Ways to Be Thankful When Life Isn't Perfect](#)" by Wendy van Eyck.

[Today I am especially grateful for _____.]

Introduction to the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

It's party time! In this weekend's Scripture readings, there's a lot of feasting and abundance. We shall see, however, that not every party has a happy ending for *some* invited guests.

Isaiah 25: 6-10 "On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast."

Nice and encouraging words, but there may not be much "feasting" going on around us these days. Isaiah calls us first to open our eyes . . . then, to see there's something for us to feast on, even in our darkest moments. Pray for light to see the good around you, even with your narrowed vision, dimmed by uncertainty and hardship.

Psalms 23: 1-6 "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. . . ."

We Americans don't like being called "sheep." Nor to think of ourselves as one of hundreds of billions in God's sheepfold, since the first humans walked the earth. Psalm 23 (22 in some bibles) invites us to *recognize* and *share* in the overflowing gifts God makes available to us. Yes, the gifts are there, but only if we open our eyes to the blessings surrounding us every day.

Philippians 4: 12-14, 19-20 "My God will fully supply whatever you need. . . ."

Based on his own life experience, Paul says that, in the highs and lows of our lives, we can find God's generous gifts—if we pray for the kind of spiritual light that allows us to *see in the dark*.

Matthew 22: 1-14 "The kingdom may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son."

This disturbing parable contrasts the joy and celebration of a wedding feast and the fickleness of some invited guests. This latter group considers celebrating with friends and offering support to the newlyweds an unwanted intrusion upon their valuable time. This joyful story turns ugly when these same invitees turn to violence in their refusal.

Finally, there's the mystery of a chosen guest being thrown out for not wearing proper wedding attire. We'll explore together what that's all about.

A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (25: 6-10)

"On this mountain Yahweh Sabaoth will prepare for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, meat full of marrow, fine wine strained. On this mountain he will destroy the pall cast over all peoples, the shroud spread over all nations, and death will be no more. The Lord Yahweh will wipe away the tears from all cheeks and eyes; he will take away the humiliation of his people all over the world: for Yahweh has spoken.

“On that day you will say: ‘This is our God. We have waited for him to save us; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For on this mountain the hand of Yahweh rests.’”

Personal Reflection

“This is our God. We have waited for him to save us; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

These timeless words have something to say about people’s mood in our own communities and many other communities on the planet. We all look forward to emerging from quarantine, tossing away our masks, and returning to what we used to think of as “normal” life.

— *How hard is it for me to keep my spirits up (stay positive) as I face each new day of shelter-in-place? How do I manage to keep a positive attitude for my own well-being and that of those with whom I live.*

“On this mountain he will destroy the pall cast over all peoples, this shroud spread over all nations. . . .” News reports chronicle a rise in domestic violence as the months of shelter-in-place trudge on towards an indefinite conclusion.

— *How do I respond when frayed nerves cause friction among those around me?*

Antiphon: Psalm 23 (1-6) God, shepherd and host: a psalm of confidence

I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life
The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside the still waters;
he restores my soul.

I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life
He guides me through the right paths for his name’s sake.
Although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for you are beside me:
your rod and your staff comfort me.

I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life
You spread a table before me in the presence of my foes.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup is overflowing.
Goodness and kindness will follow me
all the days of my life,
I shall dwell in the house of the Lord as long as I live.

Personal Reflection

“(Yahweh) guides me through the right paths for his name’s sake. Although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are beside me: your rod and your staff comfort me.”

— *How confident am I that God is not off doing other things, instead of walking right beside me through the current storms of my life? Who or what bolsters my confidence?*

“Goodness and kindness will follow me all the days of my life. . . .”

— *Where and in whom do I find the “goodness” and “kindness” of God in my life today? (Be specific and start your goodness/kindness of God list here: _____)
(Continue this thought during your journaling time.)*

From St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians 4 (12-14, 19-20)

“I know what it is to be in want and what it is to have plenty.
I am trained for both: to be hungry or satisfied, to have much or little.
I can do all things in him who strengthens me.
However, you did right in sharing my trials. . . .
God, himself, will provide you with everything you need, according to his riches,
and show you his generosity in Christ Jesus.
Glory to God, our Father, for ever and ever. Amen!”

Personal Reflection

We often sell ourselves short, focusing on what we can’t do, rather than what we can. Paul rejects that sort of personal assessment: “I can do all things in him who strengthens me.”

— *At what point in my life did I think, “I can’t do this” or “. . . can’t do it anymore.” What happened next? If I fought my way through that place and ended up doing what I considered beyond my strength, how did it turn out? How much credit did I give to God? Or did I say, “Wow! Look what I just accomplished!”*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Matthew (22: 33-43)

Jesus continued speaking to them in parables:
“This story throws light on the kingdom of heaven:
“A king gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to call the invited guests to the banquet, but the guests refused to come.

“Again, he sent other servants, instructing them to say to the invited guests, ‘I have prepared a banquet, slaughtered my fattened calves and other animals, and now, everything is ready. Come to the wedding!’

“But they paid no attention and went away, some to their farms, and some to their work.

“Others seized the servants of the king, insulted them and killed them.

“The king was furious. He sent his troops to destroy those murderers and burn their city.

“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is prepared, but the invited guests were not worthy. Go instead to the streets and invite everyone you find to the wedding feast.’

“The servants went out into the streets and gathered all they found, good and bad alike, so that the hall was filled with guests.

“When the king came in to see the wedding guests, he noticed a man not wearing a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in without the wedding clothes?’

“The man remained silent.

“So the king said to his servants, ‘Bind his hands and feet. Throw him into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

“For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Personal Reflection

“The king came in to see the wedding guests and noticed a man not wearing a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in without the wedding clothes?’”

This is fascinating. In telling this story-with-a message, Jesus had something important in mind that went deeper than society’s expectations for proper dress. But what in particular? Think about this, then watch a 2-minute video reflection on this parable. Composer-musician/spiritual guide [JohnMichael Talbot](#) offers insightful comments on the [Parable of the Wedding Feast](#).

— *What do I think of Talbot’s interpretation of the improperly outfitted guest? Do I agree with him? Disagree? Why? What new insight did I gain from Talbot, if any?*

— *When have I been invited to a party or celebration, one I preferred not to attend? Did I go? If I went, did I show my displeasure to those around me? Or did I end up being glad I went and have a good time?*

Shelter-in-Place

Jesus is not political. He does not associate his name with any political party or partisan movement. His concerns are justice and the common good of *all* peoples. It’s a given that no political party, no candidate is perfect. My votes for each national

and local office, even for state propositions and local measures, call for thoughtful discernment. I may end up having to choose what I consider the “lesser of two evils.”

This is a major decision point, *especially for Catholics*. To vote sensibly, I need to weigh both the good and not so good in each candidate and issue in coming to a final decision. (*A greater civic—possibly moral—fault might be my decision not to vote at all!*)

— *How convinced am I that casting my vote for one candidate or issue in favor of another is a moral decision? How willing am I to vote for a candidate I consider as the “lesser of two ‘evils’” in their approach to addressing national and civic issues”?*

Our late pastor, Fr. Brian Joyce, put forth this challenge: “What would Jesus want *me* to do?”

— *How can I be sure my voting decisions represent what Jesus would want me to do? (My answer reveals my basic values, positive or negative.)*

Write about your feelings and your lived experience of these issues during your journaling time (below).

Journaling Prompts

What insights have I gained from reflecting on this weekend’s liturgical readings in light of my current social demands and restrictions. Suggested prompt:

— *After reflecting on the four scriptures, what made the deepest impression on me?*

We mustn’t simply be grateful “recipients” of God’s good gifts. We also need to “give back.”

— *How will this week’s Scriptures and current societal events impact the way I think, live, love—and “give back”—during the week ahead?*

For Inspirational Listening / Reading

Book:

[A Mindful Year: 365 Ways to Find Connection and the Sacred in Everyday Life](#)

by Aria Campbell-Danesh, DCLinPsychol, CPsychol and Seth J. Gillihan, PhD

(These brief daily reflections unite the best age-old wisdom of mindfulness with cognitive behavioral science—the best-tested set of practices for living a life of love and tolerance.)

Note: I have used these reflections almost daily since Jan. 1, 2020 and am always moved by their simple, everyday wisdom.—AJG

Listen:

Using “Alexa” or “Hey, Google,” or Apple Music say, “Play JohnMichael Talbot” and enjoy his many meditative, Scripture-based hymns.

Note: My personal favorite is Talbot’s “Prayer of [St. Teresa of Avila](#)” on YouTube (3 min)--AJG

Preview of Next Session

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 45: 1, 4-6 “I am the Lord; there is no other.”

Psalms 96: 1, 3-5, 7-10 “Sing to the Lord a new song.”

I Thessalonians 1: 1-5 “We give thanks to God always for all of you.”

Matthew 22: 15-25 “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”

Closing Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

Father God, I come to you worn and weary from the hard times
I am walking through.
I come to you seeking shelter. I know I will find security and rest in your shadow.
Father, my circumstances are no match for your great power.
Thank you for being my safe place.
Thank you that I am always welcome beneath your wings.
Thank you for being a fortress I can trust.
Father, I know you can save me from these trials.
I wait patiently for you to help me work things out for my good.
You are always faithful. Let me rest in your faithfulness.
Amen.

Source: aloveworthlivingfor.com

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

The Sunday readings are from [Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition](#)
© 1999, Bernardo Hurault and Patricia Grogan, FCJ. Imprimatur:
Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines

Questions and Commentaries © 2020 [Alfred J. Garrotto](#)
(follow this link to my novel, [Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words](#))