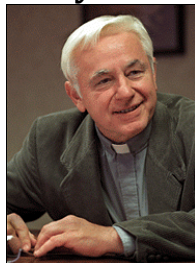


***ctkAlive!* Scripture Study
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time
2020—A Cycle Readings**



Bishop Kenneth Untener (1937-2004)

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, "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 Reflection on Perseverance in Ministry

A Future Not Our Own—Part 1

Note: This reflection/prayer first appeared in a homily written for [Cardinal John Dearden](#) by then-Fr. [Kenneth Untener](#) on the occasion of the Mass for Deceased Priests (1979). Fr. Untener later became bishop of Saginaw, Michigan (1980).

Pope Francis quoted this prayer in his remarks to the Roman Curia (2015). It is often mistakenly attributed to Saint Archbishop [Oscar Romero](#) of El Salvador, who used it often before his [martyrdom](#) in 1980 (click here for this information's [source](#)). Bishop Untener is best known to Christ the King parishioners as the original author of the seasonal Blue Book for Advent and Black Book for Lent.

It helps now and then to step back and take a long view.

The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of
saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives include everything.

(to be continued at the end of this scripture reflection)

Introduction to the 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

This weekend's Scriptures guide us to embrace LOVE as the essence of God's desire for creation and our personal model and roadmap.

Exodus 22: 20-26 "Thus says the Lord. . . ." introduces Moses' teaching about how Yahweh's faithful followers must live their Jewish lives, both in word and behavior. In doing so, Moses puts flesh on the Ten Commandments given at Mt. Sinai.

Psalm 18: 2-4, 47, 51 "I love you, my Lord and my strength."

King David reflects on a time when he was young and a great warrior. His opening words, "I love you," sum up the David's inner feelings and his awareness that Yahweh works mysteriously through him, though he is a flawed man. David knows he cannot maintain his throne and power unless he remains faithful to Yahweh.

I Thessalonians 1: 5-10 "From you, the word of the Lord has sounded forth . . . in every place your faith in God has gone forth."

The Good News (*kerygma*) Paul brought to his new converts contained more than just words (v. 5). He reminds them they witnessed many signs, miracles, and other manifestations of Christ's presence. Paul worried that adequate Christian formation might not be available in view of his sudden departure after three months and looming threats of persecution.

Matthew 22: 34-40 The Pharisees said to Jesus, "Teacher, which commandment in the law of the greatest?"

In effect, the Pharisees ask which of their 613 laws Jesus considers most important. He immediately understands this as one more effort to trap him in a punishable error.

A Reading from the Book of Exodus (22: 20-26)

"You shall not wrong or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not harm the widow or the orphan. If you do harm them and they cry out to me, I will hear them and my anger will blaze and I will kill you with the sword, and your own wives will be widows and your own children orphans. If you lend money to any of my people who are poor, do not act like a moneylender and do not charge him interest. If ever you take a person's cloak as a pledge, you must give it back to him by sunset, for it is all the covering he has for his body. In what else will he sleep? And when he cries to me I will hear him,

Personal Reflection

"If you harm (strangers) . . . I will hear them . . . for I am full of pity."

— *In what way(s) do I recognize this passage as an amplification of the 5th Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill."*

— *Who are the “strangers” in my life? In what ways do I share their joys and sorrows (the real meaning of ‘pity’).*

Some of Moses’ examples and their prescribed punishments seem exaggerated to “sophisticated” 21st c. American Christians.

— *How would I rewrite the above passage using statements and examples that might resonate in the lives of today’s Christians? (Give it a try.)*

Antiphon: Psalm 18 (2-4, 47, 51) David’s gratitude for victory

I love you, Lord, my strength
I love you, O Yahweh, my strength.
Yahweh is my rock, my fortress,
my deliverer and my God,
the rock in whom I take refuge.
my shield, my powerful savior, my stronghold.
I call on Yahweh, who is worthy of praise:
he saves me from my enemies!

I love you, Lord, my strength
Yahweh lives! Praised be my rock!
Exalted be my savior God—
the God who grants me vengeance
and subdues the peoples for me.
He delivers me from my foes;
he exalts me above my adversaries;
he rescues me from violent people.

I love you, Lord, my strength
For this I extol you, O Yahweh, among the nations;
I will sing praise to your name, saying:
“He has given victories to his king;
he has shown his love to his anointed ones,
to David and his descendants forever.”
I love you, Lord, my strength

Personal Reflection

Note: As a lead-in my reflection on Psalm 18, I will listen to “[Father, I Put My Life in Your Hands](#),” by compose/singer JohnMichael Talbot (4 min.).

Talbot’s hymn echoes the spirit of King David’s lyrics.

— *How deeply do I identify with and live the title and lyrics of Talbot’s hymn?*

If my honest examen reveals a shortcoming, what will I do today to align myself more closely with the spirit of this hymn?

Note: If the spirit of Psalm 18 sounds familiar, Jesus spoke these words as he died (Luke 23:46).

“He has given victories to his king; he has shown his love to his anointed ones, to David and his descendants forever.”

— *In what ways can I (as David’s spiritual descendant) include myself in his song of praise? For example: What major and minor victories have I achieved by God’s power?*

“Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, and my God, the rock in whom I take refuge.”

— *When have I witnessed God as my “rock,” my “fortress,” my “deliverer,” my “refuge”? As I reflect on these words, what specific moments come to mind from my past life . . . my present circumstances?*

From St. Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians (1: 5-10)

“The gospel we brought you was such, not only in words. Miracles, the Holy Spirit, and plenty of everything were given to you. You, also, know how we dealt with you for your sake. In return, you became followers of us and of the Lord when, on receiving the word, you experienced the joy of the Holy Spirit, in the midst of great opposition. And you became a model for the faithful of Macedonia and Achaia since, from you, the word of the Lord spread to Macedonia and Achaia, and still farther.

“The faith you have in God has become news in so many places, that we need say no more about it. Others tell of how you welcomed us and turned from idols to the Lord. For you serve the living and true God, and you wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who frees us from impending trial.”

Personal Reflection

As Paul moved on to form other communities in Macedonia and nearby regions, he held up the faith and perseverance of the Ephesian community as a model for others to follow.

— *What would St. Paul say of our Christ the King/St. Stephen’s Community, if he were to speak to other communities about us? What role do I play in building CTK/SF as a Christian community in the spirit of Paul?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Matthew (22: 34-40)

“When the Pharisees heard how Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they assembled together. One of them, a lawyer, questioned him to test him, ‘Teacher, which commandment of the law is the greatest?’

“Jesus answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and most important of the commandments. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets are founded on these two commandments.’”

Personal Reflection

Jesus offers a two-pronged standard as a summation of all 613 Jewish religious commandments: love God . . . love your neighbor.

— *How do I measure up to the “great” commandments? How willing am I to examine my conscience using these two criteria for faithful love and service? (Avoid a facile “Yes” answer.) Let me begin by asking how often I use different forms of the word “hate.” Examples: “I hate _____” or “I can’t stand _____”*

Pharisees and Sadducees are familiar titles to us (we think).

— *Who were the Pharisees and Sadducees in the context first century Judaism? (If I find my knowledge vague about these two groups who harassed Jesus throughout his public life, I can follow these links to refresh my memory: [Pharisee](#) . . . [Sadducee](#).)*

Shelter-in-Place

Election Day is fast approaching. Part of our anticipation is, “Thank God! It will soon be over.” Another reaction might be, “What if . . . Pres. Trump is reelected?” Or “What if Joe Biden becomes president?” One thing is certain. After a winner is declared. Some of us will rejoice. Some might suffer a great letdown.

Jesus’ only concerns are justice, compassion, and the common good of *all* races, nationalities, fiscal statuses, genders, etc.

It’s a given that no political party or 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 creates a major decision point for Catholics. To vote sensibly, I need to weigh both the good and not so good in each candidate and issue.

(A greater civic—possibly moral—fault might be my decision not to vote at all!)

— *How willing am I to vote for a candidate I consider the lesser of two evils in their approach to addressing civic, national, and international issues?*

Our late pastor, Fr. Brian Joyce, left us 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 lived experience of these issues during your journaling time (below).

Journaling Prompts

What insights into my current social demands and restrictions have I gained from reflecting on this weekend's liturgical readings? Suggested prompt:

— *After reflecting on this weekend's scriptures, what impressed me the most?*

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:

[*The Apostle: The Life of Paul* by John Pollock](#)

Master storyteller John Pollock makes Paul and his amazing story come freshly alive, so we can know the Apostle to the Gentiles, as Luke did as he traveled with him. As you turn the pages, you'll sense Paul's motives, his aims and priorities; what mattered to him; and what he was willing to die for.

(I read this book and found it a wonderful way to get to know the man, Paul of Tarsus.—AJG)

Videos:

[JohnMichael Talbot's](#) 2-minute teaching on [Mt. 22: 34-40](#)

[Bishop Robert Barron](#) on [The Meaning of the Gospel](#) (11 min.)

Film:

Romero starring Raul Julia in the title role (1989), now streaming on Amazon Prime Video.

Preview of Next Session

November 1, [Feast of All Saints in Heaven](#) (and those still living among us)

Revelation 7: 2-4, 9-14 "Salvation comes from our God who is seated on the throne; and from the Lamb."

Psalms 24: 1-6 "Who can ascend to the mountain of the Lord?"

I John 3: 1-3 "See what love the Father has bestowed on us!"

Matthew 5: 1-12 "Blessed are. . ." (Beatitudes)

Closing Reflection on Perseverance in Ministry

A Future Not Our Own—Part 2

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water the seeds already planted knowing they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing this.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the
difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders, ministers,
not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Questions?

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

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(follow this link to my novel, [Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words](#))