

# *ctkAlive!* Scripture Study

## 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020—A Cycle Readings



*“Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me.”*

Matthew 10

Image source: [Freepik.com](https://www.freepik.com)

*Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, we have added 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 the lesson, you may have an opportunity to watch or listen to a relevant song or video.*

### **Opening Prayer**

#### **Prayer of Love**

by [St. John Vianney](#)

*(abridged)*

I love You, O my God, and my only desire is to love You until my last breath.

I love You, O infinitely lovable God, and I prefer to die loving You,  
rather than to live for a single moment without loving You.

I love You, O my God and long for heaven,  
only to know the bliss of loving You perfectly.

My God, give me the grace of loving You while I suffer.

Give me the grace of one day breathing my last breath out of love for You.  
The closer I come to my final end, the more I beseech You to intensify  
and perfect my love for You.

Amen.

## Introduction to the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Scriptures

Many Catholics, even those attending Mass regularly, are unaware that for nearly all weekend liturgies (especially in Ordinary Time) the [assemblers of our liturgies](#) have linked the theme of the First Reading with the Gospel of the day. *New American Bible Revised* is the only text used at Masses [in the United States](#). Let's see how this 1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> arrangement applies to this weekend's readings. (See \* at the end of this reflection.)

In II Kings 4: 8-11, 14-16, a childless "rich woman" invites the [Prophet Elisha](#) (*successor to the Prophet Elijah*) to stay in her home whenever he visits her town. She even provides a private room as his own during those periodic visits. For this act of generosity, Elisha returns the favor by prophesying that he will return in a year and, by that time, his benefactor will have given birth to a son.

Let's see how this theme of generosity repeats in Matthew's Gospel (10: 37-40)? First, we notice that Jesus' topsy-turvy value system recurs in his prediction that, "Whoever finds his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life, for my sake, will find it." Jesus closes his discourse with a plea for *kindness to others*: "The one who welcomes a prophet, as a prophet (*as the woman welcomed Elisha*), will receive the reward of a prophet" (as the woman does in the first reading).

In beautiful Psalm 89, one sentence leaps out for attention: "The promises of the Lord **I will sing forever**; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness." It's easier for most of us Catholics to pray in silence (when I pray). Any other prayer mode seems excessive or, as we might say, "not my thing." I let the choir do the singing for me, so I can pray in silence. But, our God—the psalmist's God—wants to fill my heart, mind, and body so fully that, despite my reticence, my heart will manifest my joy in song.

[Those who watched the recent funeral for the murder victim, George Floyd, saw a congregation fully involved in dialogue-response to the speakers' words. Do Catholics need more of that? Yes, but in our own way.]

Romans 6: 3-4, 8-11 "If then we have died with Christ, we shall also live with him." Paul's words demand an answer to the questions, "Have I truly died with Christ? Have I freely born my undeserved crosses and those imposed by failure to take my faith seriously and fully?" Paul tells the Roman community—many of whom would one day die on fiery crosses as street lighting or in the arenas as entertainment for the masses—to accept the smaller, daily deaths of life to be worthy of the joy that lies on the other side of each major/minor experience of death.

## **First Reading from the Second Book of Kings (4: 8-11, 14-16)**

“One day Elisha went to Shunem, and a [rich woman](#) invited him to eat. Afterward, whenever he went to that town, he would go to her house to eat. The woman said to her husband, ‘See, this man who constantly passes by our house is a holy man of God. If you want, we can make a small upper room for him and place a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp. So when he comes, he may stay and rest.’

“One day when Elisha came, he went to the upper room and lay down. Elisha said to Gehazi [*his servant*], ‘What can we do for her?’

“The young man answered, ‘She has no children and her husband is now old.’

“So Elisha said to him, ‘Call her.’

“The young man called her; and as the woman stood by the door, Elisha said, ‘By this time next year, you will hold a son in your arms.’

“She answered, ‘No, my lord, O man of God, you are deceiving your maidservant.’”

### **Personal Reflection**

Note how the woman responds to Elisha’s prophecy as too good to be true.

- *When have I received a promise that I dismissed as “too good to be true”?*
- *How am I being called today, as Elisha was, to bolster another person’s faith and courage?*

## **Antiphon: Psalm 89 (2-3, 16-19)**

*The magnificent Promises of God*

*Forever, I will sing the goodness of the Lord.*

I will sing forever, O Yahweh, of your love,  
and proclaim your faithfulness from age to age.

I will declare how steadfast is your love,  
how firm your faithfulness.

*Forever, I will sing the goodness of the Lord.*

Blessed is the people who know your praise.  
They walk in the light of your face.  
They celebrate all day your name,  
and your protection lifts them up.

*Forever, I will sing the goodness of the Lord.*

You give us glory and power;  
and your favor gives us victory.  
Our king is in the hands of Yahweh;  
the God of Israel is our shield.

*Forever, I will sing the goodness of the Lord.*

### Personal Reflection

“I will declare how steadfast is your love, how firm your faithfulness.”

— *When have I told someone, be that person a close friend or stranger: “God is so good to me.” What were the circumstances at the time? How was my sharing received?*

“Forever, I will sing the goodness of the Lord.” Community singing (prior to covid-19 and outdoor Masses) *seemed* to be on the decline at our weekend liturgies, despite the slides used at Mass at Christ the King.

— *How comfortable am I raising my voice in song during our liturgies? If most of the time I say to myself, “Let the choir do all the singing,” what excuse do I give to God for not raising my voice in songs of praise?*

— *How aware am I that, like the psalmist, I too am called by my baptismal grace to “sing the goodness of the Lord”? When was the last time I shared with another something God had done for me, noticeably answering my prayer?*

### **Second Reading: St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans (6: 3-4, 8-11)**

“Don’t you know, that in baptism, which unites us to Christ, we are all baptized and plunged into his death? By this baptism in his death, we were buried with Christ and, as Christ was raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father, we begin walking in a new life.

“But, if we have died with Christ, we believe we will also live with him. We know that Christ, once risen from the dead, will not die again, and death has no more dominion over him. For, by dying, he is dead to sin, once and for all, and, now, the life that he lives, is life with God.”

### Personal Reflection

*Note: Recall from last week’s reflection that Romans is the only letter St. Paul wrote to a Christian community he had not yet visited. The community consisted of both Jewish*

*and pagan converts, struggling to co-exist and find common ground despite their deep social and historical differences.*

Baptism is not simply something we did (or was done to us) at some distinct moment in our lives. The sacrament is a reality that we are called to LIVE daily.

— *If you have the information at hand, find the answers to these questions: When was I baptized? In what Christian faith community? Who were my godparents?*

“ . . . as Christ was raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father, we begin walking in a new life.”

— *If I consider my baptism a one-and-done event, how do I now understand St. Paul’s use of the action-filled statement, “We begin walking in a new life.”*

— *How might focusing on Paul’s words today make a difference in my commitment to Christ? In other words, what evidence shows that I am “walking in a new life.”*

### **Proclamation from the Gospel of Matthew (10: 37-42)**

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life, for my sake, will find it. Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes him who sent me. The one who welcomes a prophet, as a prophet, will receive the reward of a prophet; the one who welcomes a just man, because he is a just man, will receive the reward of a just man. And, if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, because he is my disciple, I assure you he will not go unrewarded.”

### **Personal Reflection**

“ . . . more than me . . . more than me . . . ”

— *Repeat aloud the above words. Say it gain, several times—slowly. Is there anyone or anything I love and cherish “more than” Jesus, who died for me? If there is, can I name it or that person (here in the privacy of my room). To make it even more real, write it down (then tear it up so no one else will find it).*

— *How might these same words of Jesus serve as a challenge, a wake-up call, to look at my life, my loves, and my priorities in life?*

## **Shelter-in-Place and the “George Floyd” Aftermath**

The demand for equal justice in our society seems to have awakened the consciences of most Americans in a new and different way. People didn’t just protest one murder of a black man at the hands of sworn servants of the people in their jurisdictions. Sadly, the killing has even continued here in the U.S. The demand for justice for minorities, especially African Americans, has echoed around the world. This reminds us of the spiritual sung by enslaved people in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> c. South.

- Take a few minutes to listen the mournful “[Go down Moses](#): Let my people go.”

— *Other than forbidding the buying and selling of slaves in America, what did Abraham Lincoln’s [Emancipation Proclamation](#) (January 1, 1863) change in the everyday lives of the newly freed slaves? Recall that the Civil War had not yet ended and its outcome was in still doubt.*

President Lincoln paid the highest price possible for his courageous proclamation—his own life (April 15, 1865). Like Jesus, Lincoln, and Rev. Martin Luther King, countless others have lost their lives for speaking truth to evil (think of the many prophets murdered in Israel and during my own lifetime).

— *Can I imagine myself “going to the dark side,” rather than having the courage to speak truth to evil? At what point would I draw the line and say, “not a step farther,” even if my life were at stake?*

## **Journaling Prompts**

Take some time to write about the insights gained from reflecting on the readings for the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time and on recent calls to end racial discrimination. Suggested prompts:

— *What is the first thought that comes to mind?*

We mustn’t simply be grateful “recipients” of God’s good gifts. We need to be “givers,” too.

— *What difference will this week’s Scriptures and current societal events make in how I think, live, love—and “give back”—during the week ahead?*

## **Questions**

Feel free to send any questions or comments you might have to [ctkAlive@ctkph.org](mailto:ctkAlive@ctkph.org)

## **Preview of Next Session**

14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Zechariah 9: 9-10 “Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion; shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem”

Psalm 145: 1-2, 8-11, 13-14 “I will praise your name forever, my king and my God.”

Romans 8: 9, 11-13 “You are not in the flesh . . . you are in the spirit, I only the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

Matthew 11: 25-30 “John came fasting, and people said, ‘He is possessed by a demon!’”

## **For Inspirational Viewing/Listening/Reading**

Song:

Maybe this is a good time to revisit the plight of the [Hebrew slaves](#), depicted in Giuseppe Verdi's 1882 opera, Nabucco (King Nebuchadnezzar).

— *How is the lament of the Hebrew slaves evident in our society today?*

Film:

[Harriet](#) (2019) starring [Cynthia Erivo](#) in the title role.

The extraordinary tale of [Harriet Tubman's](#) escape from slavery and her transformation into one of America's greatest heroines. Her courage, ingenuity, and tenacity freed hundreds of slaves.

## **Closing Prayer**

### **Prayer for Racial Justice**

(abridged)

Save us, O God, from ourselves,  
from racism cloaked in pious words,  
from the machinations of white supremacy hidden in calls for civility,  
from micro aggressions thinly veiled in arrogance,  
from apologies when they don't give way to action,  
from forgiveness without facing the truth,  
from reconciliation without reparation.

Grateful for the long arc that bends toward justice, we pray:  
Grant us wisdom; give us courage to face these days,  
by the power of the Spirit, all for the sake of the kin-dom  
we share in Christ Jesus.  
Amen.

Source: [Tread Lightly Retire Early](#)

The Sunday readings are from  
[Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition](#)  
© 1999, Bernardo Hurault and Patricia Grogan, FCJ  
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(follow the link above to the novel *Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words*)

\* *This is not to say that the NAB is the best English language Catholic version of the Bible. For example, in this as in past reflections, we are using The Christian Community Bible: The Catholic Pastoral Bible. This text originated in 1960 in Chile, when Claretian missionary Rev. Bernardo Hurault recognized the need for a Bible ordinary people could understand. He began translating from Hebrew and Greek to Spanish and incorporating his homilies and questions from his own congregation in the commentaries.*

*The Christian Community Bible was then translated into French, Filipino, Chinese, Cebuano, and Ilonggo. Other translations are in process. The editors engage in a constant process of revision and improvement of the translations and commentaries always making it relevant with the latest developments in biblical scholarship and with the real situations of the people.*

*Scripture scholar Sr. Patricia Grogan, FCJ, produced the English translation in 1979. It is now used as the official liturgical text for the Philippines and Southeast Asia.*

*More than one hundred fifty editions exist in different languages and have helped the faithful in many local churches to understand and better assimilate the Word of God.*