### Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

***The following prayer is written by then-Fr. Ken Untener and often attributed to the story of Archbishop Oscar Romero because they summarize his ministry and commitment to the people of El Salvador and to Christ.***

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

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent  
enterprise that is God’s work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a 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 includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

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.

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This prayer was first presented by Cardinal Dearden in 1979 and quoted by Pope Francis in 2015. This reflection is an excerpt from a homily written for Cardinal Dearden by then-Fr. Ken Untener on the occasion of the Mass for Deceased Priests, October 25, 1979. Pope Francis quoted Cardinal Dearden in his remarks to the Roman Curia on December 21, 2015. Fr. Untener was named bishop of Saginaw, Michigan, in 1980.