

## Vernon Thompson

The first time I remember visiting with Vernon Thompson here at the cathedral was at a Sunday Mass at 8 pm, when he showed up in the middle of a snowstorm. The last time I remember seeing him was in the parking garage of a local grocery store. He honked, waved, and wouldn't let me go any further till I said hello. Whether facing big challenges or ordinary routines, Vernon was there.

He was active in the local civil rights movement and a founding member of the Social Actions Committee of 20. His was a voice of reason and vision, a true prophet in our community. There are young black men in Kansas City today who are better people because of SAC 20. And there are old white guys like me who benefited too because that committee has improved our society. Kansas City is a better city today because of Vernon Thompson.

The scripture readings proclaimed here this morning are the same ones heard at Catholic Churches throughout the world on this day. But the first reading and psalm could not be more fitting as we call Vernon to mind. St. Paul told the Romans, "Owe nothing to anyone"—except for one exception: "to love one another." That is the debt we each owe our neighbor. St. Paul reviewed the great commandments and then concluded with these words, "Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law." All the laws formulated in a city or a church work best when they are founded on love. SAC 20 has striven to make that happen here.

Psalm 112 followed this reading. This psalm describes what constitutes a good person and how God smiles on them. The one who "greatly delights in the Lord's commands" is blessed. "His posterity shall be mighty upon the earth.... He is gracious and merciful and just." "He dawns through the darkness; a light for the upright." Any of us can do this if we delight in the Lord's commands.

As we reflect on these passages today and remember Vernon's life, he easily stands out for us as a man who took to heart the virtues of Psalm 112 and the words of St. Paul. Vernon's light continues to shine in the darkness. It inspires each of us to do better—to make ourselves better people, our city a better city, and our church a better church. May God accept our brother Vernon into eternal happiness.