

READINGS FOR YOUR WEDDING

If you decide to have two readings choose the first from Section A or Section B, and the second from Section C. If you decide to have three readings choose one from each section.

1. Section A - Old Testament Readings

1.

Genesis 1: 26-28, 31

This reading recalls how marriage was part of God's plan from the first moment of creation

God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be master of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth.' God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying to them, 'Be truthful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, and birds of heaven, and all living animals on the earth.' God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good.

2.

Genesis 2: 18-24

This story tells of our human need to share life with other people

The Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate.' So from the soil the Lord God fashioned all the wild beasts and all the birds of heaven. These he brought to the man to see what he would call them; each one was to bear the name the man would give it. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of heaven and all the wild beasts. But no helpmate suitable for man was found for him. So the Lord God made the man fall into a deep sleep. And while he slept, he took one of his ribs and enclosed it in flesh. The Lord God built the rib he had taken from the man into a woman, and brought her to the man. The man explained, 'This at last is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh! This is to be called woman, for this was taken from man'. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife and they become one body.

3.

Genesis 24: 48-51, 58-67

The meeting of Isaac and Rebekah

Abraham's servant said to Laban, 'I blessed the Lord, God of my master Abraham, who had so graciously led me to choose the daughter of my master's brother for his son. Now tell me whether you are prepared to show kindness and goodness to my master; if not, say so, and I shall know what to do.' Laban and Bethuel replied, 'This is from the Lord; it is not our power to say yes or no to you. Rebekah is there before you. Take her and go; and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has decreed.' They called Rebekah and asked her, 'Do you want to leave with this man?' 'I do', she replied. Accordingly they let their sister Rebekah go, with her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. They blessed Rebekah in these words: 'Sister of ours, increase to thousands and tens of thousands! May your descendants gain possession of the gates of their enemies!' Rebekah and her servants stood up, mounted the camels, and followed the man. The servant took Rebekah and departed. Isaac, who lived in the Negeb, had meanwhile come into the wilderness of the well of Lahai Rol. Now Isaac went walking in the fields as evening fell and looking up saw camels approaching. And Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac. She jumped down from her camel and asked the servant, 'Who is that man walking through the fields to meet us?' The servant

replied, 'That is my master'. The she took her veil and hid her face. The servant told Isaac the whole story, and Isaac led Rebekah into his tent and made her his wife; and he loved her. And so Isaac was consoled for the loss of his mother.

4.

Tobit 7: 6-14

The betrothal of Tobias and Sarah

Raguel kissed Tobias and wept. Then finding words, he said, 'Blessings on you, child! You are the son of a noble father. How sad it is that someone so virtuous and full of good deeds should have gone blind!' He fell on the neck of his kinsman Tobias and wept. And his wife Edna wept for him, and so did his daughter Sarah. Raguel killed a sheep from the flock and they gave him a warm-hearted welcome. They washed and bathed and sat down to table. Then Tobias said the Raphael, 'Brother Azarias, will you ask Raguel to give me my sister Sarah?' Raguel overheard the words, and said to the young man, 'Eat and drink, make the most of your evening; no one else has the right to take my daughter Sarah - no one but you, my brother. In any case I, for my own part, am not at liberty to give her to anyone else, since you are her next of kin. However my boy, I must be frank with you; I have tried to find a husband for her seven times among our kinsmen, and all of them have died the first evening, on going to her room. But for the present, my boy, eat and drink; the Lord will grant you his grace and his peace.' Tobias spoke out. I will not hear of eating and drinking till you have come to a decision about me'. Raguel answered, 'Very well. Since as prescribed by the book of Moses, she is given to you, heaven itself decrees she shall be yours. I therefore entrust your sister to you. From now on you are her brother and she is your sister. She is given to you from today for ever. The Lord of heaven favour you tonight, my child, and grant you grace and peace.' Raguel called for his daughter Sarah, took her by the hand and gave her to Tobias with these words, 'I entrust her to you; the law and the ruling recorded in the Book of Moses assign her to you as your wife. Take her; take her home to your father's house with a good conscience. The God of heaven grant you a good journey in peace.' Then he turned to her mother and asked her to fetch him writing paper. He drew up the marriage contract, how he gave his daughter as bride to Tobias according to the ordinance in the law of Moses. After this they began to eat and drink.

5.

Tobit 8: 4-8

The wedding prayer of Tobias

On the evening of their marriage. Tobias said to Sarah, 'You and I must pray and petition Our Lord to win his grace and protection'. They began praying for protection, and this is how he began.

'You are blessed, O God of our Fathers;
Blessed, too, is your name for ever and ever.,
Let the heavens bless you and all things you have made for ever more.
It was you who created Adam.
you who created Eve his wife to be his help and support;
and from these two the human race was born.
It was you who said,
"It is not good than man should be alone;
let us make him a helpmate like himself,"
And so I do not take my sister for any lustful motive;
I do it in singleness of heart.
Be kind enough to have pity on her and on me and bring us to old age together.'
And together they said, 'Amen, Amen.'

6

Song of Songs 2: 8-10, 14, 16 & 8; 6-7

The Song of Songs is a series of love poems, sometimes interpreted as giving an insight into God's love for his people.

I hear my beloved.
 See how he comes leaping on the mountains.
 My beloved is like a gazelle, like a young stag.
 See where he stands behind our wall.
 He looks up at the window, he peers through the lattice.
 My beloved lifts up his voice, he said to me,
 'Come then, my love, my lovely one, come.
 My dove, hiding in the clefts of the rock.
 In the coverts of the cliff,
 show me your face, let me hear your voice;
 for your voice is sweet and your face is beautiful.'
 My Beloved is mine and I am his.
 Set me like a seal on your heart, like a seal on your arm.
 For love is strong as Death, jealousy relentless as Sheol .
 The flash of it is a flash of fire, a flame of the Lord himself.
 Love no flood can quench, no torrents drown.

7

Ecclesiasticus 26: 1-4, 13-16

A reflection on the qualities of a good wife
 Happy the husband of a really good wife; the number of his days will be doubled.
 A perfect wife is the joy of her husband, he will live out the years of his life in peace.
 The good wife is the best of portions, reserved for those who fear the Lord;
 rich or poor, they will be glad of heart, cheerful of face, whatever the season.
 The grace of a wife will charm her husband, her accomplishments will make him stronger.
 A silent wife is a gift from the Lord, no price can be put on a well-trained character.
 A modest wife is a boon twice over, a chaste character cannot be weighed on scales.
 Like the sun rising over the mountains of the Lord is the beauty of a good wife in a well-kept house.

8

Jeremiah 31; 31-34

I will be their God and they shall be my people

See, the days are coming - it is the Lord who speaks - when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. No, this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel when those day arrive - it is the Lord who speaks. Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people. There will be no further need for neighbour to try and teach neighbour, or brother to say to brother, 'Learn to know the Lord!' No. they will all know me, the least no less than the greatest - it is the Lord who speaks.

9.

Apocalypse 19: 1, 5-9

The wedding feast of the Lamb. This reading is particularly appropriate in the Easter season

I, John, seemed to hear the great sound of a huge crowd in heaven, singing 'Alleluia! Victory and glory and power to our God!' Then a voice came from the throne; it said, 'Praise our God, you servants of his and all who, great or small, revere him'. And I seemed to hear the voices of a huge crowds, like the sound of the ocean or the great roar of thunder, answering, 'Alleluia! The reign of the Lord our God Almighty has begun: let us be glad and joyful and give praise to God, because this is the time for the marriage of the Lamb. His bride is ready, and she has been able to dress herself in dazzling white linen, because her linen is made of the good deeds of the saints.' The angel said, 'Write this: Happy are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.'

Section B - New Testament Readings

1

Romans 8: 31-35, 37-39

A moving passage about the power of God's love

With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything he can give. Could anyone accuse those that God has chosen? When God acquits, could anyone condemn? Could Christ Jesus? No! He not only died for us - he rose from the dead, and there at God's right hand he stands and pleads for us.

Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked. These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us.

For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2

Romans 12: 1-2, 9-18

A model of Christian behaviour

Think of God's mercy, my brothers, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God. Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.

Do not let your love be a pretence, but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers should and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come; and keep praying. If any of the saints are in need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care.

Bless those who persecute you: never curse them, bless them. Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those in sorrow. Treat everyone with equal kindness; never be condescending but make real friends with the poor. Do not allow yourself to become self-satisfied. Never repay evil with evil but let everyone see that you are interested only in the highest ideals. Do all you can to live at peace with everyone.

3

Corinthians 6: 13-15, 17-20

You shall use your bodies for God's glory

The body is not meant for fornication; it is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. God who raised the Lord from the dead, will by his power raise us up too.

You know, surely, that your bodies are members making up the body of Christ. But anyone who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. Keep away from fornication. All other sins are committed outside the body; but to fornicate is to sin against your own body. Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God. You are not your own property; you have been bought and paid for. That is why you should use your body for the glory of God.

4

Corinthians 12: 31-13: 8

A beautiful description of love

Be ambitious for the higher gifts. And I am going to show you a way that is better than any of them.

If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophesy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatsoever.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes. Love does not come to an end.

5

Ephesians 5: 2, 21-33

The marriage relationship is model of the relationship between Christ and the Church

Follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up in our place. Give way to one another in obedience to Christ. Wives should regard their husbands as they regard the Lord since as Christ is the head of the Church and saves the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife, and as the Church submits to Christ, so should wives to their husbands, in everything. Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy. He made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words, so that when he took her to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless.

In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. A man never hates his own body, but feeds it and looks after it; and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because it is his body - and we are its living parts. For this reason, a man must leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one body.

This mystery has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church. To sum up; you too, each one of you, must love his wife as he loves himself; and let every wife respect her husband.

6

Collossians 3: 12-17

How to live in peace and thankfulness

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

7

1 Peter 3: 1-9

How husbands and wives should treat each other.

Wives should be obedient to their husbands. Then, if there are some husbands who have not yet obeyed the word, they may find themselves won over, without a word spoken, by the way their wives behave, when they see how faithful and conscientious they are. Do not dress up for show; doing up your hair, wearing gold bracelets and fine clothes; all this should be inside, in a person's heart, imperishable; the ornament of a sweet and gentle disposition - this is what is precious in the sight of God. That was how the holy women of the past dressed themselves attractively - they hoped in God and were tender and

obedient to their husbands; like Sarah who was obedient to Abraham and called him her lord. You are now her children, as long as you live good lives and do not give way to fear or worry. In the same way, husbands must always treat their wives with consideration in their life together, respecting a woman as one who, though she may be the weaker partner, is equally an heir to the life of grace. This will stop anything from coming in the way of your prayers.

Finally, you should all agree among yourselves and be sympathetic; love the brothers, have compassion and be self-effacing. Never pay back one wrong with another, or an angry word with another one; instead pay back with a blessing. That is what you are called to do, so that you inherit a blessing yourselves.

8

1 John 3: 18-24

My children, our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active. Only by this can we be certain that we are children of the truth and be able to quieten our conscience in his presence, whatever accusations it may raise against us, because God is greater than our conscience and he knows everything.

My dear people, if we cannot be condemned by our own conscience, we need not be afraid in God's presence, and whatever we ask him, we shall receive, because we keep his commandments and live the kind of life that he wants. His commandments are these: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and that we love one another as he told us to.

Whoever keeps his commandments lives in God and God lives in him. We know that he lives in us by the spirit he has given us.

9.

As long as we love one another God will live in us because God is love

My dear people, let us love one another since love comes from God and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Anyone who fails to love can never have known God, because God is love.

God's love for us was revealed when God sent into the world his only Son so that we could have life through him. This is the love I mean: not our love for God, but God's love for us when he sent his Son to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away. My dear people, since God has loved us so much, we too should love one another. No-one has ever seen God; but as long as we love one another God will live in us and his love will be complete in us.

Section C - Gospel Readings

1.

Matthew 5: 1-12

Life-giving attitudes

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

‘How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are the gentle; they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn; they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right; they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful; they shall have mercy shown them

Happy the poor in heart; they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers; they shall be called sons of God.

Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right; theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

2.

Matthew 5: 13-16

You are the salt of the earth - the light of the world

Jesus said to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.

3.

Matthew 7: 21. 24-29

To listen to the words of Christ is the foundation of a good marriage

Jesus said to his disciples: "It is not those who say to me, "Lord, Lord", who enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven. Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against the house, and it did not fall: it was founded on rock. But everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a fall it had!"

Jesus had now finished what he wanted to say, and his teaching made a deep impression on the people because he taught them with authority, and not like their own scribes.

4.

Matthew 19:3-6

It is God who unites a couple in marriage

Some Pharisees approached Jesus, and to test him they said, "Is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife on any pretext whatsoever?" He answered, "Have you not read that the creator from the beginning made them male and female and that he said: *This is why a man must leave father and mother, and cling to his wife, and the two become one body? They are no longer two, therefore, but one body.* So then, what God has united, man must not divide.

5.

Matthew 22: 35-40

The greatest commandment is the commandment to love

A lawyer, to disconcert Jesus, put a question, "Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?" Jesus said, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second resembles it: you must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also."

6.

Mark 10:6-9

A briefer version of Gospel 4

Jesus said, "From the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide".

7.

John 2: 1-11

The first miracle of Jesus was to help a young married couple at their wedding.

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. When they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the wedding was all finished, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." Jesus said, "Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." There were six stone water jars standing there meant for the ablutions that are customary among the Jews: each could hold twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants. "Fill the jars with water," and they filled them to the brim. "Draw some out now" he told them "and take it to the steward." They did this; the steward tasted the water, and it had turned into wine. Having no idea where it came from - only the servants who had drawn the water knew - the steward called the bridegroom and said, "People generally serve the best wine first, and keep the cheaper sort till the guests have had plenty to drink; but you have kept the best wine will now."

This was the first of the signs given by Jesus. It was given at Cana in Galilee. He let his glory be seen, and his disciples believed in him.

8.

John 15: 9-12

Jesus commands us to love one another

Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. This is my commandment: love one another, as I loved you."

9.

John 15: 12-16

You were chosen and commissioned by Christ to go out and bear fruit

Jesus said to his disciples "This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you, I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master's business: I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name."

10.

John 17:20-26

Your unity is a sign of Christian love

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said "Holy Father, I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you. so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me. that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may always see the glory you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Father, Righteous One, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them."