

## N-10

### Reading

Hebrews 13: 1–4a. 5–6b

*Marriage is to be honoured by all.*

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

<sup>1</sup> Continue to love each other like brothers,  
<sup>2</sup> and remember always to welcome strangers,  
for by doing this, some people have entertained angels  
without knowing it.

<sup>3</sup> Keep in mind those who are in prison,  
as though you were in prison with them;  
and those who are being badly treated,  
since you too are in the one body.

<sup>4</sup> Marriage is to be honoured by all,  
and marriages are to be kept undefiled.

<sup>5</sup> Put greed out of your lives and be content with whatever you have;  
God himself has said:

I will not fail you or desert you,

<sup>6</sup> and so we can say with confidence:

With the Lord to help me, I fear nothing.

The word of the Lord.

# Looking at the Text

+ N-10 Hebrews 13:1-4a, 5-6b  
*Marriage is to be honoured by all.*

## The letter to the Hebrews

It is not known who wrote the letter to the Hebrews. However, it is written to believers who are under pressure to return to their former Jewish faith, or to mix in Judaism with their Christianity. The author strongly affirms the new ‘covenant’ relationship that Christians have with God. Through his life, suffering, death and resurrection, Jesus makes and fulfills the Covenant, uniting everything in God’s original plan of relationship with him. The ‘covenant’ we have with God through Jesus is an enduring, faithful, life-long, fruitful bond based on the eternal well-spring of love. Our marriage bond is an ‘echo’ or ‘sign’ of this bond — it too is enduring, faithful, life-long and fruitful.

### In this passage

We are asked to love each other as family and to be hospitable in the truest sense of the word — to be open, and to share in a selfless way what we have with those in need. This includes people who are bound up in any way: prisoners through illness or circumstance, and anyone who is being badly treated. At the heart of the reading, we find a sentence specifically about respecting or ‘honouring’ marriage. In the Catholic Christian tradition, marriage is honoured as a sacrament of the church — in other words, it is one of the ways in which the members of the church celebrate and live out God’s loving action within our human existence. To give marriage the honour and respect it deserves, couples are required to enter the married state based on a solid preparation — one that will help them sustain a strong, loving, life-long and fruitful relationship. Your preparation integrates the relational and spiritual dimensions, recognising the holistic nature of living out daily married life. You can’t separate out one aspect from another and say ‘this is holy’ and this is ‘ordinary’. The whole of our vowed life as a married couple is ‘holy’. It’s based on saying ‘yes’ to one another in front of our witnesses — the priest, our families and friends, and the vows we make to love and cherish one another, for better for worse, in sickness and health, until death. It’s holy to be unselfish and get up in the night and feed the baby; it’s holy to say no to what you want in order to serve your partner’s needs; it’s holy to look after one another and your family; it’s holy to be content with what you have and to share it. Holiness in marriage and in family life is unselfish love in action. Impossible? The letter to the Hebrews reassures us ‘God himself has said: I will not fail you or desert you’ and so we can say with confidence ‘With the Lord to help me, I fear nothing’ and we can live our radical calling.

## Reflecting on Scripture together

*Use the ‘Reflecting on Scripture together — a simple way’ in the introduction ‘Choosing your Wedding readings’.*

### Further Reflection

*Following the ‘slow reading’ process, here are some questions for further reflection:*

- You have chosen to get married in a Catholic church. What difference does this make?
- Think of a marriage that you respect. What is it about that marriage that draws your respect? What do you think is going to help you sustain your own marriage?

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These notes have been prepared by Caroline Dollard, Marriage & Family Life Project, CBCEW [www.catholicfamily.org.uk](http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk) This is one of a series of Liturgy Office resources to support the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*. [www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Marriage](http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Marriage) © 2016 Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales

- Together, you may like to look at the questions you will be asked and the vows you are going to make to one another in the wedding service. Your priest can help you here.
  - Have you come without any pressure from anyone, freely and wholeheartedly to enter into marriage?
  - Are you prepared to love and honour each other as long as you both shall live?
  - Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?
  - ‘I take you to be my wife/husband.  
to have and to hold from this day forward,  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish  
till death do us part.’
  - ‘Receive this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity’

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### Note about the Reading

+ = This reading selection is new to the *Order of Christian Marriage* and so is not found in the Lectionary (1983). It is included in the Scripture Readings on the Liturgy Office website.