

Reading

1 John 3:18–24

Our love is to be something real and active.

A reading from the first letter of St John.

18 My children,
our love is not to be just words or mere talk,
but something real and active;
19 only by this can we be certain
that we are children of the truth
and be able to quieten our conscience in his presence,
20 whatever accusations it may raise against us,
because God is greater than our conscience and he knows everything.
21 My dear people,
if we cannot be condemned by our own conscience,
we need not be afraid in God's presence,
22 and whatever we ask him,
we shall receive,
because we keep his commandments
and live the kind of life that he wants.
23 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.
24 Whoever keeps his commandments
lives in God and God lives in him.
We know that he lives in us
by the Spirit that he has given us.
The word of the Lord.

Looking at the Text

N-12 1 John 3:18-24

Our love is to be something real and active.

The first letter of St John

This letter reflects on many of the themes of John's Gospel — including light and darkness, living as God's children, and specifically, the greatest commandments of faith in Jesus and loving one another as he loves us. In keeping these commandments, we will share the life that Jesus himself shares with the Father. This is a great mystery, beyond words and understanding — it is the mystery that is made real in the ordinary everyday living out of love that God, who is love, enables us to do.

In this passage

We hear that our love is to be real — not just talk. And our conscience will help us to discern if we are living out this real love. If we can feel 'at peace' in our conscience — our hearts and minds — peace that we are living in a loving way, we are probably getting something right! St John says we can ask God for all the help we need to live out our love, knowing that God pours out the gift of the Holy Spirit for just that purpose.

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:

- What does it mean for our love not to be just words or mere talk? Talk together about the many different ways you can and do make your love for one another real.
- What do you think about 'conscience' — how would you describe it? How does it work?
- How do you know you are living out real love? And how do you know when you are not?
- God is love and wants to help us live in love. What sort of things would you like to ask God's help with in your own relationship? For now? And for the months and years to come?
- You may like to pray the last sentence, repeating it together a few times: *'We know that he lives in us, by the Spirit that he has given us'.*