

Reading

Apocalypse 19: 1.5–9

Happy are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

A reading from the book of Apocalypse.

¹ I, John, seemed to hear the great sound of a huge crowd in heaven, singing, ‘Alleluia! Victory and glory and power to our God!’

⁵ Then a voice came from the throne; it said, ‘Praise our God, you servants of his and all who, great or small, revere him.’

⁶ And I seemed to hear the voices of a huge crowd, like the sound of the ocean or the great roar of thunder, answering, ‘Alleluia! The reign of the Lord our God Almighty has begun; ⁷ let us be glad and joyful and give praise to God, because this is the time for the marriage of the Lamb.

⁸ 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.’

⁹ The angel said, ‘Write this: happy are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.’

The word of the Lord.

Looking at the Text

N-14 Revelation 19:1, 5-9a

Happy are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

The Book of Revelation

The Apocalypse is also known as the ‘Book of Revelation’, because it sums up and ‘reveals’ or ‘unveils’ the whole message of hope of the Christian mysteries, that helps us to understand and live well in our present times. It is a strange and rather baffling book full of symbolism, with disturbing, weird and wonderful characters and images — but overall, it is to encourage! It gives a vision of a new way of being, achieved through Christ, where the weak are strong and the oppressed become powerful, set free from dark, dominating systems. We are shown a vision of a ‘new heaven and a new earth’, separated by a very thin ‘veil’, and brought into ‘communion’ together, through Jesus Christ’s continuing eternal presence and action through, with and in his Body, the Church, whenever we gather to celebrate the Church’s worship in the Liturgy (the Mass and the Sacraments, the prayer of the Church), when the past and the future break into the present. Every Mass is a celebration of Christ present with his Body, the Church, in anticipation of the ‘Supper of the Lamb’ that we are all called to at the end of time.

In this passage

We hear tell of such a gathering of the whole ‘crowd’ of heaven singing the great hymn of praise, Alleluia! We have the image of a great liturgy of heaven and earth together, celebrating the good news of bridegroom and bride. This is a common theme for describing the relationship of Christ with his Body, the people of the Church — as bridegroom and bride. It is rooted in the Old Testament theme of God’s covenant relationship with his people, a bond of enduring, faithful, fruitful love. For Catholics, the marriage bond of the couple, lifelong, faithful, and fruitful, is a sign of the bond of Christ and his love for his people, the Church. We hear in the words of the priest just before we receive communion at Mass, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb’. Our wedding liturgy and our married life is to be a sign of God’s invitation to all to a relationship of love. Your wedding will be a time of great celebration. Not only you as a couple will be bursting with joy, but also your family and friends and the wider community too. Something wonderful is beginning through your commitment to one another in marriage!

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:

- Who are the people you are inviting to your wedding? Can you picture the huge crowd in heaven and the crowd of family and friends coming to your wedding, together?
- Everyone will be joining in the celebration wholeheartedly supporting you. Music and sacred songs or hymns will add greatly to the joy and help everyone present to express their love and support. What hymns/sacred songs, and music are you going to choose?

These notes have been prepared by Caroline Dollard, Marriage & Family Life Project, CBCEW 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 © 2016 Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales

- The reading speaks of the ‘white’ dress being a sign of the ‘good deeds’ of the people. Talk together about the ‘good people’ who have helped you to know about love, firstly as a child growing up — perhaps your grandparents, or parents, or close friends? And as an adult? How have these people been examples to you of what a loving relationship is? What have you learnt from them? It might help you to think of your own wedding dress as a symbol of all the goodness of people in your own lives.

Note about the Reading

Readings from the Book of Revelation are traditionally used in the Easter Season.