

## Reading

1 Corinthians 12:31–13:8

*If I am without love, it will do me no good whatever.*

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

<sup>31</sup> Be ambitious for the higher gifts.

And I am going to show you a way that is better than any of them.

<sup>13:1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy, 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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 whatever.

<sup>4</sup> Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous;  
<sup>5</sup> love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful.

<sup>6</sup> Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth;  
<sup>7</sup> it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.

<sup>8</sup> Love does not come to an end.

The word of the Lord.

# Looking at the Text

N-5 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8a

*If I am without love, it will do me no good whatever.*

## St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians

In his first letter to the diverse groups of Christians in the busy port at Corinth, St Paul answers their questions on living the moral life, as well as making comments on their motives, behaviours and difficulties. He gives them the great teaching about Jesus Christ as the head, and everyone in the Church making up the members of his body. Each person or member has unique dignity, and unique gifts to contribute to the healthy functioning of the whole body. Each person has a part to play in relationship with others, and a certain responsibility and power to be aware of and respond to the needs of the whole body, joined to Christ the head, and filled with his spirit. A marriage, as a 'little church' or 'domestic church' has similar characteristics. The husband and wife in the marriage are united in unselfish love, which has its source in God's love which is like a spring, welling up inside them. They and the members of the family, each share in the responsibility to give themselves for one another, unselfishly building a healthy happy 'body' that is the couple and the family.

We often hear this particular reading at weddings. It is a beautiful description of 'the way of love', which St Paul says is better than any other way. Love as expressed here is the absolute cornerstone of a happy 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:*

- Which description of love, 'the greatest gift', are you most drawn to in this reading?
- Talk about the different words to describe love. What do you think about each of these? Could you perhaps make the last section a prayer of hope & trust for yourselves, putting the words '*We hope and trust that our*' before the word love:

*We hope and trust that our love will be patient and kind, and never jealous.*

*We hope and trust that our love will never be boastful, conceited, rude or selfish.*

*We hope and trust that our love will not take offence or be resentful.*

*We hope and trust that our love will delight in the truth.*

*We hope and trust that our love will be forgiving, will trust, will hope, and will endure whatever comes.*

*With God's grace and blessing, in the power of the Holy Spirit, our love is eternal. Thank you, Lord, for the gift of our love for each other.*

- What do you like about this reading, and why might it be a good reading for your wedding?