

Reading

Ephesians 4: 1-6
One Body and one Spirit.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians

¹ I, the prisoner in the Lord,
implore you therefore to live a life worthy of your vocation.

² Bear with one another charitably,
in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience.

³ Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit
by the peace that binds you together.

⁴ There is one Body, one Spirit,
just as you were all called into one and the same hope
when you were called.

⁵ There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
⁶ and one God who is Father of all,
over all, through all and within all.

The word of the Lord.

Looking at the Text

+ N-6 Ephesians 4:1-6
One Body and one Spirit.

St Paul's letter to the Ephesians

This letter is full of encouragement for living out a Christian life. At its heart is the most important message of all — that we are unconditionally loved by God, and that we can give, receive and enjoy love throughout our lives, particularly as married couples, and over time grow stronger. There are so many blessings from God that strengthen our human capacities, including the ability to live in love, listen to our consciences, connect thought with action and have a sense of purpose in family life and relationships, knowing we are loved.

This passage speaks of the unity we are called to in the Christian vocation. St Paul helps us consider what it means to have a 'vocation' to being and becoming the person God intends us to be. In this time of preparing for marriage, we are thinking about our 'calling' or 'vocation' to live out our marriage as best as we possibly can. St Paul gives us some clues here. He asks us to live with humility — that is to work at putting our partner before ourselves, being gentle and patient. It takes hard work to build a relationship, especially because we know our own selfishness and weaknesses — and God knows our weaknesses too! In a Christian marriage, God promises to strengthen our human resolve to love one another, for better for worse, in good times and bad, with his own faithfulness, grace and power. We are called to hope — and to hope means to step out together, knowing that it is God who makes us 'one'; we are not alone and with God's help, nothing that comes against us can overwhelm us. We will come out stronger the other side of our difficulties.

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 do you like about this reading?
- When you think about a 'calling to marriage', what does that mean for you?
- What for you are the foundations of a strong, lifelong marriage?
- What has helped you to be strong in your life so far?
- How are you going to build your marriage — your friendship, communication and physical relationship? Tell each other your thoughts.
- Making time for each other regularly helps build a life-long marriage — but lots of demands can get in the way. How are you going to plan for time together to have fun, talk together, putting all the distractions and demands aside?
- What do you like about this reading? Why might it be a good one for your wedding?

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.

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