

Reading

Ephesians 5: 2a. 21–33

This mystery has many implications and I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

2 Follow Christ by loving as he loved you,
giving himself up in our place.

21 Give way to one another in obedience to Christ.

22 Wives should regard their husbands as they regard the Lord,
23 since as Christ is head of the Church and saves the whole body,
so is a husband the head of his wife;

24 and as the Church submits to Christ,
so should wives to their husbands, in everything.

25 Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church
and sacrificed himself for her

26 to make her holy.

He made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words,
27 so that when he took her to himself she would be glorious,
with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless.

28 In the same way, husbands must love their wives
as they love their own bodies;

for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself.

29 A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it;
and that is the way Christ treats the Church,

30 because it is his body — and we are its living parts.

31 For this reason, a man must leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one body.

32 This mystery has many implications;
but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church.

33 To sum up; you too, each one of you,
must love his wife as he loves himself;
and let every wife respect her husband.

The word of the Lord.

Looking at the Text

M N-7 Ephesians 5:2a, 21-33 (long form) or 5:2a, 25-32 (short form)
This mystery has many implications and I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church.

St Paul's letter to the Ephesians

This letter is full of encouragement about 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, growing stronger. There are so many blessings from God, including the ability to live in love, listen to our consciences, connect thought with action and have a sense of unity and purpose in family life and relationships, knowing we are loved.

In this passage

St Paul says we are to be Christ-like in our self-emptying, in words and actions. We must love the other as we love and look after ourselves. God unites us and makes us 'one' — we are part of each other. To be truly compassionate is to 'suffer with' — as 'one' body, so for example, if one of the partners in the marriage is hurting for some reason, the other is so absolutely with them that they too hurt. Another word that might help here is 'companionship'. We share life together, whatever it brings. We are to nourish and look after one another — and this is a great mystery, St Paul says, because the mutual self-giving love of a husband and wife is a sign of how Christ loves his Body, the church.

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 might it mean to 'make sacrifices' for one another or 'give way' to one another in your marriage? How can you work through selfishness and move from 'my way' to 'our way'?
- How do you know when your partner is hurting, or has some emotional need? How do you show your tender care for one another? How do you show respect for one another?
- In a marriage, two become one — so what might it mean to say that if you 'love one another', you 'love yourself'?
- What does it mean for you to be leaving/have left your own families of origin, your parents, and to set up your own household? What's going to help you to do this?
- What do you like about this reading? Why might it be a good reading for your wedding?

Note about the Reading

M = this indicates that this is a reading which speaks explicitly about Marriage. One of the chosen readings must be taken from those which are about Marriage.

This reading is given in a long and short form — either may be chosen.

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