

New Testament Readings

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C1 **Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39**

What will separate us from the love of Christ?

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans:

Brothers and sisters: If God is for us, who can be against us? He did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him? Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who acquits us. Who will condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things, we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

This reading concludes a long opening section in Paul's letter to the Christian community living in Rome. He preaches that the Gospel announces salvation for all peoples whether they are Jews or Gentiles. Then he offers reflections on our justification to God. Thus, the questions in this passage sound a bit like a back-and-forth argument. It is Christ whose death and resurrection has justified us and now intercedes on our behalf before God (vs. 34). A love that Christ demonstrates by dying for all of us is a bond of love that cannot be broken by anything – earthly, supernatural, or otherwise (vs. 38-39).

The Church offers a sacramental marriage, something different and in addition to a civil marriage. Sacraments are an encounter with and a participation in the life of Christ Jesus. Couples who marry in the Catholic Church root their relationship in this inspiring vision of Christ's love. It is a love that unites and a love that is unbreakable. Husbands and wives who share this strength of love can be as confident as St. Paul knowing that when hardship, suffering, and difficulties arise, their love will help carry them through. No hardship from the heavens or from earth, from creatures, rulers, or angels can destroy their marriage bond. Christ's love was victorious, and any love that imitates his will share in the same gift.

C2-a Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 (Long Form)

Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans:

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.

The word of the Lord.

OR

C2-b Romans 12:1-2, 9-13 (Short Form)

Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans:

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

When St. Paul speaks of a living sacrifice, the people would initially think this is an impossible contradiction. Sacrifices entailed the blood of an animal offered in the temple. This was done to express the moral life, to make up for one's faults, and to please God. St. Paul, however, is preaching after Jesus' blood was shed on the cross. That sacrifice of his own life was the fulfillment of all sacrifices. The Apostle suggests that those who follow Christ are to offer their bodies as living sacrifices. This is the paradox of faith—that sacrificing, most especially the sacrifice of the cross, gives life and shuns death. In other words, St. Paul is saying that something completely new is taking place because of Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection. The lives of the Christian believers are to look different, and they are to embrace a new way of living in the world because of the beliefs they hold.

Husbands and wives must compromise. A successful compromise entails sacrifice from both. The marriage vows state that each is willing to lovingly sacrifice for the other, whatever the cost. The second portion of this reading outlines a series of outward and visible actions that one can do to reflect sacrificial love that benefits others while also pleasing God. This list of high ideals will inspire many couples, yet it is intended to be a sign for all believers. Couples who choose the shorter option of this reading will miss some wonderful passages: “weep with those who weep,” “have the same regard for one another,” “do not repay anyone evil for evil,” “on your part, live at peace

with all.” These images express the hopes for many couples, and should be the ideals for all. Proclaiming them will add to the joy of the celebration.

C3 Romans 15:1b-3a, 5-7, 13

Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans:

Brothers and sisters: We ought to put up with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves; let each of us please our neighbor for the good, for building up. For Christ did not please himself. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

This reading emphasizes St. Paul's strong hope that the Christian community in Rome might live in harmony. With different people in our global society today, we hear much about living peacefully with all. We use phrases like, "we agree to disagree;" "we respect one another;" or "we tolerate the things we don't like." Some married couples find that these phrases can balance the differences in their relationship. However, St. Paul calls for a particular expression of harmony, based on an imitating of Christ.

This reading will clearly remind both bride and groom that the success of their marriage will come when they lose track of their own selves and focus their energies on their spouse. Efforts that are made for the good of the other will build up the marriage. Christ has accepted and even welcomed us with all our shortcomings and faults. The loving couple will seek to allow their love to go beyond themselves to friends, family, and even strangers. Couples with convictions about improving their society and faith community will want to consider this reading. Younger couples looking forward to long years of marriage will also appreciate the prayer for endurance, encouragement, joy, and peace.

C4 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20
Your body is a temple of the Spirit.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians:

Brothers and sisters: The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, And the Lord is for the body; God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

The apostle Paul writes some of his most extensive thoughts to the Corinthians. In these letters he responds to various problems occurring in Corinth. Some are not all that different from society today, including marital obligations and sexual immorality. When this reading is proclaimed before an assembly gathered for a wedding, all will know the immorality referenced in the opening phrase is sexual in nature. When read at the wedding, this reading does not have to be dour or come across as a finger shaking. Rather it upholds the supernatural beauty hidden in the human body.

This scripture passage supports the Catholic teaching of abstaining from sexual intercourse until marriage, precisely because of the dignity given to each individual human body. Sexual relations affect both the individual and collective Christian body—the community. Just as bodily actions can cause harm to others and tear down God’s kingdom, so too can they be used to glorify God (vs. 20). Paul states that the body is to be conformed to the Lord. He refers to the Risen Lord (vs. 14) because the resurrected body of Jesus is radiant and glorifies God – an image of what our bodies can be. Furthermore, our bodies are a fitting place for the Holy Spirit (vs. 19). When viewed as holding the potential to glorify God, couples might grow to see their sexual intimacy as a sign of the sacred.

C5 1 Corinthians 12:31–13:8a

If I do not have love, I gain nothing.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians:

Brothers and sisters: Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

This passage is known as a hymn of love. It is popular for Catholics and other Christians, and it tugs at the heartstrings of engaged couples as soon as they glance over the options. Most will not initially realize that St. Paul is not talking directly to husbands and wives. He is addressing many concerns within Corinth's Christian community and is seeking to strengthen their overall unity. The community appears to have lost some of the vision of Gospel living. Thus, the apostle offers these thoughts.

This bold Christian view of love demonstrates clearly that it cannot be reduced to a romantic emotion. Love looks like something. Here, St. Paul describes it with poetic detail. He tells what love is – patient, kind, enduring– as well as what it is not – jealous, pompous, inflated, rude, quick-tempered. The reading also foretells what happens when love is absent. Without it, lives and relationships are like a noisy gong. We can accumulate things, be showered with gifts, and even give things away, yet without love, all is worthless. Really, what Paul is describing, is a love that looks like Christ, the one who is Love incarnate.

C6 **Ephesians 4:1-6**
One Body and one Spirit.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians:

Brothers and sisters: I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace: one Body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

In this part of St. Paul's letter, he is urging all the believers of the community at Ephesus to have a communal view of how they conduct their laws. As believers, they are no longer individuals but are called to a common life of "humility and gentleness with patience, bearing with one another through love."

The goal for your marriage is the same as Paul's hope for the Ephesians: to be one body, one in spirit, and one in all things. And, too, just as hope for the Ephesians, may your life together be centered on God who is Father of all.

C7-a* Ephesians 5:2a, 21-33 (Long Form)

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians:

Brothers and sisters: Live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us. Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the Church, he himself the savior of the body. As the Church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the Church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the Church, because we are members of his Body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband.

The word of the Lord.

OR

C7-b* Ephesians 5:2a, 25-32 (Short Form)

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians:

Brothers and sisters: Live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the Church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the Church, because we are members of his Body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

Couples looking for a clear, strong image of sacramental marriage will gravitate toward this passage. It is the most expressive passage in the New Testament regarding marriage. It is also complex. Some couples will dismiss it as objectionable to a contemporary perspective of spousal love. The language within the reading can pose pastoral challenges. Yet couples who pray with this passage might trade in their initial objections for a spirited embrace of the vision of marriage offered here.

The author gives an extended meditation on the second creation story and quotes it directly (Genesis 2:18-24, 2nd Old Testament option). The author is very familiar with the Gospel of Christ Jesus, crucified and raised from the dead. Christ's actions of suffering, dying, and rising make all the difference in the world, even to husbands and

wives. The initial verse (2) indicates how to interpret this passage: “Live in love, as Christ loved us, and handed himself over for us.” Christ did this for the Church, the living body of believers. Married couples constitute the domestic church. Their mutual love should mirror the love Christ demonstrated. They are not expected to give their lives for the whole world, but they are to offer their lives for their spouse, the one they love. It is a love that is offered and given for another, or as the author states, “be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ” (vs. 21). Some believe this passage unfairly treats women. The passage uses different verbs—to be subordinate, and to love—to describe the actions of wives and husbands, but the intent is the same. Both are to mutually give of themselves and freely love the other all for the sake and unity of their family.

The author stresses the unity present in all creation. When husbands and wives mutually give and love one another in a way that imitates Christ, they help to strengthen the unity in society. All is connected, and this exhortation to spouses to live as Christ is a part of his larger mission “to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth,” (1:10).

The shortened option removes the two more glaring references to subordinate wives. This might be the wiser option, especially if the person preaching does not intend to elaborate on this particular scriptural image.

C8 **Philippians 4:4-9**

The God of peace will be with you.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians:

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

This passage urges the Christian people of Philippi to live fully in the ideals of truth, justice, and love, all the while savoring God's peace that will follow them. This is a worthy passage for a marriage liturgy, particularly because the Catholic Church believes that marriages and families are the very building blocks of society. A couple that humbly prays to God, keeps their hearts rooted in Christ, and seeks truth, justice, and love, will be a couple that promotes peace in their home and in society.

Weddings in the United States all too easily turn into elaborate productions and can be the source of enormous stress for the couple and their friends. Couples will bring their doubts and worries with them to the wedding celebration. Some questions linger: Will we be able to establish a home we like? What kind of parents will we be? How will we work out our financial challenges? This passage helps to put all those many things into perspective as it boldly encourages, "Have no anxiety at all." It promotes a radical dependence upon God, whose peace "surpasses all understanding." Starting a covenanted relationship with the firm belief and proclamation that "the God of peace will be with you," is a comforting truth, and will be reason for bride, groom, and guests to rejoice!

C9 Colossians 3:12-17

And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians:

Brothers and sisters: Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one Body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

This selection of the Colossians letter describes to the people what they should do now, in light of their resurrection with Christ Jesus. Throughout much of the New Testament there are descriptions of what is necessary for a good and flourishing Christian community. These readings work well for the wedding liturgy, for the ideals of a good society are the ideals for a good marriage.

The list of characteristics that opens the passage is one that every couple should regularly review. Spending a lifetime growing richly in heartfelt compassion, humility, gentleness, forgiveness, etc. will be a lifetime well spent. The perfection of these attributes will be love. The biblical image of love is not an emotion or feeling, but here, it is the glue and the motivator for each person to pursue a more Christ-like way of life.

Verse 15 references the "Body," which is the Church as the Body of Christ. But in the wedding liturgy, it could refer to the fact that the two now become one through this sacrament. This reading would be a nice complement to the Genesis and Gospel readings referencing the two becoming one flesh, one body.

The passage ends with an inspiring command to "let the word of Christ dwell in your richly," and in all things, "give thanks to God the Father." For Catholics, this can be a gentle reminder of the importance of Sunday Mass. We open our hearts to receive the word of Christ when the scriptures are proclaimed at Mass, and we give thanks at the altar of the Lord. We go to Mass not out mere obligation, but out of love, a love which binds us to one another and to God who is Love.

C10* Hebrews 13:1-4a, 5-6b

Let marriage be held in honor by all.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews:

Brothers and sisters: Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels. Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment, and of the ill-treated as of yourselves, for you also are in the body. Let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be kept undefiled. Let your life be free from love of money but be content with what you have, for he has said, I will never forsake you or abandon you. Thus we may say with confidence: The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

In marriage preparation an often cited phrase is that it takes three to make the marriage successful: the husband, the wife, and God. This short passage speaks to the ways that God can be interwoven with the life of the couple. Generous hospitality can lead to encounters with divine realities. Sharing in the sufferings and hardships of others is a virtue. Loving God and loving one another should clearly take a greater priority than preoccupations with money. These short examples illustrate how the Lord lovingly sustains with us.

Couples who have had struggles in their lives might be drawn to this passage. Those who resist the societal expectations of an extravagant wedding celebration and those who do not have abundant financial resources will find themselves at home with this passage. In place of household gifts for the couple, some are directing guests to make contributions to charitable organizations. This passage certainly reinforces that social consciousness. Those who have seen the Lord with them in their need in the past might use this passage as a proclamation of faith that they trust in God's presence with them as they embark upon their married life.

C11* 1 Peter 3:1-9

Be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter:

Beloved: You wives should be subordinate to your husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct when they observe your reverent and chaste behavior. Your adornment should not be an external one: braiding the hair, wearing gold jewelry, or dressing in fine clothes, but rather the hidden character of the heart, expressed in the imperishable beauty of a gentle and calm disposition, which is precious in the sight of God. For this is also how the holy women who hoped in God once used to adorn themselves and were subordinate to their husbands; thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him "lord." You are her children when you do what is good and fear no intimidation. Likewise, you husbands should live with your wives in understanding, showing honor to the weaker female sex, since we are joint heirs of the gift of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. Finally, all of you, be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble. Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

This letter was originally sent to five Roman provinces in Asia Minor where Christianity had taken root in some small pockets. The Romans were nervous of outside religions like Christianity. Their society was strongly patriarchal, and they feared that strange, new religions would cause revolts. This is why it includes household codes, and ethical statements to wives, slaves, and children.

That bit of background might help to understand the harsh tone of this passage to 21st century readers. The bulk of the reading is directed toward wives. There is mentioned that "husbands should live with your wives in understanding, showing honor." Readers will resonate more favorably with the vision for married life in the final lines that encourage them to be of one mind, loving one another compassionately and humbly. It challenges the couple to resist the temptation to play the blame game, "Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult." It calls them to a higher way of relating, by striving to be a blessing for one another.

C12 1 John 3:18-24

Love in deed and truth.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John:

Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit that he gave us.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

The first letter of St. John was written as a response to some people who had broken away from the early Christian community and were opposed to some of the basic teachings about Jesus. This is why the passage opens with references to what is true. Love is not a matter of words. It must also involve real actions. One's thoughts and beliefs (things of the heart) must match what is done on the outside, for "God is greater than our hearts and knows everything."

The reading emphasizes truth. At the heart of the wedding liturgy is the vows, during which the couple will say, "I promise to be true to you." Traditionally this has referred to sexual fidelity, yet it can include a wider range of truth. Couples also need to be true about their finances, their hopes for family, their personal histories, their struggles and addictions, their beliefs about God, and much more. Being true in all things is an imitation of the way Christ Jesus loves us.

The passage describes a love that is sincere. God has commanded us to believe in Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit will help us to know when we have kept God's commands.

C13 1 John 4:7-12

God is love.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John:

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

This passage dives deep into the Christian mystery and spirituality of love. Love one another, not because of anything we have done or felt or experienced. Rather, we love only because God has loved us first. In other words, love is not dependent upon us or our capabilities. Love depends upon God. God, who is unseen, has shown us what love is like – Love is his Son, Jesus. Most especially, love is his embrace of our sinfulness and the new life that follows in the resurrection.

The reading says nothing specifically about marriage. Yet, marriage has everything to do with love. Couples often believe that love has to do with the feelings and emotions they share with one another. That may be one piece, and this reading can help them see that their love is really gift from God and a participation in God.

The reading will help couples to see that authentically loving their spouse will at some point include a sacrifice, like the love seen in the actions of the Son. Yet loving each another is a way to experience God's abiding presence, and trusting that God will perfect their love for each another.

C14 **Revelation 19:1, 5-9a** *(This reading may be used in place of the Old Testament reading during the Easter Season)*
Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

A reading from the Book of Revelation:

I, John, heard what sounded like the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying: “Alleluia! Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God.” A voice coming from the throne said: “Praise our God, all you his servants, and you who revere him, small and great.” Then I heard something like the sound of a great multitude or the sound of rushing water or mighty peals of thunder, as they said: “Alleluia! The Lord has established his reign, our God, the almighty. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory. For the wedding day of the Lamb has come, his bride has made herself ready. She was allowed to wear a bright, clean linen garment.” (The linen represents the righteous deeds of the holy ones.) Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.”
The word of the Lord.

Commentary

The book of Revelations is also referred to as apocalypse, which was an ancient writing genre. An apocalypse was when an author would reveal (hence the title Revelations) visions about the future or heaven. This passage is a glimpse into a heavenly wedding feast. Christ is the central figure, and his bride is the entire church, the people of God. The great multitude is the throngs of angels and saints. Reference is made to a bright, clean garment. At a wedding, one would think of the bride’s dress. Here, it is the white garment of the saints, and the baptismal garment of those born into the life of Christ through the waters of baptism.

A wedding is referenced twice, yet it is a mystical image of Christ and the Church. It tells us something about the nature of the sacrament of marriage. Christian sacramental marriage intends to show the world the kind of unity that God has with his people. The overabundance of joy in heaven at the union of the faithful with Christ is similar to the joy of a Christian husband and wife.

This reading is mystical in nature and might not easily appeal to the wedding couple and their gathered friends. It could appeal to those who have studied in depth the church’s teachings, who have a common love for the Eucharist (a symbol of the banquet feast) and who look forward to a life together on earth and in heaven.