

Reading

Colossians 3:12–17

Over all these, to keep them together and complete them, put on love.

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

- ¹² You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you,
and you should be clothed in sincere compassion,
in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience.
- ¹³ Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins.
The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same.
- ¹⁴ Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them,
put on love.
- ¹⁵ And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts,
because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body.
Always be thankful.
- ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you.
Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom.
With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns
and inspired songs to God
- ¹⁷ and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- The word of the Lord.

Looking at the Text

N-9 Colossians 3:12-17

Over all these, to keep them together and complete them, put on love.

St Paul's letter to the Colossians

St Paul is writing to the former Jews, new Christians of Colossae, affirming God's enormous love and repeating some of the earliest teachings of the Christian faith, bringing his readers back to Christ, his life, suffering, death and resurrection being at the heart of everything we hope, believe, trust and do as Christians. It is a mix of instruction in faith, warnings against false teaching and great encouragement on the way of love which is the way of Christ.

In this passage

St Paul urges a real sincerity in our relationship. To sustain a loving relationship, we are to be full of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and tireless patience — always ready to forgive one another too. A tall order! And what will help us to live out this self-emptying, grateful love — the love that looks out to the other, always wanting the best for them ahead of our own needs? Accordingly, to know we can love like this because we are first loved by God, and in order to let the 'message of Christ find a home' in us, we need to be open to that message of love. The Holy Spirit helps us hear this message and learn to live it: firstly through our reflection on the scriptures; secondly, through mixing and talking with our families and friends and people in the parish community, observing, and asking them to say what gives their life meaning; thirdly, through coming to Church and joining in the liturgy of the Church and being touched by the words and gestures, the silences and actions, and learning to deepen prayer ourselves as individual and as a couple; and finally, we hear the message and learn to live it through 'serving' or doing things for others — first our partner, but then more widely, wherever there is need. How will we know when the message of Christ is at home in us? St Paul reassures us, saying let peace be the 'umpire' in your hearts and minds. If you have a sense of peace when making choices and taking decisions about your life together, you are on the right track!

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 qualities do you most admire in one another? What do you most love about each other?
- Why are you getting married in a Catholic Christian setting? What is central about the message of Christ for you? What does this extract from the letter to the Colossians tell you about the message of Christ?
- How can your family and friends support you in your marriage? What about the parish where you are getting married? What about the parish near to where you live?

- What do you think you both bring to the life of your families, and the wider community? You might ask your parents and families what they think your love for each other brings to them!
- Having read through the passage a few times, and shared what strikes you in particular, what do you think God might be saying to you through these words? How does this help you in your preparation for marriage?
- How would you describe 'prayer' for you? When and where might you pray? What help would you like? Where might you find it?
- What do you like about this passage? Why might it be a good reading for your wedding?