

Gospel

Matthew 19: 3–6

*What God has united, man must not divide.*

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

3 Some Pharisees approached Jesus, and to test him they said,  
'Is it against the Law for a man to divorce his wife  
on any pretext whatever?'

4 He answered, 'Have you not read that the creator from the beginning  
made them male and female

5 and that he said: This is why a man must leave father and mother,  
and cling to his wife, and the two become one body?

6 They are no longer two, therefore, but one body.  
So then, what God has united, man must not divide.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

# Looking at the Text

M G-4 Matthew 19:3-6

*What God has united, man must not divide.*

## The Gospel of St Matthew

This is the first of the four gospels, giving an account of Jesus' life and ministry, teaching by word, stories, and example — how to live with others, how to pray, how to grow in wisdom and come close to God. Matthew writes as a Jew for the Jewish Christians in the early days of the Church, proclaiming Jesus as 'Messiah', as the fulfilment of the Old Testament, both the Law and the Prophets.

### In this passage

Jesus is teaching about the commitment of marriage. Marriage is God's idea, from the beginning, for a man and a woman to be joined together in an exclusive, life-long and fruitful relationship. God pours out his love and blessings, giving strength to combat any human weakness and enabling the couple to live a faithful and joyful life together. In a culture that is sadly lacking in commitment, a couple choosing to get married in church are a great sign of hope and encouragement for everyone. The true happiness born in strong relationships shines out for all. In a life-long commitment, both partners can flourish. Through the exchange of consent and making vows, they are assured in the knowledge that they are loved, and that God has united them, come what may. Each can be honest and vulnerable, trusting in their husband or wife's acceptance of them. In this environment of self-less love, mixed in with faith in God's love and support with them, the couple can live out their vocation, and grow towards being the happy, blessed, fruitful people God made them to be. That sounds idealistic! A marriage is not an easy path, and requires great tenacity and trust too. However, bottom line, it is designed by God to be a way of life that images something of what heaven is, and it is powerful in the living of it.

## 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:*

- Generally, what would you say the law is for in our lives? How does it help?
- There are 'laws' in the Church, alongside the blessings, that help us to sustain life-long and fruitful marriages. You might like to talk together about what exclusive 'commitment' means to you. What about 'life-long' commitment? What does it mean to be 'fruitful' in a marriage?
- Think of a marriage you admire. What do you think has made it a 'good' marriage? What are the human qualities that 'join' you together in your relationship?
- Take time to look at the solemn vows you are going to make to one another, and your hopes for your marriage.
  - Have you come without any pressure from anyone, freely and wholeheartedly to enter into marriage?

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These notes have been prepared by Caroline Dollard, Marriage & Family Life Project, CBCEW [www.catholicfamily.org.uk](http://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](http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Marriage) © 2016 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

- Are you prepared to love and honour each other as long as you both shall live?
- Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?
- ‘I take you to be my wife/husband.  
to have and to hold from this day forward,  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish  
till death do us part.’
- ‘Receive this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity.’
- What do you like about this reading? Why might it be a good choice for your wedding?

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### 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.