

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Ephesians (*Ephesians 5:23-27*)

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection ~ Christ consummates His love for His Church on the Cross and in the Holy Eucharist

Marriage, a precious gift from God. The beginning of Scripture tells of the marriage between our first parents, Adam and Eve, whilst the last book of Scripture tells of the great wedding banquet of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ and His Church. Marriage is the most intimate relationship between a man and a woman, and called by God to be very holy, and is a sacrament of the Catholic Church. In the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony the couple receives special graces from God and participates in His divine life. Christ Himself gives teaching on this human union: *So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate* (*Matthew 19:6*).

In steadfast love, mercy, faithfulness, justice and righteousness God calls each and every one of us to enter into a covenantal, spousal relationship with Him. *And I will betroth you to Me forever. I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord* (*Hosea 2:19-20*). Though we are merely God's creatures, God does not call us slaves which in fact we are since we belong to Him as He is our Creator. Instead, the Lord prefers to call us friends (cf. John 15:15) and to rejoice over us as His betrothed (cf. Isaiah 62:5)! These are all His gifts. We do not merit it. To make us fitting to be His Betrothed, He has to cleanse us from all our sins.

Christ consummates His love for His Spouse, the Church on the Cross. To the unbelieving Gentiles and Jews, the Cross is a foolishness and a stumbling block (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:23) but to Christ it is the altar of sacrifice, of consummation of His undying love for His Church. Through it, He steps into eternal glory - the glory that was already His - bringing along with Him His holy Spouse, the Church whom He purified, redeemed and sanctified by His own Precious Blood shed on the Cross of Calvary. *For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God* (*Hebrews 12:2*). Thus, Jesus gives a profound lesson on love when He scorned the shame of the cross and gave His all for the eternal welfare of every one. No one is excluded from the salvific act of Jesus. All are called into Christ's Church and to be espoused to Him in righteousness, love, mercy, faithfulness and justice. Thus, Jesus sets the standard for all human marriages which are to be modelled on Christ's marriage of His holy Church. Christ teaches through St Paul who exhorts wives to be submissive to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives selflessly with their all (cf. Ephesians 5:25).

Christ consummates His love for His Church in the Holy Eucharist. A true lover always wants to be with his beloved. Before His ascension, Jesus promised to be with us always till the end of the age (cf. Matthew 28:20). Jesus fulfilled His promise in a very special way when He instituted the Holy Eucharist. In the Holy Eucharist of the Mass, it is a re-enactment of His supreme Sacrifice on Calvary. In the Blessed Sacrament, it is an abiding Real Presence inviting all sinners to come to the throne of grace here on earth to ask for whatever we need from Him whether temporal or spiritual. In Holy Communion, it is the divine food for soul, communicating to us His divine life. *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich* (*2 Corinthians 8:9*).

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, You give Your all in order that I may live, be with You, be fit to enter Your Kingdom and to receive my eternal inheritance, that is Your Kingdom. In Your mercy and infinite wisdom, You placed me into a covenantal, spousal relationship with You so that I can take leave of my old self, be renewed and reformed in mind, heart and spirit to become what You have made me to be: Your joy, Your love, Your Crown of Beauty, Your Spouse, a source of Your rejoicing. In response, I offer You with all my love, my heart and life, my free will so that You can do whatsoever You desire with my life for the eternal good of everyone. Help me to remember how much I am being loved, so that I can respond to love You more and more. Mary, Mother of Salvation, set my heart on fire with love for Jesus! Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.