

# MARRIAGE MATTERS<sup>®</sup>



This online Word.doc book **MARRIAGE MATTERS** is a collection of 60-word snippets, adapted from the Sunday Mass Scripture Reading reflections found in **I AM WITH YOU Year B**. These can be placed in a newsletter, bulletin, website or blog. Simply 'cut and paste' and apply the relevant week's reflection to the medium you're using. Our desire through this book is to support, encourage, inspire, challenge and motivate couples to deepen their relationship with one another and with God.

It is for use by organisations, parishes and dioceses, nationally and internationally. Its sole purpose is to enhance relationships and heighten the profile of Marriage and its sanctity and significance in the life of the family, the Church, communities and society as a whole.

**Every blessing from the *Two In One Flesh* group**

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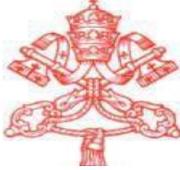
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## FOREWORD



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM  
PRO FAMILIA



Prot. n. 2014/717-II/21

Vatican City, October 22nd 2014

It is an essential part of the Church's duty to support and assist spouses in family prayer, attentive hearing of the word of God, and knowledge of the Bible. We know that every Christian home ought to have a Bible in a worthy place to be used for regular reading and prayer. So it is with joy that I welcome this latest initiative of the British group *Two in One Flesh* in providing brief online scriptural reflections on sacramental marital love in the light of the Sunday readings for Year B. Such a resource as MARRIAGE MATTERS comes at a timely moment in the life of the Church when there is fresh attention on the centrality of marriage in her mission. The Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* declares that "it must never be forgotten that the word of God is at the very origin of marriage' and that fidelity to God's word leads us to point out that marriage is in many ways under attack". It reminds us "the Word of God is a precious support amid the difficulties which arise in marriage and in family life". I pray that all who use this resource especially spouses will find renewed hope and trust in God's fidelity to them as couples and that like His precious Word, it will enable them to remain alive and active in their commitment to one another.

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✠ Jean Laffitte  
Secretary

00120 STATO CITTÀ DEL VATICANO

Ufficio: Piazza S. Calisto, 16 - 00153 Roma - Tel. 06.698.87243 - Fax 06-698.87272 - E-mail: [pcf@family.va](mailto:pcf@family.va)

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## MARRIAGE MATTERS

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**First Sunday in Advent** (Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1, 3-8 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 Mark 13:33-37)

Thanking God for each other

*"Stay awake for you never know when the time will come...!"* Today's Gospel reminds us to remember that our lives together will not go on for ever. It is therefore so important to thank God every day for the wonderful gift that we are to each other, indeed one of the greatest gifts that the Father has given us.

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**Second Sunday of Advent** (Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-4 2 Peter 3:8-14 Mark 1:1-8)

Let us be a sign for all

A voice cries *"Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord"*. Sometimes life can seem to be a wilderness as we look ahead. If we try to live today to the best of our abilities, removing those attitudes and behaviours that prevent us from being better husbands and wives, then we can become a clearer 'signpost' for everyone.

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**Third Sunday of Advent** (Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11 1Thessalonians 5:16-24 John1: 6-8, 19-28)

We have been anointed by God

A TV programme poses the question: 'Who do you think you are?' When John, baptising in the desert, was asked this question, to paraphrase he replied: *"I am a voice, drawing attention to something greater than you can see or hear."* Our marriages are like this! We are a 'sign' radiating God's love for all His people.

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**Fourth Sunday of Advent** (2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11, 16 Romans 16: 25-27 Luke 1:26-38)

Listening is a way of loving

David, Paul and Mary listened to God, changed their plans and way of life. Before marrying we listened intently and consequently felt loved and cherished. Today, with the pressures of everyday living, our listening can be impaired. We need constantly to overcome the temptation to just 'hear' what's said, and work on listening with our hearts, eyes and full attention.

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**Christmas Day *Midnight Mass*** (Isaiah 9:1-7 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14)

Presents or Presence

The first Christmas Story is simple: it reveals the real presence of Jesus, Mary and Joseph to each other. Maybe the lesson for us is to focus more on being 'present' to one another rather than on giving 'presents', so that Jesus can be born again in our marriage and in all those we love and care for.

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**The Holy Family** (Ecclesiastes 3:2-6, 12-14 Colossians 3:12-21 Luke 2:22-40)

Give way and love gently

When Mary and Joseph had done everything that the Law required, they went back home. Little is said about them as a couple. Did Mary 'give way to her husband, as you should in the Lord'? Did Joseph 'love his wife and treat her with gentleness'? Did they choose daily to love each other over and above everything else? Do we?

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**Mary, Mother of God** (Numbers 6:22-27 Galatians 4:4-7 Luke 2:16-21)

The wonder of who we are called to be

Today, let us ponder in our hearts God's gift of our love for each other and His call to reflect Jesus' love for His Church. In marriage He calls us to an intimate relationship. So, let us try to be gentle and understanding in good and difficult times; ready to listen, forgive, reconcile and to joyfully rejoice in one another.

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**Second Sunday after Christmas** (Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2, 8-12 Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18 John 1:1-18)

You have been chosen

St Paul says "*You have been chosen*" and John says "*All things have life in Him*". In a marriage, each partner has been personally called to love their spouse in a lifelong relationship. The fact that God calls us individually means that He has chosen us for a specific reason: to bring life to my partner, to understand and forgive.

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**The Epiphany of the Lord** (Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6 Matthew 2:1-12)

The gift of unity

At this joyful time of the year, let us look with delight at one another, remembering that we have each been entrusted, by God, with the grace he meant for each other when we got married. God's gift has made us one body and the gift of our children is this grace made flesh bringing joy into our hearts.

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**The Baptism of the Lord** (Isaiah 42:1-4, 4-7 Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38 Mark 1:7-11)

You are my Beloved

How we each adapt to and accept the many differences in each other is a remarkable insight into the Spirit of God deeply seeded within us. It is this which calls us to say to one another: you are my chosen one in whom my heart delights! Let us celebrate with joy God's love for us and for all marriages.

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**Ash Wednesday** (Joel 2:12-18 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18)

Now is the favourable time

Saint Paul urges us not to delay in seeking or giving forgiveness: "*Now is the favourable time – the day of salvation*". As married couples, we can avoid clinging on to hurts between us by genuinely asking each other for forgiveness, rather than saying a casual 'sorry'. Also, seek to give it generously in our hearts, like '*giving alms in secret*'.

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**First Sunday of Lent** (Genesis 9:8-15 1 Peter 3:18-22 Mark 1:12-15)

We hunger for closeness

'Wilderness' can be a reality in our marriage relationship at times, a kind of 'desert experience': hungering for a gentle touch or return of the closeness in our relationship. Yet, we can look back on such times and recognise the Spirit was at work. God's grace was in our yearning, calling us to choose life and turn away from self-indulgence.

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**Second Sunday of Lent** (Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18 Romans 8:31-34 Mark 9:2-10)

Free to be ourselves

Sometimes we can be overwhelmed by each other's generous sensitivity, thoughtfulness and kindness which have helped us grow in confidence to share our deepest feelings, fears and joys. Let us try this week to find ways of growing in that confidence and trust so that in our relationship we radiate God's joy through the way we love each other.

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**Third Sunday of Lent** (Exodus 20:1-17 1Corinthians 1:22-25 John 2:13-25)

God's love is our strength

Let us remind each other constantly that our marriage is as unique and as special to God today as it was when we first married. We are blessed with a love that transforms ordinary everyday events into something quite different and special. Our faults and weaknesses become our strengths if we strive to love one another as God loves us.

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**Fourth Sunday of Lent** (2Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23 Ephesians 2: 4-10 John 3: 14-21)

Called to be a 'sign'

The world often ridicules marriage saying 'it's just a piece of paper', but Scripture draws attention to God's powerful message. St. Paul says: "*We are God's work of art; created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning He had meant us to live it.*" Let us shine out so the world sees what it's missing.

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**Fifth Sunday of Lent** (Jeremiah 31:31-34 Hebrews 5:7-9 John 12:20-33)

Unconditional love

Love is called to be unconditional, not 'counting the cost', not 50/50, but both giving 100%. Today's Gospel reminds us a rich harvest is only possible when a single wheat grain falls on the ground and dies. Our loving efforts, trials and difficulties in marriage are ways of 'dying' to a lifestyle contrary to what God is calling us to.

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**Sixth Sunday of Lent** (Isaiah 50:4-7 Philippians 2:6-11 Mark 14:1-15)

Today is all we have

Today let us reflect on what is really important in our marriages. In this day and age the cost of living can create anxieties and tensions about making ends meet. So today, let's hold hands, look at each other, and celebrate our love, which joins us together as a 'sign' of God's love for everyone.

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**Easter Sunday** (Acts of the Apostles 10:34, 37-43 Colossians 3:1-4 John 20:1-9)

A sign of new life

Today we celebrate the resurrection and new life in the Lord. In our marriage we too rise to new life when we put each other first in all we do and say. Let us live openly, honestly and truthfully so that we become a 'sign' to our families that Jesus is alive in our married love.

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**Second Sunday of Easter** (Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35 1 John 5:1-6 John 20:19-31)

Doubt no longer

Sometimes we are asked to trust our spouse implicitly despite the doubts that plague us. Can we believe them when something really important depends on it? Thomas needed proof of Jesus' wounds before believing. Jesus said: "*Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe [and]...Doubt no longer but believe.*" It's important to believe and to decide to trust.

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**Third Sunday of Easter** (Acts of the Apostles 3: 13-15, 17-19 1John 2: 1-5 Luke 24: 35-48)

Let peace reign in our hearts

There are times in life, as couples, when the demands of work, concerns about money and care of the children can seem overwhelming. In times like these let's acknowledge each other, take time out to clarify the issues and remind ourselves of the words of Jesus to the Apostles when they thought it was all over, "*Peace be with you!*"

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**Fourth Sunday of Easter** (Acts of the Apostles 4:8-12 1 John 3:1-2 John 10:11-18)

We lay down our lives, we go beyond...

Couples can relate to the notion of 'shepherding' with regards to their children: "*I know my own and my own know me*". Even in crowds, our children will recognise our voices and we theirs. Also, just as Jesus spoke today of '*laying down His life*', when marrying, we made a solemn vow to lay down our lives for one another.

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**Fifth Sunday of Easter** (Acts of the Apostles 9:26-31 1 John 3:18-24 John 15:1-8)

Listening and discerning together

Jesus says: "*Whoever remains in me bears fruit in plenty.*" Listening to Our Lord is essential for our fruitfulness. This can depend on how well we make the time to listen to each other, to discern together. Often God speaks to us through our spouse; some say 'the closer we are to each other, the closer we are to God'.

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**Sixth Sunday of Easter** (Acts of the Apostles 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48 1 John 4:7-10 15:9-17)

Called to reflect God's love

"*Love one another as I have loved you*". With these words Jesus spells out God's plan for marriage. As husband and wife we are called each day to give our lives to each other as completely as we are able. From today let us decide to reflect this 'sign' of God's love to our children, our family and our friends.

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**Seventh Sunday of Easter** The Ascension (Acts 1:15-17, 20-26 1John 4: 11-16 John 17: 11-19)

Strive for unity

Since even before we married, we have worked to bring about unity in our love relationship. Today we are reminded that by loving one another; "*God will live in us and His love will be complete in us*". Let's take a moment to hold hands, look at each other and say "you are my beloved 'till the end of time'".

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**Pentecost** (Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13 John 20:19-23)

Differences add richness

Paul saw the Church as being a corporate body: various people, each with unique identities, talents, different skills and abilities, all contributing to bringing the Good News to others. Our differences became evident early in our marriage; these differences can be problematic or add richness to our relationship. The outcome depends on whether our choices are selfish or 'us' focused.

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**Second Sunday in Ordinary Time** (1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19 1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20 John 1:35-42)

Welcomed in His name

When Andrew and Simon Peter met Jesus, they asked Him: "*Rabbi, where do you live?*" He said: "*Come and see.*" They went, and stayed for the rest of the day. Did Mary, His mother, return to find strangers in her house and welcome and serve them in her Son's name? Do we welcome and serve one another in His name?

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**Third Sunday of Ordinary time** (Jonah 3: 1-5 1 Corinthians 7: 29-31 Mark 1: 14-20)

Change of lifestyle

Jonah the prophet and Jesus call us to repent, to a change of lifestyle. When we married there was a radical change in our lifestyles. He became husband, she became wife and together we became a flesh and blood 'sacrament of marriage'. This is our continued call to each other - live a new life of love in the Lord.

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**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Deuteronomy 18:15-20 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 Mark 1:21-28)

Evangelisation through our Sacrament

St Paul infers a deeper spirituality is found among the unmarried, yet writing to the Ephesians (5:32), he speaks of 'the profound mystery' of marriage and compares it to the relationship between Christ and the Church. The Lord is at the heart of our love for one another, providing the grace for daily living and evangelisation, through our Sacrament.

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**Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Job 7:1-4, 6-7 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23 Mark 1:29-39)

Making the time to talk and to listen

As married couples we need time to grow in knowledge and understanding of each other. This week let us make time when we are not tired, to talk together, to share what's happened in the day, our thoughts and feelings, the things that worry us or make us happy. Perhaps we can also plan a regular celebration of our love.

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**Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Leviticus 13:1-2, 45-46 1 Corinthians 10: 31-33, 11:1 Mark 1:40-45)

Keeping our love alive

Sometimes we have a sense of being at odds and separated from each other. The question, often unasked, is 'do you love me?' The answer is the same as Jesus gave to the outcast leper 'of course I do!' From being apart, we can be one again. How often do we say to each other 'I love you'?

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**Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Isaiah 43:18-19, 21-22, 24-25 2 Corinthians 1:18-22 Mark 2:1-2)

A fresh beginning

Things do sometimes go wrong in marriage. Let us choose not to allow issues to 'paralyse' the opportunities for making a fresh start. We can 'strip away' the attitudes and behaviours keeping us at odds with each other and rediscover, together, the happiness which comes from forgiving and the joy of 'picking each other up' and starting a new day.

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**Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Hosea 2:16-17, 21-22 2 Corinthians 3:1-6 Mark 2:18-22)

You are a love letter from Christ

The Scriptures are a 'love letter' telling the story of the ups and downs of God's love relationship with humanity. From Hosea through to Jesus, the 'bridegroom', we are called to go out to the whole world with the 'new wine' containing the Good News of God's faithful, unconditional love for the human race. Our sacrament encompasses such a call.

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**Ninth Sunday of Ordinary time** (Deuteronomy 5: 12-15 2 Corinthians 4: 6-11 Mark 2: 23-36)

Living God's plan for marriage

Sometimes we can get drawn into the world's plan for marriages - doing things and behaving as others think we should; in other words - conforming. But we are a unique couple, a sacramental couple, there isn't anyone like us. So today, let's break the mould so that who we are, a special couple, shines out for all to see.

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**Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Genesis 3:9-15 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 Mark 3:20-35)

Together in Christ

Blaming each other is easy when pressures and emotions are running high. We too can feel exposed and naked in our hurry to justify ourselves, just like Adam and Eve when they were 'in trouble'. Never forget the fact that God's grace is continually being poured upon us through our Sacrament of Marriage and the sacramental life of the Church.

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**Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Ezekiel 17:22-24 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 Mark 4:26-34)

The seed that grows to become a shelter

Each of us has a 'seed' of love in us at our birth. This is fostered as we grow to value others through our relationships. Learning to love ourselves and each other more deeply helps our seeds of love to swell. Eventually our unified love becomes a 'shelter' for our children, our families and all those whose lives we touch.

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**Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Job 38:1, 8-11 2Corinthians 5: 14-17 Mark 4: 35-41)

Make time for each other

Today the readings speak of turbulence and stormy waters. Life is like that! So it is in our married relationships. Nothing is ever completely smooth; our lives are often messy and difficult. As a couple, if we take time to take stock and trust in each other and the Lord, we might just hear His encouragement. *"Quiet now, be calm!"*

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**Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24 2 Corinthians 8:7; 9:13-15 Mark 5:21-43)

The triumph of love over fear

The love that a married couple have for one another gives them the strength to overcome together the situations that occur in their life. Whether it is illness, difficult relationships with children or parents, unemployment, work issues or financial worries, Jesus tells us not to be afraid but to trust and have faith in each other and in Him.

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**Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Ezekiel 2: 2-5 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10 Mark 6: 1-6)

Recognising our real beauty

When we married we became, together, a 'prophet', not predicting the future, but proclaiming the good news of marriage, here and now. Yet, there are times when we feel sorry for ourselves, blaming each other. Let's admit our own faults and weaknesses and remind one another of the beautiful qualities we found when we first fell in love.

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**Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Amos 7:12-15 Ephesians 1:3-14 Mark 6:7-13)

Sent out in pairs

Sending pairs out to proclaim the Good News is repeated in other parts of the New Testament, including accounts of up to forty being sent out in pairs; it is even possible this included married couples. Jesus obviously thought pairs work well together. Married couples can draw spiritual strength from their Sacrament, particularly when they're working together for the Church.

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**Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Jeremiah 23:1-6 Ephesians 2:13-18 Mark 6:30-34)

Walking alongside or away?

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, experienced rejection: many "*walked with him no longer*". This offers us some consolation, when despite doing our best to pass on our faith in Jesus and His Church to our children, we, their 'shepherds', experience them drifting away from the faith. God loves our children unconditionally, and we need to continually 'hold them' in our love.

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**Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Kings 4:42-44 Ephesians 4:1-6 John 6:1-15)

Selflessness in giving

The readings recount God's continuing faithfulness to His people, and their response. Elisha's story is the forerunner to Jesus feeding at least five thousand on a few loaves and fishes. Such providence reminds us of our faithful God who gives, and gives, and then gives again. Do I do this, do we, to each other? In His strength, we can.

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**Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (1 Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15 Ephesians 4:17, 20-24 John 6:24-35)

Jesus will give us courage and strength

The readings today focus very much on God's love and care for each of us. Our relationship at times can be challenged by something like a serious physical or mental illness, making it very hard to communicate. At such times, if we dig deep, we will find the trust we have in Jesus. This can pull us through together.

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**Nineteen Sunday in Ordinary Time** (1Kings 19: 4-8 Ephesians 4: 30-32 5: 1-2 John 6: 41-51)

To love as God loves

When we married we became a flesh and blood sacrament. Today, Jesus says "*I am the bread of life*". We are 'food and drink' for each other. Let's continue to nourish one another in our marriages, in all those little ways, with tender words and loving actions and become more a 'sign' of God's love for the world.

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**Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Proverbs 9: 1-6 Ephesians 5: 15-20 John 6: 51-58)

Called to nourish each other

In marriage we must try to lead intelligent lives as St. Paul reminds us in his letter. No one says you have to be clever, but the wisdom to see through ignorance, folly, thoughtlessness and so on will help us to nourish our love for each other. In this way our marriages will give thanks to God.

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**Twenty-First Sunday of Ordinary time** (Joshua 24: 1-2, 15-18 Ephesians 5: 21-32 John6: 60-69)

Making decisions: being open and honest

The word 'submit' used in Ephesians today, raises many hackles in our equality sensitive society. 'Submit' does not mean obey. In fact the passage begins by saying we husbands and wives should submit ourselves to one other. In this context 'submit' is about choosing to relate openly and honestly with each other. Open, honest and trust-filled communication brings about intimacy.

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**Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Deut4:1-2, 6-8; James1:17-18, 21-22, 27; Mk7:1-8 14-15,21-23)

Choosing what is best for 'us'

Today, Jesus almost affirms His disciples' rule-breaking. He talks of people honouring Him with lip-service, with hearts far from Him. In marriage, it's the same when behaving 'husbandly' or 'wifely': saying/doing the right words/actions with hearts far from one another. Making listening to Jesus and each other a lifestyle choice enables us to choose what is best for 'us'.

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**Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Isaiah 35:4-7 James 2:1-5 Mark 7:31-37)

Healing and wholeness may take time

Criticism, intended or not, can lead to harsh words or painful silences. When trying to talk, the hurts can be so deep, they seem too big a block to overcome. To leave space or do something we enjoy doing together, and then trying to talk, can often enable us to open our ears to listen and our hearts to love.

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**Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Isaiah 50:5-9 James 2:14-18 Mark 8:27-35)

Love in action

Jesus invites us "*to love as He loves*". We hear this so often in the Scriptures that there is a risk the words become so familiar that we stop really hearing them. We can say the words "I love you" to our spouse but without the relevant actions the words may mean little or nothing: 'actions speak louder than words'.

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**Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Wisdom 2:12, 17-20 James 3:16-4:3 Mark 9:30-37)

Selfish ambition versus intimacy

The readings illustrate the struggle between peacemakers and those driven by jealousy and selfish ambition - is that us? Together, we can regulate what we do as a couple, knowing each other so intimately. Our consciences can be reinforced by the extent we are prepared to be open and honest with each other. What do we choose?

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**Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Numbers 11:25-29 James 5:1-6 Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48)

Attitudes stemming from jealousy

We read today how Moses and Jesus ignored criticism, seeing it as rooted in jealousy. So many evils have been perpetrated because of jealousy. A problem today for husbands and wives is the temptation to judge their spouse on their ability to match up to what the media shows, becoming so deep-seated it can cause serious harm. Stand firm together.

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**Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Genesis 2:18-24 Hebrews 2:9-11 Mark 10:2-16)

Two in one flesh

God said: "*It is not good that the man should be alone.*" Do I value my husband, my wife? Do I really know you, my beloved and lifelong companion? When was the last time we were intimate or celebrated our sexuality; the essence of our being two in one flesh? How much of a priority are you in my life?

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**Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Wisdom 7:7-11 Hebrews 4:12-13 Mark 10:17-30)

The call to change: no his or hers

Today, the Gospel calls us to share ALL that we have. We promised to do this on our wedding day when we said that we would change the things that come between us and develop the things that bring us together. It is this journey of change that makes our marriage the sign of Jesus' love for us all.

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**Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Isaiah 53: 10-11 Hebrews 4: 4-6 Mark 10: 35-45)

To love is to be strong

Today we are reminded that Jesus has turned all worldly values upside down. When we place our faith in God's saving love and copy that in our marriages, we too, in spite of our weaknesses and failings, are renewed and made strong in our love for each other. The more we give our love away the more it grows!

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**Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Jeremiah 31: 7-9 Hebrews 5: 1-6 Mark 10: 46-52)

Ask and you will receive

The prophet tells us today that if we ask, the Lord will always comfort, lead and guide us, so that we will not stumble. Jesus' response to Bartimaeus – "*What do you want me to do for you?*" – points the way. In marriage we become mirrors of God's saving help, supporting each other and being sure guides for our children.

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**Thirty-First Sunday of Ordinary time** (Deuteronomy 6: 2-6 Hebrews 7: 23-28 Mark 12: 28-34)

Remember our wedding vows

In the Old Testament, Moses said: "*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength.*" In Mark's gospel Jesus completes this commandment: "*You must love your neighbour as yourself*". Your wife, your husband, is the nearest neighbour you have! This is what we promised each other on our wedding day.

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**Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Kings 17:10-16 Hebrews 9:24-28 Mark 12:38-44)

Giving from what little we have

Considering the context of today's readings, we see the 'holiness' inherent in the 'sacrifices' of all those involved. The reality of life's experiences indicates that it is through giving that we receive. The small things we do each day produce wonderful and fruitful consequences in our marriage. Our graced daily 'yes' to one another is what ultimately 'makes us holy'.

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**Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time** (Daniel 12:1-3 Hebrews 10:11-14; 18 Mark 13:24-32)

We do not know the hour or the day

The world will not last for ever, and marriage too will end when one spouse dies. This week, we married people are reminded to reflect on the treasures of love in our life: romance, warmth, tenderness, joyful celebrations, intimate moments and the fruitfulness of our love. Let's celebrate each other, reconcile past hurts and continually praise God for His blessings.

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**Feast of Christ the King Last Sunday of the Year** (1Daniel 7: 13-14 Revelation 1: 5-8 John 18: 33-37)

Marriage, called to be a kingdom of love

In our sacramental relationship we are called to be a 'kingdom of love'. Just as God's kingdom is for all, so our marriages are not private relationships. We are a 'sign' for all, especially for our children where truth, life, holiness, grace, justice, desire, passion, tenderness, joy and peace reign. It sounds a tall order - but not with God!

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**The Immaculate Conception** (Genesis 3:9-15, 20 Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12 Luke 1:26-38)

God's invitation calls for our co-operation

Disobedience was foreseen by the Blessed Trinity but, "*before the world was made*", God had a plan; it included us, and Mary, "*so highly favoured*" by God. When her mother Anne conceived her, Mary was without sin. When tempted, she co-operated with the graces given her. Husbands and wives, do we co-operate with God's invitation to us?

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**The Presentation of the Lord** (Malachi 3:1-4 Hebrews 2:14-18 Luke 2:22-40)

Salvation is our destiny

When all had been done according to the law, Mary, Joseph and Jesus journeyed back to Nazareth. We might imagine them walking along, singing God's praises for their beautiful child, dimly aware they carried the Salvation of the world. Are we aware that as we help one another along, family and others, it's our journey on the road to salvation?

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**Saint Joseph** (1Samuel 7: 4-5, 12-14, 16 Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22 Matthew 1: 16, 18-21)

Model husband

The gospel tells us very little about St. Joseph. But he must have been steadfast, loyal and strong to have been entrusted with the protection and care of Jesus and Mary. On this feast day today, let us celebrate within our married relationships those same qualities which are part of what a good husband and father aspires to be.

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**The Annunciation of the Lord** (Isaiah 7:10-14 Hebrews 10:4-10 Luke 1:26-38)

When God invites and we co-operate, Christ is born anew in us

Holiness comes from obedience to the will of God, not rules. The angel's invitation, followed by Mary's co-operation, lead to the Incarnation: God among us. We too are invited to do the will of God and can co-operate - in the kitchen, the bedroom, the workplace or the garden, our 'yes' to each other, makes Christ present in our world.

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**Holy Trinity** (Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40 Romans 8:14-17 Matthew 28:16-20)

The Blessed Trinity is an intimate love relationship

Jesus summarises the commandments: love God and your neighbour. The intimacy of married love has this high calling: wholly love God and love each other, we are one another's closest neighbour. It is said that married love most closely reveals the love relationships in the Trinity: three persons in one God, calls us to be two persons in one flesh.

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**Corpus Christi** (Exodus 24: 3-8 Hebrews 9: 11-15 Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26)

A promise of eternal life

Today, the letter to the Hebrews speaks of a new covenant, a new promise of eternal life. We became a new covenant when we promised to be a married couple on our wedding day. We renew our married covenant each time we nourish and feed each other in our relationship with acts and words of tender kindness.

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**The Sacred Heart of Jesus** (Hosea 11:1, 3-4, 8-9 Ephesians 3:8-12, 14-19 John 19:31-37)

Tender, loving, forgiveness, even when we walk away

Hosea extols the tender love of God: a father leading a child beginning to walk '*with strings of love...*' Then, like many parents, God watched His children '*do their own thing*' and suffer the consequences. Jesus' heart was pierced by the centurion's lance and blood and water flowed, symbolising God's tender loving forgiveness. In marriage, tender, loving forgiveness is essential.

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**The Birth of John the Baptist** (Isaiah 49:1-6 Acts 13:22-26 Luke 1:57-66, 80)

Called by God in a unique Sacrament

Today's readings highlight that John the Baptist was someone special in God's eyes. The great challenge for us as married couples, is to hear Isaiah's words "*You are my servant in whom I shall be glorified*" and apply them to ourselves. Never forget, God has chosen and graced the two of us to live this unique Sacrament of Marriage!

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**Feast of Saints Peter and Paul** (Acts 12: 1-11 2 Timothy 4: 6-8 Matthew 16: 13-19)

Strong in faith and love

We hear of wars, disputes and arguments throughout the world. Today we are reminded that in spite of all that is happening, the Lord stands beside us to protect, encourage and guide. Can we in our marriages mirror the Lord in all His faithful actions, so that we too become a 'sign' of His love for the entire world?

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**The Transfiguration of the Lord** (Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 2 Peter 1:16-19 Mark 9:2-10)

A fraction of that holy light

Jesus led His disciples up the mountain and was there transfigured; "*His face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as the light*". In marriage there are moments when it's as if a brilliant light shines on us, a fraction of God's holy light. His grace and power can transfigure our relationships and love: do we let Him?

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**The Assumption** (Revelation 11: 19, 12: 1-6 10 1 Corinthians 15: 20-26 Luke: 39-56)

If in need

We have good reason for believing that from her special place in heaven God continues to do great things through Mary. Her own experience of being a wife and mother has made her very aware of the joys, trials and sufferings of life for married couples. This means that whenever we need it we can ask her for help.

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**The Triumph (or Exultation) of the Cross** (Numbers 21:4-9 Philippians 2:6-11 John 3:13-17)

Love can overcome everything: it is a decision

'TRIUMPH' and 'CROSS' seem uncomfortable bedfellows. However, much of life, faith and truth is paradox. Sometimes we question the quality of our relationship, asking "is this the best we can hope for?" Yet, choosing to love, we make the decision to believe in our beloved's goodness and often discover the new life that Jesus promised; this is love's paradox.

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**The Forty Martyrs of England and Wales** (Hebrews 11:33-40 John 12:24-26)

In our weakness we are strong

In tough times, when struggling with life's pressures, we can get snared in our own worries or anxieties. This can lead to us acting independently or nursing our own hurts. When the focus is on each other, or when one spouse reaches out openly, sensitively and listens with understanding, and communicates acceptance, the relationship is strengthened and problems shouldered together.

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**All Saints** (Revelation 7: 2-4, 9-14 1John 3: 1-3 Matthew 5: 1-12)

Rejoice, our reward is great in heaven

As the opening prayer of Mass reminds us '...today we rejoice in the holy men and women of every time and place'. Later we hear of a huge number, impossible to count, dressed in white robes and standing before the throne of God. We too are among that throng as we live our call to 'unity' in God's love.

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**All Souls** (Isaiah 25: 6-9 Romans 5: 5-11 John 6: 37-40)

Walk in each other's footsteps

If we walk together through our married lives, seeking always to be as one in thought, word and action then "no evil will I fear". This is because we can live in the hope of God's love being poured into our hearts, so that, no matter what our circumstances, we can live in joyful trust with each other.

**Thank you for using this resource  
And supporting Marriage in the process**

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