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Guide to Recommended Readings for Holy Matrimony

The readings in the attached packet are grouped as follows:

Old Testament

Epistles (originally written as letters, these are sections taken from the New Testament but not including the Gospels or Revelations)

Gospels (narratives of the life of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)

Psalms

At least one passage of Holy Scripture is read during the service. More common is for there to be several readings. One pattern to consider is this (in the order given):

1. One reading from the Old Testament.
2. One Psalm reading.
3. One reading from an Epistle
4. One Gospel reading

The Scripture passages in this packet are suggestions. You are free to choose other passages that have meaning to you. You may also look at different versions of the Bible to see if you might like a different translation style. These all come from the New Revised Standard Version; look at BibleGateway.com or other websites to easily find different versions.

Some couples also choose selections of poetry, lyrics, or other readings that have significance to the couple.

During your preparation for marriage, you will have several opportunities to discuss the selection of readings with someone from the church.

Recommended Readings for Holy Matrimony

One or more passages from Holy Scripture are read, the following being particularly recommended. It is desirable that the Lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles be read by lay persons. If the marriage is to include a Communion, a passage from the Gospel, read by the clergy, always concludes the Readings.

The Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-28 (*Male and female he created them*)

²⁶Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' ²⁷So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'

Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24 (*A man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh*)

⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; ⁶but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— ⁷then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. ⁸And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.' ¹⁹So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my

bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.’
²⁴Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Exodus 40:34-38 (*A sacred journey*)

³⁴Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.
³⁵Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁶Whenever the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on each stage of their journey; ³⁷but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day that it was taken up. ³⁸For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel at each stage of their journey.

Ruth 1:11-18 (*Ruth’s faithfulness to Naomi*)

¹¹But Naomi said, ‘Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?’ ¹²Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, ¹³would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me.’ ¹⁴Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵So she said, ‘See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.’ ¹⁶But Ruth said, ‘Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!’ ¹⁸When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

I Samuel 18:1-5 (*Jonathan’s covenant with David*)

¹When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ²Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father’s house. ³Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. ⁵David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6-7 (*Many waters cannot quench love*)

¹⁰My beloved speaks and says to me:
‘Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
¹¹for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
¹²The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtle-dove
is heard in our land.
¹³The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.

⁶Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a raging flame.

⁷Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If one offered for love
all the wealth of one's house,
it would be utterly scorned.

Tobit 8:5b-8 (*That she and I may grow old together*)

^{5b}Tobias* began by saying,
'Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors,
and blessed is your name in all generations for ever.
Let the heavens and the whole creation bless you for ever.

⁶You made Adam, and for him you made his wife Eve
as a helper and support.

From the two of them the human race has sprung.
You said, "It is not good that the man should be alone;
let us make a helper for him like himself."

⁷I now am taking this kinswoman of mine,
not because of lust,
but with sincerity.

Grant that she and I may find mercy
and that we may grow old together.'

⁸And they both said, 'Amen, Amen.'

The Epistles

I Corinthians 13:1-13 (*Love is patient and kind*)

¹If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

2 Corinthians 5:16-20 (*A new creation*)

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Galatians 3:26-28 (*You are one in Christ Jesus*)

²⁶For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:14-19 (*The Father from whom every family is named*)

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33 (*Walk in love, as Christ loved us*)

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ²and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

²¹Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²²Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. ²⁴Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. ²⁸In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' ³²This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. ³³Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Colossian 3:12-17 (*Love which binds everything together in harmony*)

¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another,

forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

I John 4:7-16 (*Let us love one another for love is of God*)

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. ¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

The Gospels

Matthew 5:1-10 (*The Beatitudes*)

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: ³'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. ⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16 (*You are the light...Let your light so shine*)

¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 7:21, 24-29 (*Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock*)

²¹ 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord", will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

²⁴ 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of

mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall! ²⁸Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, ²⁹for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Mark 3:31-35 (*Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother*)

³¹Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. ³²A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, ‘Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.’ ³³And he replied, ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ ³⁴And looking at those who sat around him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’ ³⁵Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.’

Mark 10:6-9, 13-16 (*They are no longer two but one*)

⁶But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female.” ⁷“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh.” So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’

¹³People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’ ¹⁶And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

John 15:9-12 (*Love one another as I have loved you*)

⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. ¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Between the Readings, a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. The following Psalms are recommended.

Psalms

Psalm 25:1-9

¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

²O my God, in you I trust;

do not let me be put to shame;

do not let my enemies exult over me.

³Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;

let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

⁴Make me to know your ways, O LORD;

teach me your paths.

⁵Lead me in your truth, and teach me,

for you are the God of my salvation;

for you I wait all day long.

⁶Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.

⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

⁸Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

⁹He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.

Psalm 26:1-8

¹Vindicate me, O LORD,
for I have walked in my integrity,
and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

²Prove me, O LORD, and try me;
test my heart and mind.

³For your steadfast love is before my eyes,
and I walk in faithfulness to you.

⁴I do not sit with the worthless,
nor do I consort with hypocrites;

⁵I hate the company of evildoers,
and will not sit with the wicked.

⁶I wash my hands in innocence,
and go around your altar, O LORD,

⁷singing aloud a song of thanksgiving,
and telling all your wondrous deeds.

⁸O LORD, I love the house in which you dwell,
and the place where your glory abides.

Psalm 67

¹May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,

²that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.

³Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

⁴Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.

⁵Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

⁶The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.

⁷May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.

Psalm 127

¹Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labour in vain.
Unless the LORD guards the city,
the guard keeps watch in vain.
²It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives sleep to his beloved.
³Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
⁴Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons of one's youth.
⁵Happy is the man who has
his quiver full of them.
He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128

¹Happy is everyone who fears the LORD,
who walks in his ways.
²You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands;
you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.
³Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.
⁴Thus shall the man be blessed
who fears the LORD.
⁵The LORD bless you from Zion.
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.
⁶May you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!

Psalm 138

¹I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
²I bow down towards your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and your word
above everything.
³On the day I called, you answered me,
you increased my strength of soul.
⁴All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
⁵They shall sing of the ways of the LORD,
for great is the glory of the LORD.

⁶For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly;
but the haughty he perceives from far away.

⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.

⁸The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O LORD, endures for ever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.