

The human couple is placed by God into the midst of all his creatures. They are the most beautiful of the Creator's works and his most perfect image. And God is pleased with his work.

1. Male and female, God created them

A reading from the book of Genesis (1:26-28, 31a)

God said, "Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth."

God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.

God blessed them, saying to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on the earth."

God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good. **The Word of the Lord**

Psalm 33

R The Lord fills the earth with his love.

They are happy, whose God is the Lord, the people he has chosen as his own. The Lord looks on those who revere him, on those who hope in his love. **R**

Our soul is waiting for the Lord. The Lord is our help and our shield. In him do our hearts find joy. We trust in his holy name. **R**

May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you. **R**

The bible tells us that man and woman have a common origin. They were created to support each other and are intended to be one in love.

2. *And they will be two in one flesh*

A reading from the book of Genesis (2:18-24)

The Lord god said, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate." So from the soil the Lord god fashioned all the wild beasts and all the birds of heaven. These he brought to the man to see what he would call them; each one was to bear the name the man would give it. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of heaven and all the wild beats.

But no helpmate suitable for man was found for him. So the Lord god made the man fall into a deep sleep. And while he slept, he took one of his ribs and enclosed it in flesh. The Lord god built the rib he had taken from the man into a woman, and brought her to the man. The man exclaimed:

"This at last is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh! This is to be called woman, for this was taken from man."

This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, and they become one body. **The Word of the Lord.**

Psalm 148

R. *Let them praise the name of the Lord*

OR

Alleluia

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights. Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his host. **R**

Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, shining stars. Praise him, highest heavens and the waters above the heavens. **R**

Praise him, all mountains and hills, all fruit trees and cedars, beasts, wild and tame, reptiles and birds on the wing. **R**

All earth's kings and peoples, praise him, earth's princes and rulers; young men and maidens, old men together with children. **R**

Let them praise the name of the Lord for he alone is exalted. The splendor of his name reaches beyond heaven and earth. **R**

Isaac and Rebekah did not choose each other, but they welcomed their betrothal as a gift from God who inspired in them a deep, abiding love.

3. The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah

A reading from the book of Genesis (24: 48-51, 58-67)

The servant of Abraham said to Laban: "I blessed the Lord, god of my master Abraham, who had so graciously led me to choose the daughter of my master's brother for his son. Now tell me whether you are prepared to show kindness and goodness to my master; if not, say so, and I shall know

what to do.”

Laban and Bethuel replied, “This is from the Lord; it is not in our power to say yes or no to you. Rebekah is there before you. Take her and go; and let her become the wife of your master’s son, as the Lord has decreed.”

They called Rebekah and asked her, “Do you want to leave with this man?” “I do,” she replied. Accordingly they let their sister, Rebekah go, with her nurse, and Abraham’s servant and his men. They blessed Rebekah in these words:

“Sister of ours, increase to thousands and tens of thousands! May your descendants gain possession of the gates of their enemies!”

Rebekah and her servants stood up, mounted the camels, and followed the man. The servant took Rebekah and departed.

Isaac, who lived in the Negeb, had meanwhile come into the wilderness of the well of Lahai Roi. Now Isaac went walking in the fields as evening fell, and looking up saw camels approaching. And Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac. She jumped down from the camel, and asked the servant, “Who is that man walking through the fields to meet us?” The servant replied, “That is my master”; then she took her veil and hid her face.

The servant told Isaac the whole story, and Isaac led Rebekah into his tent and made her his wife; and he loved her. And so Isaac was consoled for the loss of his mother. **The Word of the Lord.**

Psalm 145

R *How good is the Lord to all*

The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in love. How good is the Lord to all, compassionate to all his creatures. **R**

All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord, and your friends shall repeat their blessing. The eyes of all creatures look to you and you give them their food in due time. **R**

The Lord is just in all his ways and loving in all his deeds. He is close to all who call him, who call on him from their hearts. **R**

God guides our lives. This is the message contained in the story of the youthful Tobias, led by God to the woman God had destined for him.

4. *The marriage of Tobias and Sarah*

(The text below, in italics, is an editorial introduction to the reading. It is added to provide a clearer context for this reading.)

A reading from the book of Tobit (7: 9-10a, 11b-14)

On a long journey into an unknown land, Tobias had been guided by a messenger of the Lord. They finally arrived at the home of Raguel; the host's daughter Sarah and Tobias were introduced.

Tobias wishes to marry Sarah, and take her to his home. Her previous marriages had proven to be bitter disappointments, one after another; she

and her parents had all but despaired of knowing normal happiness.

A dinner was held in honour of the two guests: everyone was at table, about to enjoy the hospitality of Sarah's father; Tobias asked god's messenger to help him gain Sarah's hand in marriage, as prescribed in the law of Moses.

"Will you ask Raguel to give me his daughter Sarah?" asked Tobias.

Raguel overheard the words, and said to the young man, "Eat and drink, and make the most of your evening; no one else has the right to take my daughter Sarah – no one but you, my kinsman. I am not at liberty to give her to anyone else. As prescribed by the Book of Moses, she is given to you; heaven itself decrees she shall be yours. She is given to you from today for ever. The Lord of heaven favour you, my child, and grant you his grace and peace."

Raguel called for his daughter Sarah, took her by the hand and gave her to Tobias with these words, "I entrust her to you; the law and the ruling recorded in the Book of Moses assign her to you as your wife. Take her, take her home to your father's house with a good conscience. The God of heaven grant you a good journey in peace."

Hand in hand, Tobias and Sarah received this blessing on their wedding day:

"May the God of Abraham, and the god of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, be with you. And may he join you together, and fulfill his blessings in you."

Then the father turned to the girls' mother and asked her to bring him some writing paper. He drew up the marriage contract, certifying that he

gave his daughter as bride to Tobias according to the ordinance in the Law of Moses.

After this they began to eat and drink, blessing God. **The Word of the Lord.**

Psalm 33

R The Lord fills the earth with his love.

They are happy, whose God is the Lord, the people he has chosen as his own. The Lord looks on those who revere him, on those who hope in his love. **R**

Our soul is waiting for the Lord. The Lord is our help and our shield. In him do our hearts find joy. We trust in his holy name. **R**

May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you. **R**

The first concern of this young couple is to recognize the presence of God at the very heart of their love. They offer him thanks and ask him to bless their life together.

5. *The prayer of a young couple*

(The text below, in italics, is an editorial introduction to the reading. It is added to provide a clearer context for this reading.)

A reading from the book of Tobit (8: 5-7a)

God had heard the prayers of Tobias and Sarah. In his kindness, God had sent his messenger Raphael to bring them together in marriage, and to free Sarah from the difficulties which had so long tried her patience and trust.

On their wedding night, Tobias and Sarah sought god's continuing favour and protection; together, they praised god, beginning with these words of Tobias:

"You are blessed, O god of our father; blessed, too is your name for ever and ever.

Let the heavens bless you for evermore and all things you have made.

"It was you who created Adam; you who created Eve his wife to be his help and support. It was you who said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make him a helpmate like himself.'

"And so I do not take my sister for any lustful motive; I do it in singleness of heart. Be kind enough to have pity on her and on me."

The prayer of Tobias was affirmed by these words of Sarah:

"Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us: and let us both grow old together in health." **The Word of the Lord.**

Psalm 103

R. *The Lord is compassion and love.*

OR

The love of the Lord is everlasting upon those who hold him in fear.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord, all my being, bless his holy name. My soul, give thanks to the Lord and never forget all his blessings. **R**

The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy. As a father has compassion on his sons, the Lord has pity on those who fear him. **R**

The love of the Lord is everlasting upon those who hold him in fear; his justice reaches out to children's children when they keep his covenant in truth. **R**

The love of a man and woman is a sign of god' tender, ardent love for us.

6. *Love is a divine fire*

A reading from the Song of Songs (2:8-10, 14, 16a; 8:6-7a)

I hear my Beloved. See how he comes leaving on the mountains, bounding over the hills.

My Beloved is like a gazelle, like a young stag.

She where he stands behind our wall.

He looks in at the window, he peers through the lattice.

My Beloved lifts up his voice, he says to me, "Come then, my love, my lovely one, come. My dove, hiding in the clefts of the rock, in the coverts of the cliff, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet and your face is beautiful."

My beloved is mine and I am his.

He said to me: "Set me like a seal on your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is strong as Death, jealousy relentless as Sheol. The flash of it is a flash of fire, a flame of the Lord himself. Love no flood can quench, no torrent drown." **The Word of the Lord**

Psalm 128

R Indeed thus shall be blessed the man who fears the Lord

O blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways! By the labour of your hands you shall eat. You will be happy and prosper. **R**

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine in the heart of your house; your children like shoots of the olive, around your table. **R**

Indeed thus shall be blessed the man who fears the Lord. May the Lord

bless you from Zion all the days of your life! R

There are some homes where one feels completely at ease and secure. It is a quality that flows from the love between husband and wife, imparting warmth and charm to their home.

7. Woman: the light of the home

A reading from the book of Sirach (26: 1-4, 13-16)

Happy the husband of a really good wife; the number of his days will be doubled. A perfect wife is a joy of her husband, he will live out the years of his life in peace. A good wife is the best of portions, reserved for those who fear the Lord; rich or poor, they will be glad of heart, cheerful of face, whatever the season. The grace of a wife will charm her husband, her accomplishments will make him the stronger. A silent wife is a gift from the Lord, no price can be put on a well-trained character. A modest wife is a boon twice over, a chaste character cannot be weighed on scales. Like the sun rising over the mountains of the Lord is the beauty of a good wife in a well-kept house. **The Word of the Lord.**

Psalm 34

R. I will bless the Lord at all times.

I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise always on my lips; in the Lord my soul shall make its boast. The humble shall hear and be glad. **R**

Glorify the Lord with me. Together let us praise his name. I sought the

Lord and he answered me; from all my terrors he set me free. **R**

Look toward him and be radiant; let your faces not be abashed. This poor man called; the Lord heard him and rescued him from all his distress. **R**

The angel of the Lord is encamped around those who revere him, to rescue them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. He is happy who seeks refuge in him. **R**

The union of husband and wife is a sign of the covenant which God establishes with humankind. His law is the law of love.

8. God makes a covenant

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah (31: 31-34)

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel (and the House of Judah), but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant of mine, so I had to show them who was master. It is the Lord who speaks.

No, this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel when those days arrive – it is the Lord who speaks. Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people.

There will be no further need for neighbor to try to teach neighbor, or brother to say to brother, "Learn to know the Lord!" No, they will all know me, the least no less than the greatest. **The Word of the Lord.**

Psalm 112

R. Happy the man who takes delight in the Lord's commands.

OR

Alleluia

Happy the man who fears the Lord, who takes delight in all his commands. His sons will be powerful on earth; the children of the upright are blessed. **R**

Riches and wealth are in his house, his justice stands firm for ever. He is a light in the darkness for the upright; he is generous, merciful and just. **R**

The good man takes pity and lends, he conducts his affairs with honour. The just man will never waver: he will be remembered for ever. **R**

He has no fear of evil news; with a firm heart he trusts in the Lord. With a steadfast heart he will not fear; he will see the downfall of his foes. **R**

Open-handed, he gives to the poor; his justice stands firm for ever. His head will be raised in glory. **R**