

We have gathered on this lovely day to celebrate the marriage of Emma and Ross. This is a day that you will remember for the rest of your lives, a day that in many ways sets the tone for the rest of your lives. The readings that you have chosen and the words of the Marriage Service itself are full of themes of commitment, of faithfulness, of the love that you have found for each other.

Now of course all this did not happen out of the blue. On this day I invite you to think back to how it all began. The time you first noticed each other, your shared interests in veterinary science, the process in which friendship grew into love and you realised that you wanted to spend the rest of your lives with each other.

The preface that I read at the beginning of the marriage service gives us some insight into the particular Christian dimension of that commitment that you are making to each other today:

‘It is God’s purpose that, as husband and wife give themselves to each other in love through their lives, they shall be united in that love as Christ is united with his Church.’ That bond of love between Christ and his Church finds its ultimate expression in his self giving, self forgetting, self emptying, sacrificial love. Our love for each other must show something of that same self forgetting love of Christ himself in which the needs of the other are placed above our own.

A great deal of thought and preparation has gone into this day – e-mail is a wonderful thing. We have thought a lot about the details of this service, the

hymns, the readings - and of course what you have thought about what you are going to wear.

Clothes are very personal - they say a lot about how we see ourselves, about how we want other people to see us - they express something of our nature, our personality. A reserved person, for example, is unlikely to appear in bright colours.

St Paul, writing to the Colossians, talks of clothes that suit their new found faith in Christ; and so he talks of our spiritual clothing as he tells us to "clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience forgiving each other just as the Lord forgave you." Then he says, "Clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (*Col 3*)

This links in with the passage that we read as our second lesson that lovely description of Christian love that we find in Paul's 1st Letter to the Corinthians: 'Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

When this day is past, the clothes you have chosen to wear on this your wedding day will be put away, perhaps rarely, if ever, to be worn again. May the love you have for each other reflect something of that Christ centred love

that Paul was talking about. May that love enfold you in the days and weeks and months and years to come as together you share each others' joys, understand each others' shortcomings, forgive each others' failings, sustain each other in all that lies ahead for you both. May you both find in your marriage and in each other true peace and happiness in your life together before God.