

## Paul and the common good

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*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes Stratton current Living by the Word column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

Sometimes when I set out to preach from the Revised Common Lectionary I feel like calling someone from the Consultation on Common Texts to get the scoop on why the group settled on a particular set of pericopes. This week, Isaiah's marriage metaphor and Jesus' miraculous transformation of water into wedding wine are an obvious match. The rationale for including 1 Corinthians 12:1-11's discussion of spiritual gifts is less clear.

Of course, the complementarity of partners in marriage is similar to the complementarity of spiritual gifts among members of the church. Christian marriages and healthy congregations share a common mission and focus on Jesus as Lord. [Rereading my magazine column on this week's reading](#), I realize that I might have put more emphasis on Paul's reference to each person's "manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." Should I ever preach from this text, I would explore various interpretations of Paul's phrase "the common good."

The concept of the common good—that social institutions and societies should serve the common interests and aspirations of all people—is a central theme of Roman Catholic social teaching, but is underutilized in Protestant discourse. With this text, Paul provides Protestants with a biblical basis for this important ethical principle.