

DIOCESE *of* DES MOINES



Celebrating the Order of Matrimony, 2nd Edition

Liturgical Guidelines



October 2016

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GREETINGS & CONGRATULATIONS!

We, the Church of the Diocese of Des Moines, are pleased that both of you have chosen to celebrate the Order of Matrimony. Both of you are making an important decision that will impact the rest of your lives. By entering into marriage, you are coming together in a faithful, exclusive lifelong union of man and woman joined together by God. The Church, thus, desires to help you prepare and celebrate your lifetime commitment.

While the celebration of a wedding is a profound event in your personal life, it is also a profound event in the life of the Church. It is a gathering of the faithful to give praise and glory to God for the gift of marital love. The focus of the liturgy, therefore, as in all liturgical celebrations, is the Paschal Mystery: the saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the wedding liturgy, we recall and celebrate how that mystery is manifest in married life. As a couple, the love you share, in a sense, is the lens that helps us to fix our gaze on Christ.

Therefore, if your desire is to celebrate your wedding in the Diocese of Des Moines, together with the work of your pastor, we wish to help in whatever ways we can in order to ensure that your wedding will be a joyful and prayerful experience. Our faith tradition provides us rich resources of Scripture, prayers, rituals, blessings, and music to allow for a sacred celebration. Your parish provides you a sacred space in which to celebrate, as well as a competent staff to assist you in a faith-filled preparation process. In the following pages you will find helpful information and guidelines for your celebration of the Order of Matrimony. We ask you to carefully read over these guidelines as you begin to make decisions about the celebration.

Our prayer for you is that your preparation process be filled with faith, hope and love.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines

PLANNING YOUR WEDDING

The Catholic Church provides three different forms of celebrating Matrimony, all which center around the same four basic elements: questions about intent, exchange of consent, the blessing and exchange of rings, and the nuptial blessing.

1. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass

This is the rite that would ordinarily be used when two Catholics marry. With the permission of the local Bishop, it may also be used when a Catholic marries a baptized Christian.

2. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass

The marriage between a Catholic and a member of another faith tradition is beautifully and meaningfully celebrated in the context of a celebration sharing the Word of God. The Church wishes to promote unity within interfaith marriages and respect for the conscience of the non-Catholic party. To avoid insensitivity to these couples and to help prepare them for a wholesome and fruitful marriage, care must be taken to offer a preparation that stresses their common beliefs, emphasizes the teachings of Scripture, and underscores the essential properties for permanence and fidelity.

3. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian

As the title implies, this form of celebration is used when a Catholic marries someone who is not yet baptized. This might be a Catechumen, a member of a Christian denomination not yet baptized, or a non-Christian. There is an exception in this form that the nuptial blessing may be omitted.

THE TIME & PLACE FOR CELEBRATION

Your Parish Church: The sacrament of Matrimony is a symbol of the covenant made in faith between God and the people God has chosen to be his own. Therefore, the normal place for the wedding liturgy is your parish church; the place where the People of God gather to give thanks for the wonders of their lives, to meet each other in warmth and hospitality, and to celebrate, nourish, and strengthen their faith. Besides your parish church, you may also choose from St. Ambrose Cathedral or St. Joseph Chapel at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines.

Selecting a Date: In the Diocese of Des Moines, a date is to be set no sooner than six (6) months from the initial contact with the priest or deacon presider. The necessary preparation during this time includes an assessment of your relationship, the gathering of pre-marital information and documents, and participation in formal instruction for engaged couples.

The Choice of Day: You may get married on most days of the Liturgical Year, using texts from Ritual Mass V: “For the Celebration of Marriage.” On the most solemn liturgical days of the Church Year, when the Sacrament of Matrimony is celebrated within Mass, there are restrictions on the choice of texts. On those days, the Mass of the Day is used with its own readings, with the inclusion of the Nuptial Blessing. Your presider will be able to instruct you on which days require the texts proper to the liturgical celebration and which days allow the texts from the Ritual Mass.

Setting a Time: It may be necessary for your parish to restrict the time available for setting up and removing decorations as well as taking pictures in church due to other activities or the parish’s regular weekend liturgical schedule. Check your local parish’s wedding policy for further clarification.

MINISTERS OF THE CELEBRATION

The Diocesan Bishop: The Bishop of the diocese where you will celebrate your wedding liturgy regulates the celebration of the rite. He cares about you and all married couples within his diocese. He appoints priests to serve as delegates to carry on this ministry.

The Ordained Minister: You will meet with your priest or deacon to discuss many important issues and to complete the necessary paperwork. In addition to faith formation, especially on the Sacrament of Matrimony, your pastor or his delegate will explain the rite itself in order that you may engage fully in it. At the wedding liturgy, he is called upon to witness and to accept your consent in the name of Christ and the Church. It is highly recommended that the priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding be the minister who prepares you for the sacrament.

The Parish Representative: Sometimes a priest will designate someone from his staff to guide you in preparing the liturgy. Do not hesitate to ask that person questions about the various options that the rite provides – in particular, readings from Sacred Scripture, the form of expressing consent, the formularies for the blessing of rings, the form of the Nuptial Blessing, the wording of the Prayer of the Faithful, and the music.

The Parish Music Minister: The parish music minister will serve as a consultant for the musical elements of the wedding liturgy, insuring that all musical selections express the faith of the Church and are placed in the proper place in the liturgy. The music minister will also be a valuable resource for music suggestions and the availability of local musicians.

The Bride and Groom: You are the actual ministers of the Sacrament of Matrimony, as you declare publicly your matrimonial commitment to one another. Therefore, in planning the celebration, the exchange of consent is to be done within the sight and hearing of all.

Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Servers, Ushers, etc.: Additional ministers may be required for the celebration. Careful attention should be given to the selection of those who will serve as lector, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, servers, ushers, etc. It is recommended that those you invite to fulfill these ministries be properly qualified to do so and are those who normally assume these functions at their regular parish Masses.

The Assembly: The Order of Celebrating Matrimony is a public act of worship involving the whole Church; therefore, those attending should be encouraged to participate in the celebration. Two norms seem to be in order at this point:

1. **Seating Arrangement:** The bride and groom do not have to be “placed” at “the foot of the altar.” Discuss with your presider possible seating arrangements which would take into consideration the available space and architectural limitations of your church’s sanctuary. You may find it appropriate to be positioned so that your backs are not to the assembly. This would enable you to be seated at appropriate times during the liturgy.

Special attention should also be given to the seating of the wedding party and the assembly. Since the members of the assembly are there as both witnesses and participants in your wedding, they are to be seated as close to the action of the celebration as possible. While it may seem traditional to have the “bride’s side” and the “groom’s side” at weddings, you might wish to integrate your families on this day as this can be symbolic of the unity into which you are about to enter. Your ushers could seat guests in the order that they arrive. This also provides a balanced seating arrangement. Finally, the placement of the wedding party should not obstruct the view of the celebration.

- 2. Worship Aid:** All those present at the liturgy will not simply watch you “get married”; instead, they will participate in the ritual action by their common prayer, responses and sung elements. For this reason, you are encouraged to prepare a worship aid which will help your guests to participate. A worship aid should contain all that the people need to follow along, to sing the hymns and acclamations, to join in prayer, and to respond to the dialogues. If you wish to use any music or words which are copyrighted, you must obtain prior written permission from the holders of the copyright and note that in your booklet. Help in this area is available from your local parish.

Ministers of Music: The musicians you choose for your wedding have a serious responsibility and should be well-trained musicians. Ample remuneration for the musicians is a matter of courtesy and justice. Since much time is spent in choosing and practicing the music, it is suggested that the musicians be reimbursed for any rehearsals in addition to the celebration fees. Be sure to inquire in advance as to the musicians’ fees.

- 1. Parish Minister of Music**

Before selecting your music, consult with the parish minister of music, who will advise you in selecting music which is not only liturgically appropriate but which also has a Christian significance. The experience of the music minister will be helpful in determining what songs are familiar to the community. If the parish has a choir, the members might be asked to participate in the wedding liturgy to help strengthen and encourage congregational singing.

- 2. Musicians from Outside the Parish**

Musicians from outside the parish may be employed in special circumstances. This should be done only with the prior knowledge, consent of, and in consultation with the parish minister of music and the pastor. When musicians from outside the parish and/or Diocese are employed, these directives are to be followed regarding the choice and place of music within the wedding celebration.

- 3. Vocal soloist – Congregational Singing**

A vocal soloist may be used at weddings. Solo singing can be most effective as prelude music, during the verses of the responsorial psalm, during the preparation of the gifts, and as a communion meditation; however, a soloist should never be engaged to sing in the place of the assembly. Congregational singing is to be considered the norm for any liturgy.

- 4. Cantor**

In order to facilitate congregational singing and the participation of all the wedding guests, the service of a cantor (song leader) should be engaged. A cantor helps the assembly feel comfortable and secure with the songs they will sing. To further encourage congregational singing, it is advisable for the cantor to conduct a short rehearsal with the assembly before the liturgy begins. The cantor is not to be considered a soloist, but someone who leads the worshipping community in sung prayer. The soloist, however, could also serve as the cantor.

- 5. Instrumentalists**

Instrumentalists and instrumental music add joy to the occasion and should be integrated into the overall plan of the music. Instrumentalists should be competent musicians and instrumental music should not prolong the ceremony.

LITURGY PREPARATIONS

ART & ENVIRONMENT

The worship space of your parish reflects the observances of various liturgical seasons. This environment is carefully planned and set and should not to be removed or altered. It is recommended that any additions be planned with simplicity and good taste while reflecting the religious nature of the celebration. Decorations should never be placed on or attached to the altar or ambo and should not obscure the view of the assembly, the presider, the wedding party or the bride and groom.

MUSIC

The overall atmosphere of a Christian wedding should give witness to the joyful celebration of the Christian community. Music should be appropriate to the theme of the sacrament of Matrimony. Each selection must take into consideration its place in the liturgy, the length of the composition, the unity of the entire ritual, as well as the role of the assembly.

Selecting Music: The task of selecting music to be used at a Christian wedding can be difficult for many couples, as well as for the presider and the musicians. It is difficult to determine when a piece of music is sacred and liturgical, or secular and popular because in our society today it is not always easy to find a clear distinction between the sacred and the secular. For example, there are so-called “secular” songs which have a religious connotation. Just because a particular song mentions God and/or love does not make it automatically suitable for a wedding liturgy.

Types of Music: There are four types of wedding music.

1. **Music composed as liturgical music and, therefore, appropriate for use.**

This music is in agreement with all the liturgical directives for Celebrating the Order of Matrimony. That is, the lyrics express a truly Christian view of love and the songs selected are appropriate to the liturgical action taking place and enhance, without delaying, the action at the moment. This type of music generally appears in a Catholic hymnal.

2. **Contemporary music which speaks directly of the religious and spiritual dimension of love.**

This type of music is generally acceptable for use as a prelude to your wedding celebration.

3. **Contemporary music which does not speak directly of religious dimension, but implies it.**

This music can be used with discretion, but not during the actual liturgical celebration. These selections might be used before or after liturgy, or if music is used during the signing of the marriage papers after the conclusion of the celebration.

4. **Popular music which refers only to the physical/emotional dimensions of love.**

This music is not acceptable for use at the wedding liturgy or in the church at all. The music and text of the songs do not display the basic characteristics of Christian, self-giving love which goes beyond the physical and emotional level. It is Christian love, a reflection of God’s love for God’s people, which is celebrated in the sacrament of Matrimony. This type of music would be more suited for your reception.

FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE CELEBRATION

Rehearsals: Rehearsals are important, but they need not be complicated. The wedding liturgy is really quite simple and the presider and/or the parish representative will do their best to help everyone feel at ease and to see that it is done properly.

The time for the rehearsal is scheduled at a time mutually agreeable to the engaged couple, the presider, and the availability of the church. It is helpful and respectful to all to have the members of the wedding party at the church on time for the rehearsal. The presider or parish representative may ask that you have the lector(s), Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and gift bearers present as well. Cantors and musicians do not always attend the rehearsal and may require an extra fee if required to be in attendance. Please be sure to bring the civil marriage record and liturgy plan so everything will be ready to proceed smoothly.

Reconciliation: You have invested a great deal of time, energy, and money in preparation for your wedding. As a Sacrament, you also need spiritual preparation. Part of this spiritual preparation includes conferences with your presider, the Invited to Joy workshop, the Sponsor-Couple Program, a Pre-Nuptial Investigation, etc. The final, most important spiritual preparation for the Celebration of Matrimony is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Your priest-presider or your pastor will be available for the celebration of this Sacrament in the final days leading up to your wedding.

THE ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY WITHIN MASS

This is the rite that would ordinarily be used when two Catholics marry. With the permission of the local Bishop, it may also be used when a Catholic marries a baptized Christian of another denomination. The following is an outline of the liturgy.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Greeting of the Bride and Groom

Form One: The Priest greets the couple in the gathering space or at the entrance to the Church, before the Procession.

Form Two: The Priest greets the couple when they arrive at their place after the Entrance Procession.

In greeting the couple, the Priest is addressing the bride and groom, showing that the Church shares in their joy of this day.

Entrance Procession in the customary manner

In any celebration of liturgy, it is customary for liturgical ministers to process toward the altar. A suggested order for the Entrance Procession is:

- Cross Bearer (not required, but commendable)
- Servers
- Lector, carrying the Book of the Gospels
- Deacon, if assisting
- Priest
- Bridesmaids & Groomsmen; other attendants (if applicable)
- Maid/Matron of Honor & Best Man / Official Witnesses
- Bride and Groom (3 Options)
 - Bride and Groom together
 - Groom with Parents; Bride with Parents
 - Groom; then Bride

****There should be no change of music for the bride – the bride and groom are equal partners in this covenantal relationship.*

Entrance Song

An essential element to any liturgical celebration is the Entrance Song, sung during the Entrance Procession. The purpose of the Entrance Song is the same for a wedding liturgy as it is for Mass – “it opens the celebration; fosters the unity of those that have been gathered; introduces their thoughts to the mystery of the particular celebration; and may accompany the procession” (GIRM 47).

The document *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, published by United States Council of Catholic Bishops, offers this guideline regarding the Entrance Song: “The entrance procession is accompanied by a suitable song or instrumental music. If instrumental music is played, the assembly may join in a song once all have taken their places” (22).

Since the people that have come to a wedding liturgy are usually related to or are friends with the Bride and Groom, they will naturally want to watch the couple enter. In order to accommodate this desire as well as give full attention to the opening song, the Entrance Song can take place in one of the following two forms:

- A. Instrumental music is played while the ministers of the liturgy and the wedding party process. When the Bride and Groom have reached their places, without any interruption in music, the Entrance Song is sung by all who have gathered.
- B. Songs that use a responsorial psalm form may be used as the Entrance Song. This type of song is in the form of a dialogue between the cantor and the assembly. The guests are able to participate in the song and still watch the procession.

Sign of the Cross & Greeting of the People

After the Entrance Song, the Priest and people make the Sign of the Cross. The greeting that follows is the usual greeting in the Introductory Rites of Mass, such as, “The Lord be with you...”

Introduction to the Liturgy

The purpose of the introduction is to address everyone with an introduction to the liturgy and set the tone for what is to come.

Glory to God

The Celebration of Matrimony within Mass is a Ritual Mass and the Glory to God is always sung or recited at Ritual Masses. This ancient song of praise may be sung as a “through-composed setting” where the assembly sings the song in its entirety or a “refrain setting” where a cantor sings the verses and the people sing the refrain.

Collect (Opening Prayer)

The Priest will select the Collect from among the six options found in the ritual Mass, or, if applicable, from the Mass of the Day.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The form and content of the Liturgy of the Word at a Celebration of Matrimony is similar to Sunday Mass. Three readings from Sacred Scripture are typically used – two readings and a responsorial psalm before the Gospel – though only two readings – one reading and a responsorial psalm before the Gospel – are permitted. At least one reading that explicitly speaks of marriage must be used. When the Order of Matrimony is celebrated on a Sunday or Solemnity, which has its own readings, the readings of the day are used, but one reading that specifically speaks of marriage may be chosen.

First Reading

If three readings are chosen, the first must be from the Old Testament, unless the liturgy takes place within the Easter season, in which case, the first reading is taken from the Book of Revelation. If only two readings are used, the first may be chosen from either the Old or New Testament, exclusive of the Gospel.

Responsorial Psalm

The Responsorial Psalm, after the first reading, helps the Liturgy of the Word come to life when a cantor sings the verses of the psalm and all sing the response. The response always belongs to the people and offers an opportunity for the active participation of the assembly.

Second Reading

This reading is taken from the New Testament Epistles (Letters) to the early Christian communities or from the Book of Revelation.

Gospel Acclamation

The acclamation before the Gospel is always sung. Its purpose is to announce the coming of the Gospel. If the acclamation is not sung, it is omitted.

Gospel

The Gospel reading is chosen from one of the suggested Gospel passages.

Homily

After the Gospel, the priest gives a homily drawn from the sacred texts. He may speak about the mystery of Christian marriage, the dignity of matrimonial love, the grace of the Sacrament and responsibilities of married life.

THE CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY

The Celebration of Matrimony takes place after the homily and consists of the elements outlined below. The witnesses are to stand near the couple.

Address to the Bride and Groom

The presider briefly addresses the bride and groom about their intention to enter into Marriage in the presence of the community and the Church's minister.

The Questions before the Consent

The Bride and Groom are questioned as to their freedom of choice, fidelity to each other, and acceptance and upbringing of children.

The Consent

This is what is more commonly known as "the vows" and it is the point in the liturgy when the couple officially becomes husband and wife. The exchange of consent is a public statement and care should be taken to ensure that it is seen and heard by the assembly.

The Consent may be expressed in a number of ways:

- The text may be memorized.
- The bride and groom may repeat the text after the priest.
- The bride and groom may respond to the text in a question and answer form.
- The text may be read from the ritual book.
- The text may be read from a card.

The Reception of the Consent

At this point in the liturgy, the presider officially receives the consent of the bride and groom. The people respond with an acclamation. This offers the congregation an opportunity to praise God for what just took place.

The Blessing and Giving of Rings

There are three formulas for the Blessing of the Rings found in the ritual text. The priest may sprinkle the rings with blessed water and after blessing them, he gives them to the bride and groom.

[The Blessing and Giving of the Arras – optional]

This rite is an approved cultural adaptation that may be included, especially if this custom is a part of the family's tradition. Yet, no one can be prohibited from using this option. In some cultures, the bride and groom have the tradition of exchanging wedding coins or *arras*. The name comes from "arrabon," a Greek word for "pledge." This

practice seems to have its source in the ancient Mozarabic Rite (15th century). In this rite, the presider blesses the coins, then the bride and groom exchange the coins. This giving of coins is not merely about their own household, but also expresses their charitable concern for others, usually thirteen coins (one for every month and one for charity). Often these ceremonial coins are handed down through generations.

[Hymn or Canticle of Praise]

Although this hymn/canticle is an option, best practice would include it in order to involve the congregation people more fully in the liturgy. This is not a solo; it is sung by all. Any song or hymn that gives praise and thanksgiving to God is appropriate. The music minister in the parish can offer assistance in making an appropriate selection.

The Profession of Faith

If the wedding liturgy takes place on a Sunday or Solemnity, the Nicene or Apostles Creed is recited.

The Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

All present offer their petitions to God. With guidance on form and content, you may compose the intercessions for your wedding liturgy. A traditional response to each petition is “Lord, hear our prayer.”

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The form and content of the Liturgy of the Eucharist is similar to that of a Sunday Mass and is outlined below.

Presentation of the Gifts

The bride and groom, now husband and wife, may bring the gifts of bread and wine to the altar, if they wish, or family members or friends may serve in this ministry.

Prayer over the Offerings

The priest asks God to accept these offerings and to shine his providence on your marriage.

Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer is the central prayer of any Mass. The shape and content of this prayer finds its roots deep in the history of our faith tradition, even to the form of prayer Jesus himself would have been familiar with. There are two focal points of every Eucharistic Prayer.

One is the *act of remembering God's mighty deeds in creation and redemption*. This culminates in the special remembrance of Jesus' actions at the Last Supper when he took bread and wine, shared it with his disciples, and asked that they remember him through this action; promising that when they did, he would be uniquely present to them in a very real way.

The second focal point of the Eucharistic Prayer is the *act of invocation* – asking God to come and act again through the power of the Holy Spirit. The priest, in the name of everyone present, prays that God will transform the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ as he promised. He also prays that through our receiving these gifts, we will be transformed into the living presence of Christ for the sake of the world.

This has special significance at a wedding. You, the newly married couple, are uniquely consecrated by the act of sharing in the Eucharistic action. This happens as you are drawn into the Eucharistic Prayer by the priest's words and then as you receive the body and blood of Christ that has been consecrated through the action of this prayer. Through this Eucharistic sharing, you are then transformed and called into the world – now as a couple – to be the living presence of Christ for one another and the world in which you live. Because of this, in the Ritual Mass, the priest adds special prayers for you, the bride and groom.

Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is recited or sung by all. As a best practice, you may want to recite this prayer instead of singing it since the people in the assembly may not have a common musical setting in their repertoire. Everyone's participation in this prayer is important.

[Blessing and Placing of Lazo or Veil]

This rite is another approved cultural option. In some cultures it is customary to use the lazo (or lasso). It may be a garland of flowers, a cord, or resemble a large rosary (or two rosaries intertwined); a veil may also be used in addition to the garland/cord/beads. The lazo symbolizes the unification of the husband and wife for the rest of their lives. If included, this rite takes place before the Nuptial Blessing. While this tradition is mostly found in Hispanic cultures, no one may be prohibited from using this approved cultural adaptation.

Nuptial Blessing

For the Nuptial Blessing, you, as the bride and groom, may either approach the altar or remain in your places and kneel.

Sign of Peace

The Sign of Peace expresses peace and unity just before we share in the great sacrament of unity, the Body and Blood of Christ. Ideally, this should not be a prolonged exchange.

Breaking of the Bread & Holy Communion

While *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* specifically says that the bride, groom, parents, witnesses and relatives *may* receive Communion under both species of bread and wine, the norm for the Diocese of Des Moines is distribution of Holy Communion under both species at all celebrations of the Eucharist.

Period of Silent Prayer

Aware of the great Sacrament which has just been received, the assembly participates in a period of silent prayer.

Prayer after Communion

The priest concludes the Communion Rite by offering a special prayer to God the Father.

THE CONCLUDING RITE

Solemn Blessing

The priest extends his hands over the bride and groom and offers a blessing, then he blesses all present.

Recessional

Like the procession, the recessional should resemble a liturgical procession. A suggested order may look like this:

- Cross Bearer (optional)
- Bride and Groom
- Witnesses
- Parents
- Servers
- Priest (with assisting Deacon, if present)

Signing of the Marriage Record (Marriage license)

When Mass is concluded, the witnesses and the priest sign the marriage record. The signing may take place either in the vesting room or in the presence of the people; however, it is not done on the altar.

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- D. Songs that use a responsorial psalm form may be used as the Entrance Song. This type of song is in the form of a dialogue between the cantor and the assembly. The guests are able to participate in the song and still watch the procession.

Sign of the Cross & Greeting of the People

After the Entrance Song, the Priest and people make the Sign of the Cross. The greeting that follows is the usual greeting in the Introductory Rites of Mass, such as, “The Lord be with you...”

Introduction to the Service

The purpose of the introduction is to address everyone with an introduction to the liturgy and set the tone for what is to come.

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The Priest will select the Collect from among the six options found in the ritual Mass, or, if applicable, from the Mass of the Day.

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Homily

After the Gospel, the priest or deacon gives a homily drawn from the sacred texts. He may speak about the mystery of Christian marriage, the dignity of matrimonial love, the grace of the Sacrament and responsibilities of married life.

THE CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY

The Celebration of Matrimony takes place after the homily and consists of the elements outlined below. The witnesses are to stand near the couple.

Address to the Bride and Groom

The presider briefly addresses the bride and groom about their intention to enter into Marriage in the presence of the community and the Church's minister.

The Questions before the Consent

The Bride and Groom are questioned as to their freedom of choice, fidelity to each other, and acceptance and upbringing of children.

The Consent

This is what is more commonly known as "the vows" and it is the point in the liturgy when the couple officially becomes husband and wife. The exchange of consent is a public statement and care should be taken to ensure that it is seen and heard by the assembly. The Consent may be expressed in a number of ways:

- The text may be memorized.
- The bride and groom may repeat the text after the priest.
- The bride and groom may respond to the text in a question and answer form.
- The text may be read from the ritual book.
- The text may be read from a card.

The Reception of the Consent

At this point in the liturgy, the presider officially receives the consent of the bride and groom. The people respond with an acclamation. This offers the congregation an opportunity to praise God for what just took place.

The Blessing and Giving of Rings

There are three formulas for the Blessing of the Rings found in the ritual text. The presider may sprinkle the rings with blessed water and after blessing them, he gives them to the bride and groom.

[The Blessing and Giving of the Arras – optional]

This rite is an approved cultural adaptation that may be included, especially if this custom is a part of the family's tradition. Yet, no one can be prohibited from using this option. In some cultures, the bride and groom have the tradition of exchanging wedding coins or *arras*. The name comes from "arrabon," a Greek word for "pledge." This practice seems to have its source in the ancient Mozarabic Rite (15th century). In this rite, the presider blesses the coins, then the bride and groom exchange the coins. This giving of coins is not merely about their own household, but also expresses their charitable concern for others, usually thirteen coins (one for every month and one for charity). Often these ceremonial coins are handed down through generations.

[Hymn or Canticle of Praise]

Although this hymn/canticle is an option, best practice would include it in order to involve the congregation people more fully in the liturgy. This is not a solo; it is sung by all. Any song or hymn that gives praise and thanksgiving to God is appropriate. The music minister in the parish can offer assistance in making an appropriate selection.

The Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

All present offer their petitions to God. With guidance on form and content, you may compose the intercessions. A traditional response to each intercession is "Lord, hear our prayer."

Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is recited or sung by all. As a best practice, you may want to recite this prayer instead of singing it since the people in the assembly may not have a common musical setting in their repertoire. Everyone's participation in this prayer is important.

[Blessing and Placing of Lazo or Veil]

This rite is another approved cultural option. In some cultures it is customary to use the lazo (or lasso). It may be a garland of flowers, a cord, or resemble a large rosary (or two rosaries intertwined); a veil may also be used in addition to the garland/cord/beads. The lazo symbolizes the unification of the husband and wife for the rest of their lives. If included, this rite takes place before the Nuptial Blessing. While this tradition is mostly found in Hispanic cultures, no one may be prohibited from using this approved cultural adaptation.

Nuptial Blessing

For the Nuptial Blessing, you, as the bride and groom, remain in your places and kneel.

CONCLUSION OF THE CELEBRATION

Final Blessing

If Holy Communion is not to be distributed, the presider blesses all present, using a simple or solemn blessing.

Concluding Song

It is recommended, but optional, to conclude the celebration with a hymn.

Recessional

Like the procession, the recessional should resemble a liturgical procession. A suggested order may look like this:

- Cross Bearer (optional)
- Bride and Groom
- Witnesses
- Parents
- Servers
- Priest/Deacon

Signing of the Marriage Record (Marriage license)

When the celebration is concluded, the witnesses and the presider sign the marriage record. The signing may take place either in the vesting room or in the presence of the people; however, it is not done on the altar.

Holy Communion (optional)

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass includes an alternate order when Holy Communion will be distributed. This practice would not be normative, but if the bride and groom are both Catholic and the decision to celebrate this Sacrament without Mass was made under unique or specific circumstances, distributing Holy Communion is an option. In most cases, however, the reasons that the Sacrament of Matrimony is being celebrated without Mass would suggest that distribution of Holy Communion at the celebration outside Mass would not take place. *Further discussion with your presider should take place before this is chosen as an option.*

THE ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY BETWEEN A CATHOLIC AND A CATECHUMEN OR A NON-CHRISTIAN

RITE OF RECEPTION

Greeting of the Bridal Party

The Priest or presiding Deacon goes with the servers to the entrance to the Church, where he receives the Bridal Party and greets them warmly.

After this greeting, the presider, the servers, the bride and groom, the witnesses, and all present go to the seats prepared for them.

Entrance Procession in the customary manner

In any celebration of liturgy, it is customary for liturgical ministers to process toward the altar. A suggested order for the Entrance Procession is:

- Cross Bearer (not required, but commendable)
- Servers
- Lector, carrying the Book of the Gospels
- Priest and/or presiding Deacon
- Bridesmaids & Groomsmen; other attendants (if applicable)
- Maid/Matron of Honor & Best Man / Official Witnesses
- Bride and Groom (3 Options)
 - Bride and Groom together
 - Groom with Parents; Bride with Parents
 - Groom; then Bride

****There should be no change of music for the bride – the bride and groom are equal partners in this covenant relationship.*

Entrance Song

An essential element to any liturgical celebration is the Entrance Song, sung during the Entrance Procession. The purpose of the Entrance Song is the same for a wedding liturgy as it is for Mass – “it opens the celebration; fosters the unity of those that have been gathered; introduces their thoughts to the mystery of the particular celebration; and may accompany the procession” (GIRM 47).

The document *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, published by United States Council of Catholic Bishops, offers this guideline regarding the Entrance Song: “The entrance procession is accompanied by a suitable song or instrumental music. If instrumental music is played, the assembly may join in a song once all have taken their places” (22).

Since the people that have come to a wedding liturgy are usually related to or are friends with the Bride and Groom, they will naturally want to watch the couple enter. In order to accommodate this desire as well as give full attention to the opening song, the Entrance Song can take place in one of the following two forms:

- E. Instrumental music is played while the ministers of the liturgy and the wedding party process. When the Bride and Groom have reached their places, without any interruption in music, the Entrance Song is sung by all who have gathered.

- F. Songs that use a responsorial psalm form may be used as the Entrance Song. This type of song is in the form of a dialogue between the cantor and the assembly. The guests are able to participate in the song and still watch the procession.

Introduction to the Service

After the Rite of Reception and when all have reached their places, the presider asks the couple and all present to prepare for the celebration of Marriage.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The form and content of the Liturgy of the Word for this Rite of Celebration of Matrimony differs from the other two. There may be one or two readings from Scripture. At least one readings that specifically speaks of Marriage must always be chosen.

First Reading

The First Reading may be taken from the Old Testament or New Testament, exclusive of the Gospel.

Responsorial Psalm

The Responsorial Psalm, after the first reading, helps the Liturgy of the Word come to life when a cantor sings the verses of the psalm and all sing the response. The response always belongs to the people and offers an opportunity for the active participation of the assembly.

Gospel Acclamation

The acclamation before the Gospel is always sung. Its purpose is to announce the coming of the Gospel. If the acclamation is not sung, it is omitted.

Gospel

The Gospel reading is chosen from one of the suggested Gospel passages.

Homily

After the Gospel, the priest or deacon gives a homily based the sacred texts and the particular circumstances.

THE CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY

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Address to the Bride and Groom

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The Bride and Groom are questioned as to their freedom of choice, fidelity to each other, and acceptance and upbringing of children.

The Consent

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- The text may be memorized.

- The bride and groom may repeat the text after the priest.
- The bride and groom may respond to the text in a question and answer form.
- The text may be read from the ritual book.
- The text may be read from a card.

The Reception of the Consent

At this point in the liturgy, the presider officially receives the consent of the bride and groom. The people respond with an acclamation. This offers the congregation an opportunity to praise God for what just took place.

[The Blessing and Giving of Rings – optional]

There are three formulas for the Blessing of the Rings found in the ritual text. The presider may sprinkle the rings with blessed water and after blessing them, he gives them to the bride and groom.

[The Blessing and Giving of the Arras – optional]

This rite is an approved cultural adaptation that may be included, especially if this custom is a part of the family's tradition. Yet, no one can be prohibited from using this option. In some cultures, the bride and groom have the tradition of exchanging wedding coins or *arras*. The name comes from “arrabon,” a Greek word for “pledge.” This practice seems to have its source in the ancient Mozarabic Rite (15th century). In this rite, the presider blesses the coins, then the bride and groom exchange the coins. This giving of coins is not merely about their own household, but also expresses their charitable concern for others, usually thirteen coins (one for every month and one for charity). Often these ceremonial coins are handed down through generations.

[Hymn or Canticle of Praise – optional]

Although this hymn/canticle is an option, best practice would include it in order to involve the congregation people more fully in the liturgy. This is not a solo; it is sung by all. Any song or hymn that gives praise and thanksgiving to God is appropriate. The music minister in the parish can offer assistance in making an appropriate selection.

The Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

All present offer their petitions to God. With guidance on form and content, you may compose the intercessions for your wedding liturgy. A traditional response to each petition is “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is recited or sung by all. As a best practice, you may want to recite this prayer instead of singing it since the people in the assembly may not have a common musical setting in their repertoire. Everyone's participation in this prayer is important.

[Blessing and Placing of Lazo or Veil – optional]

This rite is another approved cultural option. In some cultures it is customary to use the lazo (or lasso). It may be a garland of flowers, a cord, or resemble a large rosary (or two rosaries intertwined); a veil may also be used in addition to the garland/cord/beads. The lazo symbolizes the unification of the husband and wife for the rest of their lives. If included, this rite takes place before the Nuptial Blessing. While this tradition is mostly found in Hispanic cultures, no one may be prohibited from using this approved cultural adaptation.

Nuptial Blessing (or Prayer)

For the Nuptial Blessing, you, as the bride and groom, remain in your places and kneel.

CONCLUSION OF THE CELEBRATION

Final Blessing

The presider blesses all present, using a simple blessing.

Concluding Song

It is recommended, but optional, to conclude the celebration with a hymn.

Recessional

Like the procession, the recessional should resemble a liturgical procession. A suggested order may look like this:

- Cross Bearer (optional)
- Bride and Groom
- Witnesses
- Parents
- Servers
- Priest/Deacon

Signing of the Marriage Record (Marriage license)

When the celebration is concluded, the witnesses and the presider sign the marriage record. The signing may take place either in the vesting room or in the presence of the people; however, it is not done on the altar.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The readings are a central part of any liturgical celebration. It is in the words of Scripture that we hear of the importance of Christian Marriage in salvation history as well as what couples need to attend to if they want to grow in holiness in this vocation. In the celebration of matrimony, there may be up to three readings (plus the responsorial psalm); the first reading should come from the Old Testament (except in the Easter Season, when the Book of Revelation is used). The readings are listed here. At least one reading that speaks directly about marriage (marked with an asterisk*) must be chosen:

First Reading	Second Reading	Gospel
Genesis 1:26-28,31a* Genesis 2:18-24* Genesis 24:48-51,58-67* Tobit 7:6-14* Tobit 8:4b-8* Proverbs 31:10-13,19-20,30-31* Song of Songs 2:8-10,14,16a; 8:6-7a Sirach 26:1-4,13-16* Jeremiah 31:31-32a,33-34a	Romans 8:31b-35,37-39 Romans 12:1-2,9-18 Romans 15:1b-3a,5-7,13 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a,17-20 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:8a Ephesians 4:1-6 Ephesians 5:2a,21-33* (short form: Eph 5:2a.25-32*) Philippians 4:4-9 Colossians 3:12-17 Hebrews 13:1-4a, 5-6b 1 Peter 3:1-9* 1 John 3:18-24 1 John 4:7-12 Revelation 19:1,5-9a (<i>used as 1st reading during Easter Season</i>)	Matthew 5:1-12a Matthew 5:13-16 Matthew 7:21,24-29 (or short form: Matt 7:21,24-25) Matthew 19:3-6* Matthew 22:35-40 Mark 10:6-9* John 2:1-11* John 15:9-12 John 15:12-16 John 17:20-26 (or short form: Jn 17:20-23)
Responsorial Psalms (should be sung): Psalm 33 (32): 12 and 18, 20-21, 22. (R. 5b) Psalm 34 (33):2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9. (R. 2a or: R. 9a) Psalm 103 (102):1-2, 8 and 13, 17-18a. (R. 8a or: R. cf. 17): Psalm 112 (111):1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8, 9. (R. cf. 1 or: R. Alleluia) Psalm 128 (127):1-2, 3, 4-5. (R. cf. 1 or: 4)* Psalm 145 (144):8-9, 10 and 15, 17-18. (R. 9a) Psalm 148:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-13ab, 13c-14a. (R. 13a or: Alleluia)		Alleluia Verses and Verses before the Gospel (omitted if not sung): 1 John 4:7b: 1 John 4:8b and 11: 1 John 4:12: 1 John 4:16:

There are certain days of the liturgical calendar on which the Ritual Mass for marriage cannot be used. On those occasions, the readings assigned to the day are used, though one of the readings may come from the list above. The minister helping you prepare the liturgy will help you determine if these rules apply.

Please take some time to prayerfully reflect on these readings. Share your thoughts with each other. Why is this reading important to you? What does it say to you about marriage? How is God speaking to you in this reading? You can look up the readings on the USCCB website: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm>.

The Consent

After asking you if you are ready to enter into marriage freely, if you are prepared to love and honor each other for life, and if you are prepared to accept children lovingly from God and raise them in accord with the law of Christ and the Church, the two of you will exchange your consent (“vows”).

This can be done in several different ways:

- The text may be memorized.
- The bride and groom may repeat the text after the priest.
- The bride and groom may respond to the text in a question and answer form.
- The text may be read from the ritual book.
- The text may be read from a card.

We recommend that you actually speak the words to each other, rather than simply reply “I do.” Such a personal exchange can be a very powerful experience. There are two sets of texts – the one found in the Rite itself and then a text adapted for use in this country.

Option 1: Roman Form	Option 2: US Adaptation
<p><i>The bridegroom says:</i> I, N., take you, N., to be my wife. I promise to be faithful to you, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and to honor you all the days of my life.</p> <p><i>The bride says:</i> I, N., take you, N., to be my husband. I promise to be faithful to you, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and to honor you all the days of my life.</p>	<p><i>The bridegroom says:</i> I, N., take you, N., for my lawful wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do us part.</p> <p><i>The bride says:</i> I, N., take you, N., for my lawful husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do us part.</p>
<p>B: Recited with Assistance of the Minister C: Read from the Ritual Book or Card (<i>above text</i>)</p>	<p>B: Recited with Assistance of the Minister C: Read from the Ritual Book or Card (<i>above text</i>)</p>
<p>D: Questions / Response</p>	<p>D: Questions / Response</p>
<p>The minister asks the bridegroom: N., do you take N., to be your wife? Do you promise to be faithful to her in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love her and to honor her all the days of your life?</p> <p>The bridegroom replies: I do.</p> <p>Then, the minister asks the bride, who replies, “I do.”</p>	<p>The minister asks the bridegroom: N., do you take N., for your lawful wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do you part?</p> <p>The bridegroom replies: I do.</p> <p>The, the minister asks the bride, who replies “I do.”</p>

The Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony provides examples for the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful). These may be used as they are below or adapted to better suit the couple and the needs of the gathered community. You may choose to write your own prayers.

Example 1:

Dear brothers and sisters,
as we call to mind the special gift of grace and charity
by which God has been pleased to crown and
consecrate the love of our sister N. and our brother N.,
let us commend them to the Lord.

That these faithful Christians, N. and N.,
newly joined in Holy Matrimony,
may always enjoy health and well-being,
let us pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.

Or another appropriate response of the people.

That he will bless their covenant
as he chose to sanctify marriage at Cana in Galilee,
let us pray to the Lord. R.

That they be granted perfect and fruitful love,
peace and strength, and that they bear faithful witness to
the name of Christian, let us pray to the Lord. R.

That the Christian people may grow in virtue day by day
and that all who are burdened by any need
may receive the help of grace from above,
let us pray to the Lord. R.

That the grace of the Sacrament
will be renewed by the Holy Spirit
in all married persons here present,
let us pray to the Lord. R.

Graciously pour out upon this husband and wife, O
Lord, the Spirit of your love,
to make them one heart and one soul,
so that nothing whatever may divide those you have
joined and no harm come to those you have filled with
your blessing. Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Example 2:

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us accompany this new family with our prayers,
that the mutual love of this couple may grow daily
and that God in his kindness will sustain all families
throughout the world.

For this bride and groom,
and for their well-being as a family,
let us pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.

Or another appropriate response of the people.

For their relatives and friends,
and for all who have assisted this couple,
let us pray to the Lord. R.

For young people preparing to enter Marriage,
and for all whom the Lord
is calling to another state in life,
let us pray to the Lord. R.

For all families throughout the world
and for lasting peace among all people,
let us pray to the Lord. R.

For all members of our families
who have passed from this world,
and for all the departed,
let us pray to the Lord. R.

For the Church, the holy people of God,
and for unity among all Christians,
let us pray to the Lord. R.

Lord Jesus, who are present in our midst,
as N. and N. seal their union
accept our prayer
and fill us with your Spirit.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.
R. Amen.

CONGRATULATIONS!

This resource has been provided to assist you in planning your wedding liturgy. In the coming months, as the date approaches, you may have questions that are not covered here. Please work with your parish pastor to get your questions answered.