

Marriage

MARRIAGE is the sacrament of love between man and woman. In its celebration, a couple become one in their love for each other, and a sign of the love Christ has for his Church.

A man and a woman wish to give themselves entirely to each other. They wish to unite their individual lives into a new life together. They invite God and man to witness and to bless their pledge of faithfulness and love.

Out of their love a new family is to be born within the parish family. So the parish gathers, in the persons of parents, relatives and friends, to witness and to approve the decision the couple has made.

The Christian lives in Christ, and so the new life which is begun in Christian marriage is Christ's life. The love which unites Christian husband and wife is Christ's love.

The union of a Christian man and woman is a sign of the union between Christ and his Church; their love is a sign of his love for his Church. Out of their love for each other, husband and wife are to show forth Christ's love in the world. Their love is to be fruitful in producing new life, and in spreading Christ's peace and his love in the world.

In the marriage rite, it is the couple themselves who are ministers of the sacrament to each other. They take each other for better or worse. They exchange rings as a sign of their fidelity. It is their words of choice which are the sign of God's power acting in them.

The celebration of marriage ordinarily takes place within the celebration of the Eucharist. The love and unity of marriage are perfected in the Eucharist, the sacrament of love and unity. For a man and woman united in Christ, the Eucharist will always be a special sign of the love which binds them together.

Blessing of an Engagement

Since the months before marriage are an important preparation in many ways, a couple intending marriage may seek the blessing of the Church and the support of the parish family during this time. The couple promises to grow in love for each other so as to be better prepared for the day on which they will give themselves to each other entirely.

This rite may also be used for groups, perhaps during a series of

pre-Cana conferences. It may be celebrated in the church, in the home, or in any suitable place. The pastor or another may act as leader.

Entrance

An appropriate hymn, such as No. 29 or No. 118, may be sung.

Priest: Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,
proclaim it on distant coasts, and say:

People: HE WHO SCATTERED ISRAEL, NOW GATHERS THEM TOGETHER,
HE GUARDS THEM AS A SHEPHERD HIS FLOCK.
THE LORD SHALL RANSOM JACOB,
HE SHALL REDEEM HIM FROM THE HAND OF HIS CONQUEROR.

Priest: Shouting they shall mount the heights of Sion,
they shall come streaming to the Lord's blessings:

People: THE GRAIN, THE WINE, AND THE OIL,
THE SHEEP AND THE OXEN.
THEY THEMSELVES SHALL BE LIKE WATERED GARDENS,
NEVER AGAIN SHALL THEY LANGUISH.

Priest: Then the young girls shall make merry and dance,
and young men and old as well.

People: THE LORD SHALL TURN THEIR MOURNING TO JOY,
HE WILL CONSOLE AND GLADDEN THEM AFTER THEIR SORROWS.

JEREMIAH 31:10-13

Reading

SIRACH 51:23-30

Response

Priest: Stern as death is love,

People: RELENTLESS AS A BLAZING FIRE IS DEVOTION.
DEEP WATERS CANNOT QUENCH LOVE,
NOR FLOODS SWEEP IT AWAY.

SONG OF SOLOMON 8:6-7

Homily

The leader may give a short homily.

Exchange of Promises

If a ring is to be given, the man places it on the finger of his fiancée while making his promise.

Man: BEFORE GOD AND THESE PEOPLE, I LOVE YOU AND I PROMISE
TO GROW IN THAT LOVE IN PREPARATION FOR OUR MARRIAGE.

Woman: BEFORE GOD AND THESE PEOPLE, I LOVE YOU AND I PROMISE
TO GROW IN THAT LOVE IN PREPARATION FOR OUR MARRIAGE.

Prayer

Priest: Let us pray.

Father, you know that it is not good for a person to be alone, and that only through sharing all in love can we become your true sons and daughters. May you give this couple wisdom, and bless them, and may the time ahead be one of right decisions and honest preparations. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: AMEN.

Conclusion

An appropriate hymn, such as No. 52 or No. 72, may be sung; or all recite together Psalm 148.

Bible Service Before Marriage

The following service may be used the night before a wedding, perhaps in connection with the wedding rehearsal, with the wedding party and close relatives and friends of the couple taking part, to provide a few moments of meditation on the meaning and importance of the sacrament which is to be celebrated. The pastor or someone else may serve as leader, in the church or elsewhere.

Entrance

An appropriate hymn, such as No. 14 or No. 118, may be sung.

Priest: The house of Israel trusts in the Lord.
He is their help and their shield.

People: THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD TRUST IN THE LORD.
HE IS THEIR HELP AND THEIR SHIELD.
THE LORD REMEMBERS US AND WILL BLESS US;
HE WILL BLESS THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL.

Priest: He will bless those who fear the Lord,
both the small and the great.

People: MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU MORE AND MORE,
BOTH YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN.

MAY YOU BE BLESSED BY THE LORD,
WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH.

Priest: Heaven is the home of the Lord,
but the earth he has given to the children of men.

People: WE GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD,
NOW AND FOREVER.

PSALM 113

Reading

GENESIS 2:18-24 OR I CORINTHIANS 13:1-10

Response

If there are two readings, the following may be recited between them:

Priest: Set a seal on your heart,
as a seal on your arm.

People: FOR STERN AS DEATH IS LOVE,
RELENTLESS AS A BLAZING FIRE IS DEVOTION;
DEEP WATERS CANNOT QUENCH LOVE,
NOR FLOODS SWEEP IT AWAY. SONG OF SOLOMON 8:6-7

Homily

The priest may give a short homily.

Prayer

Priest: Let us pray.

Father, this couple is soon to become one in marriage. Favor them so that they may live by your holy word. Make them strong in constant fidelity and real affection for one another, and let their love be a sign to the world of your love for men. Help them to grow in loving service, Lord, and support them in times of hardship and suffering. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: AMEN.

Priest: May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord give you peace.

People: AMEN.

Conclusion

An appropriate hymn, such as No. 83 or No. 124, may be sung; or all together recite Psalm 127.