

Other Concerns

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Careful celebration of marriage requires an in-depth rehearsal. Pastoral concern for a spiritually fruitful celebration requires that an opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) be made available to the wedding party and others interested at the rehearsal or some other time.

Wedding Photographers

Photographers are not to obstruct or interfere with the liturgy of the marriage. Their work should never intrude upon the solemnity of what is taking place. If a videotaping requires extensive lighting, the couple should prudently consider whether it will be a distraction both to the celebration and to the congregation.



Prayer for Engaged Couples

Lord our God,
you are the source of all life and the Author of Marriage.
All that lives and breathes finds its being in you,
and through your Son, you have shown us your unconditional love.
As we prepare for our celebration of marriage,
we give you thanks for having brought us together.
We ask you to strengthen our hearts
so that we may be faithful to you
and grow in mutual respect for each other.
May our joy ever increase as we prepare for our wedding day,
and may our love continue to grow each and every day of our marriage.
In Jesus' name, we pray.
Amen.



Preparing Your Marriage Liturgy



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Preparing Your Marriage Liturgy

Your wedding ceremony is challenging and exciting to plan. These guidelines are offered to each couple preparing for marriage in the Diocese of Scranton. They provide both an outline and a starting point for your preparation process.

Unlike a civil ceremony, your wedding is a *RELIGIOUS CELEBRATION*. The Christian community celebrates in faith your commitment and love for one another as well as God's love for us.

The framework of the Roman Catholic *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* helps you to prepare a religious celebration that expresses the dimensions of your love. You will want to discuss the possible selections with the parish musician and priest/deacon who will preside (and preach) at your marriage. Their experience can be very helpful to you.

The wedding ceremony is not a performance for passive spectators. It is a *COMMUNITY CELEBRATION* and should involve your guests as active participants. Well-prepared congregational singing invites everyone to participate. Individuals should be selected to participate at appropriate times, for instance, by proclaiming the Scripture readings, in the presentation of the gifts (wine, hosts...), etc.

There are three forms of the marriage ceremony:

- 1. Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass
- 2. Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass
- 3. Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian

When two Catholics are married, the ceremony would normally take place within Mass. The marriage of a Catholic and a baptized person of another church or a Catholic and a person who is not baptized, will normally take place without Mass. The decision of the form of celebration for your marriage should be made in consultation with the priest.

On certain days of the liturgical year that have great solemnity (e.g. Easter, Christmas, holy days), the Nuptial Mass is not permitted or appropriate. In that case, Matrimony is celebrated within the Mass of the day.

Elements of the Order of Celebrating Matrimony

The Introductory Rites

The *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* offers two forms for the Entrance Procession in the Introductory Rites. The first is a customary *liturgical procession* led by the ministers (altar servers, readers etc.) followed by the deacon and/or priest, then the bridesmaids/groomsmen, the maid/matron of honor and best man, and then the bride and groom with the option of being escorted by their parents. The second form is the *non-liturgical procession* of the bridesmaids and groomsmen followed by the bride traditionally escorted by her father. The priest and/or the



Outlines of the Order for Celebrating Matrimony

Celebrating Matrimony within Mass

- Introductory Rites**
 - Procession
 - Greeting
 - The Gloria
 - The Collect
- Liturgy of the Word**
 - Old Testament Reading
 - Responsorial Psalm
 - New Testament Reading
 - Gospel Acclamation
 - Gospel Reading
 - Homily
- Celebration of Matrimony**
 - Address to the Bride and Groom
 - Questions before the Consent
 - The Consent
 - Reception of the Consent
 - Blessing and Giving of Rings
 - [Blessing and Giving of Arras] *optional*
 - The Universal Prayer
- Liturgy of the Eucharist**
 - Preparation of the Gifts
 - Prayer over the Offerings
 - The Eucharistic Prayer
 - Communion Rite
 - Lord's Prayer
 - [Blessing and Placing of the Lazo] *optional*
 - The Nuptial Blessing
 - Rite of Peace
 - Fraction of the Bread
 - Communion
 - Prayer after Communion
- The Conclusion of the Celebration**
 - Blessing



Celebrating Matrimony without Mass

- Introductory Rites**
 - Procession
 - Greeting
 - The Collect
- Liturgy of the Word**
 - Old Testament Reading
 - Responsorial Psalm
 - New Testament Reading
 - Gospel Acclamation
 - Gospel Reading
 - Homily
- Celebration of Matrimony**
 - Address to the Bride and Groom
 - Questions before the Consent
 - The Consent
 - Reception of the Consent
 - Blessing and Giving of Rings
 - [Blessing and Giving of Arras] *optional*
 - The Universal Prayer
 - [Blessing and Placing of the Lazo] *optional*
 - The Nuptial Blessing
 - [Holy Communion, if distributed, is preceded by the Lord's Prayer.]
- The Conclusion of the Celebration**
 - Lord's Prayer (*or another prayer if Holy Communion was distributed*)
 - Blessing

Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or Non-Christian

- The Rite of Reception**
 - Greeting
 - Entrance Procession
 - Introduction
- Liturgy of the Word**
 - Reading(s)
- Celebration of Matrimony**
 - Address to the Bride and Groom
 - Questions before the Consent
 - The Consent
 - Reception of the Consent
 - Blessing and Giving of Rings
 - [Blessing and Giving of Arras] *optional*
 - The Universal Prayer
 - The Lord's Prayer
 - [Blessing and Placing of the Lazo] *optional*
 - The Nuptial Blessing
- The Conclusion of the Celebration**
 - Blessing

The Blessing and Giving of Rings

After their Consent is received by the priest or deacon, the couple may give each other rings as a sign of the consent they have just shared and the marriage covenant they have entered into. The circular shape of rings and the hardness of the metal both symbolize the mutual love, unity, fidelity and the strength of the marriage bond. Because the couple gives them to each other, the wedding ring that the groom wears is the sign of his wife's love for him and the wedding ring the bride wears is the sign of her husband's love for her. Both are reminded of the promise that another has made to them and of God's love in joining them together.



Blessing and Giving of Arras (optional)

In some cultures, the bride and groom exchange coins, or *arras*, symbolic of God's blessing and the good gifts the couple will share as well as their charitable concern for others. If done, this ritual would take place after the Blessing and Giving of Rings.

Blessing and Placing of the *Lazo* or the Veil (optional)

Some cultures have the custom of placing the *lazo* (or lasso) which is a garland of flowers, a cord, or a large rosary and sometimes an additional veil over the couple which is symbolic of the unification of the husband and wife for the rest of their lives. This optional ritual would take place immediately following The Lord's Prayer before the Nuptial Blessing.

Reception of Holy Communion

If Matrimony is being celebrated within Mass, one of the couple's first acts together after receiving the Church's blessing upon their marriage in the Nuptial Blessing is the reception of Holy Communion. It is most fitting that the couple who are united by God in marriage now share in one Bread and one Cup of the Eucharist. Through this "Sacrament of Unity," the couple and all the faithful who have gathered intimately join themselves to Christ and to each other.



Other Practices

Over the past few decades, other elements have been added to the wedding liturgy that are not part of the *Order for Celebrating Matrimony* as presented by the Church. The lighting of the "unity candle" is a recent practice that actually detracts from the most significant and symbolic moments of the marriage celebration and has no place in the wedding liturgy. Such a practice and others like it (such as the "blending of sands") should be discouraged in light of the more powerful signs and symbols that are listed above. If desired, these secular rituals could be incorporated into the rehearsal dinner or at the wedding reception as part of the prayer before dinner.

While having a devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is a important tradition in the Church, it is better that moments of personal devotion not become the focus of attention during the liturgy. Therefore the gesture of presenting flowers or prayer before an image of Mary is not recommended during the wedding celebration.

deacon would then greet the couple at the place that has been prepared for them. The first form of the *liturgical procession* is recommended for Catholic weddings for several reasons:

- Demonstrates that the couple are equals entering into this marriage relationship
- Conveys that the couple themselves are the ministers of this sacrament
- Allows parents of both the bride and groom to assume a more distinguished role in the celebration

Regardless of the Entrance Procession form chosen, an Entrance Hymn is to be sung by the entire congregation. Instrumental music may be used to accompany the procession, and when the bride and groom are in place, the singing of the Entrance Hymn would begin. The purpose of this hymn is the same as any other liturgical gathering: "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" (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* #47).

Liturgy of the Word

This is one of the principal parts of the celebration. In a special way Christ's presence in the Church is experienced through the proclamation of the Word of God.

The sequence of the readings is as follows:

- Old Testament Reading (proclaimed by a trained lector)
- Responsorial Psalm (refrain sung by the assembly; verses sung by the cantor)
- New Testament Reading (proclaimed by a trained lector)
- Gospel Acclamation (sung; otherwise omitted)
- Gospel (proclaimed by a priest or deacon)



Most marriage preparation booklets include the Scripture passages that are suitable for the wedding liturgy. These are provided for your consideration to select two or three readings. One reading that explicitly speaks of marriage (indicated by an asterisk *) must be used.

Following the Gospel, the homily, which is an integral part of the liturgy is preached by a priest or deacon.

Celebration of Marriage

Consent

The bride and groom may face the altar, the congregation, or each other during this part of the ceremony. The couple exchanges consent in one of two ways:

- The priest obtains their consent in question form to which the bride and groom respond individually, "I do."
- The bride and groom exchange their consent either by repeating the phrases of the formula after the priest or by reciting the formula from memory or from the printed text.

Only those formulas for the declaration of consent which are printed in the *Order for Celebrating Matrimony* for the United States are to be used by the couple. A couple is not free to compose their own declaration of consent.

The Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)

The Universal Prayer follows the Consent and the Blessing and Giving of Rings. The couple may compose the intercessions which are to include prayers ...

- For the whole Church
- For the assembly
- For particular needs
- For civil concerns
- For the newly married couple &/or all newly married (and for their families)

Many marriage preparation booklets provide examples of these prayers. The various petitions may be read by a properly prepared lay person or persons. The priest/deacon introduces and concludes the intercessions.

If celebrating Matrimony within Mass, the Prayer over the Offerings, the Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer, and the Nuptial Blessing should be selected in accordance with the Scripture texts you have chosen. The priest might be able to offer some guidance for liturgical unity.

The Nuptial Blessing takes place after the Lord’s Prayer when marriage is celebrated during Mass. When marriage is celebrated without Mass, the Nuptial Blessing replaces the concluding prayer of the Universal Prayer. The petitions of the Universal Prayer should thus be in harmony with but not duplicate the Nuptial Blessing.

During Mass, the Sign of Peace is normally exchanged by the whole assembly. The couple may go to their families, to the other members of the wedding party or also to others. This greeting, however, should not unduly delay the Communion Rite.

Communion may be received only by Catholics. The “Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian” does not provide for the distribution of Holy Communion.

Music in the Wedding Liturgy

The choice of music for the wedding is most important. In 1972, the Liturgy Committee of the Bishops of the United States said, "The quality of joy and enthusiasm which music adds to community worship cannot be gained in any other way". In choosing the music, the couple should consult with the parish musicians who, in turn, should follow the official policy of the Diocese of Scranton.

The following norms may be helpful in the decision-making process.

- Participating through singing is rightly the part of the congregation and should not be taken from them by too many or inappropriate solos. The Entrance Hymn, Glory to God, Responsorial Psalm Refrain, the Gospel Acclamation,



Acclamation after the Reception of Consent, the Holy, Holy, Holy, the Mystery of Faith, the Great Amen, the doxology ("For the Kingdom...") and Communion Hymn all belong by right to the congregation. Indeed, these are the first in priority where there is singing at Mass. The services of a leader of song should be enlisted to facilitate the participation of the congregation. Parishes will need to provide a list of suitable leaders of song and/or cantors.

- The music selections as a whole should have a definite sacred character which supports the celebration of Christian love in the marriage ceremony.
- The lyrics and context of each piece of music should, at the very least, be consistent with a Christian view of love and marriage, and should be appropriate to the particular part of the liturgy.
- Judgment about a particular piece of music should be made in the context of the overall music selection. Music composed for entertainment, including music from Broadway shows, operas, and movies, is not suitable for liturgy. Music for the liturgy is not meant to entertain. If it is properly reverent, music which is not appropriate to the liturgy itself might be suitable as the congregation gathers. The reception is the suitable place for other music.
- One or two musical solos could be appropriate. For instance, a solo might be appropriate during the Presentation of the Bread and Wine or in thanksgiving after Communion. (Naturally, a soloist might sing before the wedding liturgy as part of the prelude music.)
- Parish policy regarding the choice of the organist, cantor/leader of song, instrumentalists and soloists should be followed.

Signs and Symbols of the Wedding Liturgy

The Questions before the Consent

The priest or deacon questions the couple about their intentions to enter into marriage, specifically about their freedom to choose, their fidelity to each other and the acceptance and the upbringing of children in the Catholic faith (may be omitted if the couple is older or unable to have children). In answering these questions, the couple acknowledges the significance of the marriage covenant they are about to enter into.

The Consent

Essential to the Celebration of Matrimony, the Consent of the Couple is the indispensable element of the celebration that makes the marriage. In giving their consent, the couple expresses their promise to love and to remain faithful to each other and in doing so, enter into a covenant with each other. As the representative of the Church, the priest or deacon witnesses and then accepts the couple’s consent. However, the ritual makes clear that it is God who has joined the couple together in Marriage.

