

The Sacrament of Matrimony

For the Tri-Parishes of
Sacred Heart in Freeport,
Immaculate Conception in New Munich, &
St. Rose of Lima in St. Rosa



Congratulations on your engagement!

As you begin to plan for your wedding celebration and your upcoming marriage, I want to encourage you to take time to listen to God's call in your lives as you journey toward a marriage centered on Christ. Marriage preparation is an important time to discern God's call to commit to each other for the rest of your life.

Marriage is a gift from God, and sometimes we need to be reminded of that fact. One recommendation for the two of you is to begin praying together if you have not already begun doing this. To pray with your spouse will be essential even if, at first, it is awkward.

For many couples, their wedding day is forever remembered as one of the most significant, joyous, and sacred occasions in their lives. In choosing to have your wedding ceremony within the Catholic Church, you are giving a great witness to others of your pledge before God to live the rest of your lives as one.

One of the first decisions you will need to make is whether your wedding ceremony will be within the celebration of a Mass. This booklet has been compiled to assist you in planning your wedding ceremony. The parish staff and I are here to assist you with your preparations for the wedding celebration.

Be assured of my prayers for you as the two of you journey toward your special day. May God look with favor upon both of you as you prepare for your upcoming wedding. May God bless you in good times and in bad so that you will grow in love for each other and always be of one heart.

In Christ,
Fr. Daniel Walz

Table of Contents

Policies	4
First Readings	8
Second Readings	11
Gospels	15
The Consent (Marriage Vows)	18
Universal Prayer	19
Q & A	20
Appendixes	24
Worship Aid Examples	27
Notes	29
Liturgy Planner	31
Sequence of Preparation Checklist	32

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony

These are requirements particular to the Church, Parish, and Civil entities.

Church Requirements

Sacramental Preparation

Arrange for Sacramental Preparation with the priest/deacon at least six months prior to the anticipated wedding date. All sacramental preparation, including liturgy preparation, needs to be completed at least one month prior to wedding date.

Fully Engaged Inventory

The Fully Engaged premarital inventory is required to be completed.

Marriage Preparation Course

Participation in and completion of an approved marriage preparation course is required by the Diocese of St. Cloud. Registration for the session is required and is your responsibility. Approved marriage courses include the Diocese of St. Cloud Engaged Couples Retreat, Engaged Encounter, or any other course that meets marriage preparation requirements. Contact the deacon/priest if you have questions on which course satisfies this requirement. The signed certificate of completion needs to be given to the parish office as it is required to be included in your marriage file at the parish office and will also provide a discount on your marriage license.

Baptismal Certificates

A baptismal certificate will be requested of each party. A Catholic is required to provide a certificate dated no more than six months prior to the wedding date. This can be obtained by contacting the parish where the person was baptized and requesting a baptismal certificate. Persons of other Christian faiths are required to give a photocopy of their baptismal certificate. The certificates are required to be included in your marriage file at the parish office.

Meeting with Presider of Wedding Liturgy

After completing the marriage preparation process, you will contact the priest or deacon to schedule a meeting. This meeting should occur two to four weeks prior to the wedding date. The purpose of this meeting is to review the liturgy plans for the wedding liturgy.

Promise of Marriage

The wedding banns are printed in the parish bulletin on three successive Sundays prior to your wedding date regarding your intention to enter into marriage. This gives parishioners the opportunity to know who is preparing for marriage and to offer prayer for the couple. The wedding banns should be published in both of the couple's home parishes. The couple is responsible for advising their home parishes of their wedding date and for asking that the wedding banns be published for the faith community's knowledge and prayers.

Parish Requirements

Parish Membership

The Sacrament of Matrimony is available to parish and non-parish members. To be considered a parishioner of one of our parishes, you must be an active registered member of the parish for six months. An active member means attending Mass every weekend and providing stewardship for the parish with your time, talent, and treasure.

Sponsor Couple Meetings

You are required to have meetings with your sponsor couple. At the meetings, you will reflect on and discuss the results of your Fully Engaged Inventory. The sponsor couple will reach out to you to schedule these meetings. The couples participating as sponsor couples are trained in this ministry.

Cohabitation

Policy 110.1 The preparation for couples living together will include:

- A. A pastoral challenge for the couple to live separately and chastely prior to marriage.
 - 1. The couple should be allowed to respond to this challenge and have their questions answered and an opportunity to express their concerns.
 - 2. A few days should be allowed for the couple to pray together, discuss with each other, and reflect upon the pertinent issues before stating their final decision on whether or not to live apart and chastely.
- B. An assessment by the priest or deacon of the couple's readiness to receive the Sacrament of Marriage should be made after the couple responds to this challenge.

Policy 110.2 In rare instances and after serious consideration, the priest or deacon may determine there are grave and compelling reasons for the engaged couple to continue living together, i.e. couples with a minor child(ren). In those rare instances, the couple must be willing to follow the teachings of the Church, by living together in a chaste relationship, that is refraining from all sexual activity prior to marriage.

Policy 110.3 Should a couple determine that they cannot discontinue cohabitation, the priest determines the next steps. Moving toward a Catholic marriage ceremony remains a possibility. The fact that the couple will continue cohabitating should not necessarily become the basis for denying them the sacrament of Matrimony. Also, the ritual used is to be determined by the priest.

Music

A consultation with the Parish Music Coordinator at least six months prior to the wedding is necessary. The music selections need to be approved three months prior to the wedding. A musician from one of our parishes may be available for the liturgy. If you will be using musicians outside of the parishes, it is required that the musician have music ability and knowledge of liturgical celebrations. The music they use must also be approved by the Parish Music Coordinator. If using an outside musician, there will be an additional fee for setting up microphones and equipment for them. All questions regarding music should be directed to the Parish Music Coordinator.

Outside soloists and instrumentalists are allowed to perform under the following conditions:

- 1. Musical selections must be approved by the Parish Music Coordinator.
- 2. There is a fee paid to the Parish Music Coordinator for additional meetings and rehearsals with outside musicians in addition to the fee to the outside musician. Fee is due one month prior to wedding. Payment to be paid to parish where Mass is taking place.

All music fees (organist, cantor, instrumentalist, choir, and extra rehearsal time) must be paid as agreed upon to the musician.

For any wedding taking place at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, music and musician consultations and approvals will be handled by the parish office staff.

Liturgy

The question is often raised whether a couple should have their marriage take place in a Liturgy of the Eucharist (Mass with Communion) or Liturgy of the Word (without Communion). It is important that we understand the difference. Every celebration of the Eucharist consists of a Liturgy of the Word (entrance rite, readings, homily, general intercessions) and a Liturgy of the Eucharist (presentation of bread and wine, the Eucharistic prayer, and Communion). When a wedding is celebrated with the Eucharist, the Rite of Matrimony takes place after the homily and before the general intercessions; the Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows. When a wedding is celebrated apart from the Eucharist, it is celebrated in the Liturgy of the Word in which the Rite of Matrimony takes place after the homily and before the general intercessions: this rite concludes with prayers including the Lord’s Prayer and blessings. A deacon may preside at the non-Eucharistic Liturgy. You should make your decision about the liturgy in consultation with the presider.

Civil Requirements

Marriage License

A valid State of Minnesota Marriage License is required. For information regarding marriage licenses, contact any Minnesota county license center. The license is valid for six months from the date of issuance and should be obtained at least one month prior to the wedding. Completing a marriage preparation course allows for a discount of the license fee. After the marriage preparation course and sponsor couple meetings are complete, the parish office will prepare a notarized Statement of Premarital Education for you to present for the discount. You will be notified when it is ready for pickup. Both parties must appear in person at the license center to sign the marriage license application and make payment. Please bring the marriage license and other information, including the envelope, received to the parish office once received. We will add your license to your marriage file and have it at the church the day of your wedding.

Witnesses

According to Minnesota State Law, two witnesses, age 16 or older, are required for a legal and binding marriage.

Parish Policies

Church Deposits and Fees

An initial (non-refundable) deposit (\$100 for parishioners and \$250 for non-parishioners) is required to hold your anticipated wedding date on the parish calendar. The balance of the fee is due one month prior to the wedding.

Use of the church:	\$250.00—Tri-Parishioner
	\$500.00—Non-Parishioner
Suggested Priest Stipend:	\$200.00—Tri-Parishioner
	\$250.00—Non-Parishioner

Appropriate Attire

The liturgy is the celebration of the faith community coming together, bringing the best we have to offer to God. Since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, we should present ourselves to God in an appropriate manner. The way we clothe our bodies expresses what is important to us—our values and beliefs. Therefore, we should clothe our bodies in a way that follows Christian modesty, being aware of hemlines and necklines. Men need to remove their hats when entering church.

Rehearsal

Rehearsals are usually held the day before the wedding. The time for rehearsal is arranged with the presider. Please contact the parish office with the time of rehearsal as soon as you have that set. Members of the wedding party, ushers, and readers should be present for the rehearsal.

Respect for Church Facilities

The wedding party and guests have the responsibility to maintain the cleanliness, dignity, and respect of church property and facilities.

Things to keep in mind:

- The church is God's house and needs to be respected with reverence. The Real Presence of Jesus Christ is present in the Tabernacle, and He deserves our respect.
- Excessive or loud talking is discouraged within the church.
- Children should not be allowed to run around in the church.
- Chewing gum in the church is not allowed.
- Food and drinks are not allowed within the worship space.
- Alcohol and controlled substances are not allowed to be used on the church premise. The abuse of alcohol or any controlled substance by anyone within the wedding party will exclude them from the wedding or cause the wedding to be postponed.
- Proper attire for church is required.
- Light snacks and beverages may be consumed in the church basement.
- Throwing of rice, bird seed, confetti, or the release of balloons or birds is not permitted for ecological, maintenance, and liability reasons.

Lost, Stolen, or Damaged Articles

The parish is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged articles on parish property.

Church Environment

Decorations

You may enhance the worship space to increase the festivity of the celebration, but existing decorations must remain in place. They cannot be moved or altered in any way. Please remember that no flowers are to be placed on or in front of the altar. Decorating may be done the day prior to the wedding. Please notify the parish office of the time. Since our church has special settings for each of the Church seasons, you need to consider how the environment will fit your plans for décor and color. The seasons are:

- **Advent:** During the four weeks before Christmas, we reflect on Christ's coming into our world. Advent is a quiet and thoughtful time. The colors of the season are shades of blue, purple, and rose.
- **Christmas:** The setting from December 17 until mid-January consists of holiday plants and décor. Usually no additional flowers are needed. The colors can be reds, whites, and golds.
- **Lent:** These six weeks prior to Easter are penitential. Being a penitential season for the church, weddings are not typically scheduled during the Lenten Season. Those marrying during this time should incorporate the simplicity of the season into their service. Flowers should be limited or perhaps green plants might be more fitting. The dominant color of the season is purple. Flowers are not part of the décor.
- **Easter:** We celebrate Easter for 50 days, and during that time the setting is bursting with plants and flowers. There may be no need for additional flowers, or perhaps these might be flowering plants to be left as part of the Easter setting. The colors of the season are anything from the yellows and the golds to brighter pinks and pastels. Pentecost, which is celebrated on the 50th day after Easter, uses red and white as the primary colors.
- **Autumn:** During the fall season from mid-September to Thanksgiving, the colors include oranges, golds, and browns. Dried wild flowers are often used, and mums in fall colors are appropriate. Pumpkins and wheat may be used.
- **Ordinary Time:** During the rest of the year, the church is usually kept simple with a few green plants.

Bows on pews are permitted and should not be fastened with tape. Bows are never to be placed on the altar, ambo, or on railings or doors.

Photography

We understand that photographs are important reminders of your wedding. Photography must be completed 1 hour before the ceremony. Photographers need to meet with the presider prior to ceremony about photographs during the ceremony or other requirements.

Videography

Video equipment must be in place 30 minutes prior to the start of the ceremony. Videography is only permitted from the choir loft or side doors. No additional lighting may be used. No wires may be laid across walkways. Nothing may be affixed in any way to church walls or furnishings. Connection to the churches sound system is not permitted. Videographers need to meet with the presider prior to ceremony about videography during the ceremony or other requirements.

Ministers of the Wedding Liturgy**Main Presider**

The pastor of the parish will be the main presider, unless you choose a different presider. If you choose a different presider, the parish pastor must grant permission to the visiting presider. Confirmation that the visiting presider is available to perform the ceremony is required at the time of reserving the church for the wedding. If the visiting presider is not from the Diocese of St. Cloud, they are required to submit a letter of suitability to the diocese prior to the wedding.

Additional Clergy

Although only one minister may function as the officiant for the Church and for the State, other priests, deacons, and non-Catholic ministers are welcome to participate. The couple should indicate this during the time of the marriage preparation. Visiting priests and deacons are required to submit a letter of suitability to the Diocese of St. Cloud prior to the wedding.

Seating Capacity of the Church

Sacred Heart, Freeport: 607

Immaculate Conception, New Munich: 496

St. Rose of Lima, St. Rosa: 229

Clean-Up After the Wedding

Please choose six to eight people to clean up the church and basement after the wedding. These people should plan to stay around for twenty minutes or so to complete the tasks listed below. We have a weekend Mass, so it is important to have the church space in order and clean.

In the Church

- Remove all wedding decorations and any special items that may have been used for the wedding, such as an aisle runner, photographs, or flowers.
- Remove any water bottles, Kleenex, or other garbage from the church.
- Remove any wedding programs left in the pews.
- Pick up any plastic/silk flowers that may have been thrown.
- Remove any cardboard boxes from the church that were used for wedding programs, flowers, etc.

In the Basement

- If food was shared in the basement during preparations before the wedding, please wash any counters and tables that were used.
- Sweep for crumbs under the tables.
- Use the large wastebaskets for food waste, water bottles, and cans.
- Restrooms should be in good order. They do not have to be specially cleaned, but paper towels and any garbage should be in the waste basket, any clothes accidentally left behind should be picked up, etc.

* If Clean-Up after the Sacrament of Matrimony is not complete, the couple will be billed for the expense to have it done.

Suggested Readings for the Sacrament of Matrimony

The first reading is usually from the Old Testament, the second from the New Testament, followed by the Gospel

FIRST READING from the Old Testament

1—Male and Female he created them.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (1:26-28, 31a)

Then God said:

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,

the birds of the air, and the cattle,

and over all the wild animals

and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.”

God created man in his image;

in the image of God he created him;

male and female he created them.

God blessed them, saying:

“Be fertile and multiply;

fill the earth and subdue it.

Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air,

and all the living things that move on the earth.”

God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.

The word of the Lord.

2—The two of them become one body.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (2:18-24)

The LORD God said: “It is not good for the man to be alone.

I will make a suitable partner for him.”

So the LORD God formed out of the ground

various wild animals and various birds of the air,

and he brought them to the man to see what he would

call them;

whatever the man called each of them would be its

name.

The man gave names to all the cattle,

all the birds of the air, and all wild animals;

but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man.

So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man,

and while he was asleep,

he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib

that he had taken from the man.

When he brought her to the man, the man said:

“This one, at last, is bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

This one shall be called ‘woman’,

for out of ‘her man’ this one has been taken.”

That is why a man leaves his father and mother

and clings to his wife,

and the two of them become one body.

The word of the Lord.

3—In his love for Rebekah, Isaac found solace after the death of his mother.

A reading from the Book of Genesis (24:48-51, 58-67)

The servant of Abraham said to Laban:

“I bowed down in worship to the LORD,

blessing the LORD, the God of my master Abraham,

who had led me on the right road

to obtain the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son.

If, therefore, you have in mind to show true loyalty to my master, let me know;

but if not, let me know that, too.

I can then proceed accordingly.”

Laban and his household said in reply:

“This thing comes from the LORD;

we can say nothing to you either for or against it.

Here is Rebekah, ready for you;

take her with you,

that she may become the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has said.”

So they called Rebekah and asked her,

“Do you wish to go with this man?”

She answered, “I do.”

At this they allowed their sister Rebekah and her nurse to take leave,

along with Abraham’s servant and his men.

Invoking a blessing on Rebekah, they said:

“Sister, may you grow

into thousands of myriads;

And may your descendants gain possession of the gates of their enemies!”

Then Rebekah and her maids started out;

they mounted their camels and followed the man.

So the servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

Meanwhile Isaac had gone from Beer-lahai-roi

and was living in the region of the Negeb.

One day toward evening he went out. . . in the field,

and as he looked around, he noticed camels were

approaching.

Rebekah, too, was looking about, and when she saw him,

she alighted from her camel and asked the servant,

“Who is the man out there, walking through the fields toward us?”

“That is my master,” replied the servant.

Then she covered herself with her veil.

The servant recounted to Isaac all the things he had done.

Then Isaac took Rebekah into his tent;

he married her, and thus she became his wife.

In his love for her Isaac found solace

after the death of his mother Sarah.

The word of the Lord.

If you would like more information on the meaning of each Scripture reading, contact the parish office.

**4—May the Lord of heaven prosper you both.
May he grant you mercy and peace.**

A reading from the Book of Tobit (7:6-14)

Raphael and Tobiah entered the house of Raguel and greeted him.
Raguel sprang up and kissed Tobiah, shedding tears of joy.
But when he heard that Tobit had lost his eyesight,
he was grieved and wept aloud.
He said to Tobiah:
"My child, God bless you!
You are the son of a noble and good father.
But what a terrible misfortune
that such a righteous and charitable man
should be afflicted with blindness!"
He continued to weep in the arms of his kinsman Tobiah.
His wife Edna also wept for Tobit;
and even their daughter Sarah began to weep.
Afterward, Raguel slaughtered a ram from the flock
and gave them a cordial reception.
When they had bathed and reclined to eat,
Tobiah said to Raphael, "Brother Azariah,
ask Raguel to let me marry my kinswoman Sarah."
Raguel overheard the words;
so he said to the boy:
"Eat and drink and be merry tonight,
for no man is more entitled to marry my daughter Sarah
than you, brother.
Besides, not even I have the right to give her to anyone but you,
because you are my closest relative.
But I will explain the situation to you very frankly.
I have given her in marriage to seven men,
all of whom were kinsmen of ours,
and all died on the very night they approached her.
But now, son eat and drink.
I am sure the Lord will look after you both."
Tobiah answered, "I will eat or drink nothing
until you set aside what belongs to me."
Raguel said to him: "I will do it.
She is yours according the decree of the Book of Moses.
Your marriage to her has been decided in heaven!
Take your kinswoman;
from now on you are her love,
and she is your beloved.
She is yours today and ever after.
And tonight, son, may the Lord of heaven prosper you both.
May he grant you mercy and peace."
Then Raguel called his daughter Sarah, and she came to him.
He took her by the hand and gave her to Tobiah with the words:
"Take her according to the law.
According to the decree written in the Book of Moses she is your
wife.
Take her and bring her back safely to your father.
And may the God of heaven grant both of you peace and
prosperity."
He then called her mother and told her to bring a scroll,
so that he might draw up a marriage contract
stating that he gave Sarah to Tobiah as his wife
according to the decree of Mosaic law.
Her mother brought the scroll,
and he drew up the contract,
to which they affixed their seals.
Afterward they began to eat and drink.

The word of the Lord.

5—Allow us to live together to a happy old age.

A reading from the Book of Tobit (8:4b-8)

On their wedding night Tobiah arose from bed and said to his
wife,
"Sister, get up. Let us pray and beg our Lord
to have mercy on us and to grant us deliverance."
Sarah got up, and they started to pray
and beg that deliverance might be theirs.
They began with these words:
"Blessed are you, O God of our fathers;
praised be your name forever and ever.
Let the heavens and all your creation
praise you forever.
You made Adam and you gave him his wife Eve
to be his help and support;
and from these two the human race
descended.
You said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone;
let us make him a partner like himself.'
Now, Lord, you know that I take this wife of mine
not because of lust,
but for a noble purpose.
Call down your mercy on me and on her,
and allow us to live together to a happy old
age."
They said together, "Amen, amen."

The word of the Lord.

6—She who fears the LORD is to be praised.

A reading from the Book of Proverbs (31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31)

When one finds a worthy wife,
her value is far beyond pearls.
Her husband, entrusting his heart to her,
has an unfailing prize.
She brings him good, and not evil,
all the days of her life.
She obtains wool and flax
and makes cloth with skillful hands.
She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her fingers ply the spindle.
She reaches out her hands to the poor
and extends her arms to the needy.
Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting;
the woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
Give her a reward of her labors,
and let her works praise her at the city gates.

The word of the Lord.

7—Stern as death is love.

A reading from the Song of Songs (2:8-10, 14, 16a, 8:6-7a)

Hark! my lover—here he comes
springing across the mountains,
leaping across the hills.
My lover is like a gazelle
or a young stag.
Here he stands behind our wall,
gazing through the windows,
peering through the lattices.
My lover speaks; he says to me,
“Arise, my beloved, my dove, my beautiful one, and
come!
“O my dove in the clefts of the rock,
in the secret recesses of the cliff,
Let me see you,
let me hear your voice,
For your voice is sweet,
and you are lovely.”
My lover belongs to me and I to him.
He says to me:
“Set me as a seal on your heart,
as a seal on your arm;
For stern as death is love,
relentless as the nether-world is devotion;
its flames are a blazing fire.
Deep waters cannot quench love,
nor floods sweep it away.”

The word of the Lord.

**8—Like the sun rising in the LORD’S heavens, the beauty of a
virtuous wife is the radiance of her home.**

A reading from the Book of Sirach (26:1-4, 13-26)

Blessed the husband of a good wife,
twice-lengthened are his days;
A worthy wife brings joy to her husband,
peaceful and full is his life.
A good wife is a generous gift
bestowed upon him who fears the LORD;
Be he rich or poor, his heart is content,
and a smile is ever on his face.
A gracious wife delights her husband,
her thoughtfulness puts flesh on his bones;
A gift from the LORD is her governed speech,
and her firm virtue is of surpassing worth.
Choicest of blessings is a modest wife,
priceless her chaste soul.
A holy and decent woman adds grace upon grace;
indeed, no price is worthy of her temperate soul.
Like the sun rising in the LORD’S heavens,
the beauty of a virtuous wife is the radiance of her
home.

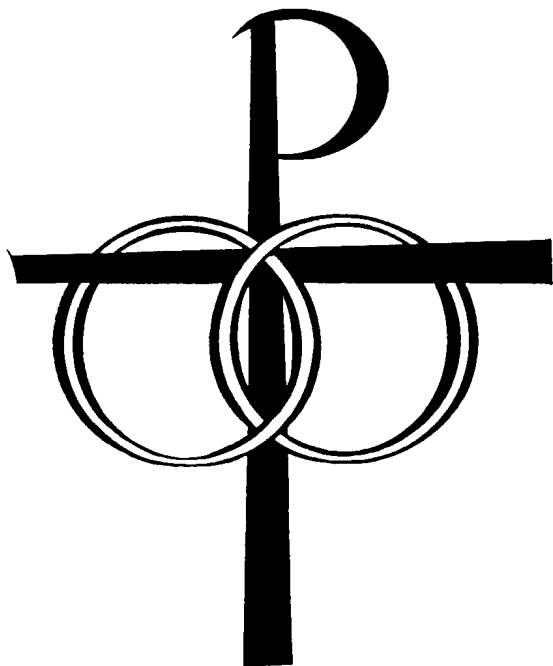
The word of the Lord.

**9—I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel
and the house of Judah.**

**A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah
(31:31-32a, 33-34a)**

The days are coming, says the LORD,
when I will make a new covenant with the house of
Israel
and the house of Judah.
It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers:
the day I took them by the hand
to lead them forth from the land of Egypt.
But this is the covenant which I will make
with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD.
I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts;
I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
No longer will they have need to teach their friends and
relatives
how to know the LORD.
All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD.

The word of the Lord.



SECOND READING from the New Testament

10—What will separate us from the love of Christ?

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans (8:31b-35, 37-39)

Brothers and sisters:

If God is for us, who can be against us?

He did not spare his own Son

but handed him over for us all,

will he not also give us everything else along with him?

Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones?

It is God who acquits us.

Who will condemn?

It is Christ Jesus who died, rather, was raised,

who also is at the right hand of God,

who indeed intercedes for us.

What will separate us from the love of Christ?

Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine,

or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

No, in all these things, we conquer overwhelmingly
through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,

nor angels, nor principalities,

nor present things, nor future things,

nor powers, nor height, nor depth,

nor any other creature will be able to separate us

from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

11—Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans (12:1-2, 9-13)

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God,
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.

Do not conform yourselves to this age

but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,

that you may discern what is the will of God,

what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Let love be sincere;

hate what is evil,

hold on to what is good;

love one another with mutual affection;

anticipate one another in showing honor.

Do not grow slack in zeal,

be fervent in spirit,

serve the Lord.

Rejoice in hope,

endure in affliction,

persevere in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the holy ones,

exercise hospitality.

The word of the Lord.

12—Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans (12:1-2, 9-18)

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God,

to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,

holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.

Do not conform yourselves to this age

but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,

that you may discern what is the will of God,

what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Let love be sincere;

hate what is evil,

hold on to what is good;

love one another with mutual affection;

anticipate one another in showing honor.

Do not grow slack in zeal,

be fervent in spirit,

serve the Lord.

Rejoice in hope,

endure in affliction,

persevere in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the holy ones,

exercise hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you,

bless and do not curse them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice,

weep with those who weep.

Have the same regard for one another;

do not be haughty but associate with the lowly;

do not be wise in your own estimation.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil;

be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all.

If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.

The word of the Lord.

13—Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you.

A reading from Saint Paul to the Romans (15:1b-3a, 5-7, 13)

Brothers and sisters:

We ought to put up with the failings of the weak and not to

please ourselves;

let each of us please our neighbor for the good,

for building up.

For Christ did not please himself.

May the God of endurance and encouragement

grant you to think in harmony with one another,

in keeping with Christ Jesus,

that with one accord you may with one voice

glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, then as Christ welcomed you,

for the glory of God.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,

so that you may abound in hope by the power of the

Holy Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

14—Your body is a temple of the Spirit.

**A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians
(6:13c-15a, 17-20)**

Brothers and sisters:

The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord,
and the Lord is for the body;
God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?
Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes on spirit with him.

Avoid immorality.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body,
but the immoral person sins against his own body.

Do you not know that your body
is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,
whom you have from God, and that you are not your
own?

For you have been purchased at a price.

Therefore glorify God in your body.

The word of the Lord.

15—If I do not have love, I gain nothing.

**A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians
(12:31-13:8a)**

Brothers and sisters:

Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts.

But I shall show you a still more excellent way.

If I speak in human and angelic tongues
but do not have love,
I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.

And if I have the gift of prophecy
and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge;
if I have all faith so as to move mountains,
but do not have love, I am nothing.

If I give away everything I own,
and if I hand my body over so that I may boast
but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind.

It is not jealous, is not pompous,
it is not inflated, it is not rude,
it does not seek its own interests,
it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury,
it does not rejoice over wrongdoing
but rejoices with the truth.
It bears all things, believes all things,
hope all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

The word of the Lord.

16—One Body and one Spirit

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians (4:1-6)

Brothers and sisters:

I, a prisoner for the Lord,
urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have
received,
with all humility and gentleness, with patience,
bearing with one another through love,
striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit
through the bond of peace: one Body and on Spirit,
as you were also called to the one hope of your call;
one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
one God and Father of all,
who is over all and through all and in all.

The word of the Lord.

**17—This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ
and the Church.**

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians
(5:2a, 21-33)**

Brothers and sisters:

Live in love, as Christ loved us
and handed himself over for us.

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord.

For the husband is head of his wife
just as Christ is head of the Church,
he himself the savior of the body.

As the Church is subordinate to Christ,
so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in
everything.

Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ loved the Church
and handed himself over for her to sanctify her,
cleansing her by the bath of water with the word,
that he might present to himself the Church in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.

So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself.

For no one hates his own flesh
but rather nourishes and cherishes it,
even as Christ does the Church,
because we are members of his Body.

*For this reason a man shall leave his father and
his mother and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.*

This is a great mystery,
but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself,
and the wife should respect her husband.

The word of the Lord.

18—This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians
(5:2a, 25-32)**

Brothers and sisters:

Live in love, as Christ loved us

and handed himself over for us.

Husbands, love your wives,

even as Christ loved the Church

and handed himself over for her to sanctify her,

cleansing her by the bath of water with the word,

that he might present to himself the Church in splendor,

without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,

that she might be holy and without blemish.

So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself.

For no one hates his own flesh

but rather nourishes and cherishes it,

even as Christ does the Church,

because we are members of his Body.

*For this reason a man shall leave his father and
his mother and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.*

This is a great mystery,

but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

The word of the Lord.

19—The God of peace will be with you.

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians
(4:4-9)**

Brothers and sisters:

Rejoice in the Lord always.

I shall say it again: rejoice!

Your kindness should be known to all.

The Lord is near.

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,

by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,

make your requests known to God.

Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding

will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters,

whatever is true, whatever is honorable,

whatever is just, whatever is pure,

whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious,

if there is any excellence

and if there is anything worthy of praise,

think about these things.

Keep on doing what you have learned and received

and heard and seen in me.

Then the God of peace will be with you.

The word of the Lord

20—And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection.

**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians
(3:12-17)**

Brothers and sisters:

Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,

heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness,

and patience,

bearing with one another and forgiving one another,

if one has a grievance against another;

as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.

And over all these put on love,

that is, the bond of perfection.

And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,

the peace into which you were also called in one Body.

And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,

as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another,

singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs

with gratitude in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, in word or in deed,

do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,

giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The word of the Lord.

21—Let marriage be held in honor by all.

A reading from the Letter of the Hebrews (13:1-4a, 5-6b)

Brothers and sisters:

Let mutual love continue.

Do not neglect hospitality,

for through it some have unknowingly entertained

angels.

Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment,

and of the ill-treated as of yourselves,

for you also are in the body.

Let marriage be honored among all

and the marriage bed be kept undefiled.

Let your life be free from love of money

but be content with what you have,

for he has said, I will never forsake you or abandon you.

Thus we may say with confidence:

The Lord is my helper,

and I will not be afraid.

The word of the Lord.

22—Be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter (3:1-9)

Beloved:

You wives should be subordinate to your husbands so that,
even if some disobey the word,
they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct
when they observe your reverent and chaste behavior.

Your adornment should not be an external one:
braiding the hair, wearing gold jewelry, or dressing in fine clothes,
but rather the hidden character of the heart,
expressed in the imperishable beauty
of a gentle and calm deposition,
which is precious in the sight of God.

For this is also how the holy women who hoped in God
once used to adorn themselves
and were subordinate to their husbands;
thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him "lord."

You are her children when you do what is good
and fear no intimidation.

Likewise, you husbands should live with your wives in understanding,
showing honor to the weaker female sex,
since we are joint heirs of the gift of life,
so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Finally, all of you, be of one mind, sympathetic,
loving toward one another, compassionate, humble.

Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult;
but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called,
that you might inherit a blessing.

The word of the Lord.

23—Love in deed and in truth.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John (3:18-24)

Children, let us love not in word or speech
but in deed and truth.

Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth
and reassure our hearts before him
in whatever our hearts condemn,
for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us,
we have confidence in God
and receive from him whatever we ask,
because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

And his commandment is this:
we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ,
and love one another just as he commanded us.

Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them,
and the way we know that he remains in us
is from the Spirit that he gave us.

The word of the Lord.

24—God is love.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John (4: 7-12)

Beloved, let us love one another,
because love is of God;
everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.
Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.

In this way the love of God was revealed to us:
God sent his only-begotten Son into the world
so that we might have life through him.

In this is love:
not that we have loved God, but that he loved us
and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us,
we also must love one another.

No one has ever seen God.

Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us,
and his love is brought to perfection in us.

The word of the Lord.

25—Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

A reading from the Book of Revelation (19:1, 5-9a)

I, John, heard what sounded like the loud voice
of a great multitude in heaven, saying:

"Alleluia!

Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God."

A voice coming from the throne said:

"Praise our God, all you his servants,
and you who revere him, small and great."

Then I heard something like the sound of a great multitude
or the sound of rushing water or mighty peals of thunder,
as they said:

"Alleluia!

The Lord has established his reign,
our God, the almighty.

Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory.

For the wedding day of the Lamb has come,
his bride has made herself ready.

She was allowed to wear
a bright, clean linen garment."

(The linen represents the righteous deeds of the holy ones.)

Then the angel said to me,

"Write this:

Blessed are those who have been called
to the wedding feast of the Lamb."

The word of the Lord.

Readings from the Holy Gospels

26—Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
(Matthew 5:1-12a)**

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain,
and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him.

He began to teach them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,

for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of
righteousness,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against your falsely
because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in
heaven.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

27—You are the light of the world.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
(Matthew 5:13-16)**

Jesus said to his disciples:

“You are the salt of the earth.

But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?

It is no longer good for anything
but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

You are the light of the world.

A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.

Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket;
it is set on a lamp stand,
where it gives light to all in the house.

Just so, your light must shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds
and glorify your heavenly Father.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

28—A wise man built his house on rock.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
(Matthew 7:21, 24-25)**

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’
will enter the Kingdom of heaven,
but only the one who does the will of my Father in
heaven.

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them
will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.

The rain fell, the floods, came,

and the winds blew and buffeted the house.

But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock.

The Gospel of the Lord.

29—A wise man built his house on rock.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
(Matthew 7:21, 24-29)**

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’
will enter the Kingdom of heaven,
but only the one who does the will of my Father in
heaven.

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them
will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.

The rain fell, the floods came,

and the winds blew and buffeted the house.

But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock.

And everyone who listens to these words of mine

but does not act on them

will be like a fool who built his house on sand.

The rain fell, the floods came,

and the winds blew and buffeted the house.

And it collapsed and was completely ruined.”

When Jesus finished these words,

the crowds were astonished at his teaching,

for he taught them as one having authority,

and not as their scribes.

The Gospel of the Lord.

30—What God has united, man must not separate.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
(Matthew 19:3-6)**

Some Pharisees approached Jesus, and tested him, saying,
"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause
whatever?"
He said in reply, "Have you not read that from the beginning,
the Creator made them male and female and said,
*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one
flesh?*
So they are no longer two, but one flesh.
Therefore, what God has joined together, man must not
separate."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**31—This is the greatest and the first commandment.
The second is like it.**

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
(Matthew 22:35-40)**

One of the Pharisees, a scholar of the law, tested Jesus by
asking,
"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the
greatest?"
He said to him,
"You shall love the Lord, your God,
with all your heart,
with all your soul,
and with all your mind.
This is the greatest and the first commandment.
The second is like it:
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
The whole law and the prophets depend on these two
commandments."

The Gospel of the Lord.

32—They are no longer two, but one flesh.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark (Mark 10:6-9)

Jesus said:
"From the beginning of creation,
God made them male and female.
*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.*
So they are no longer two but one flesh.
Therefore what God has joined together,
no human being must separate."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**33—Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in
Galilee.**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (John 2:1-11)

There was a wedding in Cana in Galilee,
and the mother of Jesus was there.
Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.
When the wine ran short,
the mother of Jesus said to him,
"They have no wine."
And Jesus said to her,
"Woman, how does your concern affect me?
My hour has not yet come."
His mother said to the servers,
"Do whatever he tells you."
Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish
ceremonial washings,
each holding twenty to thirty gallons.
Jesus told them,
"Fill the jars with water."
So they filled them to the brim.
Then he told them,
"Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter."
So they took it.
And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become
wine,
without knowing where it came from
(although the servants who had drawn the water knew),
the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him,
"Everyone serves good wine first,
and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior
one;
but you have kept the good wine until now."
Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee
and so revealed his glory,
and his disciples began to believe in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

34—Remain in my love.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (John 15:9-12)

Jesus said to his disciples:
"As the Father loves me, so I also love you.
Remain in my love.
If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love,
just as I have kept my Father's commandments
and remain in his love.
"I have told you this so that my joy might be in you
and your joy might be complete.
This is my commandment: love one another as I love you."

The Gospel of the Lord.

35—This is my commandment: love one another.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John
(John 15:12-16)**

Jesus said to his disciples:

"This is my commandment: Love one another as I love you.

No one has greater love than this.

to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I no longer call you slaves,

because a slave does not know what his master is doing.

I have called you friends,

because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you

and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain,

so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you."

The Gospel of the Lord.

36—That they may be brought to perfection as one.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John
(John 17:20-23)**

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said:

"I pray not only for my disciples,

but also for those who will believe in me through their word,

so that they may all be one,

as you, Father, are in me and I in you,

that they also may be in us,

that the world may believe that you sent me.

And I have given them the glory you gave me,

so that they may be one, as we are one,

I in them and you in me,

that they may be brought to perfection as one,

that the world may know that you sent me,

and that you loved them even as you loved me.

The Gospel of the Lord.

37—That they may be brought to perfection as one.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John
(John 17:20-26)**

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said:

"I pray not only for my disciples,

but also for those who will believe in me through their word,

so that they may all be one,

as you, Father, are in me and I in you,

that they also may be in us,

that the world may believe that you sent me.

And I have given them the glory you gave me,

so that they may be one, as we are one,

I in them and you in me,

that they may be brought to perfection as one,

that the world may know that you sent me,

and that you loved them even as you loved me.

Father, they are your gift to me.

I wish that where I am they also may be with me,

that they may see my glory that you gave me,

because you loved me before the foundation of the world,

Righteous Father, the world also does not know you,

but I know you, and they know that you sent me.

I made known to them your name and I will make it known,

that the love with which you loved me

may be in them and I in them."

The Gospel of the Lord.

With this ring...

The Consent (Marriage Vows)

A—Consent

You will join hands and the groom begins:

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.

The bride says:

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.

C—Consent

You will join hands and the priest 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?
The groom: I do.

Then he asks the bride:

N., do you take N. to be your husband?
Do you promise to be faithful to him
in good times and in bad,
in sickness and in health,
to love him and to honor him all the days of your life?
The bride: I do.

B—Consent

You will join hands and the groom begins:

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.

The bride says:

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.

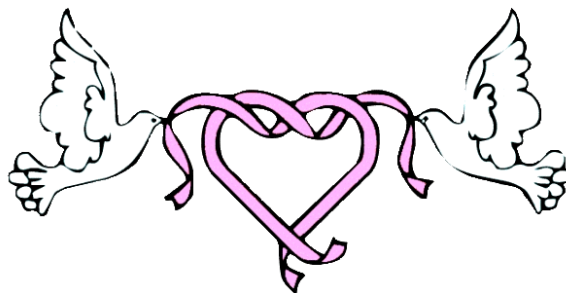
D—Consent

First the one presiding asks the groom:

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?
The groom: I do.

Then he asks the bride:

N., do you take N. for your 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 you part?
The bride: I do.



Universal Prayer

A—Universal Prayer

The priest or deacon begins:

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.

A reader continues:

That these faithful Christians, N. _____ and N. _____

newly joined in Holy Matrimony,
may always enjoy health and well-being,
We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer

That he will bless their covenant
as he chose to sanctify marriage at Cana in Galilee,
We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer

That they be granted perfect and fruitful love,
peace and strength,
and that they bear fruitful witness to the name of Christian,
We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer

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,
We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer

That the grace of the Sacrament
Will be renewed by the Holy Spirit
In all married persons here present,
We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer

The priest or deacon concludes:

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.

B—Universal Prayer

The priest or deacon begins:

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.

A reader continues:

For this bride and groom,
and for their well-being as a family,
We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer

For their relatives and friends,
and for all who have assisted this couple,
We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer

For young people preparing to enter Marriage,
and for all whom the Lord is calling to another state in life,
We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer

For all families throughout the world
and for lasting peace among all people,
We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer

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

For the Church, the holy People of God,
and for unity among all Christians,
We pray to the Lord. R. Lord, hear our prayer

The priest or deacon concludes:

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.



Frequently Asked Questions about the Celebration of Catholic Weddings

My fiancé and I hear the wedding ceremony being called different things. Which is correct: *ceremony*, *liturgy*, or *liturgical celebration*?

Any of these terms is accurate. Ceremony has a more universal meaning and is used in reference to both civil and religious wedding celebrations. A *liturgy* or *liturgical celebration* is quite exclusively a religious event. The word *liturgy* comes from a Greek term meaning “the work of the people.” We use it in the Catholic Church to define our communal and regulated worship. By *regulated* we simply mean that Church laws and guidelines determine what can and should be done during these public times of worship.

You will also see the words *rite* and *order* used frequently in this booklet. These terms are used to define an established set of ritual words and actions that we use for particular liturgical celebrations. All of the sacraments, for example, are celebrated using specific rites or orders that have been written and formally approved for use in the Church.

We live in separate cities. Is it okay if one of us makes all the arrangements?

While it makes sense to divide up responsibilities for many of the details that go into your wedding day, it is important that you plan your wedding liturgy together as much as possible. Try to work together in choosing the readings, prayers, form of marriage vows, blessings, and music together. You will also want to talk about and decide the form of your entrance processional and recessional in conversation with parish personnel.

Can our wedding take place outdoors, in my parent's home, or at a restaurant?

Catholics are required to celebrate their wedding in a Catholic Church, before a priest and two witnesses. If the bride or groom is not Catholic and you wish for the wedding to take place in his or her church, or at some other location, that is possible with special permission of your home diocesan bishop. It is important to work through your local parish so that the requirements for the Catholic person are fulfilled.

Only one of us is Catholic. Can we still have Mass?

Yes, but it is worth thinking carefully about this. If you want to have Mass, you will need permission from your bishop to do so. If either the bride or groom is not Catholic, consult the Presider to decide what Liturgy will be used. The wedding ceremony should be as inclusive as possible, and if one of you cannot receive Communion or if you will have a large number of non-Catholic guests, it is preferable to celebrate the Liturgy without Mass.

Is the wedding still a sacrament if there is no Mass?

The free exchange of consent (vows) between a baptized man and a baptized woman makes the marriage a sacrament, not the act of doing so within the context of a Mass. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass is just as valid a celebration of the sacrament as the Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass. However, if both bride and groom are Catholic, the normal form of celebrating matrimony is within Mass.

I know that we can be validly married in the Catholic Church, even though my fiancé has never been baptized. What will be different about our wedding ceremony?

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian is similar to celebrating within a Mass or without Mass, but it will not contain language that pertains to sacrament, since only someone who is baptized receives sacraments. There will be prayers, readings, a blessing, and—most importantly—the exchange of consent or vows. You will not celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist or have Communion. For more information on marriage between a Catholic and a non-Christian, please see appendix A (page 24).

Will our non-Catholic family and friends be able to receive Communion if we do have Mass?

The Catholic Church understands the reception of Holy Communion to be the preeminent sign of unity among Christians. Sadly, divisions still exist within the church, and as a result of these divisions, inter-communion is not permitted. If one of you is not Catholic and if you will have a large number of non-Catholics guests, it is suggested that you do not have a Mass so that the issue of who may receive Communion and who may not does not become a source of disunity at your celebration. For more information on this question, please see "A Pastoral Note on Intercommunion" on page 24.

Can the ordained minister from my fiancé's church have a role at our wedding?

Yes, with some restrictions. Take up the question with the priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding. In short, you must have *one* person who officially witnesses your marriage or receives your consent (vows), for legal reasons of both state and Church. In other words, your priest and your fiancé's minister or pastor cannot "co-officiate" using the Catholic rite, nor can they each celebrate their own ritual at your wedding. In certain circumstances, a minister from another church may proclaim a scripture reading, give an exhortation, or pray a blessing at a Catholic wedding so long as he or she has been invited to do so by the pastor of the Catholic parish.

Do our best man and maid/matron of honor both have to be Catholic?

No. According to the Canon Law of the Church, you need two witnesses in addition to the presider. You do not specifically need one man and one woman, and the witnesses do not need to be baptized. They do need to understand what is going on and so must have reached the age of reason and be in full control of their reason. For example, if one or both of your witnesses are intoxicated or otherwise impaired, they may not fill this role.

How many people should be involved in our wedding liturgy?

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony requires the bride and groom, a priest or deacon, and two witnesses (usually your best man and maid/matron of honor) be present. In addition to those essential participants, you will likely want to have one or more readers and a cantor and/or a musician to lead singing. You may also include others such as groomsmen and bridesmaids. You do not need a flower girl or ring bearer, but they may also be included, provided they are old enough to undertake the role you are giving them. Sometimes ushers are used to help seat your guests when they arrive at the church, and if you are celebrating with Mass, you may need people to bring the bread and wine forward and others to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

Do we have to sing?

It is customary to sing during Catholic worship, so check with the person helping you plan your wedding liturgy about the diocesan and parish expectations with regard to music and singing. He or she can assist you in choosing what will help and not hinder your celebration.

Can we choose any songs we want for our wedding?

The music chosen for your wedding must be commonly understood as sacred music. The Church has a rich tradition of beautiful hymns and other music from which you can choose what pieces you wish to use at your wedding with the guidance of your parish contact.

Where do we find musicians for the ceremony?

Check with the Parish Music Coordinator or parish office staff where your wedding will take place. They will often help you contact musicians and perhaps provide guidance on hiring them.

We've seen a variety of entrance processions at weddings. Is there a particular way we have to do this? What about the recessional?

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony calls for the bride and groom to be welcomed by the presiding priest or deacon at the doors of the church, similar to how we begin a baptism or the Rite of Welcome with those who want to join the Catholic Church. When this occurs, some couples choose to greet guests at the church entrance as a simple act of hospitality. The entrance procession then begins.

A second option is for the priest or deacon to go to the place where the bride and groom will be seated or he goes to his chair. When they have arrived at their place, he warmly greets the couple.

Various forms of the entrance procession are permissible as long as they conform to local guidelines. One option is to have a formal liturgical procession precede the wedding party, including cross and candle bearers, the reader, and the priest or deacon who will preside. Another option is to have the bridesmaids and groomsmen come in as couples with the bride and groom also processing as a couple and their parents preceding them. Or the bride can be accompanied by her parents and the groom by his. A father walking his daughter down the aisle to be given away is also a common element of the procession. While this was a fitting custom long ago, it may or may not be desirable for the two of you. Your parish contact can tell you what is permissible and help you determine what is most appropriate for your wedding.

May we use readings that are not in the Bible?

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony calls for the use of particular scripture readings as the primary way that God speaks to us about the nature and meaning of the sacrament. The options available for you to use at your Catholic wedding are presented in this booklet. Poems and other readings not found in the Bible may not be used for your wedding liturgy, but consider using them as part of your rehearsal dinner or wedding reception.

May non-Catholics proclaim the readings during the liturgy?

If you choose to celebrate the marriage within Mass, then yes. However, if you are having Mass, then a Catholic should proclaim the readings. In either situation, the readers should be trained in the ministry, well coached ahead of time in the church, and given time to practice with the microphone that will be used on your wedding day.

Who can be extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion?

The distribution of Holy Communion is a sacred moment in the liturgy. You are permitted to select extraordinary ministers of Communion, however it is essential that they have already been trained and commissioned.

Do we have to memorize our vows? Can we write our own vows?

While your vows are deeply personal, they are not private. Rather, they are public expressions of your love, faithfulness, and commitment. Couples are not free to write their own vows but may choose from options found in this booklet. Some priests or deacons suggest that couples memorize the vows while others do not.

Do we have to write our own intercessions?

You do not; depending on the liturgical norms of your parish and diocese, it is possible to write your own intercessions or use one of the forms given in this booklet. This is a question to which the priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding can best respond. Many couples start with one of the intercessions provided in this booklet and add names of deceased family members or friends to it. You may also add particular intentions that might be appropriate given your individual circumstances or a particular season of the year. Guidelines for composing your own intercessions—should you be free to do so—can be found at TogetherforLifeOnline.com.

Can we have a blessing of *arras*? Blessing and placing of the *lazo*?

The Order of Celebrating Matrimony allows: for the blessing of the *arras* and the *lazo*. The adaptations of these traditions—important for Hispanic and Filipino cultures—have already been approved for use in the United States in Spanish since 2010. Making them available in English translation is intended for occasions when one (or both) of the spouses has this cultural background and the couple wishes to celebrate their wedding in English. *For more information on these traditions visit TogetherforLifeOnline.com, Catholic Weddings, Catholic Wedding Traditions.*

May we light a unity candle?

The unity candle is not part of the Catholic celebration of matrimony. The symbolism of "two becoming one" that the unity candle is meant to signify is already present with your exchange of vows and the blessing and exchange of rings. Many parishes ask that if you desire a unity candle, it be used at the rehearsal dinner or reception instead. As is the case with all customs that are not part of the official rite, it is best to speak about this with the priest or deacon who is presiding at your wedding.

Can we light a candle or do something in memory of a deceased parent?

Honoring those you love who cannot be present at your wedding is a fitting thing to do. For those who have a deceased parent or loved one, a candle lit in their memory or a special flower placed in the church is appropriate. It is also common to include a special remembrance of deceased loved ones in the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful). Talk over your options for a memorial during the ceremony with the priest or deacon who will preside at your wedding.

Should we take flowers to a statue of Mary?

Although this custom is not part of *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, many couples who have a devotion to Mary want to take a moment at the conclusion of the liturgy to offer prayers to Mary as they begin their married life together. Mary is a wonderful model of how we are to live out our faith and trust in God. Couples will often bring flowers to the statue of Mary in the church and offer prayers asking for her intercession. This ritual usually takes place at the end of the ceremony. You may also be able to choose a Marian hymn such as the "Ave Maria" to be sung during this time.

Do we need a program or worship aid?

While it is not necessary, a program or worship aid will help your guests by providing musical refrains, prayer and reading responses, and an outline of the order of the ceremony. A handout will be especially helpful for those in attendance who are not familiar with Catholic liturgy. For information about reprinting the scripture readings visit usccb.org/bible/permissions.

Wedding Program/Worship Aid Guide within a Mass can be found on page 27.

Wedding Program/Worship Aid Guide without a Mass can be found on page 28.

Do we have to go to confession before our wedding?

One of the best ways for Catholics to prepare spiritually for their wedding day is to celebrate the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation (i.e., go to confession). This may be a big step, especially if you have not been to confession in some time, but it is well worth talking this possibility over with the priest, deacon, sponsor couple, or other marriage preparation contact at the parish. Making time to examine your Christian commitments in confession prior to accepting your new role in the Church as a married person is a wonderful way to experience the healing, forgiveness, and grace Christ offers you.

Source: Together for Life Sixth Edition by Joseph M. Champlin

A. Marriage between a Catholic and a Non-Catholic

The Catholic Church believes that marriage between one man and one woman is a natural institution; that is, it is woven into the very fabric of what it means to be part and parcel of the human family and reflects God's plan for that family. When these two people are baptized Christians, this natural institution of marriage becomes a sacrament. In other words, because each person shares in the life of the Holy Spirit and discipleship to Jesus, their whole life together becomes a vibrant, visible sign of the invisible reality of God's unending love for the world. Marriage brings the couple God's rich blessing of grace, and the couple becomes a medium of God's grace to others.

It is quite common, of course, for a Catholic to marry a member of a different Christian tradition. For example, many Catholics marry Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, members of nondenominational communities, or Christians who for one reason or another remain unaffiliated with a particular faith community. Other Catholics marry someone who has never been baptized. The person may be Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or unaffiliated with any faith. Keep in mind that whether a Catholic enters into a sacramental marriage with a Christian of a different church or a valid marriage with a non-Christian, the Church supports the witness of love and fidelity the couple offers to the world.

During the course of your marriage preparation, issues of faith and belief should be addressed in an open and honest way, both about the faith you share and the significant differences in what you believe and how you practice your religious faith. Speaking candidly about these issues with the priest or deacon helping you prepare for your marriage is very important.

A Pastoral Note on Intercommunion

One of the most sensitive and easily misunderstood issues in Catholic life and practice today is the prohibition of intercommunion—the reception of Holy Communion in the Catholic Church by non-Catholics or its reception by Catholics in other Christian churches. Some Catholics who have a non-Catholic fiancé, family members, or friends may believe that an injustice is being done and that Catholic limitations on intercommunion are contrary to the gospels' teaching of love and acceptance. Why, then, are non-Catholics asked not to take Communion at Mass?

The reasons behind the Catholic prohibition of intercommunion are not based on a perceived moral or religious superiority of Catholics over other Christians. There are many faithful members of other Christian traditions who are morally or religiously better Christians than nominal Catholics, but that is not what is at stake in intercommunion. The Catholic discipline of not practicing intercommunion is based on a theology of the Eucharist: what it is, what it does, and what it signifies.

Many Christian denominations do not share our Catholic understanding of the Eucharist. Some view communion as a rich symbol and a memorial of what Jesus has done for us, but for Catholics, the Eucharist is more than a memorial meal. It makes real again all of the power and promise of Christ's life-giving death and resurrection. Catholics believe that the Eucharist is a sacrament and therefore a particular kind of sign that effects or brings about what it signifies. In essence, we believe that Holy Communion doesn't just *point us* to the presence of Christ but that—through a profound mystery—it *is* the presence of Christ, which we consume in order to better become that divine presence in the world.

But these differences regarding what Holy Communion is are not the sole obstacle to intercommunion. There is also the matter of what Holy Communion does. Catholics believe that the Eucharist draws those who receive Communion into greater unity within the Body of Christ and at the same time signifies that unity. The Eucharist, simply put, is both a sign and source of unity in the Church. Thus, the Eucharist is not only about uniting individual believers to Christ through a share in Communion but more fundamentally about uniting a community of believers together. When one receives Communion, he or she is saying yes to a communion of mind and heart with the Church. It is an act that signifies not only a spiritual union with other members of the Church but also a public affirmation of being united in the beliefs and practices of that community.

The reception of Holy Communion by members of another Christian denomination cannot be a sign of unity among those believers when, in fact, significant differences in belief and practice still remain between Catholics and those of other Christian churches. Eucharistic communion would then be a counter-sign: it would signify a unity that does not exist among these Christians. Given all of this, while it is certainly not prohibited for couples to use the Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass when one partner is a baptized non-Catholic, it may be better to use the Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass, the Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass in order to avoid misunderstanding or insult.

B. Honoring Ethnic and Cultural Traditions

A child eating with her mother and grandmother asked, "Mom, why do you always cut an inch off the end of the Thanksgiving ham?" The mother replied, "I learned that from your grandmother. It makes the ham juicier. Right, Mama?" The grandmother giggled: "I did it because I didn't have a roasting pan big enough!"

Some say tradition is an excuse to act without thinking. When it comes to rituals, whether religious or secular, we often simply do what we've seen and learned from others. But not knowing where our traditions come from can lead us to do some strange things that may not fit our own situation.

The same is true when preparing a wedding. You might be surprised to know that a lot of what you see and hear on television or in the movies or even at the last Catholic wedding you attended isn't actually part of *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*. Some examples of these customs include the bride walking down the aisle by herself, improvised or customized vows, lighting a unity candle, pouring sand into a vase, or placing flowers at an image of Mary.

If these aren't in the Catholic rite, where did they come from? Why do some Catholic weddings have them? And how do you know which of these would be appropriate for your wedding?

Something Old

Some of these traditions come from a time and culture in which marriage was treated as a contract between families and the transfer of wealth and property played an important role. "Giving away the bride" ritualized this contract. In this light, you can see how the tradition of the father escorting his daughter to her groom may have developed. Catholics, however, believe that the bride and groom give themselves to each other as equal partners, and as one, they give themselves to God. Does this mean it would be inappropriate to follow this tradition? Not necessarily. Parents play a major role in our lives, and sharing this moment with them is a gift. But there are ways to blend tradition with what the rite requests. For example, the groom might walk in first with his parents, followed by the bride with hers. Or parents can process in together followed by the wedding party with bride and groom together at the end. Discussing these options with your family and parish ministers might also give you some valuable time to reflect on the role your family has had in your relationship and may help mend divisions.

Something New

Some traditions are actually trends in popular culture. These include customs like the unity candle, a sand ceremony, or improvised vows. These practices developed relatively recently and have been used in both religious and civil ceremonies. Of these, the unity candle is most popular, but it is not required and technically not allowed to be used during Catholic weddings.

Lighting candles, however, does have great significance in the Catholic Church. Our most important candle is the Paschal or Easter Candle, which is first lit each year at the Easter Vigil and remains prominent throughout the Easter season. All the candles given at infant and adult baptisms are lit from this candle. It is also lit during funerals to mark our loved one's passage to eternal life. We honor the Paschal Candle because it represents Christ, the Light.

One reason the Church's rite does not include a unity candle may be that its popular meaning—two lives becoming one—is already profoundly signified through the couple's exchange of vows and rings and in the nuptial blessing. Some churches allow a unity candle to be lit after the conclusion of the rite, just before the recessional.

Something Borrowed

Other traditions are rooted in our ethnic cultures. These customs hold deep meaning for many families, and the Church invites couples to include them in their ceremony if they do not conflict with a Christian understanding of marriage. For example, in many Hispanic families, there is a blessing and giving of coins; Filipino families place a *Lazo* or veil and a cord over the couple; Vietnamese couples honor their ancestors; and Celtic families wear the colors of their clan. Additional information about ethnic wedding traditions and how to adapt them to *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* and the liturgical norms of the Catholic Church are available at TogetherforLifeOnline.com

Something Blue

Finally, some of our traditions developed from a spiritual devotion to the Virgin Mary. She is a model for living one's faith in the good and bad of everyday life. It is natural, then, for Catholics to want to pray to her as they begin their new life together. Some couples place flowers at an image of Mary and spend a few moments in prayer to her during the wedding. But more often than not, couples really just want a special song sung at that time, and they may think they need to take flowers to a statue of Mary in order to have that song included. Not so. If both of you genuinely have a devotion to Mary, then certainly ask if you can include this tradition. But if it is not allowed, keep in mind that you are not required to do it.

Ritual traditions take root in our lives most often because they unite us to the past, connect to who we are today, and help us express who we want to become. Good rituals are powerful because they communicate this connection clearly. As you prepare your wedding, look first at the traditions that have been handed on to you from all the cultures that make you who you are today. Especially begin with the rite from our ancestors in the faith. Explore where these traditions come from and what they mean. Adapt them for your wedding with the help of your parish staff so they express what the two of you hope for in your married life. *For more on ethnic and cultural traditions, visit TogetherforLifeOnline.com.*

Source: Together for Life Sixth Edition by Joseph M. Champlin

The Wedding Liturgy Uniting...(couples names)....**in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony**— example

Date

Location (optional)

The Nuptial Mass or The Gathering

Prelude (optional)

Processional—name of song may be included

Gathering Hymn—name of song may be included

Greeting*

Gloria*

Collect*

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading—name of reading with scripture location e.g. Song of Songs 2:8-10, 10-14, 16a: 8-6-7a

Responsorial Psalm—name of psalm or song title can be included

Second Reading—name of reading with scripture location e.g. 1 John 4:7-12

Alleluia

Gospel—name of gospel with scripture locate e.g. Matthew 5:13-16

Homily

The Rite of Marriage

Expression of Consent & Profession of Marriage Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Signing of Marriage License—name of song may be included

Prayers of the Faithful

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Presentation and Preparation of Gifts—name of song may be included

Eucharistic Prayer (optional)

The Lord's Prayer

Nuptial Blessing

Sign of Peace—name of song may be included

Communion—name of the song may be included

Concluding Rite

Final Blessing

Presentation of the Couple

Recessional—name of song may be included

Postlude

- *These are part of the Mass but are optional to list in the worship aid/program
- When listing the songs, if they are in the *Journey Song* books in church it is nice to add the song # as well.

Other Items you may include:

- Wedding Celebration Participants: Celebrant, Parents of the Bride & Groom, Grandparents of the Bride/Groom
- The Wedding Party
- Thank you
- In Remembrance....
- Reception information

Wedding Program/Worship Aid Guide (Without Mass)

The Wedding Liturgy Uniting...(couples names)....**in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony**— example

Date

Location (optional)

The Nuptial Mass or The Gathering

Prelude (optional)

Processional— name of song may be included

Gathering Hymn-name of song may be included

Greeting*

Collect*

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading— name of reading with scripture location e.g. Song of Songs 2:8-10, 10-14, 16a: 8-6-7a

Responsorial Psalm- name of psalm or song title can be included

Second Reading— name of reading with scripture location e.g. 1 John 4:7-12

Alleluia

Gospel— name of gospel with scripture locate e.g. Matthew 5:13-16

Homily

The Rite of Marriage

Expression of Consent & Profession of Marriage Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Signing of Marriage License— name of song may be included

Prayers of the Faithful

The Lord's Prayer

Nuptial Blessing

Concluding Rite

Final Blessing

Presentation of the Couple

Recessional— name of song may be included

Postlude

- *These are part of the Mass but are optional to list in the worship aid/program
- When listing the songs, if they are in the *Journey Song* books in church it is nice to add the song # as well.

Other Items you may include:

- Wedding Celebration Participants: Celebrant, Parents of the Bride & Groom, Grandparents of the Bride/Groom
- The Wedding Party
- Thank you
- In Remembrance....
- Reception information

Notes

[illegible]

Notes

[illegible]

Scripture Reading Selections

First Reading: (Old Testament) _____ **Read By:** _____

Second Reading: (New Testament) _____ **Read By:** _____

Gospel: _____ (Read by the Priest)

The Consent (Marriage Vows): _____

Universal Prayer: _____ **Read By:** _____

Music (Contact Musician) Musician: _____

Mass Ministers/Wedding Party

Gift Bearers: (2-3) _____

Extra-Ordinary Eucharistic Ministers: _____

Altar Servers: (2) _____

Best Man: _____

Maid/Matron of Honor: _____

Greeters (optional): _____

Ushers: _____

Sequence of Sacramental Preparation for Marriage

- _____ Contact the parish office
- _____ Booklet emailed to bride _____ and groom _____
- _____ Set up initial meeting with the priest/deacon (**Required before a date can be set**, at least 6 months prior to wedding date)
- _____ Determine who the presider will be. Reach out to ask them and confirm their availability. (**Required before a date can be set**, at least 6 months prior to wedding date)
- _____ Church reserved and deposit made (**Required before a date can be set**, at least 6 months prior to wedding date)
- _____ Diocesan marriage course completed and certificate to parish (as soon as completed)
- _____ Meetings with Sponsor Couple (completed at least 2 months prior to wedding date)
- _____ Groom's Baptismal Certificate (Issued within 6 months of the wedding date)
- _____ Bride's Baptismal Certificate (Issued within 6 months of the wedding date)
- _____ Parish Music Coordinator contacted by couple (at least 6 months prior to wedding date)
- _____ Approval of musician by Parish Music Coordinator (at least 6 months prior to wedding date)
- _____ Contact parish office with name of musician (at least 6 months prior to wedding date)
- _____ Statement of Premarital Education picked up. The office will contact you when it is ready. (at least 2 months prior to wedding)
- _____ Marriage License obtained (No more than 6 months prior to wedding date) and delivered to parish office (as soon as possible)
- _____ Music Selections approved by Parish Music Coordinator (3 months prior to wedding date)
- _____ Meet with presider , ask how close to the wedding date they would like to meet _____
(Schedule this meeting at least 1 month prior to the wedding date)
- _____ Liturgy preparation reviewed and okayed with presider (You will do this when you meet with the presider)
- _____ Final payment made to church (due 1 month prior to wedding date)
- _____ Wedding date & time set _____
- _____ Rehearsal date & time set _____
- _____ Decorating date & time set _____
- _____ Photography time set _____

} Contact parish office with this information as soon as possible & no later than 2 months prior