

The Wedding Liturgy

LITURGICAL CELEBRATION OF YOUR MARRIAGE

The celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage, which is rooted in the Church's regular worship life, is not a private family function, nor is it merely a social affair or a personal expression of your love for one another. Rather, it is an action of the entire church in whose presence you commit yourselves to one another. Because the Sacrament of Marriage is worship, it is principally congregational. And because it is congregational, every effort should be made to enable the assembly to participate in a full and active manner. The liturgy is neither a show nor a performance and it is not enhanced by any design that creates passive observers. Everyone present should be encouraged to participate by being able to hear, see, speak, sing and pray.

MASS WITH COMMUNION OR MARRIAGE CEREMONY

After meeting and consulting with the priest who will preside at the wedding, the couple will determine if the marriage will be celebrated in the context of a Nuptial Mass (with Communion) or a Marriage Ceremony (without Communion). The determining criteria will center on the religious background of the bride and groom, and which form of liturgy best accommodates the assembled guests to celebrate their unity.

Blessed Sacrament is fully committed to making all our guests feel welcome and brothers and sisters in God, joining in the prayer of this joyous occasion. At the same time, it would be a disservice to pretend as though differences and divisions within our Christian faith family and with other traditions do not exist. Specific concerns you should ask yourself:

- Are those attending a part of the Catholic faith, or will there be many other Christian or non-Christian traditions represented?
- Will the celebration of Mass with communion prohibit a significant number of your family and guests from feeling fully welcome and participating?

While we do all we can to overcome differences and divisions, we choose instead to focus on what unites us at this moment of joy, welcoming all to your celebration of unity. With this in mind, we recommend the following formats for your liturgical service:

MASS WITH COMMUNION (*see sample program on page 19*)

- for a Catholic marrying another Catholic;
- Both families are significantly practicing Catholics

CEREMONY WITHOUT COMMUNION (*see sample program on page 20*)

- for a Catholic marrying a Non-Catholic Christian
- for a Catholic marrying a person of another Faith Tradition;

WEDDING PARTY

- **Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor**

These individuals are very special persons in your life, and by custom they accomplish two things:

1. They witness to the words of fidelity and love you publicly exchange with each other;
2. They are to support and encourage you in the practice of the faith you are publicly professing.

Because of this honor *and* responsibility, at least one of these witnesses should be a practicing Catholic.

- **Ministers of Hospitality (Ushers)**

The ushers are first and foremost the ministers of hospitality. As soon as your guests arrive at the church, they are welcomed by the ushers. The ushers are the ones who hand out your programs and seat your guests. We suggest one usher for every 50 guests.

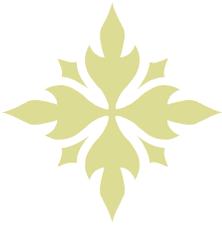
- **Children In The Wedding Party**

We understand the desire of couples who wish sometimes to include very young members of their families in the wedding as flower girls or ring bearers. We simply ask you kindly to consider carefully the age of any children you might wish to include in your wedding party. Really young children can sometimes be quite overwhelmed (and perhaps a little frightened) by the triumph of the wedding ceremony, especially the opening procession. We recommend thoughtful planning in this regard. Children should be old enough to have a sense of the event and the importance and execution of the procession. Children must be able to walk the length of the aisle.

READINGS AND LITURGICAL PRAYERS

You will be provided with a resource which contains those scripture readings most appropriate for use at weddings. In consultation with the pastoral minister helping you plan your wedding, you will select usually three passages from scripture. Non-scriptural readings or poems are never permitted in place of the scriptures.

Weddings held at Blessed Sacrament are celebrated according to the worship books of the Roman Catholic Church: the Roman Missal, the Lectionary, and the Rite of Marriage. Keep in mind this is a sacrament of the Catholic Church and the bride and groom may not read their own vows, privately written. In order for the Sacrament of Marriage to be valid, the vows as prescribed in the Rite of Marriage must be used.



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OPTIONS

- **The Unity Candle**

The unity candle has emerged in contemporary times as an additional symbolic expression of the couple's vow as and as a "symbol of unity." This is one among several wedding customs that are not officially part of the Church's liturgical ritual. While the unity candle may not be used at Mass, you may find it helpful to discuss whether or not you need to include the unity candle in your Marriage Ceremony based on the following considerations;

1. As Catholics, the "symbol of unity" is expressed in the wedding vows, which make known not only your words, but makes the Word (Jesus Christ) present once again.
2. Additionally, the rings you exchange as a sign of your love and fidelity symbolize the permanence of the marriage vows (a circle with no beginning and no end), as well as the permanence of God's love for you both (no beginning and no end).
3. Finally, your verbal commitments to your promises of love and fidelity are made visible in your ongoing choice to wear your rings publicly and permanently.

For these reasons, a unity candle is typically seen as redundant and unnecessary.

- **Flowers to the Blessed Virgin Mary** have been a custom retained by various Catholic cultures. You may choose to include this ritual in your ceremony if you have a devotion to the Blessed mother. Please consult with the pastoral minister helping you plan your wedding if this is an option you wish to include in the ceremony.
- **Cultural Wedding Traditions** such as the "*arras*", "*lazo*" and similar elements are a great gift of many different cultures. In celebrating our diversity, we recognize their value as an integral part of your heritage. However, in the spirit of good order and noble simplicity which has always characterized the Roman Rite, we ask that the couple carefully consider the number of primary and secondary sponsors they invite to participate in the liturgy if these cultural options are included.

WEDDING PROGRAMS

One of the things that will help your guests to participate and worship well together is a nicely designed, printed program. If you wish to have a printed program for your wedding, the guides on pages 15-16 will be of assistance to you. Listed on the left-hand margins is an example of those parts of the liturgy that should be printed in the program. Items printed in *italics* indicate variables that you should list in the finished product. Optional items are given in brackets. The music office will provide you with all of the musical variables (titles, composers and music texts) once your musical selections have been finalized. Finalized wedding programs need to be submitted to the music and liturgy staff prior to printing.

PROGRAM FOR FULL MASS

PRELUDE [SEATING OF THE MOTHERS]	<i>Music Title</i>	<i>Composer</i>
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INTRODUCTORY RITE

PROCESSIONAL	<i>Music Title</i>	<i>Composer</i>
GREETING [OPENING HYMN]	<i>Music Title</i>	<i>Hymn Number</i>
OPENING PRAYER		

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING		<i>Scripture Reference</i>
REPONSORIAL PSALM	<i>Text of Psalm Refrain</i>	<i>Psalm Number</i>
SECOND READING		<i>Scripture Reference</i>
GOSPEL ACCLAMATION	<i>Alleluia*</i>	<i>Composer</i>
GOSPEL		<i>Scripture Reference</i>
HOMILY		

RITE OF MARRIAGE

EXCHANGE OF VOWS
BLESSING AND EXCHANGE OF RINGS
GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

OFFERTORY		
EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER		
ACCLAMATIONS	<i>Title of Mass Setting</i>	<i>Composer</i>
LORD'S PRAYER		
NUPTIAL BLESSING		
SIGN OF PEACE		
LAMB OF GOD	<i>Title of Mass Setting</i>	<i>Composer</i>
COMMUNION	<i>Music Title</i>	<i>Composer</i>
PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION [FLOWERS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN]		

CONCLUDING RITE

FINAL BLESSING AND DISMISSAL	<i>Music Title</i>	<i>Composer</i>
RECESSIONAL		

**Please note that during the season of Lent, alleluias are not sung in the church's liturgies. During Lent, the gospel acclamation will be "Glory to you, O Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ."*

