

The Sacrament of Marriage

Parish Policies and Procedures

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1 A Catholic Vision of Marriage

Married Christians, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and share in the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church; they help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of children; and they have their own special gift among the people of God.

Marriage arises in the covenant of marriage, or irrevocable consent, which each partner freely bestows on and accepts from the other. This intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on each of them and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them. Christ the Lord raised this union to the dignity of a sacrament so that it might more clearly recall and easily reflect his own unbreakable union with his Church.

Christian couples, therefore, nourish and develop their marriage by undivided affection, which wells up from the fountain of divine love, while, in a merging of human and divine love, they remain faithful in body and mind, in good times as in bad.

By their very nature, the institution of matrimony and wedded love are ordained for the procreation and education of children and find in them their ultimate crown. Therefore, married Christians, while not considering the other purposes of marriage of less account, should be steadfast and ready to cooperate with the love of the Creator and Savior, who through them will constantly enrich and enlarge his own family.

– from the introduction to *The Rite of Marriage of The Roman Ritual*

2 Steps to Take

If you plan to marry at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, you should contact one of the parish priests or deacons at least six months in advance of your anticipated wedding day. He will discuss your engagement with you and will be able to schedule a wedding date if you are prepared to do so at that time. Please note that it may be helpful to contact the parish clergy much earlier than the six-month requirement, inasmuch as the church will occasionally be booked for particular wedding dates more than a year in advance,

Your clergyman will interview you to verify that you are free to marry according to the requirements of civil and ecclesiastical law. He will ask you to participate in a marriage preparation program prior to your wedding day—see the section *Personal Preparation* for more details. You will also receive the materials you need for the preparation of the liturgy. Additionally, in this book you will find important information about the wedding rehearsal and the wedding day.

3 Parish Wedding Policies

3.1 Scheduling the Wedding

Weddings should be scheduled at least six months in advance of the anticipated day. This allows time not only for personal, spiritual preparation, but also for the assembly of proper documentation.

Most weddings are scheduled Saturday afternoons at 1:30 p.m. or earlier. Under some circumstances, weddings may also be scheduled at 6:00 p.m. Saturday or later. Wedding parties must vacate the church property at least one hour before the next scheduled event. On Saturday afternoon, this typically means leaving by 3:00 before the 4:00 p.m. Mass.

Weddings may also be scheduled on weekdays or evenings, if desired. No weddings are scheduled on Sundays, holy days of obligation, or other days forbidden by liturgical law. Weddings scheduled for major feast days and seasons of the Church calendar will have liturgical restrictions appropriate to those days.

Under certain circumstances, marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic may take place in non-Catholic churches or other venues, with or without the presence of a Catholic priest or deacon. Nevertheless, in such cases, it is necessary for the Catholic party to contact a Catholic clergyman in advance, to obtain the required permission.

3.2 Fees

For practicing Catholics who are members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, the parish charges no fees for the use of the church building. Such couples are encouraged to make a donation to the parish and to consider small honoraria for the services of clergymen, altar servers, and wedding coordinators.

The donation to the parish may be a percentage of the total expense of the rehearsal dinner, wedding, and reception; the suggested amount is 3%. Thus, for example:

<i>If you spend this amount on the rehearsal dinner, the wedding, and the reception:</i>	<i>You should consider donating this amount to the church:</i>
\$2,000	\$60
\$5,000	\$150
\$10,000	\$300
\$20,000	\$600

Clergy frequently receive about \$50, altar servers \$10 each, wedding coordinators \$20 each.

For those who are not members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, the three percent charge noted above may be required for the use of the church building and property. If this fee represents a hardship, couples should consult the parish pastor. This fee does *not* include gratuities for the clergy, altar servers, wedding coordinators, or others who may assist at the wedding.

Fees for music—e.g., organist and cantor—are noted below in the section on music.

3.3 The Wedding Day

Under no circumstances may wedding parties or guests bring alcohol or drugs onto the parish premises, nor may members of the wedding party be under the influence of drugs or alcohol before or during the wedding ceremony. Violation of this rule may result in the cancellation of the wedding. Couples may be asked to sign a memorandum of understanding to this effect.

It is recommended that ushers arrive at least forty-five minutes prior to the scheduled time for the wedding, and that other members of the wedding party arrive at least fifteen minutes prior to that time.

Keep in mind that parking must be available for parishioners as they arrive for the 4:00 p.m. Mass on Saturday. Limousines and other vehicles should not block the church parking lot after 3:00 p.m.

4 Personal Preparation

4.1 Spiritual Preparation

When a couple seeks a wedding in the Catholic Church, at least one of the partners should be a practicing Catholic. It is assumed that practicing Catholics will want to make the marriage an opportunity to grow in the love of God and neighbor, through prayer and the regular reception of the sacraments. For this reason, couples may wish to consult one of the parish priests about the availability of the sacrament of penance (confession) for themselves or friends and family. The priests are available Saturday 11:00 to 12:00 noon, and will also make themselves available before or after the rehearsal upon request.

For those who are not practicing Catholics as well as those who are, a wedding is a precious opportunity to reexamine one's faith and spiritual life, especially as one prepares to share one's life with another person. Your priest or deacon will be eager to help you learn more about the Catholic faith and to move toward the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and first communion, if you have not already received these sacraments.

4.2 Marriage Preparation Programs

Most couples will be expected to participate in a marriage preparation program approved by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish recommends the *Engaged Encounter of Pittsburgh*. You will receive information about these and other programs when your priest or deacon first interviews you.

Those who do not participate in the weekend *Engaged Encounter* may instead attend a lecture series sponsored by the Diocese of Pittsburgh, or any marriage preparation program sponsored by one of the Catholic parishes in the Diocese.

4.3 Civil and Ecclesiastical Documents

Your clergyman will ask you to provide a number of documents prior to your wedding. Catholics will need baptismal certificates recently issued by the parish of baptism; other Christians may submit photocopies of any baptismal certificate. By the time of the rehearsal, couples must have a marriage license valid for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Depending upon your circumstances, several other papers may also be necessary.

5 Liturgical Preparation

5.1 Principles

The wedding rite is not simply the private arrangement of bride and groom; it is a public act of worship on the part of two families and the entire parish community. Therefore, though the entire parish is invited to participate, the parish pastor is the person principally responsible for arrangements and the celebration of the liturgy. However, your officiating priest or deacon will invite you to cooperate with him in planning the wedding, especially as described in the following material. Please remember that as in all acts of worship, the wedding liturgy should be celebrated with dignity and solemn reverence. Secular expressions of joy are encouraged—but they should take place at the wedding reception.

5.2 The Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal is an opportunity to familiarize the witnesses, attendants, readers, and other members of the wedding party with the wedding liturgy. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish typically recruits one or more volunteer wedding coordinators to assist with the rehearsal and wedding liturgy.

Rehearsals are scheduled at the convenience of the parish, usually the evening on the day or two before the wedding. Your clergyman will make more specific arrangements with you. Wedding rehearsals may last for as long as an hour, depending upon the complexity of the liturgy.

Rehearsals are *not* opportunities for group decision-making. Couples requiring clarification or wishing to make special requests should speak to their officiating clergyman at least one week in advance of the wedding.

5.3 The Structure of the Rite

Weddings between two Christians always take place in a church building; weddings between two Catholics take place during a celebration of the Eucharist. Normally, weddings involving a non-Catholic do not take place during a celebration of the Eucharist, since non-Catholics are not invited to share in this sacrament. Questions about these policies should be referred to your officiating priest or deacon.

Two sample wedding rites are outlined here, on the next two pages, to help you plan your liturgy. Please refer to whichever outline fits your circumstances, as described above. [Optional elements are indicated in brackets.]

5.3.1 Wedding Rite during a Celebration of the Eucharist (for two Catholics)

[Seating of Dignitaries, if any]

Procession of Wedding Party

Opening Rites

Liturgy of the Word

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel Reading
- Homily

Rite of Marriage

- Inquiry
- Consent (Exchange of Vows)
- Blessing and Exchange of Rings
- [Lighting of Unity Candle, if any]
- Prayers of the Faithful

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Preparation of Gifts and Presentation Hymn
- Preface Dialogue & *Sanctus*
- Eucharistic Prayer and Doxology
- Our Father*
- Nuptial Blessing
- Sign of Peace [with presentations to wedding party, if any]
- Communion Rite [with Marian devotion, if any]

Closing Rites and Dismissal

5.3.2 Wedding Rite without a Celebration of the Eucharist (for a wedding involving a non-Catholic)

[Seating of Dignitaries, if any]

Procession of Wedding Party

Opening Rites [with Sign of Peace, if any]

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm

Second Reading

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel Reading

Homily

Rite of Marriage

Inquiry

Consent (Exchange of Vows)

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

[Lighting of Unity Candle, if any]

Prayers of the Faithful

Nuptial Blessing

Our Father

Closing Rites and Dismissal

5.4 Liturgical Ministers

Commonly, the priest or deacon you have chosen to prepare you for marriage will officiate at your wedding. However, it is possible to have Catholic priests from other locations officiate in their stead; if this is of interest to you, contact one of the clergymen from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish to inquire about the details. Also, when one of those to be married is not Catholic, it is possible to have non-Catholic clergy participate in a Catholic wedding; again, contact your Catholic clergyman for more details.

You will be expected to name certain people to assist at the wedding liturgy:

- precisely two witnesses to the marriage (best man and maid/matron of honor);
- one, two, or three readers;
- one, two, or more gift bearers (if desired, and if the Eucharist is to be celebrated); and
- ushers, bridesmaids, or other attendants (as desired by the couple).

5.5 Music

Music is an integral element of Catholic worship. At a wedding, pieces of music may include a prelude, processional hymn or instrumental, responsorial psalm, gospel and eucharistic acclamations, presentation hymn, communion hymn, Marian hymn, recessional, and postlude. All music selected must be prayerful and worshipful; furthermore, it is expected that all music between the procession and recession should be written for the purpose of Christian worship. Secular or popular music, even that which expresses aspects of love or commitment, should be considered for the reception instead of the wedding ceremony.

As a rule, the organist for the wedding ceremony must be from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish. Permission may be granted for an outside organist (i.e. a family member or close friend) to play for the wedding at the discretion of the *Director of Music*, provided that the organist is competent and familiar with Catholic liturgy. Please contact a Parish organist at least three months in advance of your wedding in order to schedule a consultation to plan the music. The stipend for a Parish organist is \$150, including one consultation. For options within the Parish, contact Nicholas Will, *Director of Music*: 412-276-1011 x 219 or music@seascarnegie.org.

If you choose not to employ an organist for your wedding, the *Director of Music* should be notified to ensure proper planning and coordination. All outside ensembles and choirs must be approved by the *Director of Music*.

A cantor (singer) or other instrumentalist can add great beauty and solemnity to the wedding ceremony. Your organist will be happy to contract qualified, experienced musicians from within the Parish and community. The stipend for a cantor is \$100. Stipends for other instrumentalists vary. Permission may be granted for an outside singer or instrumentalist (i.e. a family member or friend) to take part at the discretion of the organist and *Director of Music*. It is important that

any outside cantor who sings for the wedding is comfortable and familiar with Catholic liturgical practice. Any necessary rehearsals with outside musicians, including the wedding rehearsal itself, will incur an additional \$25 fee per occasion. The organist normally does not attend the wedding rehearsal.

Couples are encouraged to pay musicians' fees in advance in order to avoid confusion on the wedding day. Fees can be dropped off at the Parish Office and will be distributed by the *Director of Music*. Otherwise, couples are responsible for paying musicians' fees directly to the musicians.

5.6 Photography and Videography

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish wants worshipers to be able to prepare themselves prayerfully for any worship service. Consequently, no photographing or videotaping may be done in the church for thirty minutes prior to the wedding. (Outdoor photographs, however, pose no problem.)

During the wedding ceremony, flash photos may be taken during the processional, during the exchange of vows and rings, and during the lighting of the unity candle (if any). Non-flash photography and videography is permitted through the entire ceremony, provided that the photographers and videographers do not distract the worshippers or obstruct their view. Photographers and videographers may not enter the sanctuary during the ceremony.

After the ceremony, posed pictures or tapes may be taken in or outside the church building, for up to one hour before the next scheduled event at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish. People, equipment, and vehicles on parish property must be withdrawn before the expiration of this period.

5.7 Liturgical Environment

Couples are encouraged to augment the sanctuary with flowers; they may also make use of a cross and a unity candle. Couples who wish to use a unity candle are asked to present this candle at the rehearsal, so that the sacristan may place it in the sanctuary for the wedding liturgy. Other forms of decoration—such as candelabras, aisle candles, bows, wreaths, etc.—are discouraged; couples desiring to add these or other decorations to the aisles may use only masking tape or rubber bands (and no wire or other adhesives) on the pews.

The center aisle is 75" wide and 94' long. It is recommended that crosses, if used, be at least 95' long.

Though it is not required, most couples wish to separate the bride and groom prior to the ceremony. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish does not have a dedicated bride's preparation room, but one of the meeting rooms on Third Avenue is available for this purpose. Take care that

windows make these rooms partially visible from the street; you may need to draw the blinds. The bridal party should take care to leave the room in good condition, as the wedding fees do not provide for custodial services in that space. Meanwhile, the groom and best man may wait in the altar servers' sacristy. Your wedding coordinators will instruct you at the rehearsal how to wait and move so that bride and groom do not encounter each other until the ceremony begins.

Flowers may be used throughout the church building; however, those flowers placed in the sanctuary are of special significance. These flowers, usually placed near the altar, are understood as a sacrificial offering from the couple to God, symbolic of their offering of their own lives to God through each other. As with other sacrifices, flowers so offered are thereafter consecrated to this purpose, and may not be withdrawn for any secular purpose (such as use in the home or at a wedding reception). Flowers are optional, but couples who place flowers in the sanctuary are asked to leave these for the use of the parish.

Because flowers in the sanctuary are prominent, they may greatly contribute to or detract from the quality of the sanctuary as a liturgical environment. In order to help couples and florists determine suitable placements and arrangements, a number of floral suggestions are identified below. Most couples simply opt for arrangement #1, but any or all of the following may be placed in the sanctuary:

Arrangement #1: Two fan-shaped arrangements on the floor before the ends of the altar
The altar must remain accessible from all sides, but the curvature of the altar front makes it possible to place a modest, fan-shaped arrangement in front of each end. To allow movement around the altar, these should be no broader than 24" wide. Together with their containers, they should be less than 36" high, in order to avoid obscuring the mensa of the altar. These arrangements will be behind the couple and priest during their vows, and will be partially obscured by kneelers, if any are used.

Arrangement #2: One piece at the side of the sanctuary
This piece is especially appropriate for couples wishing to have an arrangement commemorating one or more deceased persons; couples so dedicating the flowers may wish to indicate this in their programs. The piece will stand on a 12" middle step into the sanctuary, against the back wall, on the tower side of the sanctuary. It may be placed on a pillar for increased visibility. It should be no more than 36" wide.

Arrangement #4: One arrangement before the ambo
This piece will stand on a 9" sanctuary step, before the ambo, in a naturally visible position. In order not to dominate the ambo, it should be no more than 30" wide and 30" high.

6 Ritual Components

Accompanying this booklet you should have received a paper entitled, “Marriage: Liturgical Information,” on which you are presented with a variety of decisions to be made in preparation for your wedding ceremony. The material below explains these choices and, where necessary, lists the available alternatives. Please note that the order of presentation corresponds to weddings celebrated during Mass; for the order outside of Mass, see the section above entitled, “the Structure of the Rite.”

6.1 Procession

The procession of the wedding party into the church is often a colorful affair, and serves as an opportunity to highlight the roles of those who have been close to the bride and groom. The two most common options are noted below; couples should consult their clergyman if they are interested in other processional patterns.

Couples, especially those making use of a unity candle, sometimes wish to have mothers and sometimes others formally escorted down the aisle by their husbands or by groomsmen. If this is to take place, it happens *before* the beginning of the wedding, so that the main procession can take place at the scheduled time. The wedding coordinators will give instructions to the groomsmen and mothers (and others, if appropriate) about how to do this.

Processional Option #1: Roman Procession

The Catholic Church recommends the following, in order:

1. Ministers and priest
2. Relatives and friends of the groom and bride (in addition to those below)
3. Ushers and bridesmaids, if any are so designated
4. Parents of the groom and bride
5. Precisely two witnesses (best man and maid/matron of honor)
6. Groom and bride

This processional pattern calls attention to the support the bride and groom have received from family and friends, especially by allowing all four parents to join in the procession. Insofar as the bride and groom proceed together, the Roman procession also highlights the joint decision of bride and groom to ask God’s blessing on their marriage.

Processional Option #2: English Procession

Many couples prefer to highlight the role of the bride’s father, and the transfer of the bride’s obedience and devotion from her father to her husband. In the English procession, the groom’s family and attendants are already in the church prior to the procession, and they greet the bride’s attendants as they come down the aisle. The father of the bride escorts her into the church, and then hands her over to the groom, highlighting how the father “gives away” the bride to her new husband.

6.2 Posture of the Bride and Groom

During the rite of marriage, couples always stand. If the Eucharist will be celebrated, they kneel and stand through the liturgy of the Eucharist as does the rest of the congregation. (Exceptions may be made for those with disabilities.) However, this leaves open the question of what happens during the readings and homily.

Posture Option #1: Kneeling

After the procession and opening rites, the bride and groom may kneel through the first reading, psalm, and second reading. They then stand for the gospel, and kneel again for the homily. This posture looks prayerful and easily accommodates a train of any length. However, it is awkward for those who are unaccustomed to kneeling for extended periods.

Posture Option #2: Standing

After the procession and opening rites, the bride and groom remain standing throughout the readings and homily. This posture accommodates a train of any length and avoids the discomfort associated with bad knees. However, it can be very difficult to stand still for over half an hour (counting the readings, homily, and marriage rite).

Posture Option #3: Sitting

After the procession and opening rites, the bride and groom sit on chairs provided for them before the ambo. The witnesses (best man and maid of honor) sit behind them. This posture is most comfortable and affords the easiest attention to the readings and the homily. It can also make the bride and groom more visible to much of the assembly, and facilitates photography. However, it can be awkward to negotiate the chairs with a long train. In such circumstances, the services of the maid/matron of honor may often be required to help move and arrange the train.

6.3 Readings

The Roman Ritual provides for selection among a variety of biblical readings for a wedding. The first is from the Old Testament, and the second from the New Testament epistles or the Book of Revelation. Between the two, a responsorial psalm is sung or recited. The readings always conclude with a selection from one of the Gospels. Couples who so choose may omit either the Old Testament or epistle. In such a case, the remaining of these two is read first, followed by the psalm and the Gospel.

6.3.1 First Reading

The first reading is from the Old Testament, the “Bible” of the Jewish people. You may choose from any of the following “B” readings.

***B1 Male and female he created them.
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.

***B2 The two of them become one body.
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.

B3 *In his love for Rebekah, Isaac found solace after the death of his mother.
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 that 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.

***B4 May the Lord of heaven prosper you both. May he grant you mercy and peace.
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 to 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 the 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.

***B5 Allow us to live together to a happy old age.
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.”

***B6 The woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
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.

B7 *Stern as death is love.*
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.”

B8 *Like the sun rising in the Lord’s heavens,*
the beauty of a virtuous wife is the radiance of her home.
Sirach 26:1-4, 13-16

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.

B9 *I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.
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.

6.3.2 Responsorial Psalm

The responsorial psalm is a response of the assembly to the reading which has just been proclaimed. Couples should choose a psalm which helps expound what they have selected in the first reading. Any of the following "C" readings may be chosen. Because the responsorial psalm is usually sung, couples should consult the musician(s) before making their choice. The musicians for the wedding will provide important advice, and make couples aware of the available musical settings for each psalm.

C1 Psalm 33:12, 18, 20-21, 22

R: The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Blessed the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people he has chosen for his own inheritance.
But see, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness.

Our soul waits for the Lord,
who is our help and our shield,
For in him our hearts rejoice;
in his holy name we trust.

May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.

C2 Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R: I will bless the Lord at all times.

I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall be ever in my mouth.
Let my soul glory in the Lord;
the lowly will hear me and be glad.

Glorify the Lord with me,
let us together extol his name.
I sought the Lord, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.

Look to him that you may be radiant with joy,
and your faces may not blush with shame.
When the poor one called out, the Lord heard,
and from all his distress he saved him.

The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
Taste and see how good the Lord is;
blessed the man who takes refuge in him.

C3 Psalm 103:1-2, 8 and 13, 17-18a

R: The Lord is kind and merciful.

Bless the Lord, O my soul;
and all my being, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits.

Merciful and gracious is the Lord,
slow to anger and abounding in kindness.
As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

But the kindness of the Lord is from eternity
to eternity toward those who fear him,
And his justice towards children's children
among those who keep his covenant.

C4 Psalm 112:1bc-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7b-8, 9

R: Blessed the man who greatly delights in the Lord's commands.

Blessed the man who fears the Lord,
who greatly delights in his commands.
His posterity shall be mighty upon the earth;
the upright generation shall be blessed.

Wealth and riches shall be in his house;
his generosity shall endure forever.
Light shines through the darkness for the upright;
he is gracious and merciful and just.

Well for the man who is gracious and lends,
who conducts his affairs with justice;
He shall never be moved;
the just one shall be in everlasting remembrance.
An evil report he shall not fear.

His heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.
His heart is steadfast; he shall not fear
till he looks down upon his foes.

Lavishly he gives to the poor;
his generosity shall endure forever;
his horn shall be exalted in glory.

C5 Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

R: Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Blessed are you who fear the Lord,
who walk in his ways!
For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork;
blessed shall you be, and favored.

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
in the recesses of your home;
Your children like olive plants
around your table.

Behold, thus is the man blessed
who fears the Lord.
The Lord bless you from Zion:
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.

C6 *Psalm 145:8-9, 10 and 15, 17-18*
R: The Lord is compassionate toward all his works.

The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.
The Lord is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

Let all your works give you thanks, O Lord,
and let your faithful ones bless you.
The eyes of all look hopefully to you
and you give them their food in due season.

The Lord is just in all his ways
and holy in all his works.
The Lord is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.

C7 *Psalm 148:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-13a, 13c-14a*
R: Let all praise the name of the Lord.

Praise the Lord from the heavens,
praise him in the heights;
Praise him, all you his angels,
praise him, all you his hosts.

Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.
Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.

You mountains and all you hills,
you fruit trees and all you cedars;
You wild beasts and all tame animals,
you creeping things and winged fowl.

Let the kings of the earth and all peoples,
the princes and all the judges of the earth,
Young men too, and maidens,
old men and boys,
Praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted.

His majesty is above earth and heaven,
and he has lifted his horn above the people.

6.3.3 Second Reading

The second reading is from one of the secondary books of the New Testament—writings originally prepared by the first Christian leaders for early Christian communities. Couples should choose any of the “D” readings below.

***D1 What will separate us from the love of Christ?
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,
how 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.

**D2 *Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.
Romans 12:1-12, 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.

**D3 *Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you.
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.

D4 Your body is a temple of the Spirit.
1st 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 one 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.

D5 If I do not have love, I gain nothing.
1st 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,
hopes all things, endures all things.
Love never fails.

***D6 This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.
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.

***D7 The God of peace will be with you.
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.

***D8 And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection.
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.

***D9 Let marriage be held in honor by all.
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.

D10 Be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another.
1st 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 disposition,
 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.

D11 Love in deed and in truth
1st 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.

D12 God is love.

1st 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.

D13 Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

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.”

6.3.4 Gospel Reading

The gospel reading is from one of the four New Testament accounts of Jesus’ life and words. Couples should choose one of the following “F” readings.

***F1 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.
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 you falsely because of me.
Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward will be great in heaven.”

F2 *You are the light of the world.*
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.”

F3 *A wise man built his house on rock.*
Mathew 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.

F4 *What God has united, man must not separate.*
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.”

F5 ***This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it.***
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.”

F6 ***They are no longer two, but one flesh.***
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.”

F7 ***Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee.***
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.

***F8 Remain in my love.
 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.”

***F9 This is my commandment: love one another.
 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.”

***F10 That they may be brought to perfection as one.
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.”

6.4 Consent

In the Roman Catholic understanding of Christian marriage, the exchange of consent (often called “exchange of vows”) between man and woman is the decisive feature of a marriage. You may choose one from the two sets of “H” vows below.

H1

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.

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.

H2

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.

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.

6.5 Blessing of Rings

The exchange of rings, although not necessary, is encouraged as an apt sign of the permanent, public bond now established between husband and wife. You may choose from the “I” blessing formulas below.

I1

May the Lord bless ✠ these rings
which you give to each other
as the sign of your love and fidelity.

I2

Lord, bless these rings which we bless ✠ in your name.
Grant that those who wear them
may always have a deep faith in each other.
May they do your will
and always live together
in peace, good will, and love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

I3

Lord, bless ✠ and consecrate N. and N.
in their love for each other.
May these rings be a symbol
of true faith in each other,
and always remind them of their love.
Through Christ our Lord.

6.6 Unity Candle

In the *Rite of Marriage of The Roman Ritual*, there is no provision for a unity candle. However, such a candle is not forbidden. In the Catholic liturgical tradition, candles normally signify the light of Christ and his gospel, or they are burned on or near the altar as a sign of the gifts we offer to God. Couples interested in a unity candle are encouraged to consider the meaning they attribute to the candle and to consult the priest or deacon who will officiate at their wedding.

The use of a unity candle usually entails having the mothers of the bride and groom light ancillary candles prior to the beginning of the wedding. Later in the ceremony, after they have exchanged consent, the bride and groom light the central candle from the ancillary candles. Your wedding coordinators will instruct you at the rehearsal.

6.7 Prayers of the Faithful

The prayers of the faithful, or general intercessions, are meant to express the concerns of the whole assembly. You may choose from the “J” selections below, or you may consult your officiating priest or deacon about writing your own prayers of the faithful.

JI

The priest introduces the intercessions:

We now entrust ourselves and our concerns to God in prayer.

The commentator announces the intercessions: The response is, “Lord, hear us.”

For Pope *N.*, and all the bishops and clergy everywhere, that they may lead us to a deeper faith in God and a stronger love for others, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear us.]

For our President and all leaders of government, that they may promote peace and prosperity, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear us.]

For married persons, especially *N.* and *N.*, now beginning their life together, that they may have divine assistance at every moment, the constant support of friends, [the rich blessing of children,] a warm love reaching out to others and good health until a ripe old age, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear us.]

For those who are sick, lonely, discouraged, or oppressed, that they may be strengthened by God’s help and promise, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear us.]

For those who have died, especially the relatives and friends of *N.* and *N.* and of all present for this wedding, that they may enjoy perfect happiness and total fulfillment in eternal life, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear us.]

For these personal needs which we mention now in silence...[*pause*]..., let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear us.]

The priest concludes the intercession:

O God, our Father in heaven, your Son taught us to ask, to seek, and to knock. We have therefore presented our petitions to you, confident that you will now look upon our many needs, consider our trusting faith, and in your great love grant these requests through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The assembly responds: Amen.

J2

The priest introduces the intercessions:

We have listened to the word of God. Let us now ask God to listen to us, to bless our words of prayer which we offer for the people of the world.

The commentator announces the intercessions:

The response is, "Lord, hear our prayer."

For leaders of Church and State, for heads of institutions, for heads of homes and households, that they will lead us and guide us in thanksgiving to God and in right living, in the search for peace and joy, and in shared life and love, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear our prayer.]

For all married people: for those married yesterday, for the new couple, *N.* and *N.*, married today, and for those who will marry tomorrow, that they may savor the joy of being together, warm love, [children,] a long life, friends, and a new day, every day, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear our prayer.]

For all young and single people who look forward to a vocation full of life and full of love, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear our prayer.]

For the lonely, the hungry, and the poor; for the sick in body, mind and spirit; for the weak, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear our prayer.]

For our relatives and friends who walk with us on life's journey, and especially for our loved ones who have died, that God may bring to fulfillment all his promises to them, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, hear our prayer.]

The priest concludes the intercessions:

Lord God, beloved of mankind, but who has first loved us, we pray that all these things may be accomplished sweetly and gently for the happiness of all, through Christ our Lord.

The assembly responds: Amen.

J3

The priest introduces the intercessions:

God has given us his promises in the word of Scripture. *N.* and *N.* have given their promises to each other in marriage. This hour of promise is also a time of prayer to God the Father, who remembers all promises.

The commentator announces the intercessions:

The response is, "Lord, have mercy."

For our Church, that she might keep the promise of salvation, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, have mercy.]

For our world, that it might keep the promise of peace, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, have mercy.]

For our country, that it might keep the promise of freedom, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, have mercy.]

For our parish, that it might keep the promise of discipleship, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, have mercy.]

For us, that we might keep the promise of loving and growing, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, have mercy.]

For this couple, that they might keep the promise of marriage, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, have mercy.]

For all souls, that the promise of the resurrection might be fulfilled in them, let us pray to the Lord. [Lord, have mercy.]

The priest concludes the intercessions:

Father, you have chosen us and given us your love, the power of the Holy Spirit in our midst. Hear our prayers today and keep us open to you. May our prayers issue forth in action, our love show itself in deeds, and our hope give us courage. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

The assembly responds: Amen.

6.8 Presentation of Gifts

The bread and wine which are consecrated at a celebration of the Eucharist are symbolic of the offerings of the assembly. Especially at a wedding, they may also represent the offering the bride and groom make to God through each other. For this reason, the bride and groom may wish to designate two family members or friends to process forward to the altar, bearing the bread and wine to the priest at the appropriate time.

6.9 Presidential Texts

The wedding liturgy includes several solemn prayers pronounced solely by the priest, playing the presiding role of Christ as the head of the Church—hence, “presidential” texts. These appear at various times during the liturgy, but during a wedding ritual one of the most important is the nuptial blessing.

The nuptial blessing is closely associated with the sacramental grace associated with a marriage between two Christians. (It may be omitted when one of the spouses is not Christian.) Here the priest or deacon, representing Jesus Christ, prays for the bestowal of God’s blessing on the couple and on their love and marriage.

Because these presidential texts come in sets, couples are encouraged to examine the especially the nuptial blessings and choose a set accordingly. Mark your Liturgical Information form with one of the “M” sets below.

	M1: Mass 1	M2: Mass 2	M3: Mass 3
Opening Collect	Be attentive to our prayers, O Lord, and in your kindness uphold what you have established for the increase of the human race, so that the union you have created may be kept safe by your assistance. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ....	Be attentive to our prayers, O Lord, and in your kindness pour out your grace on these your servants [<i>N. and N.</i>], that, coming together before your altar, they may be confirmed in love for one another. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ....	Grant, we pray, almighty God, that these your servants, now to be joined by the Sacrament of Matrimony, may grow in the faith they profess and enrich your Church with faithful offspring. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ....
Prayer over the Offerings	Receive, we pray, O Lord, the offering made on the occasion of this sealing of the sacred bond of Marriage, and, just as your goodness is its origin, may your providence guide its course. Through Christ our Lord.	Receive in your kindness, Lord, the offerings we bring in gladness before you, and in your fatherly love watch over those you have joined in a sacramental covenant. Through Christ our Lord.	Show favor to our supplications, O Lord, and receive with a kindly countenance the oblations we offer for these your servants, joined now in a holy covenant, that through these mysteries they may be strengthened in love for one another and for you. Through Christ our Lord.

	M1: Mass 1	M2: Mass 2	M3: Mass 3
Preface	It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For you have forged the covenant of marriage as a sweet yoke of harmony and an unbreakable bond of peace, so that the chaste and fruitful love of holy Matrimony may serve to increase the children you adopt as your own. By your providence and grace, O Lord, you accomplished the wonder of this twofold design: that, while the birth of children brings beauty to the world, their rebirth in baptism gives increase to the Church, through Christ our Lord. Through him, with the Angels and all the Saints, we sing the hymn of your praise, as without end we acclaim....	It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For in him you have made a new covenant with your people, so that, as you have redeemed man and woman by the mystery of Christ's Death and Resurrection, so in Christ you might make them partakers of divine nature and joint heirs with him of heavenly glory. In the union of husband and wife you give a sign of Christ's loving gift of grace, so that the Sacrament we celebrate might draw us back more deeply into the wondrous design of your love. And so, with the Angels and all the Saints, we praise you and without end we acclaim....	It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For you willed that the human race, created by the gift of your goodness, should be raised to such high dignity that in the union of husband and wife you might bestow a true image of your love. For those you created out of charity you call to the law of charity without ceasing and grant them a share in your eternal charity. And so, the Sacrament of holy Matrimony, as the abiding sign of your own love, consecrates the love of man and woman, through Christ our Lord. Through him, with the Angels and all the Saints, we sing the hymn of your praise, as without end we acclaim....
Nuptial Blessing	O God, who by your mighty power created all things out of nothing, and, when you had set in place the beginnings of the universe, formed man and woman in your own image, making the woman an inseparable helpmate to the man, that they might no longer be two, but one flesh, and taught that what you were pleased to make one must never be divided; O God, who consecrated the bond of Marriage by so great a mystery that in the wedding covenant you foreshadowed the Sacrament of Christ and his Church; O God, by whom woman is joined to man and the companionship they had in the beginning is endowed with the one blessing not forfeited by original sin nor washed away by the flood: Look now with favor on these your servants, joined together in Marriage, who ask to be strengthened by your blessing.	Holy Father, who formed man in your own image, male and female you created them, so that as husband and wife, united in body and heart, they might fulfill their calling in this world; O God, who, to reveal the great design you formed in your love, willed that the love of spouses for each other should foreshadow the covenant you graciously made with your people, so that, by fulfillment of the sacramental sign, the mystical marriage of Christ with his Church might become manifest in the union of husband and wife among your faithful; Graciously stretch out your right hand over these your servants [<i>N.</i> and <i>N.</i>], we pray, and pour into their hearts the power of the Holy Spirit. Grant, O Lord, that, as they enter upon this sacramental union, they may share with one another the gifts of your love and, by	Holy Father, maker of the whole world, who created man and woman in your own image and willed that their union be crowned with your blessing, we humbly beseech you for these your servants, who are joined today in the Sacrament of Matrimony. May your abundant blessing, Lord, come down upon this bride, <i>N.</i> , and upon <i>N.</i> , her companion for life, and may the power of your Holy Spirit set their hearts aflame from on high, so that, living out together the gift of Matrimony, they may [adorn their family with children and] enrich the Church. In happiness may they praise you, O Lord, in sorrow may they seek you out; may they have the joy of your presence to assist them in their toil, and know that you are near to comfort them in their need; let them pray to you in the holy assembly and bear witness to you in the world,

	<p>Send down on them the grace of the Holy Spirit and pour your love into their hearts, that they may remain faithful in the Marriage covenant. May the grace of love and peace abide in your daughter <i>N.</i>, and let her always follow the example of those holy women whose praises are sung in the Scriptures. May her husband entrust his heart to her, so that, acknowledging her as his equal and his joint heir to the life of grace, he may show her due honor and cherish her always with the love that Christ has for his Church. And now, Lord, we implore you: may these your servants hold fast to the faith and keep your commandments; made one in the flesh, may they be blameless in all they do; and with the strength that comes from the Gospel, may they bear true witness to Christ before all; [may they be blessed with children, and prove themselves virtuous parents, who live to see their children's children]. And grant that, reaching at last together the fullness of years for which they hope, they may come to the life of the blessed in the Kingdom of Heaven. Through Christ our Lord.</p>	<p>being for each other a sign of your presence, become one heart and one mind. May they also sustain, O Lord, by their deeds the home they are forming [and prepare their children to become members of your heavenly household by raising them in the way of the Gospel]. Graciously crown with your blessings your daughter <i>N.</i>, so that, by being a good wife [and mother], she may bring warmth to her home with a love that is pure and adorn it with welcoming graciousness. Bestow a heavenly blessing also, O Lord, on <i>N.</i>, your servant, that he may be a worthy, good, and faithful husband [and a provident father]. Grant, holy Father, that, desiring to approach your table as a couple joined in Marriage to your presence, they may one day have the joy of taking part in your great banquet in heaven. Through Christ our Lord.</p>	<p>and after a happy old age, together with the circle of friends that surrounds them, may they come to the Kingdom of Heaven. Through Christ our Lord.</p>
<p>Prayer after Communion</p>	<p>By the power of this sacrifice, O Lord, accompany with your loving favor what in your providence you have instituted, so as to make of one heart in love those you have already joined in this holy union [and replenished with the one Bread and the one Chalice]. Through Christ our Lord.</p>	<p>Having been made partakers at your table, we pray, O Lord, that those who are united by the Sacrament of Marriage may always hold fast to you and proclaim your name to the world. Through Christ Our Lord.</p>	<p>Grant, we pray, almighty God, that the power of the Sacrament we have received may find growth in these your servants and that the effects of the sacrifice we have offered may be felt by us all. Through Christ our Lord.</p>

6.10 Sign of Peace

After the nuptial blessing comes the sign of Christ's peace, exchanged among ministers and members of the assembly. It may be a brief kiss, a handshake, or some other appropriate sign, offered to those who happen to be in one's immediate vicinity. If there is to be a formal kiss between the newly married before the end of the liturgy, this is an appropriate time.

At a wedding, couples have the option of an "extended" sign of peace, affording them the opportunity of a more methodical greeting of each of the bridesmaids, groomsmen, and possibly also the parents or grandparents. If the bride and groom wish to present flowers to mothers or grandmothers, this again is the most appropriate time.

6.11 Marian Devotion

Some brides may have a special devotion to Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus. It is not uncommon for the bride to present flowers to the image of Mary after communion, offering a brief prayer as she does so. This is the appropriate time for any Marian hymn, if desired.

6.12 Other Rituals

Other post-ceremony rituals, involving rice, bird seed, confetti, balloons, flower petals, et cetera, are not permitted, because there is rarely sufficient time for wedding parties or church personnel to clean up afterwards. The blowing of soap bubbles, however, is permitted on the external steps of the church. Those who seek to continue or establish other traditions are encouraged to reserve these for the wedding reception.