



WEDDING LITURGIES



1. INTRODUCTION:

Definition of the Sacrament according to the CCC

“The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole life, is by its nature ordered towards the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.”

Scripture begins with the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26 -27) and concludes with the wedding feast of the lamb (Rev.19: 7, 9).

Since it is a Sacrament, we celebrate it during the Eucharist which is the memorial of the Death and the Resurrection of Jesus, The D/R is what is celebrated in every liturgy and is what is at the heart of Christian Marriage.

1.1 Marriage in the Lord

In the Old Testament God’s covenant with Israel is the image of exclusive and faithful married love. This prepares the way for the new and everlasting covenant in which the Son of God, by becoming incarnate and giving his life, has united to himself in a certain way all humankind saved by him, thus preparing for the wedding feast of the lamb. Symbolically, Jesus performs his first miracle at a wedding feast in Cana. The Church attaches great importance to Jesus’ presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ’s presence.

1.2 Marriage in CHRIST therefore is

- a sharing in the love between Christ and his Church
- a covenant of fidelity
- a permanent bond leading to continuation and nurturing of human life

1.3 The Bond of Marriage is

- something holy, sacred
- symbol of Christ's love for his church
- a reflection of God's divine love

1.4 The Sacrament of Marriage is

- a great mystery that refers to Christ and his church
- The church is the Lord's beloved bride – through him offers worship to the Father

1.5 A Sacramental Marriage

- between two Catholics
- normally celebrated during Mass

1.6 An inter-faith Marriage

- a valid marriage
- but non-sacramental
- celebrated outside Mass

2. The Ceremony unfolds as follows:

- Introductory Rites
- Liturgy of the Word
- Rite of Marriage
- (Creed); Prayer of the Faithful
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
- Concluding Rites

2.1 The Introductory Rites

- Gathering the community of worshippers
- The Entrance Procession and Hymn
- Greeting and Introduction
- Penitential Rite
- Gloria (if prescribed)
- Opening Prayer

2.2 Liturgy of the Word:

- First Reading
- Psalm Response

- Second Reading (if prescribed)
- Acclamation
- Gospel
- Homily

2.3 The Rite of Marriage

- Statement of Intentions & Consent
- Marriage Vows
- Blessing and Exchange of Rings

2.4 Creed {if prescribed}

2.5 Prayer of the Faithful

2.6 The Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Presentation of Gifts (Offertory)
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Communion Rite
Our Father; Nuptial Blessing; Peace; Breaking of Bread (Lamb of God); Holy Communion

2.7 The Concluding Rite:

- Blessing
- Dismissal
- Signing the Register

3. Guidelines:

3.1 Preliminaries

- Paperwork, Marriage Preparation Course
- Place
- Celebrant

3.2 Liturgical Guidelines:

3.2.1. Entrance Procession

- A) Celebrant receives couple at the door
- B) Groom and Bride enter separately escorted by their parents
- C) Combination of A and B

- The congregation should be present in their places before the procession begins
- The entrance hymn is sung during the procession to the altar
- Greeting and Introduction done by the Celebrant

3.2.2. Choice of Readings

- On Solemnities {Major Feasts}
- Special Seasons - Advent, Lent, Easter
- Within a Scheduled Sunday Mass
- On Sunday, outside a scheduled Mass
- On a Weekday
- It is not appropriate for the couple themselves to do the readings at Mass
- The lector should effectively proclaim the Word of God (prior training)

3.2.3. The Psalm Response

- should be a **psalm** from the Lectionary
 - usually sung by the choir / cantor with the congregation joining in the response
 - if not sung, it should be recited by someone other than the lector
- Please Note:** The role of lector and cantor may only be performed by someone who professes the Catholic faith. Persons should not be selected just because they are relatives or have to be honoured with a role

3.2.4. The Rite of Marriage

- The two designated witnesses should come forward
- The celebrant is the Church's official witness
- The words of the rite form the essence of the sacrament and may not be changed or paraphrased. The couples should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the words & memorise them, if possible

3.2.5. The Prayer of the Faithful

- The intercessions and response should be brief and follow a standard pattern
- The intentions should include petitions for:
 - the Universal Church
 - the world/ nation
 - the couple
 - other local needs
- The Prayer of the Faithful should not be combined with the Offertory Procession

3.2.6. The Preparation & Presentation of Gifts (formerly called Offertory)

- The so called "offertory procession" is not always necessary
- If gifts are presented, they should be:
 - what is required for the celebration
 - for the needs of the church

- for the poor
- not retrievable token items / symbols
- The Presentation of Gifts is not to be accompanied by a commentary
- A hymn may be sung as the gifts are brought forward

3.2.7. The Choice of Hymns/Role of the Choir

- Hymns should be chosen from a Liturgical Hymnal such as *Celebration* or *With Joyful Lips*
- The choice of hymns should reflect the Church's understanding of the sacrament, i.e.:
 - not merely devotional
 - not sentimental
 - nor resembling popular love songs
- The role of the choir is to facilitate the people's participation
- If the nuptials take place during a scheduled mass, the hymns should be in keeping with the theme of the day/feast, and not merely the marriage theme

4. Other Considerations

4.1. Preparing a Booklet???

- A folder or booklet is not necessary, but can be a useful aid to participation
- It could contain an outline of order of celebration, with the texts of the hymns and responses used during the liturgy.
- The text of the Penitential Rite, Prayers, Readings, the Psalm verses and the intentions of the prayer of the faithful are not to be included.
- It is suggested that we desist from adding personal prayers and inserting our own additions.
- The rite of marriage is a rich symbol in itself and anything that distracts from this should be avoided

4.2. Floral arrangements

- should not impede the approach to the altar or restrict movement in the sanctuary or obscure one's view of the altar.

4.3. Photography & Videography

- Photographers and videographers should be instructed:
 - not to mar the sacredness of the celebration by roaming around the church and sanctuary during the ceremony
 - to use only available light for the photographs / video

4.4. Dress Code

- A sense of decorum, modesty and beauty are useful reference points in observing a proper dress code
- In particular, the bridal entourage is to be appropriately dressed
- Your wedding ceremony is not a fashion show, nor is it a ‘glamour event’.

5. Beautiful reflections from the late Pope John Paul II

He said that the marriage liturgy be valid, fruitful, simple and dignified:

“Marriage is a sacramental action of the church, and the liturgical celebration of marriage should involve the Christian community, with the full, active and responsible participation of all those present - the bride and groom, the priest, the witnesses, the relatives, the friends, the other members of the faithful - all of them members of an assembly that manifests and lives the mystery of Christ and His Church”

6. Useful Tip to those helping prepare liturgies (The 3 P’s)

PLAN

PREPARE

PRAY

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