



St. Raphael the Archangel Parish

Rite of Marriage Between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person

The rite for a Catholic marrying a catechumen (one who is preparing for baptism), a non-Christian, or someone who does not believe in God exemplifies sensitivity for the unbaptized person and his/her family. This third form has the same four basic elements as the first two forms of the rite: questions about intent, exchange of consent, the blessing and exchange of rings, and the nuptial blessing. With the exception that the nuptial blessing may be omitted, this rite preserves the same structure as the other two forms.

The Rite for Celebrating Marriage between a Catholic and an unbaptized person is set outside Mass within a Liturgy of the Word. The number of Scripture readings may be fewer than the usual three. As is obvious in the outline below, it offers multiple options so that the couple, with the assistance of the priest or deacon, can tailor it to their circumstances.

Entrance Rite

1. Gathering
2. Welcome of the bride and bridegroom (at the door of the church or at the altar)
3. Procession (many choices for the entrance song)
4. Welcome of the congregation and introduction of the Liturgy of the Word

Liturgy of the Word

1. Old Testament Scripture Reading (nine options)
2. Responsorial Psalm (seven options and many musical settings)
3. New Testament Scripture Reading (thirteen options)
4. Gospel Acclamation (choice of musical settings)

5. Gospel (ten options)
6. Homily (based on the Scriptures, Church teaching on marriage, and the couple's lives)

Rite of Marriage

1. Address to the couple
2. Questions regarding intentions
3. Consent (two choices of vows for the couple to speak to each another; a third alternative, when pastoral circumstances dictate, has the priest or deacon pose the vows as questions)
4. Reception of the consent (may be accompanied with a musical acclamation by the assembly)
5. Blessing and Exchange of Rings (three prayer options, may be omitted if circumstances require)
6. General Intercessions (three suggested forms available, personalization possible) with the Nuptial Blessing (may be omitted if circumstances require)

Concluding Rite

1. The Lord's Prayer (may be omitted or another prayer by the priest or deacon may be substituted if the Nuptial Blessing is omitted)
2. Blessing (a simple blessing or four options for a solemn blessing)
3. Dismissal (three options)
4. Recessional (many choices for music)

Given multiple options for various elements, a couple can make choices that reflect their aspirations for marriage and are most appropriate for their family and the local community. The wedding liturgy can be personally expressive while proclaiming the Catholic vision for their union.

To prepare well yet without undue stress over the choices, a future bride and groom can use the Rite for Celebrating Marriage options for prayers and Scriptures to help them develop shared prayer. Praying and reading Scripture aloud is effective for listening to the way each selection speaks to one's heart. A parish or diocesan wedding music workshop can aid the non-Christian party's understanding of the Catholic rite as well as help the couple choose music and instrumental accompaniment. Otherwise a parish liturgist can advise and even play for them some good possibilities for music. The Catholic party's parents might be a source of advice as to which family members and friends are qualified to proclaim Scripture.

A non-Catholic bride or groom and the person's family may not know that the bride and groom are the principal ministers of the Rite of Marriage. As such they are both expected to be in the entrance procession with the priest or deacon and other ministers of the liturgy. Bride and groom may walk together or their parents may escort each of them. Ordinarily their two witnesses (Maid of Honor and Best Man) precede them down the aisle, and bridesmaids and groomsmen may also join the entrance procession.

The third form of the Rite for Celebrating Marriage, between a Catholic and an unbaptized person, while not a Sacrament (an unbaptized person does not celebrate a sacrament) is a complete and valid rite, signifying a permanent bond, that offers the couple many options. When the couple makes choices that reflect their own prayerfulness, religious practice, and social responsibility, their individuality and hopes for marriage will shine out in their Scripture, prayer, and music selections. Their wedding will be the holy, hospitable, and happy celebration it is meant to be, reflective of the Church's vision for their marriage.