



St. Raphael the Archangel Parish

Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass

When a Catholic marries a Christian of another denomination, the Rite for Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass is used. Hospitality suggests that this form is the appropriate one when a significant number of guests are not Catholic and cannot join in Holy Communion. The couple might also talk with the priest or deacon about the participation of clergy from the non-Catholic party's church.

“Celebrating Marriage within a Liturgy of the Word” more accurately portrays this form of the rite. It is identical to the rite used for marriage within a Mass. It has the same four basic elements: questions about intent, exchange of consent, the blessing and exchange of rings, and the nuptial blessing. The emphasis is still on mutual consent and the nuptial blessing, showing that this marriage is a sacrament rooted in the couple's mutual vow of love and is blessed by God as an image of Christ's wedding with His Church.

The difference between this form of the rite and a marriage within Mass is only that it is not integrated with the Eucharist. Yet if this form is used for the marriage of two Catholics and is presided over by a deacon because a priest is not available for Mass, a Communion service may, under certain circumstances and in accord with the policy of the local diocese, be integrated during the concluding part of the rite.

The four key elements are central in the structure of this rite for celebrating marriage within a Liturgy of the Word. The outline below has options and other opportunities to make choices in parentheses.

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)
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)
6. General Intercessions (three suggested forms available, personalization possible) with the Nuptial Blessing (three options)

Concluding Rite

1. The Lord's Prayer
2. Communion Service (optional, under certain circumstances and in accord with the policy of the local diocese, if Mass cannot be celebrated and distribution of Communion by a deacon is desired)
3. Blessing (a simple blessing or four solemn blessing options)
4. Dismissal (three options)
5. Recessional (many choices for music)

A couple who reflects on the ritual elements and the Scripture readings, seeks advice from the priest or deacon, and consults with a liturgical musician can make sound choices from among the many offered. An engaged couple can prepare the wedding liturgy by making it part of the months of marriage preparation. Praying together with prayers from the Rite and reading the Scriptures aloud to each another will help them to decide which options are best for their wedding. If the parish or diocese does not offer a wedding liturgy workshop, the couple can ask a liturgical musician to

audition a variety of songs and recommend instruments to complement the organ and piano.

Parents might have good advice about which family members can best serve as lectors. A discussion with parents well before the rehearsal is important if they do not realize that the Rite of Marriage anticipates an entrance procession extended from the usual Sunday Mass entrance, which is composed of the ministers of the liturgy. Altar Servers and a Lector (carrying the Book of the Gospels, if no deacon is present) precede the priest or deacon. Since the bride and groom administer the sacrament to each another, they are both expected to be in the entrance procession, immediately following the priest or deacon. The couple may ask their parents to escort them, preceded by the two witnesses (Maid of Honor and Best Man). They may also invite bridesmaids and groomsmen to join the procession.

The couple's own prayerfulness, Christian practice, and social responsibility will naturally mirror their Scripture, prayer, and music selections. They can make certain their wedding is a prayerful, hospitable, and festive celebration that creatively reflects both their dream for marriage and the Church's vision for their covenant.