



St. Raphael the Archangel Parish

Rite of Marriage Within Mass

The Catholic Rite of Marriage centers around two key moments: The Exchange of Consent and the Nuptial Blessing. Marriage is rooted in the couple's mutual vows of faithful love and is blessed by God as an image of the marriage between Christ and the Church. The couple's declaration of reciprocal consent and the nuptial blessing reveal the sacramental nature of marriage as the spouses become symbols of Christ's selfless love.

In addition to Exchange of Consent and the Nuptial Blessing, the Rite of Marriage contains two other basic elements. Before exchanging vows the bride and groom are asked a series of questions, called the Statement of Intentions, to determine that each approaches marriage freely, intends a lifelong union, and is open to children and to rearing them in the Church. The fourth element is the Blessing and Exchange of Rings. The spouses will wear these blessed rings as a sign of their covenant with each another and with God.

When two Catholics marry, the rite is ordinarily integrated with the Eucharist (in the context of the Mass). The structure of this first form is outlined as follows, with options and other possibilities for choice in parentheses.

Entrance Rite

Gathering

1. Welcome of the bride and bridegroom (at the door of the church or at the altar)
2. Procession (many choices for the entrance song)
3. Greeting (three options)
4. Gloria (even on a Sunday during Advent and Lent; choice of musical settings)
5. Opening Prayer (four options)

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 and a third alternative, when pastoral circumstances dictate, having 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)
7. Profession of Faith (if Marriage is celebrated on a Sunday or Solemn Feast Day)

Liturgy of the Eucharist

1. Preparation of the gifts (may select two people to carry the bread and wine to the altar and choose from among three options for Prayer Over the Gifts)
2. Eucharistic Prayer (three options for Preface; several Eucharistic Prayer formulas; various sets of sung acclamations)
3. The Lord's Prayer
4. Nuptial Blessing (three options)
5. Sign of Peace
6. The Breaking of the Bread (musical settings as for the Eucharistic Prayer)
7. Communion (under forms of both consecrated bread and consecrated wine or under the form of consecrated bread alone; many choices for Communion processional song)
8. Prayer after Communion (three options)

Concluding Rite

1. Solemn Blessing (four options)
2. Dismissal (three options)
3. Recessional (many choices for music)

Notice that the marriage rite is central in the wedding liturgy. It takes place after the couple has listened to the Word of God proclaimed and preached. With their mutual consent, they become an image of Christ who gave his life for the Church. Then the couple and the assembly enter the Liturgy of the Eucharist, where Christ becomes present in the form bread and wine, blesses their covenant, and unites them in His body and blood. Mass makes obvious that the Eucharist is the source of and continuous nourishment for the marriage.

With thoughtful planning, assisted by a priest or deacon and a liturgical musician, a couple can choose among the many options to design a wedding liturgy that expresses the core meaning of marriage for them and the Catholic community. The prospective bride and groom might read the Scriptures aloud to each other and listen for those that speak most strongly to them. Prayer options can be tried out as part of their own shared prayer. A parish liturgist is usually happy to audition a variety of songs and recommend instruments in addition to the organ. Parents may be able to name those with skill and experience proclaiming Scripture, several who could gracefully carry the bread and wine to the altar, one or more commissioned Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and an altar server(s), unless the celebrant prefers a parish altar server or none at all. A wise couple asks their parents, siblings, and other relatives what Scriptures, prayers, and actions allowed in the rite best express the values and spirituality of the bride and groom to add insights but not to make choices.

It is a good idea for the couple to talk over their choices with their parents weeks or months before the rehearsal, particularly if parents are to be part of the entrance procession. In the Rite of Marriage, the entrance procession is an expanded form of the Sunday Mass entrance, which is always a procession 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. Bride and groom are the principal ministers of the Rite of Marriage and are both included in the wedding liturgy entrance procession. They follow the priest or deacon. The rite suggests that their parents and the two witnesses (Maid of Honor and Best Man) escort them to the altar. Bridesmaids and groomsmen may also accompany them.

The Rite for Celebrating Marriage is rich and deep. If a couple's choices reflect personal prayer, authentic Christian life, and their social spirituality, their wedding will be unique while still belonging to the Church.