

PREPARING
FOR THE
CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY



DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE
2016

required for the wedding liturgy to take place in a suitable place outside of the Catholic Church.

May the father of the bride accompany her down the aisle?

The OCM says, “The procession to the altar then takes place in the customary manner.” Among the rich variety of customary formed experiences at weddings in this country, the option of the procession with the cross, servers, presider, bridesmaids and groomsmen, the groom and bride [perhaps accompanied by their parents], would be commendable and should be encouraged.

When the bride and groom are accompanied by their parents, it provides a visual presentation of the Biblical view of both the bride and groom “leaving father and mother and clinging to one another” (Gen 2:24; Mt 19:5, Eph 5:31) as the two become one in the covenantal relationship of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Although there are many pastoral concerns that prevent one or both parents from accompanying their son or daughter down the aisle, this model offers a new perspective from the father accompanying his daughter as the one who “gives the bride away.”

May recorded music be used at the wedding liturgy?

The role of liturgical musicians is ministerial in nature and cannot be replaced by electronic music. Likewise, “recorded music lacks the authenticity provided by a living liturgical assembly gathered for the Sacred Liturgy, (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, no. 93)

Is a cantor required for the wedding liturgy?

The cantor serves an extremely important role in enabling all in the assembly to unite mind and heart in sung prayer and praise on this most special day. Many musical elements in the wedding liturgy are dialogical, between the cantor and the rest of the assembly. *Sing to the Lord* states that if a singer is not trained to be a psalmist or cantor, “another singer should be secured for this liturgically important role.” (*STTL*, no. 221)

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it permissible to use readings other than those in The Order of Celebrating Matrimony?

Whether celebrated within our without Mass, the readings must always be taken from Scripture. On those days when the Ritual Mass is celebrated, the Scripture readings are to be selected from the OCM.

The instruction for the readings note that at least one reading that “explicitly speaks of marriage” must be selected. What does that mean?

In the rite itself (no. 56), one set of readings is given. In Chapter 4 of OCM, all assigned readings are listed and those which explicitly speak of marriage are indicated with an asterisk. (*)

May a non-Catholic proclaim the readings?

Normally, “during a Eucharistic celebration in the Catholic Church” the readings are to be proclaimed by a Catholic (*Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, June 8, 1993, no. 133.) There is an allowance in this document that says that “on exceptional occasions and for a just cause, the Bishop of a diocese may permit a member of another church or ecclesial community to take on the task of reader.” But note that only the diocesan Bishop may allow this exception. If the Marriage takes place without Mass (Rite II or Rite III), a non-Catholic is permitted to serve as reader.

May couples write their own vows?

The OCM offers two forms of Consent (vows) and two methods of saying them. No other forms for the Consent are permitted,

Must the celebration of Matrimony take place in the church building?

Canon 1118.1 states, “A marriage between two Catholic or between a Catholic party and a non-Catholic baptized person is to be celebrated in the church. It can be celebrated in another church or oratory with the permission of the local Ordinary or Pastor.” The permission of the local Bishop is

Introduction

As Catholics, we believe that marriage is a sacrament and a celebration of the whole Church. God’s love is made manifest in the lives of husbands and wives. This belief is based on the words of St. Paul who reflects in his letter to the Ephesians, upon the words of Jesus:

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and the two shall become as one. They are no longer two but one flesh.” (Mark 10: 6-7)

The apostle exhorts married Christians to a strong mutual love. Holding with Genesis 2:24 that marriage is a divine institution, Paul sees Christian marriage as taking on a new meaning symbolic of the intimate relationship of love between Christ and the church. The wife should serve her husband in the same spirit as that of the church’s service to Christ (Eph 5:22, 24), and the husband should care for his wife with the devotion of Christ to the church (Eph 5:25–30). Paul gives to the Genesis passage its highest meaning in the light of the union of Christ and the church, of which Christlike loyalty and devotion in Christian marriage are a clear reflection (Eph 5:31–33).

Taking into account the symbolic nature of liturgy, Canon Law and the regulations of the Diocese of Syracuse, the following guidelines have been prepared for the convenience of the couple to help assist in the planning of the Wedding Ceremony.



Preliminary Preparations

1. Arrangements for your wedding must be made at least six months prior to your wedding date. This is a diocesan regulation. Before other preparations are made, the date and time for the wedding should be decided upon in consultation with the priest or deacon in order to reserve the church.
2. A couple may get married on most days of the Liturgical Year. Days that may not be chosen are Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, and Pentecost; Solemnities of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary and All Saints. If the Marriage is celebrated on a day having a penitential character, especially during Lent, the liturgical norms for the season must be followed (e.g., limited music, simple sanctuary adornment and no singing of the Alleluia.)
3. To be married in a particular parish church, one party should be a registered member of the parish. If neither Catholic party is registered, permission from the bride or groom's proper pastor must be obtained. Only for a good reason should a couple be married outside their own faith community.
4. If either party has been previously married, then a copy of the **Decree of Nullity** must be presented before any other preparations may begin. If their party must enter into the Annulment Process, it is diocesan policy that no wedding date may be set until an annulment has been granted. If a person has been previously married and their former spouse is deceased, a proof of death is required.
5. There are prescribed Marriage Preparations required of all couples:
 - ◆ The Marriage Investigation Form is a requirement for all couples who seek Catholic marriage. As canonical (legal) form, questions are asked to ascertain the freedom of the parties to marry and their understanding of the duties and obligations of marriage as taught by the church.

Optional Rites

The renewed **Order of Celebrating Matrimony** has included two optional rites that may be included as part of the wedding ceremony. These adaptations, important to Hispanic and Filipino cultures, have been approved for use in the dioceses of the United States in the Spanish edition since 2010.

The Blessing and Giving of the Arras

The Hispanic culture gives us the tradition of the wedding coins, *arras*. The word *arras* literally means “pledge”. After the blessing and exchange of rings, the priest or deacon blesses a set of gold coins, usually thirteen gilded or plated coins (one for each month and one for the poor) symbolizing prosperity. The groom gives them to his new wife as a pledge to care for her and the home they will build together. The bride receives them and commits herself to working with her new husband to see the gifts they have to care for all in need.

Blessing and Placing of the Lazo (lasso) or Veil.

The *lazo* and/or the veil is usually placed just before the Nuptial Blessing, since the Nuptial Blessing, symbolized by the veil, is the “protection” which the Church offers the newly married couple.

In Filipino families, the newlyweds “tie the knot”, so to speak, by wearing a lasso or cord, and veil. Before the Nuptial Blessing, sponsors—friends, godparents, or close family members who are married—pin a large veil over the shoulders of the couple who kneel side by side. Then they place a cord or lasso—sometimes shaped as a large rosary or a silk cord—on top of the veil, around the heads of the couple, tying them together. The meaning is quite clear: “what God has joined, let no one divide.”

assembly, mainly from within our outside this particular parish. The Pastoral Judgment takes into account all the facts that might make this assembly particularly unique.

Careful consideration of these three judgments leads to the conclusion that some songs, even those which have been widely performed at weddings, are suitable for a church celebration.

The Music Program for a wedding should include the following:

Preludes: Ten minutes of instrumental music and/or vocal selections before the procession.

Processional: An instrumental piece accompanying the procession into church followed by an Opening Hymn or the Opening Hymn may accompany the procession.

The Gloria must be included when celebrated within Mass.

Responsorial Psalm: sung between the Old and New Testament readings.

Gospel Acclamation: sung before the reading of the Gospel

Acclamation: a song or acclamation to be sung after the exchange of vows.

[Optional Hymn or Canticle of Praise] to be sung at the conclusion of the exchange of vows and giving of rings.

The Eucharistic Acclamations: The Holy, Holy, Holy; The Mystery of Faith and Amen at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer should be sung.

Communion Song: to accompany the Communion Procession

Recessional: to accompany the closing procession.



- ◆ If a couple is to be married outside the Diocese of Syracuse two Prenuptial Witness Forms must be completed for each of the parties.
 - ◆ It is a diocesan requirement for all couples to participate in a Pre-Cana Program. The diocese offers many options for couples to fulfill this requirement. You may register by going to the diocesan website: www.syracusediocese.org, click on the “Offices” tab and click on **Pre-Cana Marriage Preparation**. Individual parishes may have other requirements for the fulfillment of Pre-Cana Preparation.
6. **Sacramental Certificates:** A Baptismal Certificate is required for all Catholics. This document can be obtained by writing or call the parish church in which one was baptized. The certificate must be a new copy, issued within six month of the date of the Wedding.
 7. **Marriage License:** Any couple who wished to be married in New York state must apply for a Marriage License in person and together, in any town, village or city clerk’s office.
 - ◆ When applying for a Marriage License both parties must present documentary proof of age and identity, such as a birth certificate, a baptismal certificate for a valid driver’s license. If one of the parties was previously married, he or she must also present the Civil Divorce Decree or certification of the proof of death of the former spouse.
 - ◆ A Marriage License if valid for sixty (60) days from the time it is issued. Please remember that a 24 hour interval is required between the obtaining of the license and the time for the marriage ceremony.
 8. **Dispensations:** If one of the parties to be married is not Catholic, a dispensation is required. When a marriage of Mixed Religion is celebrated the Order of the Celebration of Matrimony without Mass is to be used. The following article may be helpful to explain this regulation.

Is A Wedding Always a Mass?

by Paul Covino

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Liturgical Training Publications,
1800 Hermitage Ave. Chicago, IL 60622-1101

Some Catholic weddings are celebrated within the context of Mass; others do not include the celebration of the Eucharist but occur in the context of the Liturgy of the Word—the same ritual that form the first part of the Mass. The *Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass* is normally used when two Catholics marry. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass* is generally used when a Catholic married a baptized person from another Christian church. The *Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian* is used when a Catholic marries someone who is not baptized, including a Catechumen—one seeking entrance into the Catholic communion.

In the first form, the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass*, the celebration of Matrimony takes place between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the second and third forms, *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass* and *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian*, the celebration of Matrimony is celebrated after a Liturgy of the Word. The celebration ends with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer and Nuptial Blessing. Each of these forms is equally valid and holy; a wedding is not any more or less complete because of the celebration of Mass.

In the recent past, when a Catholic married and Non-Catholic, the wedding was sometimes treated as a second-class celebration. It was often performed in the rectory instead of the church building or, if in the church, at a side altar instead of the main altar. Such distinctions are no longer necessary. Whenever a Catholic marries another baptized person, whether the person is Catholic or from another Christian church, the marriage is considered a sacrament. When a Catholic marries someone who is not baptized, the marriage is recognized and blessed by the Church, but is not by definition a sacrament because a sacramental marriage involves a covenant between two baptized persons. The different forms of celebration are an attempt to respect the consciences of all involved and to provide a celebration in which all in attendance can participate.

Option B: The bride and groom are greeted at the door of the church by the priest, the procession follows with the bridal party and the groom escorted by his parents followed by the bride escorted by her parents.

Option C: The procession proceeds into the church either with the groom preceding the bride or the groom and his parents preceding the bride and her parents and the priest greets them at the altar.

Music for the Procession: There are two options: The procession may enter the church to an instrumental processional. When all have arrived at their places, and Opening Hymn is sung **or** the Opening Hymn maybe sung as the procession enters the church.

The Choice of Wedding Music: A wedding is the celebration of one of the Church's sacraments where we pray for God's blessing and guidance for the couple who are celebrating this Sacrament. It is a time of prayer and praise to the God who calls men and women to live in communion together as mirrors of God's love for the world. As in any liturgical prayer, the music plays an important part in the worship and should be chosen with great care. The church provides a series of guidelines by which the suitability of music is determined. These guidelines are determined by a series of judgments:

The Musical Judgment asks whether or not this piece of music is technically, aesthetically and expressively good. While care must be exercised in order not to confuse the quality with style or personal preference, this judgment is exercised to eliminate music of generally poor quality.

The Liturgical Judgment asks whether the music, and especially the words, are appropriate for liturgical prayer. The words and music should enable the people to join the bride and groom in praising God as the Author of all love and asking His blessing on their union.

The Pastoral Judgment evaluates the music in terms of its ability to enable the people gathered for this specific occasion to express their faith. It considers such variables as whether or not the majority of the assembly is likely to be Catholic, people of a particular ethnicity, the size of the

Celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony

By the Sacrament of Matrimony Christian spouses signify and participate in the mystery of unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church; therefore, both in embracing the conjugal life and in accepting and educating their children, they help one another to become holy and have their own place and particular gift among the People of God. Through this Sacrament the Holy Spirit bring it about that, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, Christian spouses also strive to nurture and foster their union in equal dignity, mutual giving, and the undivided love that flows from the divine font of charity.

from the Introduction to the Order of Celebrating Matrimony, #8-9

The new Order of Celebrating Matrimony, published in August 2016, makes some significant changes to the ceremony. Many of the elements are changed in order to promote a sense of mutual dignity of the bride and groom and to promote a fuller sense of liturgical participation by the bride and groom and the entire assembly.

Prelude Music: Selections for the music to be played as the wedding guests gather are chosen by the couple with the assistance of the Director of Music Ministry. Normally these selections are instrumental in nature, but other liturgical songs can be chosen to be sung by a soloist.

The Procession: The order of the procession takes place in the customary manner of a liturgical procession. The procession is led by the crossbearers and servers, the assisting deacon, the priest, then the bridesmaids and groomsmen, maid of honor and best man. There are three options for the bride and groom.

Option A: The bride and groom are greeted at the door of the church by the priest and the procession follows with the bridal party and the bride and groom enter together at the end of the procession.

Why might it be a good idea to celebrate the two forms of Matrimony that do not include Mass? Even if only one partner is Catholic, shouldn't he or she receive Holy Communion on their wedding day? It would, of course, be good for the couple to be able to share in the Eucharist after exchanging their vows. But if the bride or groom cannot receive Holy Communion (and this may include many friends and family members), it is often better not to celebrate the Eucharist. The Eucharist is our ultimate sacrament of unity, of communion. Celebrating the Eucharist in a situation in which a large number of those present—including the bride or groom— cannot receive Holy Communion runs the risk of turning this Sacrament of Communion into a sign of something that divides rather than unites us. This is why the Church gives us three forms for the Order of Matrimony.

As marriages between Catholics and Non-Catholics grow in number, it is increasingly important for us to understand and respect the validity of all forms of the Order of Matrimony. Husbands and wives who do not share a common religious heritage need and deserve the support of family, friends and the local parish community as they undertake marriage and seek to integrate each other's traditions and spiritualities into their new life as a family.

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Guidelines for the Preparation for the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*

As Catholics, we believe that marriage is a sacrament and that the wedding ceremony is primarily a celebration of faith and prayer. It is of primary importance that the various elements of the ceremony be in harmony with the Church's principles of good worship and that they be conducive to the active participation of all present.

The wedding ceremony must be respectful of the place where the wedding is celebrated; in a church, and that the liturgy be conducted reverently and in good taste. A Catholic wedding should not be viewed as an opportunity of excessive display. Pope Francis says,

"It is good that your wedding be simple and make what is truly important stand out. Some are more concerned with the exterior details, with the banquet, the photographs, the clothes, the flowers...These are important for a celebration, but only if they point to the real reason for your joy: the Lord's blessing on your love."

—Address to engaged couples in Rome, February 14, 2014

There are many opportunities at the wedding reception to include elements of non-religious nature. Anything that would detract from this important time of prayer should be avoided.

Flowers: The couple is to make their own arrangement for flowers for the church and sanctuary. No flower arrangements may be placed on the altar itself. Nothing should be attached to the pews that could harm their finish. It is customary that whatever is purchased for the church remains in the church after the wedding ceremony.

Aisle Runner: Our Diocesan Risk Management Office prohibits the use of aisle runners for weddings. They are a trip hazard and are a danger to your guests.

The Wedding Candle: This option is not a part of the wedding ritual. The wedding candle would be more appropriately used at the wedding banquet.

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Photography and Videotaping: Taking pictures and video during the ceremony is permitted as long as it does not detract from the liturgy. It is recommended that there be just one photographer for the wedding. The photographer should not enter the sanctuary at any time during the ceremony and should be as inconspicuous and unobtrusive as possible. Flash should be used minimally and floodlights are not allowed. If video is desired, the camera should be placed on a stationary tripod throughout the ceremony. Wireless microphones are not advised, since they often interfere with the church's sound system. It is suggested that the photographer speak to the priest before the ceremony begins.

Reception Line: The Bride and Groom and their parents form a receiving line at the end of the ceremony, if they so choose. The entire wedding part does not form a part of the receiving line.

Pictures following the Ceremony: The couple may choose to have pictures taken in the church following the ceremony.

Rice, Confetti, Birdseed, Balloons and Flower Petals: The use of rice, confetti, birdseed, balloons and flower petals is prohibited. They are a hazard to people's walking and unsafe for birds and the environment.



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