

Sacrament of Christian Marriage

United together to serve the Kingdom

Sacramental marriage is the commitment of Christian persons to each other for intimate life together. It is a symbol of the love and unity between Christ and His Church, is a means of grace by which the Holy Spirit strengthens His people for ministry and service, and is intended to be lifelong. The celebration of this liturgy must reflect this intention.

The Eucharist is the normative celebration of the Christian life. The marriage liturgy is intended to be a part of the Eucharistic celebration. The primary Sunday service is an ideal time to celebrate the marriage of active parish members.

Since marriage is, first and foremost, a sacrament of ministerial commitment, the persons to be married must be baptized Christians.

The gender of the persons to be married is irrelevant. This church makes no distinction between heterosexual and homosexual marriages. Likewise, the legal status of the marriage with the state has no bearing on the ceremony. The persons to be married, however, must be free from other conflicting binding vows of marriage.

The liturgical color for the celebration is that of the season or day. Marriage is generally inappropriate during Lent, except on Sunday or under extenuating circumstances. Under no circumstance may a marriage be celebrated on Passion Sunday or during Holy Week.

The celebration is Christian in nature. Secular music that is tasteful and appropriate may be used during the prelude and postlude but must not otherwise take the place of congregational singing and sacred music. The rites and ceremonies of secular organizations have no place in the celebration.

Participants in the celebration should dress appropriately. The choreography and costuming of the wedding party should not be so elaborate as to detract from the primary drama of the Eucharist. Since marriage is primarily a sacrament of commitment akin to confirmation and ordination, albs are acceptable dress for the persons to be married.

The liturgy begins with a procession accompanied by a joyous and festive congregational hymn. In large weddings, the procession should be led by the crucifer, accompanied by torches and thurifer. The choir may follow, next followed by any wedding attendants (bridesmaids, groomsmen, etc.) individually or in pairs. The persons to be married then follow, each walking in separately; they may be flanked or accompanied by their parents, children, or other family members. The ministers then follow, with the celebrant ending the procession. It is not appropriate for only one of the persons to be married to process. The place of honor belongs to the Cross of Christ, and not to any individual.

The wedding party should be seated in the chancel or the foremost part of the nave. They will come into the front of the chancel for the portion of the liturgy in which the wedding actually is performed.

The vows contained herein are suggested, but other appropriate vows may be used provided they support the church's basic theology of marriage. The names used during the vows are Christian names -- typically our full first and middle, but not last, names -- the names given us at Baptism.

Christian Marriage

The parts of the people are in **bold black type**. The parts of the celebrant or other ministers are in *italic black type*. The parts of the persons to be married are in **red type**. Instructions and comments are in blue type.

THE PEOPLE STAND. From the back of the church the celebrant announces the service and calls us to remember our Baptism.

With the sign of the Cross we remember our Baptism.

In the Name of the Father ☩ and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The wedding and liturgical parties process into the church as the congregation sings a hymn of praise. The incense, cross, and torches lead, followed by the choir and wedding party. The persons to be married follow next individually, flanked, if desired, by their parents or other family members. The liturgical ministers then follow, with the celebrant at the end.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Kyrie

The Kyrie is always either said or sung:

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

Gloria in Excelsis

The Gloria in Excelsis may be said or sung. In large church weddings it should be sung by the entire party and congregation. In smaller settings it may be said or eliminated.:

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
We worship You, we give You thanks, we praise You for Your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world:
Have mercy on us;
You are seated at the right hand of the Father:
Receive our prayer.
For You alone are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
With the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect

Father, You have made the bond of marriage a holy mystery, a symbol of Christ's Love for His Church. Hear our prayers for N. and M. With faith in You and in each other they pledge their love today. May their lives always bear witness to the reality of that love. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Old Testament Lesson

SIT. One of the following Old Testament lessons is read. Tobit tells of the marriage and love of Tobias and Sarah. Samuel tells of the love of King David and Saul's son Jonathan. Ruth tells of the love and loyalty of Ruth and Naomi.

Tobias marries Sarah. Tobit 7:12-14; 10:7d-13 (NRSV).

A reading from the Book of Tobit.

Then Raguel summoned his daughter Sarah. When she came to him he took her by the hand and gave her to Tobias, saying, "Take her to be your wife in accordance with the law and decree written in the book of Moses. Take her and bring her safely to your father. And may the God of heaven prosper your journey with His peace." Then he called her mother and told her

to bring writing material; and he wrote out a copy of a marriage contract, to the effect that he gave her to him as wife according to the decree of the law of Moses. Then they began to eat and drink.

Now when the fourteen days of the wedding celebration had ended that Raguel had sworn to observe for his daughter, Tobias came to him and said, "Send me back, for I know that my father and mother do not believe that they will see me again. So I beg of you, father, to let me go so that I may return to my own father. I have already explained to you how I left him." But Raguel said to Tobias, "Stay, my child, stay with me; I will send messengers to your father Tobit and they will inform him about you." But he said, "No! I beg you to send me back to my father."

So Raguel promptly gave Tobias his wife Sarah, as well as half of all his property: male and female slaves, oxen and sheep, donkeys and camels, clothing, money, and household goods. Then he saw them safely off; he embraced Tobias and said, "Farewell, my child; have a safe journey. The Lord of heaven prosper you and your wife Sarah, and may I see children of yours before I die." Then he kissed his daughter Sarah and said to her, "My daughter, honor your father-in-law and your mother-in-law, since from now on they are as much your parents as those who gave you birth. Go in peace, daughter, and may I hear a good report about you as long as I live." Then he bade them farewell and let them go.

Then Edna said to Tobias, "My child and dear brother, the Lord of heaven bring you back safely, and may I live long enough to see children of you and of my daughter Sarah before I die. In the sight of the Lord I entrust my daughter to you; do nothing to grieve her all the days of your life. Go in peace, my child. From now on I am your mother and Sarah is your beloved wife. May we all prosper together all the days of our lives." Then she kissed them both and saw them safely off.

Tobias parted from Raguel with happiness and joy, praising the Lord of heaven and earth, King over all, because He had made his journey a success. Finally, he blessed Raguel and his wife Edna, and said, "I have been commanded by the Lord to honor you all the days of my life."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

David loves Jonathan. 1 Samuel 18:1-5; 20:11-17,35,40-42; 2 Samuel 1:17,24-26. (NJB)

When David had finished talking to Saul, Jonathan felt an instant affection for David; Jonathan loved him like his very self; Saul engaged him that very day and would not let him go home to his father. ... Jonathan made a covenant with David, since he loved him like his very self; Jonathan took off the cloak which he was wearing and gave it to David, and his armor, too, even including his sword, his bow, and his belt. Wherever David was sent on a mission by Saul, he was successful, and Saul put him in command of the fighting men; all the people respect him and so did Saul's staff.

Jonathan then said to David, "Come on, let us go out into the country," and the pair of them went out into the country. Jonathan then said to David, "By YAHWEH, God of Israel! I shall sound my father this time tomorrow; if all is well for David and I do not then send and inform you, may YAHWEH bring unnamable ills to Jonathan and worse ones too! If my father intends to do you a mischief, I shall tell you so and let you get away, so that you can be safe. And may YAHWEH be with you as He used to be with my father! If I am still alive, show your servant faithful love; if I die, never withdraw your faithful love from my family. ... Jonathan then renewed his oath to David, since he loved him like his very soul.

Next morning, Jonathan went out into the country at the time agreed with David, taking a young servant with him. ... Jonathan then gave his weapons to his servant and said, "Go and carry them to the town." As soon as the servant had gone, David stood up beside the mound, threw himself to the ground, prostrating himself three times. They then embraced each other, both weeping copiously. Jonathan then said to David, "Go in peace. And as regards the oath that both of us have sworn by the Name of YAHWEH, may YAHWEH be Witness between you and me, between your descendants and mine forever."

[After Saul and Jonathan had died,] David sang the following lament over Saul and his son Jonathan ...

*O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul
who gave you scarlet and fine linen to wear,
who pinned golden jewelry on your dresses!*

How did the heroes fall in the thick of the battle?

*Jonathan, by your dying I too am stricken,
I am desolate for you, Jonathan my brother.
Very dear you were to me,
your love more wonderful to me than the love of a woman.*

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Ruth's loyalty to Naomi. Ruth 1: 15-17 (NJB)

A reading from the book of Ruth.

Naomi then said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her god. Go home, too; follow your sister-in-law." But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you and to stop going with you, for

*wherever you go, I shall go,
wherever you live, I shall live.
Your people will be my people*

*and your God will be my God.
Where you die, I shall die
and there I shall be buried.
Let YAHWEH bring unnamable ills on me
and worse ills, too,
if anything but death
should part me from you!"*

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (150)

Alleluia! Praise God in His hóly temple;*
praise Him in the firmament óf His power.

Praise Him for His míghty acts;*
praise Him for His Éxcellent greatness.

Praise Him with the blast óf the ram's horn;*
praise Him with lýre and harp.

Praise Him with tímbrél and dance;*
praise Him with stríngs and pipe.

Praise Him with resóunding cymbals;*
praise Him with loud-clánging cymbals.

Let everything thát has breath
praise the LORD. Álleluia!
Epistle Lesson

Epistle Lesson

John tells us that God is Love. 1 John 4: 7-19 (NRSV).

A reading from the first letter of John.

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God;
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is Love.*

*God's Love was revealed among us in this way:
God sent His only Son into the world
so that we might have Life through Him.*

*In this is Love: not that we loved God,
but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the Atoning Sacrifice for our sins.*

*Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.
No one has ever seen God:
if we love one another, God lives in us and His Love is perfected in us.*

*By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us,
because He has given us of His Spirit.
And we have seen and do testify
that the Father has sent His Son as Savior of the world.
God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God,
and they abide in God.
So we have known and believe the Love God has for us.*

*God is Love, and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them.
Love has been perfected among us in this:
that we may have boldness on the day of judgment,
because as He is, so are we in this world.
There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear;
for fear has to do with punishment,
and whoever fears has not reached perfection in Love.
We love because He first loved us.*

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

The Holy Gospel

STAND. The Alleluia is chanted responsively. In lent the sentence is said without "Alleluia."

Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.
Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

If we love one another, God who lives in Love will live in us. Alleluia.
Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

A reading from the Holy Gospel ✠ according to John.

Glory to You, O Lord

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and His disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to Me? My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." and they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it.

When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of His signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

The Sermon

SIT. A sermon or homily may follow, expounding on God's love for us and our call to share that love with one another.

The Nicene Creed

STAND. Christian marriage is akin to ordination. It is a sacrament through which God blesses ministers, in this case persons working together in ministry as a team. It is appropriate that the first thing they do before their marriage is confess their Christian faith together with their family and friends.

**We believe in One God,
the Father, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in One Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,**

**God from God, Light from Light,
True God from True God,
begotten, not made,
of One Being with the Father.
Through Him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
He came down from heaven;
by the Power of the Holy Spirit
He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made Man.
For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and His Kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life,
Who proceeds from the Father.
With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead
and the Life ☩ of the world to come. Amen!**

The Marriage

SIT. The wedding party come forward to the chancel. The celebrant addresses the people.

My friends, we have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining of N. and M. in Christian marriage. We celebrate today as our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated the marriage of friends in Cana in Galilee, where He performed His first miracle. Marriage is sacramental because it signifies the mystery of the Union between Christ and His Church, which is a Union of boundless, eternal, and self-giving Love.

The marital union of Christians in heart, body, mind, and spirit is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help, comfort, and support they give each other in prosperity and adversity; in some cases for the raising of children; and, most of all, to give grace that together they can better serve their God and His people. It is also for this latter reason that marriage is

sacramental. The promises of Baptism now may be carried out in partnership for the good of all.

A marriage is created when people promise a life-long commitment to one another in the presence of God. The Holy Spirit is then poured out upon them once more in grace, strengthening them for this ministry of service. Our role today as Church and friends is to witness these promises and this sacramental grace. Our role tomorrow continues as we promise to support and uphold N. and M. in their marriage.

I require and charge you, here in the presence of God, that if you know any reason why you may not be wed together that you do now confess it. Likewise, if anyone has just cause why these persons should not be wed together, speak now or forever hold your peace.

Assuming that no valid objections are made, the service continues.

If appropriate, the officiant then addresses the immediate family members, who answer in response.

Will you as family promise to support your children/parents in this new commitment?

We will.

THE PEOPLE STAND. The officiant then addresses the people:

Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these persons in their marriage?

We will.

The officiant then requests the persons to be married to recite the marriage vows. Each person in turn recites the vows individually. If necessary, the vows should be read from a paper, not repeated after the officiant. Other appropriate vows may be used if desired, provided they profess a life-long commitment of love and support.

N. and M., if it is your intention to share with each other your joys and sorrows and all that the years will bring, with your promises bind yourselves to each other in Christian marriage.

Each person in turn then says:

**I, _____ (first and middle names),
take you, _____ (first and middle names),
to be my life-partner.**

**I promise before God, my family, the Church,
and the whole Communion of Saints in heaven and on earth
these things to you:**

I will be faithful to you and honest to you;

I will respect, trust, help, and care for you;

I will share my whole life with you;

I will forgive you as we have been forgiven;

**I will try with you to understand more fully
God, ourselves, and the world,**

**through the best and the worst of what is to come,
as long as we both shall live.**

**Therefore, so that we may together serve
God and His Kingdom,**

**I give you priority in my life,
second only to the LORD our God.**

(It is appropriate for the speaking partner to make the sign of the cross on the chest of the listening partner)

**In the Name of the Father ✠
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen!**

After both have made their vows, the officiant then blesses the rings.

Bless, O Lord, ✠ these rings to be signs of the vows by which these people have bound themselves to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The rings are exchanged with these or similar words:

N., I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness.

The officiant announces the marriage:

By their promises before God in our presence, N. and M. have bound themselves to one another.

Blessed be the Father ✠ and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

The people join in prayers. An assistant minister, particularly a member of the family, may lead the prayers of the people.

Let us pray.

Eternal God, Creator and Preserver of all life, Author of salvation, and Giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which Your Son gave His Life, and especially upon N. and M. whom You make one flesh in Christian marriage.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in Your will, and their spirits in Your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with You and one another all the days of their life.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault and to seek each other's forgiveness and Yours.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Make their life together a sign of Christ's Love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair.

Lord, hear our prayer.

[Bestow on them, if it is Your will, the gift to bear or adopt children and the grace to bring them up to know You, to love You, and to serve You.

Lord, hear our prayer.]

Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Grant that all married persons who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Officiant

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all Your children are united one to another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by Your Grace that Your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where, O Father, with Your Son and the Holy Spirit, You live and reign in perfect Unity, now and for ever.

Amen.

The newlyweds kneel. The celebrant lays hands on them and blesses them. The officiant may tie the hands of the newlyweds together with his stole.

My friends, by your promises before God you have bound yourselves together in the sacrament of Christian marriage. May God look with favor upon you, give you wisdom and devotion, strength in time of need, and grace to seek each other's forgiveness. May your life together be a sign for the world of the Unity of the Church and of Christ's Love for His people. May God the Holy Spirit be your Guide to love and peace in this life and toward the ways of Eternal Salvation through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The officiant shares the peace with the newly married, and then the people share together:

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

The wedding party return to their seats. The Eucharistic Liturgy continues with the offertory in accordance with the proper liturgy for the season.

All of the baptized faithful are invited to share in the Eucharistic Meal. It is never appropriate for Communion to be distributed only to the newlyweds or the wedding party.

The following postcommunion prayer may be used in place of the one appointed:

**O God, the Giver of all that is true and lovely and gracious:
We give You thanks for binding us together
in these Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood
of your Son Jesus Christ.
Grant that by Your Holy Spirit,
N. and M., now joined in Christian marriage,
may become one in heart and soul,
live in fidelity and peace,
and obtain those joys prepared for all who love You;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

If there is no Eucharist, the Lord's Prayer, blessing, and dismissal may immediately follow the peace above. This practice is not encouraged.

After the blessing, a recessional hymn is sung. The newlyweds, walking together, may immediately follow the cross and torches. The wedding party, choir, liturgical ministers, and celebrant then follow.