



THE ORDER OF  
CELEBRATING MATRIMONY

PASTORAL NOTES

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## PASTORAL NOTES

# THE ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY

### INTRODUCTION

1. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (2017) published by CCCB Publications is the only approved ritual book for celebrating Matrimony in the Dioceses of Canada. Unlike the previous Marriage ritual, permission was not received to include Pastoral Notes as part of the publication. These notes, which are included with every copy of *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, are intended to assist those who are responsible for preparing and celebrating Matrimony. It is important to note that there are some substantial changes to the liturgies in the new ritual. Hence, all those entrusted with preparing or assisting any liturgical celebrations of Matrimony are encouraged to carefully read the "Introduction" (*Praenotanda*) of *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, the rubrics for each respective celebration as well as these Pastoral Notes.

### SOME THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

#### A Sacrament of the Church

2. The Marriage of two Christians is a Sacrament – an effective sign which reveals and makes present the mystery of God's love for humanity, and in particular, the mystery of Christ's love for the Church, which is His Bride. It is always an occasion for joyful celebration within the Christian community.

"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 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."<sup>1</sup>

3. The marriage between a Catholic and non-Christian, although not a Sacrament, is likewise a celebration of the Church because it is an occasion of joy, which celebrates human and divine love and the establishment of a family. In "The Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian", provisions are always made to respect the beliefs of the bride or groom and other non-Christians who are gathered.

4. "Rooted in God's plan for humanity, the union of man and woman in Matrimony is a symbol of the faithful and all-embracing love of God for the world."<sup>2</sup>

#### A Celebration of the Paschal Mystery

5. The celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony, like all the liturgical rites of the Church, is a celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection. A husband and wife first enter into this mystery in the life-giving waters of Baptism. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, their share in this mystery is intensified and rendered more visible in the mutual, committed and self-sacrificing love they have for one another. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, this same mystery is further

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1 *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (OCM), CCCB Publications, Ottawa, ON (2017), no. 8.

2 *The Christian Celebration of Marriage: A Resource for Preparation*, Diocese of Hamilton, Hamilton, ON (1996), p. 5.

manifested in the loving service which married persons offer to others.

### **A Celebration of the Christian Community**

6. The Christian celebration of Matrimony is a public act of the entire Christian community. It is never a private event. It is a celebration of the Church, the community of believers; not merely an event that takes place in the house of the Church. "Since Marriage is ordered toward the increase and sanctification of the people of God, its celebration displays a communitarian character that encourages the participation also of the parish community, at least through some of its members."<sup>3</sup> The purpose of Christian Matrimony is to establish an enduring communion of life and love between man and woman, a sign to the world of the very love of Christ for His Church. In addition, it brings forth and nurtures new life, which enriches both the human race and the Christian community. Marriage and family life are integral to the life of the Church and its mission to bring about the reign of God in our world.

### **PREPARING THE COUPLE**

7. Preparation of the bride and groom is a ministry of pastoral care. Diocesan or parish based programs of formation are usually required prior to the celebration of Matrimony. Couples should be encouraged to participate in these programs with open hearts since these are intended to assist them in living out the covenantal relationship they are about to enter. During this time of preparation, it is important that couples have the opportunity to understand and reflect upon the texts from Sacred Scripture, the prayers, the rituals

and "The Consent" from the celebration of Matrimony. Occasions for communal prayer, such as Celebrations of the Word, appropriate for both Catholics and non-Catholics alike, can serve as a means of on-going evangelization and prepare the couples for public prayer during the celebration of Matrimony.

8. The presiding minister, when meeting with engaged couples, is encouraged to assist them to develop patterns of both personal prayer and prayer as a couple. Beginning and ending meetings with a brief prayer is one way to gently draw the couple into an experience of prayer. Using a simple form of *Lectio Divina* with the texts from the Sacred Scriptures from *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* may also help couples to share their faith and to prepare spiritually for Matrimony.

9. The period of preparation for the celebration of Matrimony is an opportune time to invite Catholics who do not regularly participate in the Sunday Eucharist to renew their faith and to participate more fully in the Church's liturgy. Helping couples to understand the meaning and importance of the Lord's Day and the celebration of the Eucharist can lead couples to regularly participate in the Sunday Eucharist in a meaningful way.

10. Wherever possible, "The Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple" (in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (nos. 253-271), ought to be celebrated in the presence of family and friends, and indeed, the entire parish community. This celebration always takes place outside of Mass. Naming engaged couples in the Universal Prayer, which surrounds them in the Church's prayer, also assists them to prepare spiritually for celebrating Matrimony.

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<sup>3</sup> OCM, no. 28.

## PREPARING THE CELEBRATION

### A Ministry of the Church

11. In addition to the bride and groom, many others are involved in the preparation for the celebration: the Priest, Deacon or an Assisting Layperson who will receive the Consent, members of Marriage preparation teams, parish staff, those responsible for liturgical music and other liturgical ministers; witnesses, family members and friends. Indeed, members of the entire Christian community participate in the preparation for the celebration as they accompany the bride and groom with their prayerful support, encouragement and witness to the beauty of Christian Marriage and family life.

### A Liturgical Rite

12. Celebrating Matrimony is a liturgical rite of the Church. For this reason, it is always celebrated in the manner which is determined by the Church and provided for in the approved liturgical books. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* provides the structural elements and order of the celebration according to different circumstances:

- The Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass
- The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass
- The Order of Celebrating Matrimony in the Presence of an Assisting Layperson
- The Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or Non-Christian.

Each Order provides the various texts for proclamation and prayer, and identifies the roles of the bride and groom, assisting minister (Priest, Deacon or Assisting

Layperson), witnesses, liturgical ministers, and members of the assembly.

13. The presiding minister will most often select the Collect and other prayers used during "The Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass", as well as the form of the Nuptial Blessing. The bride and groom, in dialogue with the presiding minister usually select the biblical readings, the form of the Consent and music for the celebration. There are variances to what selections the presiding minister may allow a couple to choose. These should be carefully communicated. The options are many and are available in an assisting resource, *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony: LITURGY PLANNING GUIDE*.

14. During the celebration of Christian Marriage, the Biblical readings (chosen from those in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (nos. 179-222, pages 75-114) are proclaimed using the *Lectionary: Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Masses for the Dead* (nos. 801-805, pages 239-268) and the *Book of Gospels* (no. 805, pages 579-587). *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* now requires at least one reading that "explicitly speaks of Marriage" to be chosen. These selections are clearly marked in the ritual book and in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony: LITURGY PLANNING GUIDE*. When Matrimony is celebrated during Mass, the *Roman Missal* is also used.

15. Those responsible for the preparation of the celebration must be familiar with each of the four forms of the rite and the particular elements proper to them so that all are able to participate in the liturgy and to ensure the faith of the Church is both clearly expressed and nourished during the celebration.

16. Permission to celebrate a mixed Marriage (a Catholic to a baptized non-

Catholic) is required as per the *Code of Canon Law*, c. 1124.

17. When one of the parties is an Eastern Catholic or a member of an Orthodox Church, only a Priest can receive the vows and give the Nuptial Blessing. This is necessary for validity.

### **Celebrating the Order of Matrimony within Mass**

18. "With due regard both for the necessities of pastoral care and for the way in which the prospective spouses and those present participate in the life of the Church, the pastor should decide whether it would be preferable to propose that Marriage be celebrated within or outside of Mass."<sup>4</sup> It may also be preferable for the Sacrament of Matrimony to be celebrated without Mass if the availability of a Priest is limited, when an individual Priest would be required to celebrate multiple Masses on the same day or when the majority of the family and the guests are not Catholic.

When both the bride and groom are Catholic, and participate with some regularity in the Eucharist, it is desirable, when it is possible, to celebrate their Matrimony within Mass. In this way, their union in Christ in the Sacrament of Matrimony is further expressed by their Eucharistic sharing at the Lord's Table. However, the decision to celebrate Matrimony within Mass is always to be made by the Priest who will receive the Consent in consultation with the couple.

### **Celebrating the Order of Matrimony without Mass**

19. Because of problems concerning Eucharistic sharing which may arise from the presence of non-Catholic witnesses and

guests, "The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass" is ordinarily used for celebrating Matrimony with a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic.

"If, however, the situation warrants it, '[The Order of] Celebrating Matrimony within Mass' (nos. 45-78) may be used, with the consent of the local Ordinary."<sup>5</sup> In such a case, with regard to the admission of the non-Catholic party to Eucharistic Communion, the norms of Canon Law are to be observed, as per the *Code of Canon Law*, c. 844.

### **Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or Non-Christian**

20. "If a Marriage takes place between a Catholic and a catechumen or a non-Christian, the right given [in] (nos. 152-178) is to be used, with the variations provided for different situations."<sup>6</sup>

### **Ministers of the Sacrament**

21. In the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, the Tradition teaches that the bride and groom are the ministers of the Sacrament. By declaring their consent they confer the Sacrament on one another. When a Catholic and a catechumen or a non-baptized person declare their consent, the natural bond of Matrimony is established. The Priest, Deacon, or Assisting Layperson who presides at the celebration invites the couple to declare their consent.

22. Two witnesses are required for the valid celebration of Marriage.

23. When a Priest or Deacon presides at a celebration of Matrimony in another parish he must receive delegation from the pastor of the parish. When he presides outside of the diocese in which he is ministering,

<sup>4</sup> OCM, no. 29.

<sup>5</sup> OCM, no. 36.

<sup>6</sup> OCM, no. 36.

he must receive delegation from the Bishop of the place where the Marriage is to be celebrated. In addition, outside of his home Province, he must obtain a civil registration number in order to ask for and receive the consent of the bride and groom.

### **Other Liturgical Ministers**

24. In addition to the bride and groom, and the Priest, Deacon or Assisting Layperson who will receive the consent, many other persons will exercise liturgical ministries during the celebration of Matrimony. Ministers of hospitality welcome and seat the guests who assemble for the celebration, and assist those with special needs. Ministers of music assist the couple in selecting appropriate music for celebrating Matrimony, and during the celebration, organists, instrumentalists, cantors and other singers lead the assembly in song. Ministers of the Word proclaim the readings from Sacred Scripture with faith and conviction, and, in place of a Deacon, read the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful). Altar servers participate in the entrance procession by carrying the Cross and candles, and assist the Priest or Deacon at the altar and throughout the liturgy. If the Sacrament of Matrimony is celebrated within Mass, gift bearers and, according to genuine need, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may exercise their ministries.

Depending on parish customs, some of these persons may be chosen from among those who regularly exercise ministries in the community; others, with the requisite abilities may be chosen from among the family and friends of the bride and groom.

Although working behind the scene, a sacristan, custodian, or another designate may prepare the seating for the wedding party, an appropriate place for the signing of the civil documents, and ensure

floral arrangements are suitably placed. Whoever is assisting with the preparation of the sacred space also ensures that all the books (*The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, the *Lectionary: Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead*, the *Book of Gospels*, the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful), the *Roman Missal*, for Mass, and any hymnals or participation aids) and those things required for the celebration (such as the sacred vessels for Mass and a vessel for holy water) are prepared.

### **Place and Time**

25. Matrimony is celebrated in the parish of one of the engaged persons, or elsewhere with the permission of the proper Ordinary or pastor. Because Matrimony is a celebration of the Christian community and an act of worship, places other than places of worship are not suitable for the celebration of Christian Matrimony.

26. In particular pastoral circumstances, Matrimony between a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian may take place in another Christian church with a Dispensation from Form. In this case, the minister of the other church presides at the celebration.

27. Matrimony may be celebrated on most days throughout the year. In Canada, however, the celebration of Matrimony is not encouraged on Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation or during Holy Week, especially because of the added pastoral responsibilities of Priests and Deacons during those days. On the occasion it may be celebrated on a Sunday or Solemnity, the ritual prayers for "The Celebration of Marriage" are not said; however, one of the biblical readings from *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (found in the *Lectionary: Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead*) may be used in the Mass of the day.

The Nuptial Blessing is given to the bride and groom.

### **Special Seasons**

28. During the Season of Advent, the Church prepares with joyful anticipation for the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord. Because of the special character of this season of preparation, weddings are discouraged, but not forbidden. During the Season of Lent, the Church embraces the works of penance in preparation for the celebration of the Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection. Because of the penitential spirit of this Season, the celebration of Matrimony is discouraged during this time.

However, if for good pastoral reasons Matrimony is to be celebrated during the Seasons of Advent or Lent, couples should be reminded that they should respect the special nature of these Seasons. Generally, this will affect the choice of music and the decoration of the church. Generally speaking, all parishioners should be aware of the special nature of these Seasons and the reason why the celebration of Matrimony would be better scheduled at other times.

### **Saturday**

29. Many weddings are celebrated on Saturday to permit family members and friends to participate. Scheduling a celebration of Matrimony on Saturday should take into account the time of the first Mass of Sunday (Vigil Mass often celebrated on Saturday afternoon or evening), scheduled times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and, if Matrimony is to be celebrated within Mass, the number of Priests available and the number of Masses already scheduled. Couples should be reminded that a Priest is generally not permitted to celebrate more than one Mass on a day (other than Sunday) unless there is a serious

reason. In addition, if more than one wedding is to take place on the same day, consideration should be given to ensuring adequate time between celebrations.

### **Music accompanying the Celebration of Matrimony**

30. Music is an integral part of every liturgical celebration. The use of sacred instrumental or vocal music prior to the celebration may help to dispose the assembly in preparation for the Sacred Liturgy. Music during the celebration is intended to assist the assembly to participate in the liturgy and to lift their minds and hearts to God in prayer. For this reason, only music approved for liturgical use may be included during any celebrations of Matrimony.

Helpful guidelines on this subject are found in *Guidelines for Liturgical Music* on the CCCB webpage, "Liturgy and Sacraments" section. Some important principles from this work are also highlighted in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony: LITURGY PLANNING GUIDE*.

Priority ought to be given to everyone's participation in the Entrance Chant, the Responsorial Psalm, the Gospel Acclamation, and, during Mass, to the Eucharistic Acclamations and the Communion Processional Hymn. Therefore music for the liturgical celebration ought to be familiar and ideally chosen from the parish repertoire, so that everyone is able to participate in the singing.

Other secular music may fittingly be used at the reception, which usually follows the liturgical celebration.

### **Floral Decorations**

31. It is customary to decorate the church for the celebration of Matrimony. A certain restraint ought to be exercised to ensure the

floral arrangements and any other accessories do not dominate the sacred space. Décor must not detract from the sacred space or action. In addition, decorations of any kind should never impede the movement of the bride, groom, liturgical ministers or the assembly.

### **Seating**

32. It is important to take into consideration the arrangement of the seating for the bride and groom and their witnesses. The bride and groom need to be seen and heard during the declaration of Consent and the Blessing and Giving of Rings. In addition, chairs and kneelers need to be arranged to enable the bride and groom to participate fully in the liturgy with the other members of the assembly. The Pastor with the Parish Staff can provide valuable guidance in this regard.

### **Cultural Rites**

33. In some cultures, there are longstanding traditions associated with celebrating Matrimony, for example, the Arras, (the blessing and exchange of coins), or the imposition of the Lazo or veil. In cases where these ancient traditions are meaningful to the bride and groom, they may take place prior to the Nuptial Blessing.

A more recent custom associated with Marriage is the lighting of a Unity Candle. The liturgical use of candles, other than for providing light, is to symbolize the Christ. The lighting of a Unity Candle and its meaning should be discussed with the couple and the Pastor.

### **Photography**

34. To preserve the memory of special events, it is customary in our culture to take photographs and videos. This is certainly true for the celebration of Matrimony, one

of the most sacred moments in life. Taking of photos and videos is permitted during the celebration of Christian Matrimony, provided this is done discreetly and without interrupting or distracting anyone from the liturgy. It is appropriate to ask members of the assembly to refrain from taking any pictures or video during the celebration.

Couples should be encouraged to discuss the issue of photography and videography with the presiding minister early in the planning stages. Most professional photographers and videographers are skilled at being unobtrusive and are able to provide the bride and groom and their families with images they will treasure for years to come.

It is always advisable that the order of the liturgy and the movement of ministers be reviewed with photographers and videographers prior to the celebration. It may also be helpful for them to be present during the rehearsal to prevent difficulties during the liturgy.

## **THE CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY**

### **Gathering for the Celebration**

35. Since the celebration of Matrimony is a celebration of the Church, everyone is to be welcomed graciously. It is fitting for family members, members of the wedding party, and even the bride and groom, to be present at the church for some time prior to the start of the liturgy. This gives them the opportunity to greet friends and relatives as they arrive for the celebration. Members of the wedding party usually lead the guests into the church where they are seated together as a community. Often, many of the guests will know only a few people. Therefore, they ought to be encouraged to greet one another before the liturgy

begins. In this way they will be able to participate more fully in the liturgy.

Out of respect for their guests, the presiding minister and the other liturgical ministers, if the bride and groom are not intending to greet their guests in advance of the celebration, they need to be mindful of arriving on time for the commencement of the liturgy.

## THE CELEBRATION OF MATRIMONY WITHIN MASS

### The Introductory Rites

36. The Introductory Rites include the greeting of the bride and groom, the procession, Sign of the Cross, liturgical greeting, a brief address by the Priest, the Glory to God and the Collect. Two Forms are provided for the entrance of the bride and the groom in this ritual.

#### *First Form*

37. In the First Form (nos. 45-47), the Priest goes, together with the servers, to the entrance of the church, where he warmly greets the bride and groom. This is reminiscent of the welcome first extended to them on the day of their Baptism. On that day they were signed with the Cross of Christ; on this day they are led in procession by the Cross to take their place in the church. Following the greeting, the procession to the altar commences.

38. The Cross bearer and servers lead the procession followed by the Priest, and then the bride and groom. According to local custom, the bride and groom may be accompanied by their witnesses and parents. The Entrance Chant or appropriate hymn accompanies the procession. If, however, instrumental music accompanies the procession,

the Entrance Chant follows immediately. Upon reaching the sanctuary, the Priest venerates the altar as usual and goes to his chair.

#### *Second Form*

39. In the Second Form (nos. 48-50), all stand while the Priest and servers go directly to their places to await the arrival of the bride and groom at the altar. The bride and groom process to the altar. They may be accompanied by their witnesses and parents. Instrumental music usually accompanies the procession. When the bride and groom reach their places, the Priest warmly receives them. Then, during the singing of the Entrance Chant or appropriate hymn, the Priest venerates the altar as usual.

40. Following either Form of the entrance, the Sign of the Cross is made and the Priest greets the entire assembly using one of the formulas provided in the *Roman Missal*. He then addresses the entire assembly or the couple, urging them to be disposed inwardly for the celebration of Marriage. Two formulas are provided in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (no. 52 addresses the assembly; no. 53 addresses the couple).

41. The Penitential Act is omitted. The Glory to God is then sung using a familiar melody, or it is said. As per custom, it is only omitted during the Seasons of Advent and Lent. The Collect concludes the Introductory Rites.

42. On Solemnities, the days within the Octave of Easter, on the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day), on Ash Wednesday, and during Holy Week, the ritual Mass is not used; the proper prayer formula for the day is used. Nevertheless, the Nuptial Blessing is given and the proper formula for the Final Blessing may be used.

## **The Liturgy of the Word**

43. The faith of the community is nourished by the proclamation of God's Word. Only biblical texts may be proclaimed during the celebration of Matrimony. At least one reading that explicitly speaks of Marriage must always be chosen.

44. Three readings selected from the *Lectionary: Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead* (nos. 801-805) may be proclaimed. The First Reading should be chosen from the Old Testament, but during the Easter Time, is taken from the Book of Revelation [no. 802(10)]. The Second Reading is then taken from no. 802(1-9). When the ritual Mass is not permitted, as noted above, the proper readings of the day are used. At least one reading, a Psalm and a Gospel passage are always chosen.

45. When Matrimony is celebrated within Mass, only Catholics may proclaim the biblical texts, though, for a just cause, the Bishop may permit a member of another Christian Church to fulfill this task. It is always preferable to have two ministers of the Word to individually proclaim the readings before the Gospel.

46. Attention is to be given to good proclamation, the observance of silence following the first two readings, and the assembly's participation in the singing of the Responsorial Psalm led by a competent cantor. The singing of a familiar setting of the Gospel Acclamation will allow all gathered to greet the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel proclaimed by the Priest or Deacon. The Homily, an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word, follows the proclamation of Scripture. The purpose of the Homily is to expound the mystery of the Sacrament of Matrimony, the dignity of conjugal love, the grace of

the Sacrament, and the responsibilities of married people. It need not be lengthy, but should be well-prepared, keeping in mind the nature of the assembly gathered for the celebration.

## **The Celebration of Matrimony**

47. The celebration of Matrimony consists of the couple's statement of intentions with the Questions before the Consent, declaration of the Consent, and the Reception of the Consent by the Priest.

### *The Questions before the Consent*

48. Following the Homily, all stand. The bride and groom, together with their witnesses, stand before the Priest who addresses them and invites them to state their intentions by responding to the questions regarding their freedom of choice, fidelity to one another, and the acceptance and upbringing of children.

### *The Consent*

49. Following the Questions before the Consent, the bride and groom face one another and join their right hands. They declare their consent, preferably by their respective declarative statements or, for pastoral reasons, in response to questions posed by the Priest. Every effort ought to be made so that the voices of the bride and groom can be heard by the members of the assembly who have gathered to witness the Consent.

### *Reception of the Consent*

50. Following the Consent, the Priest receives their consent by proclaiming one of the formulas provided (no. 64). Then the Priest invites all to praise God, with the words: "Let us bless the Lord." All reply: "Thanks be to God." Another suitable acclamation, known by the community, may be sung or said.

### *The Blessing and Giving of Rings*

51. It is customary for the couple to exchange rings as a sign of their love and fidelity. The rings are presented to the Priest, usually by the witnesses, and he blesses them using one of the formulas provided (nos. 66, 229 or 230). Then he may sprinkle them with blessed water and gives them to the bride and groom. The groom places the wife's ring on her ring finger, saying the formula provided (no. 67). Likewise, the wife places the husband's ring on his ring finger, saying the formula provided.

### *Hymn or Canticle of Praise*

52. A hymn, expressing gratitude for the gift of married love or a canticle of praise, such as the *Magnificat*, may be sung by the assembly (no. 68). By their participation in the song, the entire community acknowledges and gives thanks for Christ's love, which has been manifested in the new covenant established by the couple's exchange of consent. A familiar selection will help all to participate.

### *The Universal Prayer*

53. The Celebration of Matrimony concludes with the Universal Prayer. The Priest invites all to pray, and the Deacon or other minister announces the intentions, to which all respond as usual. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* provides several examples (nos. 251-252); other intercessions may be prepared by the couple and their families. The Priest concludes this prayer using one of the formulas provided or similar words.

### *The Creed*

54. On days when the Ritual Mass cannot be celebrated, and when the rubrics require it, the Symbol or Creed is said. It is fitting on such occasions to say the Apostles' Creed, which echoes the baptismal

profession of faith once made by the bride and groom, and which is affirmed by their declaration of Consent during this liturgy.

## **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**

### *The Preparation of the Gifts*

55. Following the celebration of Matrimony, all are seated while the altar is prepared for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The gifts of bread and wine are brought forward to the altar at this time. Members of the couple's family, or as circumstances suggest, the bride and groom may present the gifts of bread and wine to the Priest. In addition to the bread and wine, gifts for the poor and needy may also be presented at this time.

### *The Eucharistic Prayer*

56. At the conclusion of the Offertory prayers, all stand for the Prayer over the Gifts as usual. The members of the assembly are invited to sing the acclamations during the Eucharistic Prayer (the Sanctus, the Memorial Acclamation, and the Amen). A setting of the acclamations which is well known in the community will assist everyone to participate in this great prayer of thanksgiving. Provision should be made for the bride and groom to be one with the assembly during the Eucharistic Prayer. Arrangements for them to observe the same posture as the assembly and focus their attention on the altar will need to be made.

57. A commemoration of the husband and wife in the Eucharistic Prayers that can be used for this occasion, namely I, II, or III, is made with one of the formulas provided (see *Roman Missal*, page 1174).

### *The Nuptial Blessing*

58. After the Lord's Prayer the Priest invokes the Nuptial Blessing upon the bride and groom. The bride and groom kneel at

their place or before the altar and the Priest invites everyone to pray in silence. Then he extends his hands over the couple and invokes God's blessing upon them. Three formulas are provided (no. 73, 241, or 243). All respond: "Amen."

The prayer, "Deliver us", and the doxology which usually follows are omitted, as is the prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ...". The greeting and Sign of Peace follow immediately.

### *Communion*

59. It is fitting that the bride and groom, and indeed, all present receive Communion under both kinds. Sufficient bread and wine should be prepared for this celebration and an adequate number of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be engaged as needed.

60. The presence of non-Catholic and non-Christian guests at the celebration of Matrimony within Mass, and their inability to share in Eucharistic Communion, requires pastoral sensitivity. Although they cannot receive Communion, they ought to be invited to join in the prayers and songs of the assembly throughout the entire celebration. In this way they are able to participate in the prayer of the Church and unite themselves with the couple whose declaration of consent they witness. A carefully worded announcement may be made before the liturgy begins or a statement may be included in a worship aid, which invites everyone to participate in the celebration to the extent that they are able, respecting each person's own faith tradition.

61. During the Communion procession, all are invited to sing the chant. Following the reception of Holy Communion a period of silence is observed. The Liturgy of the Eucharist concludes with the Prayer after Communion.

## **The Conclusion of the Celebration**

### *The Blessing at the End of the Celebration*

62. The liturgical celebration concludes with the blessing. It is fitting that a solemn form of the blessing be used. See the formulas in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (no. 248, 249 or 250). The dismissal follows in the usual way.

### *The Signing of the Marriage Record*

63. Following the Blessing at the End of the Celebration, all are invited to be seated while the bride and groom and their witnesses, together with the Priest, sign the Marriage record. The signing may take place in the presence of the assembly or in another place. However, it never takes place on the altar, which is dedicated for the celebration of the Eucharist. Appropriate sacred music – instrumental or vocal – may accompany the signing.

Once the Marriage documents have been signed, it is fitting for the Priest to invite all to stand and greet the newly married couple as they leave the church. Festive instrumental music fittingly accompanies this procession.

## **THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE WITHOUT MASS**

64. This form of the celebration takes place when both bride and groom are baptized, when one of the parties is non-Catholic, and when pastoral circumstances suggest (as previously indicated). It can also be used to celebrate Matrimony between two Catholics.

### **The Introductory Rites**

65. The Introductory Rites include the greeting of the bride and groom, the procession, Sign of the Cross, liturgical

greeting, a brief address by the Priest (or Deacon), and the Collect. Two forms are provided for the entrance of the bride and the groom in this ritual.

#### *First Form*

66. In the First Form (nos. 80-82), the Priest (or Deacon) goes, together with the servers, to the entrance of the church, where he warmly greets the bride and groom. This is reminiscent of the welcome first extended to them on the day of their Baptism. On that day they were signed with the Cross of Christ; on this day they are led in procession by the Cross to take their place in the church. Following the greeting, the procession to the altar takes place.

67. The Cross bearer and servers lead the procession followed by the Priest (or Deacon), and then the bride and groom. According to local custom, the bride and groom may be accompanied by their witnesses and parents. The Entrance Chant or appropriate hymn accompanies the procession. If, however, instrumental music accompanies the procession, the Entrance Chant follows immediately. Upon reaching the sanctuary, the minister venerates the altar as usual and goes to his chair.

#### *Second Form*

68. In the Second Form (nos. 83-85), all stand while the Priest (or Deacon) and servers go directly to their places to await the arrival of the bride and groom at the altar. The bride and groom process to the altar. They may be accompanied by their witnesses and parents. Instrumental music usually accompanies the procession. When the bride and groom reach their places, the Priest warmly receives them. Then, during the singing of the Entrance Chant or appropriate hymn, the minister venerates the altar as usual.

69. Following either Form of the entrance, the Sign of the Cross is made and the Priest (or Deacon) greets the entire assembly using one of the formulas provided in the *Roman Missal*. He then addresses the entire assembly or the couple, urging them to be disposed inwardly for the celebration of Marriage. Two formulas are provided in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (no. 87 addresses the assembly; no. 88 addresses the couple).

There is no Penitential Act or Gloria. The Collect (no. 89, 223, 224, 226, 227 or 228) concludes the Introductory Rites.

### **The Liturgy of the Word**

70. The faith of the community is nourished by the proclamation of God's Word. Only biblical texts may be proclaimed during the celebration of Marriage. At least one reading that explicitly speaks of Marriage must always be chosen.

71. Three readings selected from the *Lectionary: Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead* (nos. 801-805) are proclaimed. The First Reading should be chosen from the Old Testament, but during the Easter Time, is taken from the Book of Revelation [no. 802(10)]. The Second Reading is then taken from no. 802(1-9).

72. Attention is to be given to good proclamation, the observance of silence following the first two readings, and the assembly's participation in the singing of the Responsorial Psalm led by a competent cantor. The singing of a familiar setting of the Gospel Acclamation will allow all gathered to greet the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel proclaimed by the minister. The Homily, an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word, follows the proclamation of Scripture. The purpose of the Homily is to expound the mystery of the

Sacrament of Matrimony, the dignity of conjugal love, the grace of the Sacrament, and the responsibilities of married people. It need not be lengthy, but should be well-prepared, keeping in mind the nature of the assembly gathered for the celebration.

### **The Celebration of Matrimony**

73. The celebration of Matrimony consists of the couple's statement of intentions with the Questions before the Consent, declaration of the Consent, and the Reception of the Consent by the Priest or Deacon.

#### *The Questions before the Consent*

74. Following the Homily, all stand. The bride and groom, together with their witnesses, stand before the Priest (or Deacon) who addresses them and invites them to state their intentions by responding to the questions regarding their freedom of choice, fidelity to one another, and the acceptance and upbringing of children.

#### *The Consent*

75. Following the Questions before the Consent, the bride and groom face one another and join their right hands. They declare their consent preferably by their respective declarative statements or for pastoral reasons, in response to questions posed by the minister. Every effort ought to be made so that the voices of the bride and groom can be heard by the members of the assembly who have gathered to witness the Consent.

#### *Reception of the Consent*

76. Following the Consent, the Priest (or Deacon) receives their consent by proclaiming one of the formulas provided (no. 98). Then the minister invites all to praise God, with the words: "Let us bless

the Lord." All reply: "Thanks be to God." Another suitable acclamation, known by the community, may be sung or said.

#### *The Blessing and Giving of Rings*

77. It is customary for the couple to exchange rings as a sign of their love and fidelity. The rings are presented to the minister, usually by the witnesses, and he blesses them using one of the formulas provided (no. 100, 229 or 230). Then he may sprinkle them with blessed water and gives them to the bride and groom. The groom places the wife's ring on her ring finger, saying the formula provided (no. 101). Likewise, the wife places the husband's ring on his ring finger, saying the formula provided.

#### *Hymn or Canticle of Praise*

78. A hymn, expressing gratitude for the gift of married love or a canticle of praise, such as the *Magnificat*, may be sung by the assembly (no. 102). By their participation in the song, the entire community acknowledges and gives thanks for Christ's love which has been manifested in the new covenant established by the couple's declaration of consent. A familiar selection will help all to participate.

#### *The Universal Prayer*

79. The celebration continues with the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful). The Priest (or Deacon) invites all to pray, and another minister announces the intentions, to which all respond as usual. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* provides several examples (nos. 251 and 252); other intercessions may be prepared by the couple and their families. If Holy Communion is not distributed, the intercessions conclude with the Lord's Prayer and the Nuptial Blessing follows.

### *The Nuptial Blessing*

80. After inviting the assembly to pray in silence, the Priest (or Deacon) extends his hands over the bride and groom and invokes God's blessing upon them using one of the formulas (nos. 104, 73 or 241). All respond: "Amen."

### *Holy Communion*

#### *(Exceptional Circumstances)*

81. If, in particular circumstances, namely when the Sacrament of Matrimony is celebrated with two Catholics and a Priest is not available, Holy Communion may be distributed.

Following the Nuptial Blessing, the Deacon approaches the place where the Eucharist is reserved, takes the vessel with the Body of the Lord, places it on the altar and genuflects. He then introduces the Lord's Prayer (no. 109).

At the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, he may invite the faithful to offer one another the Sign of Peace. When this ritual action is completed, the Deacon genuflects, takes a host and, holding it slightly raised above the vessel, facing the people, says: "Behold the Lamb of God..." (no. 111) All respond: "Lord, I am not worthy..."

82. Holy Communion is distributed under the form of bread. During the distribution of Holy Communion an appropriate hymn is sung by the assembly. This is followed by a period of prayerful silence or the singing of a Psalm or canticle of praise. The Prayer after Communion (no. 115) concludes the Communion Rite.

### **The Conclusion of the Celebration**

#### *The Blessing at the end of the Celebration*

83. Following the Lord's Prayer, if there is no distribution of Holy Communion,

or following the Prayer after Communion, a solemn form of the Blessing is given (no. 248, 249 or 250).

### *The Signing of the Marriage Record*

84. Following the blessing, all are invited to be seated while the bride and groom and their witnesses, together with the Priest (or Deacon) sign the Marriage record. The signing may take place in the presence of the assembly or in another place. However, it never takes place on the altar, which is dedicated for the celebration of the Eucharist. Appropriate sacred music – instrumental or vocal – may accompany the signing.

85. Once the Marriage documents have been signed, it is fitting for the Priest (or Deacon) to invite all to stand and greet the newly married couple as they leave the church. Festive instrumental music or a hymn may fittingly be sung to accompany this procession.

## **THE ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY IN THE PRESENCE OF AN ASSISTING LAYPERSON**

86. "The Order of Celebrating Matrimony in the Presence of an Assisting Layperson" who has a faculty from the Diocesan Bishop is essentially the same as "The Order of Celebrating Matrimony outside Mass." The rite ordinarily takes place in a church.

### **The Introductory Rites**

87. The celebration may begin with a procession of the bride and groom, their witnesses and family members. Instrumental music may accompany this procession. When all are in place, the Assisting Layperson greets the couple warmly and says the opening invocation: "Blessed be God ..." All respond: "Amen", or "Blessed be

God for ever", or in some other suitable way (no. 122).

88. The Assisting Layperson addresses the bride and groom, and the entire assembly to dispose them inwardly for the celebration of Matrimony (no. 123 or 124).

89. There is no Collect and the Liturgy of the Word follows immediately.

### **Liturgy of the Word**

90. The faith of the community is nourished by the proclamation of God's Word. Only biblical texts may be proclaimed during the celebration of Marriage. At least one reading that explicitly speaks of Marriage must always be chosen.

91. Three readings selected from the *Lectionary: Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead* (nos. 801-805) are proclaimed. The First Reading should be chosen from the Old Testament, but during the Easter Time, is taken from the Book of Revelation [no. 802(10)]. The Second Reading is then taken from no. 802(1-9).

92. Attention is to be given to good proclamation, the observance of silence following the first two readings, and the assembly's participation in the singing of the Responsorial Psalm led by a competent cantor. The singing of a familiar setting of the Gospel Acclamation will enhance the proclamation of the Good News by the presiding minister or reader.

93. It is appropriate that the Assisting Layperson give an exhortation expounding the mystery of Christian Marriage, the dignity of conjugal love, the grace of the Sacrament, and the responsibilities of married people. It need not be lengthy, but should be well-prepared, keeping in mind the nature of the assembly gathered for the celebration. Alternately, the Assisting

Layperson may read a homily indicated by the Bishop of the pastor.

### **The Celebration of Matrimony**

94. The celebration of Matrimony consists of the couple's statement of intentions with the Questions before the Consent, declaration of the Consent, and the Reception of the Consent by the Assisting Layperson who has been given the faculty from the Diocesan Bishop.

#### *The Questions before the Consent*

95. Following the exhortation, all stand. The bride and groom, together with their witnesses, stand before the Assisting Layperson who addresses them and invites them to state their intentions by responding to the Questions before the Consent (no. 128) regarding their freedom of choice, fidelity to one another, and the acceptance and upbringing of children.

#### *The Consent*

96. Following the Questions before the Consent, the bride and groom face one another and join their right hands. They declare their consent (no. 130) preferably by their respective declarative statements or for pastoral reasons, in response to questions posed by the Assisting Layperson. Every effort ought to be made so that the voices of the bride and groom can be heard by the members of the assembly who have gathered to witness the Consent.

#### *Reception of the Consent*

97. Following the Consent, the Assisting Layperson receives their consent by proclaiming one of the formulas provided (no. 132). Then the Assisting Layperson invites all to praise God, with the words: "Let us bless the Lord." All reply: "Thanks be to

God." Another suitable acclamation, known by the community, may be sung or said.

#### *The Blessing and Giving of Rings*

98. It is customary for the couple to exchange rings as a sign of their love and fidelity. The rings are presented to the Assisting Layperson, usually by the witnesses, and he or she blesses them using one of the formula provided (no. 134). Then he or she may sprinkle them with blessed water and gives them to the bride and groom. The groom places the wife's ring on her ring finger, saying the formula provided (no. 135). Likewise, the wife places the husband's ring on his ring finger, saying the formula provided.

#### *Hymn or Canticle of Praise*

99. A hymn, expressing gratitude for the gift of married love or a canticle of praise, such as the *Magnificat*, may be sung by the assembly (no. 136). By their participation in the song, the entire community acknowledges and gives thanks for Christ's love, which has been manifested in the new covenant established by the couple's declaration of consent. A familiar selection will help all to participate.

#### *The Universal Prayer*

100. The celebration continues with the Universal Prayer. The Assisting Layperson invites all to pray and another minister announces the intentions, to which all respond as usual. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* provides several examples (no. 251 and 252); others may be prepared by the couple and their families. If Holy Communion is not distributed, the intercessions conclude with the Lord's Prayer and the Nuptial Blessing follows.

#### *The Nuptial Blessing*

101. After inviting the assembly to pray in silence, the Assisting Layperson extends his or her hands over the bride and groom and invokes God's blessing upon them (no. 140). After each invocation the assembly responds, "Blessed be God for ever", then, at the conclusion, all respond: "Amen."

#### *Holy Communion (Optional)*

102. If, in particular circumstances, when the celebration of Matrimony is between two Catholics, who participate regularly in the life of the Church, Holy Communion may be distributed after the Nuptial Blessing. The Assisting Layperson approaches the place where the Eucharist is reserved, takes the vessel with the Body of the Lord, places it on the altar and genuflects. He or she then introduces the Lord's Prayer (no. 142). At the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, the Assisting Layperson may invite the faithful to offer one another the Sign of Peace. When this ritual action is completed, the Assisting Layperson genuflects, takes a host and, holding it slightly raised above the vessel, facing the people, says: "Behold the Lamb of God..." All respond: "Lord, I am not worthy..." (no. 144)

103. The Assisting Layperson may receive Holy Communion. Then Holy Communion is distributed under the form of bread only. During Communion, an appropriate hymn is sung by the assembly. This is followed by a period of prayerful silence or the singing of a Psalm or canticle of praise. The Assisting Layperson concludes the Communion Rite with the Prayer after Communion (no. 149).

## THE CONCLUSION OF THE CELEBRATION

104. Following the Lord's Prayer, if Holy Communion is not distributed, or following the Prayer after Communion, the Assisting Layperson signs himself or herself with the Sign of the Cross using the formula provided (no. 150).

### *The Signing of the Marriage Record*

105. Following the Sign of the Cross all are invited to be seated while the bride and groom and their witnesses, together with the Assisting Layperson sign the Marriage record. The signing may take place in the presence of the assembly or in another place. However, it never takes place on the altar, which is dedicated for the celebration of the Eucharist. Appropriate sacred music – instrumental or vocal – may accompany the signing.

106. Once the Marriage documents have been signed, it is fitting for the Assisting Layperson to invite all to stand and greet the newly married couple as they leave the church. Festive instrumental music or a hymn may fittingly be sung to accompany this procession.

## THE ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY BETWEEN A CATHOLIC AND A CATECHUMEN OR A NON-CHRISTIAN

107. When Matrimony is contracted by a Catholic and a catechumen or a non-Christian, the celebration takes place in a church or in another suitable place according to this rite. Having received a dispensation from the Disparity of Cult (see *Code of Canon Law*, cc. 1086, 1125, 1126) a Priest, Deacon, or an Assisting Layperson who has

received delegation from the local Ordinary may preside over the celebration.

### **The Rite of Reception**

108. The celebration begins with the Rite of Reception. The bride and groom, the witnesses and members of their families may be greeted warmly at the door of the church or in another suitable place. A procession with instrumental music may take place following the greeting at the door or prior to the greeting if this is to be done in front of the altar. When all are in place, the presiding minister addresses the bride and groom and the entire assembly to dispose them for the celebration of Matrimony (see no. 154).

109. There is no Collect. The Liturgy of the Word begins immediately.

### **The Liturgy of the Word**

110. The faith of the community is nourished by the proclamation of God's Word. Only biblical texts may be proclaimed during the celebration of Marriage. At least one reading that explicitly speaks of Marriage must always be chosen.

111. Three readings selected from the *Lectionary: Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead* (nos. 801-805) are proclaimed. The First Reading should be chosen from the Old Testament, but during the Easter Time, is taken from the Book of Revelation [no. 802(10)]. The Second Reading is then taken from no. 802(1-9). However, only two or even one reading may be proclaimed if circumstances make this more desirable.

112. Attention is to be given to good proclamation, the observance of silence following the first two readings, and the assembly's participation in the singing of the Responsorial Psalm led by a competent

cantor. The singing of a familiar setting of the Gospel acclamation will enhance the proclamation of the Good News by the presiding minister. The Homily, an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word, follows the proclamation of Scripture. The purpose of the Homily is to expound the mystery of Christian Marriage, the dignity of conjugal love, and should be adapted to the responsibilities and situation of the couple and other circumstances. It is appropriate for an Assisting Layperson to give an exhortation or read a homily indicated by the Bishop or pastor.

### **The Celebration of Matrimony**

113. The celebration of Matrimony consists of the couple's statement of intentions with the Questions before the Consent, declaration of the Consent, and the Reception of the Consent by a Priest, Deacon or an Assisting Layperson who has been given the faculty from the Diocesan Bishop.

#### *The Questions before the Consent*

114. Following the exhortation, all stand. The bride and groom, together with their witnesses, stand before the one who presides, who addresses them (no. 158) and then invites them to state their intentions by responding to the Questions before the Consent regarding their freedom of choice, fidelity to one another, and the acceptance and upbringing of children.

#### *The Consent*

115. Following the Questions before the Consent, the bride and groom face one another and join their right hands. They declare their consent (no. 161) preferably by their respective declarative statements or for pastoral reasons, in response to questions posed by the one who presides. Every effort ought to be made so that the voices of the bride and groom can be heard by

the members of the assembly who have gathered to witness the Consent.

#### *Reception of the Consent*

116. Following the Consent, the one who presides receives their consent by proclaiming one of the formulas provided (no. 163). Then the one who presides invites all to praise God, with the words: "Let us bless the Lord." All reply: "Thanks be to God." Another suitable acclamation, known by the community, may be sung or said.

#### *The Blessing and Giving of Rings*

117. It is customary for the couple to exchange rings as a sign of their love and fidelity. The rings are presented to the one who presides, usually by the witnesses, a Priest or Deacon blesses them using one of the formulas provided (no. 165, 229 or 230) or for an Assisting Layperson (no. 166). Then the presiding minister may sprinkle them with blessed water and gives them to the bride and groom. The groom places the wife's ring on her ring finger, saying the formula provided (no. 167). Likewise, the wife places the husband's ring on his ring finger, saying the formula provided.

#### *Hymn or Canticle of Praise*

118. A hymn, expressing gratitude for the gift of married love or a canticle of praise, such as the *Magnificat*, may be sung by the assembly (no. 168). By their participation in the song, the entire community acknowledges and gives thanks for Christ's love which has been manifested in the new covenant established by the couple's declaration of consent. A familiar selection will help all to participate.

#### *The Universal Prayer*

119. The celebration continues with the Universal Prayer. The presiding minister

invites all to pray and another minister announces the intentions, to which all respond as usual. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* provides several examples (nos. 251 and 252); other intercessions may be prepared by the couple and their families. At the conclusion of the intercessions, the presiding minister invites all Christians present to say the Lord's Prayer. The Nuptial Blessing follows.

#### *The Nuptial Blessing*

120. After inviting the assembly to pray in silence, the minister extends his or her hands over the bride and groom and invokes God's blessing upon them using one of the formula provided. A Priest or a Deacon may use (no. 172) while an Assisting Layperson may use (no. 173). All respond: "Amen." If because of circumstances, the Nuptial Blessing is omitted, a prayer is spoken over the bride and groom (see no. 174).

### **The Conclusion of the Celebration**

#### *The Blessing*

121. Following the Nuptial Blessing or the prayer over the couple, a simple blessing is given by a Priest or Deacon (no. 175), or by an Assisting Layperson (no. 176).

#### *The Signing of the Marriage Record*

122. Following the blessing, all are invited to be seated while the bride and groom and their witnesses, together with the Priest, Deacon, or Assisting Layperson sign the Marriage record. The signing may take place in the presence of the assembly or in another place. However, it never takes place on the altar, which is dedicated for the celebration of the Eucharist. Appropriate sacred music – instrumental or vocal – may accompany the signing.

123. Once the Marriage documents have been signed, it is fitting for the presiding minister to invite all to stand and greet the newly married couple as they leave the church. Festive instrumental music or a hymn may fittingly be sung to accompany this procession.

### **THE ORDER OF BLESSING AN ENGAGED COUPLE**

124. The rite provided may be used as part of a family celebration, in which case a parent may preside. If a Priest or Deacon is present, he fittingly takes on the role of presiding. The rite may also be used when couples are brought together for marriage preparation of for a parish celebration outside Mass.

This rite may be celebrated with an individual couple or with several couples at the same time, and therefore, is to be adapted according to circumstances. It is always celebrated outside of Mass.

### **Introductory Rites**

125. The celebration begins with the Sign of the Cross and a greeting by the presiding minister (see nos. 257 or 258). Following the greeting, the presiding minister addresses those present, inviting them to enter into this moment of prayer (no. 259).

### **Reading of the Word of God**

126. Following the Introductory Rites, the presiding minister or another person proclaims a text of Sacred Scripture. Two texts are provided in the ritual and others are suggested (see nos. 260-262). A Responsorial Psalm may be sung or said following the proclamation of the Reading (no. 263), or another suitable song may be sung.

127. Following the reading (and Psalm or song), the one who presides may offer a reflection on the biblical reading and words of encouragement to the bride and groom as they prepare for the Sacrament of Matrimony.

### **Prayers**

128. The Word of God is followed by prayers. A form of intercessory prayer is provided (no. 265). The one who presides may select from those provided and may add others that are applicable to the circumstances.

129. At the conclusion of the prayers, the couple may express some sign of their promise to each other, for example, by signing a document, or by the giving of rings or other gifts. If rings or gifts are exchanged, these may be blessed using the formula provided (no. 267).

### **Prayer of Blessing & Conclusion**

130. The celebration concludes with a prayer of blessing said by the presiding minister. Two texts are provided (nos. 268 or 269). A final dismissal is addressed to everyone present. It is fitting, as circumstances suggest, to end the celebration with a suitable hymn or chant.

## **THE ORDER OF BLESSING A MARRIED COUPLE WITHIN MASS ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF MARRIAGE**

131. "The Order of Blessing a Married Couple within Mass on the Anniversary of Marriage" is intended to celebrate significant milestone anniversaries. The rite takes place at the end of the Liturgy of the Word following the Homily.

132. On Sundays and Solemnities throughout the year, the proper Mass of the Day is celebrated. On weekdays during Ordinary

Time, the prayers in the *Roman Missal* (Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, no. 11 "On the Anniversaries of Marriage"), may be used. Suitable Readings from the *Lectionary: Ritual Masses, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, Votive Masses, Masses for the Dead*, (nos. 801-805 or 943-947) may be used except on Sundays and Solemnities.

### **Invitation to Prayer**

133. Following the Homily, the Priest invites the couple to pray in silence and to renew their commitment to live their Marriage in holiness using the formula provided (no. 275).

### **Renewal of Commitment**

134. The couple may renew their commitment silently or may do so publicly using the formula provided (no. 277).

### **The Blessing of Rings**

135. The couple's wedding rings may be blessed (and honoured with incense), or new rings may be presented and blessed (nos. 278 or 279).

### **The Universal Prayer**

136. The Prayer of the Faithful may follow. This may take the form of the usual intercessions for the day. Alternately, the text provided (no. 280) may be used. If the celebration takes place on Sunday or on another day when the rubrics require it, the Creed is said.

### **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

137. During the Preparation of the Gifts, it is appropriate for the husband and wife to present the gifts of bread and wine for the Eucharist.

### **Prayer of Blessing**

138. After the Lord's Prayer, the Priest, facing the couple, offers the Prayer of Blessing, using the formula provided (no. 283). The liturgy continues in the usual way. In accordance with local custom, the couple and all others offer one another the Sign of Peace.

### **Communion**

139. The couple may receive Holy Communion under both kinds.

### **Blessing and Dismissal**

140. At the end of Mass, the Priest blesses the couple either in the usual manner or by using a solemn form of the blessing (see no. 286).



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