

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage (2)

Adapted from The Book of Common Prayer 1979

Concerning the Service

At least one of the parties must be a baptized Christian; the ceremony must be attested by at least two witnesses; and the marriage must conform to the laws of the State.

A priest or a bishop normally presides at the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, because such ministers alone have the function of pronouncing the nuptial blessing, and of celebrating the Holy Eucharist.

When both a bishop and a priest are present and officiating, the bishop should pronounce the blessing and preside at the Eucharist.

A deacon, or an assisting priest, may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other assisting functions at the Eucharist.

Where it is permitted by civil law that deacons may perform marriages, and no priest or bishop is available, a deacon may use the service which follows, omitting the nuptial blessing which follows The Prayers.

It is desirable that the Lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles be read by lay persons.

In the opening exhortation (at the symbol of *N. N.*), the full names of the persons to be married are declared. Subsequently, only their Christian names are used.

Additional Directions are on page 10 of this document.

The text of these rites is taken from pages 97-103,105 of the Supplemental Materials provided to the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church by the Standing Committee on Liturgy and Music.

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At the time appointed, the persons to be married, with their witnesses, assemble in the church or some other appropriate place.

During their entrance, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

Then the Celebrant, facing the people and the persons to be married, addresses the congregation and says

Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of N. and N. in Holy Matrimony. The joining of two people in a life of mutual fidelity signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and so it is worthy of being honored among all people.

The union of two people in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the gift of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

Into this holy union N. N. and N. N. now come to be joined.

If any of you can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, speak now; or else for ever hold your peace.

Then the Celebrant says to the persons to be married

I require and charge you both, here in the presence of God, that if either of you knows any reason why you may not be united in marriage lawfully, and in accordance with God's Word, you do now confess it.

The Declaration of Consent

The Celebrant says to one member of the couple, then to the other

N., will you have this woman/man/person to be your wife/husband/spouse; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her/him, comfort her/him, honor and keep her/him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her/him as long as you both shall live?

Answer I will.

The Celebrant then addresses the congregation, saying

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

People We will.

If there is to be a presentation or a giving in marriage, it takes place at this time.

See Additional Directions.

A hymn, psalm, or anthem may follow.

The Ministry of the Word

The Celebrant then says to the people

The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Celebrant Let us pray.

O gracious and everliving God, you have created humankind in your image: Look mercifully upon *N.* and *N.* who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Then one or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture is read. Other readings from Scripture suitable for the occasion may be used. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.

Genesis 1:26–28 (*Male and female he created them*)

Song of Solomon 2:10–13; 8:6–7 (*Many waters cannot quench love*)

Tobit 8:5b–8 (New English Bible) (*That she and I may grow old together*)

1 Corinthians 13:1–13 (*Love is patient and kind*)

Ephesians 3:14–19 (*The Father from whom every family is named*)

Ephesians 5:1–2 (*Walk in love, as Christ loved us*)

Colossians 3:12–17 (*Love which binds everything together in harmony*)

1 John 4:7–16 (*Let us love one another, for love is of God*)

Between the Readings, a psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate psalms are Psalm 67, Psalm 127, and Psalm 128.

When a passage from the Gospel is to be read, all stand, and the Deacon or Minister appointed says

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to _____.
People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Matthew 5:1–10 (*The Beatitudes*)

Matthew 5:13–16 (*You are the light ... Let your light so shine*)

Matthew 7:21, 24–29 (*Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock*)

John 15:9–12 (*Love one another as I have loved you*)

After the Gospel, the Reader says

The Gospel of the Lord.
People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

A homily or other response to the Readings may follow.

The Marriage

Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the hand of the other and says

In the Name of God, I, N., take you, N., to be my wife/husband/spouse,
to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better for worse, for richer for poorer,
in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish,
until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.

The Priest may ask God's blessing on rings as follows

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

The giver places the ring on the ring finger of the other's hand and says

N., I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow,
and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you,
in the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit [or in the Name of God].

Then the Celebrant joins the right hands of the couple and says

Now that *N.* and *N.* have given themselves to each other by solemn vows,
with the joining of hands and the giving and receiving of rings,
I pronounce that they are wed to one another,
in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

People Amen.

The Prayers

All standing, the Celebrant says

Let us pray together in the words our Savior taught us.

People and Celebrant

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

If Communion is to follow, the Lord's Prayer may be omitted here.

The Deacon or other person appointed reads the following prayers, to which the People respond, saying, Amen.

If there is not to be a Communion, one or more of the prayers may be omitted.

Leader 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 *N.* whom you make one flesh in Holy Matrimony. *Amen.*

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. *Amen.*

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. *Amen.*

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

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. *Amen.*

| Bestow on them, if it is your will, the gift and heritage of children, and the grace to bring them up to know you, to love you, and to serve you. *Amen.*

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

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

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 Blessing of the Marriage

The People remain standing. The couple kneel, and the Priest says one of the following prayers

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to make the way of the cross to be the way of life. We thank you, also, for consecrating the union of two people in his Name. By the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing upon *N.* and *N.* Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death. Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table where your saints feast

for ever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

or this

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his Church: Send therefore your blessing upon these your servants, that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The couple still kneeling, the Priest adds this blessing

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting. *Amen.*

The Peace

The Celebrant may say to the People

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People And also with you.

The newly married couple then greet each other, after which greetings may be exchanged throughout the congregation.

When Communion is not to follow, the wedding party leaves the church. A hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

At the Eucharist

The liturgy continues with the Offertory, at which the newly married couple may present the offerings of bread and wine.

Preface of the Season

At the Communion, it is appropriate that the newly married couple receive Communion first, after the ministers.

In place of the usual postcommunion prayer, the following is said

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 N., now joined in Holy Matrimony,
may become one in heart and soul,
live in fidelity and peace,
and obtain those eternal joys prepared for all who love you;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

As the wedding party leaves the church, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

The Blessing of a Civil Marriage

The rite begins as prescribed for celebrations of the Holy Eucharist, using the Collect and Lessons appointed in the Marriage service.

After the Gospel (and homily), the couple stand before the Celebrant, who addresses them in these or similar words

N. and N., you have come here today to seek the blessing of God and of his Church upon your marriage. I require, therefore, that you promise, with the help of God, to fulfill the obligations which Christian Marriage demands.

The Celebrant then addresses one member of the couple, then the other, saying

N., you have taken N. to be your wife/husband/spouse. Do you promise to love her/him, comfort her/him, honor and keep her/him, in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, to be faithful to her/him as long as you both shall live?

Answer I do.

The Celebrant then addresses the congregation, saying

Will you who have witnessed these promises do all in your power to uphold these two persons in their marriage?

People We will.

If rings are to be blessed, the members of the couple extend their hands toward the Priest [or Bishop], who says

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

The Celebrant joins the right hands of the couple and says

Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder

People Amen.

The service continues with The Prayers found above.

Additional Directions

If Banns are to be published, the following form is used

I publish the Banns of Marriage between *N. N.* of _____ and *N. N.* of _____ . If any of you know just cause why they may not be joined together in Holy Matrimony, you are bidden to declare it. This is the first [or second, or third] time of asking.

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage may be used with any authorized liturgy for the Holy Eucharist.

This service then replaces the Ministry of the Word, and the Eucharist begins with the Offertory.

After the Declaration of Consent, if there is to be a giving in marriage, or presentation, the Celebrant asks,

Who presents [gives] these two people to be married to each other?

The appropriate answer is, "I do." If more than one person responds, they do so together.

For the Ministry of the Word it is fitting that the couple to be married remain where they may conveniently hear the reading of Scripture. They may approach the Altar, either for the exchange of vows, or for the Blessing of the Marriage.

It is appropriate that all remain standing until the conclusion of the Collect. Seating may be provided for the wedding party, so that all may be seated for the Lessons and the homily.

The Apostles' Creed may be recited after the Lessons, or after the homily, if there is one.

When desired, some other suitable symbol of the vows may be used in place of the ring.

At the Offertory, it is desirable that the bread and wine be presented to the ministers by the newly married persons. They may then remain before the Lord's Table and receive Holy Communion before other members of the congregation.