CELEBRATING MARRIAGE
National Bulletin on Liturgy

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This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope, and is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, teachers, religious and clergy, and all who are involved in preparing and celebrating the community liturgy.

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CELEBRATING MARRIAGE

The Catholic Church recognizes marriage as a sacrament, established by the Lord Jesus. Many other Churches do not accept this, but do agree with us that marriage is a sacred event in the lives of the couple and of the community; it is to be marked and blessed by public prayer and worship.

Bulletin 59 looks at the ways in which liturgy and ritual can help us in:

- Deepening the faith of the Christian community;
- Helping couples prepare for life in marriage;
- Preparing for a Christian celebration of marriage;
- Celebrating the wedding liturgy.

Good celebration of marriage depends mainly on the believing community, which needs to develop and set standards to be expected of all its members. In the past, our standards were high; what is to be said of them now in the average parish or worshipping community? This Bulletin discusses how parishes may help to improve the way in which Catholic people prepare for and celebrate the sacrament of marriage.
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A SIGN OF HIS LOVE

In the Old Testament, God compared his love for Israel to the love of a husband for his wife; turning away from God to worship idols was called adultery or infidelity.

In the New Testament, the love of husband and wife is compared to that of Christ for his Church. The love of a man and his bride — whether on their wedding day, during the years of raising children, or on their golden anniversary — is a continuing sign of Jesus’ love for his people.

Marriage and family life have been subjected in our time to many devastating attacks. The claims of God and his Church are scoffed at as old-fashioned. Public morality has been determined too much by the flagrant sins of movie stars and singing idols, and not by the teaching of Christ.

If we are going to bring Christian marriage back to its proper place in our society, the work will have to be done by us — by ordinary people in parishes, by young people, by catechists and teachers, pastors and bishops. The work has to go on in each home and parish, school and diocese. And the Holy Spirit of truth will guide us and strengthen us as we strive to obey the will of Christ and of his Father.

Renewal is needed in many aspects of marriage and family life: in attitudes, Christian values, handing on the faith to children; family prayer, discipline, penance, morality; preparation for marriage and other vocations, celebration of marriage; parish support for family living; counselling; and in many more areas.

To continue to wring our hands and do nothing is to surrender the field to Satan and the powers of evil. To begin now to work toward a gradual renewal in marriage and family life means that Christ once more can conquer the gates of hell in our time, and restore the kingdom a little more fully to his heavenly Father.

Which will it be? Whose side are we on?

Give us strength, Father of lights,
to work with Christ and his Church,
with all your sons and daughters,
to restore Christian principles in marriage.
Guide us as we work with young people
as they prepare for their vocation of marriage.
Help us to encourage parents and children to pray,
and to live together according to the mind of Christ.
Give your strength to husbands and wives,
and let their married lives continue to reflect
the love of Christ for his bride, the Church.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen!
In this brief glance at marriage rites throughout the lifetime of the Christian Church, we see how different cultures and eras have formed their ceremonies around certain basic elements.

First: Three Centuries

The first Christians celebrated marriage according to local traditions and family customs, and gradually adapted these to Christian ways. In most cultures, the bride was the center of the marriage celebration.

**Israel:** The Church was born in a Jewish milieu. For the Jews, marriage was a domestic rite protected by a civil contract and the laws in the scriptures. Betrothal took place some time ahead of the marriage, when the bride’s father said to the future husband, “Today you will be my son-in-law” (see 1 Sam. 18: 21). At this time the dowry was settled. Mary was betrothed to Joseph at the time of the annunciation (Lk. 1: 27).

The marriage ceremony included a contract (probably written): see Tob. 7: 13. The man simply stated that she was his wife and that he was her husband forever; the bride said nothing. The groom wore a wreath (see Is. 61: 10), and his friends went with him to the bride’s home, along with a band and tambourines (see 1 Mac. 9: 39). The bride wore her jewellery (see Is. 61: 10; Ps. 45: 14-15) and veiled her face (see Song of Songs 4: 1). Her bridesmaids accompanied her to the groom’s house (Ps. 45: 15-16). Both Ps. 45 and the Song of Songs are wedding chants.

The wedding feast took place in the home of the groom, and usually continued for a week (see Judges 14: 10-12). The book of Tobit (7: 9 — 10: 13) mentions other elements connected with the marriage rites.

**Pagan marriages:** Basic practices in the area around the Mediterranean included:

- **Consent makes the marriage:** Roman law required the parties to give their consent freely, and also needed the agreement of their parents.

- **Solemn betrothal:** This promise to marry in the future usually took place during a meal with relatives and friends. The man gave his fiancee an iron ring (gold after the second century) and some presents. Later, a kiss was added to this rite.

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Marriage: Three distinct periods marked the celebration of the marriage:

- Veil: An orange veil was placed on the bride’s head with a crown of flowers. This veil was the sign that she was a married woman.

- Consent: In the morning, a number of ceremonies took place at the bride’s home: the matron of honor presented the bride, who was dressed in white; soothsayers were consulted; the wedding contract was read aloud and the witnesses signed it; then the couple exchanged their consent. The bride was given to her husband by joining their right hands. A sacrifice of a sheep was offered to the household gods, and the wedding banquet began.

- Procession: In the evening, the nuptial procession led them with torches to the groom’s house. This was usually accompanied by bawdy shouts and songs.

Christian marriage: In the first three centuries, Christians followed the traditional practices of betrothal and marriage, but removed idolatrous elements (soothsayers and sacrifice), and cleaned up the bawdiness during the procession.²

The Roman idea of consent was accepted, but divorce was forbidden, following the teaching of Christ. Early in the second century, Ignatius of Antioch said that it was proper for Christians to marry with the bishop’s approval: in this way their marriage would be according to the Lord rather than passion. The bishop’s permission was also needed for cases not approved by Roman law and for the marriage of a cleric.

Christians who married were joined in Christ. Early Christian art shows the Lord Jesus presiding at the marriage. He places the veil over the couple, who join their right hands on the gospel book. Around the year 200, Tertullian mentions that their marriage is blessed in the celebration of the eucharist.

Developments in the Roman Liturgy

Early in the fourth century, Constantine ended the persecution of the Church. In the following decades, Christian worship expanded and developed rapidly. In various parts of the empire, different elements of traditional wedding customs were made part of the liturgy.

Exchange of consent: When family and society were strong and stable, the Church did not have to set a definite formula for the exchange of consent. Ambrose mentions the ring, the gifts, and the kiss in the betrothal rites. As the empire of Charlemagne started to collapse in the ninth and tenth centuries, however, the Church began to adopt a more formal approach, changing domestic practices to liturgical rites. The Church protected the freedom of the bride’s consent by placing more emphasis on marriage as public in nature; this was a battle that continued down to the sixteenth century.

In Normandy, consent was made public by having it exchanged at the church door; no longer did the rite take place in the bride’s home. In the twelfth century,

² For more details on this period, see “Marriage among Early Christians: A Consideration for the Future,” by John Kevin Coyle, OSA, in Eglise et Théologie (St. Paul’s University, 223 Main St., Ottawa, Ontario K1S 1C4), vol. 8, no. 1, January 1977, pages 73-89.
the ceremony included sprinkling with holy water; questions by the priest to make sure that they were free to marry; instruction on Christian living. Then the priest asked the parents to give their daughter to the groom, the groom gave her the dowry, and the contract was read aloud. The ring was blessed and put on the bride's right hand.

After a blessing, they entered the Church for the wedding Mass. The couple held lighted candles, and gave them as an offering during the preparation of the gifts (offertory). After the Lord's prayer, a veil was placed over them, and the nuptial blessing was said, followed by the kiss of peace.

These rites, which combine elements of betrothal and marriage, passed into the *Roman Ritual* of 1614. This book noted that other local customs which are praiseworthy may be retained in the celebration of marriage.

**Nuptial blessing:** In the second half of the fourth century, this blessing was said at Rome while the priest placed the veil on the bride's head and on the groom's shoulders. The bride remained at the center of the celebration of marriage, for the blessing was given to her alone: it was in the form of a prayer of consecration. It proclaims that marriage comes from God and is blessed by him; marriage is a sign of the union of Christ and his Church. Until 1963, the blessing of the bride was not given during Advent or Lent, or to a woman marrying for the second time.

**Wedding Mass:** In the early middle ages the nuptial blessing was given after the Lord's prayer. Then the priest gave the kiss of peace to the groom, who gave it to his bride. Their communion followed that of the priest. St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) reminds us that their marriage is particularly related to the eucharist, which is the wedding banquet of Christ and his Church.

- *The texts* of the Mass taught about Christian marriage. The Council of Trent chose readings from Eph. 5: 22-33 and Mt. 19: 3-6 to emphasize that the marriage of two baptized persons is a sacrament.
- *Final blessing:* This prayer for the couple was used in the eleventh century in Spain as the priest gave the bride to the groom. A prayer text based on the book of Tobit (chapters 9 and 11) dates from the thirteenth century.

**Eastern Churches**

From the fourth century, the Eastern Churches emphasized the crowning of the couple while the West used the rite of veiling. For the past thousand years, betrothal and marriage rites have been combined in one ceremony. Consent is exchanged and the rings are blessed (betrothal rites), and the office of crowning the couple forms the marriage ceremony. St. John Chrysostom (c. 349-407) considered the crowns as a sign of the couple's victory over passion; others have seen them as reminders of the crown of martyrdom through self-sacrifice.

Another common Eastern practice is to give the couple a cup of wine as a reminder of the wedding feast of Cana, and as a symbol of the common life they are beginning.
Different prayers, readings, and formularies are used in the various Eastern Churches for the celebration of marriage. For the Orthodox Church, free consent of the couple is required, but it is considered that the priest is the minister of the sacrament, and that it is Christ who makes the couple one in his sacrament. The rite of betrothal takes place at the church entrance, and then all go in procession to the lectern for the marriage rite. The bride and groom hold lighted candles during it. The crowning precedes the epistle, and the common cup is given after the gospel. At the end of the celebration, the priest leads the couple three times around the altar.

Protestant Reformation

Luther (1483-1546) considered marriage as both sacred and secular, but not a sacrament. Regulation was to be left primarily to the state or town council, and the Church was to bless the newlywed couple, offer prayers for them, and recall for them the meaning of marriage. Many formulas developed in the first few years of the Reformation, often based on local Catholic rites. In 1529, Luther published his order of marriage to replace the wedding Mass. This order consisted of banns, marriage at the church entrance, and a blessing at the altar. A public betrothal with the parents' approval preceded the wedding ceremony.

Martin Luther approved the idea of bringing the couple to the church for God's blessing, and decried the jeering and joking that surrounded weddings.

The marriage rite at the church door included consent followed by the exchange of rings, the reading of Mt. 19:6b, and the declaration of their marriage. Then they went to the altar for the religious ceremony. The pastor read Gen. 2:18, 21-24, and gave a brief exhortation, formed mainly of scripture passages. Luther himself used to preach at this point on the meaning of marriage for Christians. After the exhortation, the pastor spread his hands over the couple, and said a collect for them.

Anglican Church: The first prayer book of 1549 arranged the solemnization of matrimony in this order:

- Banns are published on three Sundays or holy days before the wedding.
- Exhortation: The service begins with a brief exhortation, and a public charge to reveal any impediments.
- Consent: The minister asks each party to give consent. Each answers, "I will."
- Giving of the bride: The minister receives her from her father or friend, and has the groom take her by the right hand.
- Pledge of fidelity: The groom and then the bride promises to be faithful.


Ring: The man places the ring and other tokens of marriage on the book, and then places the ring on her finger.

Prayer: The minister says a collect.

Declaration of marriage: Joining their right hands together, the minister quotes Mt. 19: 6b, and declares before the community that this couple is man and wife.

Blessing: He blesses the couple with a Trinitarian formula and the sign of the cross.

Psalm: In the choir of the church, Ps. 128 or Ps. 67 is sung.

Prayers: At the altar the priest leads in the Lord, have mercy, Lord's prayer, versicles and responses, and says three collects; the second one is omitted when the woman is past the age of childbirth.

Blessing: He blesses them and makes the sign of the cross during the formula.

Sermon: After the gospel, the priest gives a sermon on the duties of man and wife as recorded in scripture; if there is no sermon, a scriptural exhortation is read from the prayer book.

Communion: The rite closes with this rubric: "The newe maried persones (the same daye of their mariage) must receiue the holy communion."

In the 1552 edition, the rite is substantially the same. The sign of the cross is omitted in the blessings. A rubric specifically states that the marriage takes place during the communion service (which now replaces the Mass). The requirement to receive communion remains as in 1549.

Canada: The Book of Common Prayer (1959) follows the 1549 rite in substance.6 A table of kindred and affinity precedes the rite. The ring may be blessed before it is given. The couple kneels for the prayers. The register may be signed after the first blessing of the couple or at the end of the service. Ps. 127 may replace Ps. 128. Some changes are made in the collects. For the eucharist, a collect, epistle (Col. 3: 15-24), and gospel (Mt. 19: 4-6) are added. A rubric notes that it is fitting for the couple to receive communion at the time of their marriage or at the first opportunity after it.

As alternatives, the recent revisions used in England and the United States are authorized for use in the Anglican Church of Canada.

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6 See The Book of Common Prayer... according to the use of the Anglican Church of Canada... (1959, Anglican Book Center, Toronto), pages 562-572: The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony.
• United States: In the ritual book approved in the fall of 1976, three rites are given for marriage.6 The outline below is for the celebration and blessing of a marriage:
  — Entrance rites: entrance song or music; address to congregation and to couple; declaration of consent; (giving in marriage); congregation called to be witnesses; hymn.
  — Ministry of the word: collect; one or more scripture readings with psalm; homily or other response to readings.
  — Marriage rite: “I take you,” and blessing of rings; declaration of marriage.
  — Blessing of the marriage: ten brief prayers; Lord’s prayer; prayer and blessing over kneeling couple; kiss of peace; recessional.
  — Eucharist: rubrics are provided for the celebration of the eucharist at the wedding.

• Church of South India: In 1947, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and other missionary groups united to form the Church of South India. During the next 15 years, various forms of rites were developed from the liturgies of the uniting Churches, and adaptations were made according to the culture of India. In 1962, The Book of Common Worship was authorized.7

The marriage service begins with a lyric8 or hymn, and an exhortation. After asking about impediments, the minister continues the service. The couple may garland each other, and a collect is said. The minister asks for their consent. Then the parent or guardian (or minister) puts the bride’s right hand into the groom’s right hand. Each pledges fidelity to the other. The minister states that God has heard their vows, and that all present are witnesses.

The mangalasutra, ring, or rings may be blessed, and the ring is placed on the finger of the bride (and of the groom if two rings are used). The mangalasutra is a treasured necklace, worn by a married woman whose husband is alive. It holds a pendant containing a precious stone or other object considered sacred by the family. (Mangalasutra comes from the words for “happiness” or “welfare,” and for “thread.”)

The minister declares them man and wife, and cites Mt. 19: 6b. The couple kneels, and the minister blesses them.

Prayers: A lyric or hymn is followed by one or two psalms (67, 128). The ceremony of the seven steps may take place during Ps. 67, with a pause after

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8 A lyric is a Christian hymn composed by an Indian writer and sung to Indian music.
each verse while the couple takes one step forward. A bible or New Testament may be given to the couple; 1 Cor. 13: 4-13 is read, followed by a sermon, the Lord's prayer, verses and responses, and four collects. If the Lord's supper is to be celebrated, the service begins at the breaking of bread (offertory); otherwise the minister concludes with the grace (2 Cor. 13: 13). A lyric or hymn may be sung while the register is being signed.

United Church of Canada: The current rite (1969) puts emphasis on both the civil and the religious significance of the marriage rite, and on dignified music suitable for a worship service. The rite has three main steps.

- **Banrs**: If published before the marriage, these follow provincial government laws.

- **The approach** (introductory rites) consists of a processional hymn of praise as the bridal party enters the church; scripture sentences; admonition (about impediments), and a prayer of approach.

- **Word of God**: An epistle, psalm, and gospel are read; Mt. 19: 4-6 is always added. The minister speaks to the people and then to the couple.

- **Response**: The minister invites the congregation to pray for the bride and groom as they make their marriage vows, and asks the Father to send the Spirit upon them. Then all the people may stand. The minister asks the couple if they wish to take each other; the father gives the bride in marriage. With right hands joined, they repeat the vows. The minister declares that they are married, and the couple may kiss.

After he says a blessing, the couple may kneel for four collects. All say the Lord's prayer, a hymn is sung, and the minister dismisses the congregation with a blessing. Then the register is signed.

Further rubrics describe how the Lord’s supper is celebrated at a wedding, and how to bless a civil marriage. In 1971, an alternative form in contemporary language was authorized.

* * *

**Helpful reading:**


*Église et Théologie*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1977):

- “Couple et sexualité selon le Nouveau Testament,” by Marcel Dumais, OMI, pages 47-72;


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OUR PRESENT RITES

The revised rite for celebrating marriage was issued by the Congregation of Rites on March 19, 1969, and was translated that year by ICEL, the International Committee on English in the Liturgy. When approved by the Canadian bishops for use in this country, it was published in Bulletin 30.

Teaching of Vatican II

The marriage of two Christians is both a sign of and a sharing in the love and unity between Jesus and his Church. In their life together and in raising their children, they grow in holiness. The family is like a little Church, and parents are the first to teach the faith to their children by word and by example (see Constitution on the Church, no. 11).

The well-being of society and of the Church depends greatly on the strength of family life. Marriage is a community of love, and all should strive to protect and foster it.

God is the author of marriage, founding it "in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent." When the parties give and receive each other freely, a bond is made by God's will, one which both God and human society recognize as permanent. The bond is permanent — for the good of the couple, their children, and society as well.

Through this sacrament, Christ enters the life of the couple, and remains with them to help them to be faithful in their love for each other. The sacrament of marriage gives them strength to live up to the duties and dignity of their vocation (see Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, nos. 47-52).

Renewed rites: In the light of this teaching, the Council recognized that the rites of marriage needed to be enriched in order to express more fully both the grace of this sacrament and the duties of the couple. Local praiseworthy customs are encouraged, as at the Council of Trent: ceremonies may be adapted to local cultures. The rite of marriage must always have the priest request and receive the couple's consent.

Until Vatican II, the wedding was celebrated before Mass began; if Mass was not celebrated, no scripture readings were included in the rite. In 1963, the Council stated that the wedding would be within the Mass, after the gospel and homily, and before the general intercessions: this was considered to be the norm; if celebrated outside Mass, scripture readings are proclaimed from those in the wedding Mass.

Until 1963, the nuptial blessing was given to the bride only, but not during Lent and Advent, or when the bride was marrying a second time. The Council said that the blessing should be given to the couple in every wedding celebration (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 77-78).
Outline of New Rite

Contents of the new rite: The present rite contains these sections:

- Decree of the Congregation of Rites.
- Rite for celebrating marriage during Mass (nos. 19-38).
- Rite for celebrating marriage outside Mass (nos. 39-54).
- Rite for celebrating marriage between a Catholic and an unbaptized person (nos. 55-66).
- Scripture readings (nos. 67-105). These are now included in the lectionary, nos. 774-778.
- Other texts for use in the marriage rite and in the wedding Mass (nos. 106-127). The Mass texts are now included in the sacramentary.

The basic elements of the marriage celebration are studied in the following pages. Most of the rites have been part of the celebration for centuries, as is seen in the previous article.

Structure: The wedding liturgy fits within the Mass in this way:

- Introductory rites
- Liturgy of the word
- Liturgy of marriage
- Liturgy of the eucharist
- Concluding rites.

Entrance Rite

The introductory rites build the sense of oneness in Christ by helping the individuals and families who have assembled to become one community in worship and praise. In this way, we are all ready to hear the word of God and to celebrate the wedding liturgy and the eucharist more devoutly (GI, no. 25).¹

Procession: Several alternatives are provided for the processional entry of the priest and ministers, and of the bridal party (rite, nos. 19-20).

- First alternative: The priest vests for Mass (normally in white: rite, no. 11), and goes in procession to the main door of the church. It would be fitting for the procession to be more solemn, as on Sunday, with cross and candles, deacon or reader carrying the lectionary, and a thurifer with smoking thurible (see GI, no. 82).

On arriving at the door, the priest greets the couple in a warm and friendly way: he shows them that the Church of God is rejoicing with them on this day.

¹ GI: This abbreviation indicates the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Written as a pastoral introduction and explanation of the rites of the Mass, it is found at the beginning of the sacramentary. In the Canadian edition, it is given on pages 11-54. If we are to understand the renewed Mass and to celebrate it properly, we must become quite familiar with the General Instruction.
Then they go to the altar in one procession: the ministers lead the priest, and the couple follow him. They may be accompanied by their parents and the two witnesses, and also by others where this is customary.

The entrance hymn is sung during this procession to the altar (GI, nos. 83, 25-26). Further notes on this are given in this Bulletin in the article on Music and singing.

- **Second alternative:** The ministers and priest go in procession as usual (the Sunday form of the procession would be preferable). He greets the couple warmly, as mentioned above; if for some reason it is considered better to omit the words of welcome, Mass begins at once. The rite does not describe any particular method by which the bridal party comes to their places.

- **No other format** is provided in the present rite. (The 1954 rite described the entrance in this way: the parents or friends lead the couple to the altar in a solemn manner.)

- **Another custom** in our country has the groom and best man seated in the front pew. After all the guests are in their places, the bride and her attendants arrive. (The practice of having the bride arrive late shows disrespect to the gathered community of worshippers.) The attendants lead the bride to the altar (almost as though she were the presiding minister). She is accompanied by her father, who gives her to the groom at the front, and the couple moves to their place. Meanwhile, during this procession, the priest and ministers wait in the sanctuary, and organ music is usually played.

This procedure certainly does not qualify as a “praiseworthy custom” (Liturgy constitution, no. 77): the entrance of the bride and her attendants often turns out to be a fashion show done at an extremely slow pace, rather than a liturgical procession; moreover, the congregation is deprived of its rightful part in the entrance chant, and is subverted from praising to gazing.

The parish liturgy committee should make an effort to encourage the more solemn form of procession (the first alternative above), and gradually let this become an established practice in their community of faith.

- **Other introductory rites:** The first part of the Mass takes part in the normal manner, preferably with the amount of solemnity used on Sunday. The Glory to God may be used when the wedding Mass is celebrated, since this qualifies as a special local celebration (GI, no. 31). As in any celebration, care needs to be taken that the introductory rites are not overemphasized by too much song.

- **Choice of Mass texts:** The sacramentary provides three ritual Masses for the celebration; in the Canadian edition these are nos. 446-448, pages 884-893. Three prefaces (nos. 72-74) are also available for the Mass. On a solemnity or

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2 See *Collectio Rituum ad instar appendicis Ritualis Romani...* (1954, Bruce, Milwaukee), page 107, no. 2.
Sunday, the Mass and color of the day are used. One of the nuptial blessings is given as usual, and a solemn blessing may be used: the texts are with the wedding Masses in the sacramentary (rite, no. 11).

**Liturgy of the Word of God**

The liturgy of the word is the first of the two major parts of the Mass. When the priest is seated at the chair to preside over the liturgy of the word, all sit in their places to listen to the readings.

The service of the word is centered around the scripture readings and the chants between them. Through these texts God speaks to his people, assuring us of his saving love, and calling for our response in faith and love. In this manner we, who are the believing community, are prepared for the celebration of the marriage rite and the eucharistic liturgy.

The Introduction at the beginning of the rite (no. 11) points out how the liturgy of the word teaches the meaning of this sacrament, including the obligations it entails.

Priests are reminded to be ministers of the gospel to everybody who comes to the celebration of a wedding, especially for people who are not Catholics, as well as for Catholics who have practically abandoned the eucharist or their faith (rite, no. 9).

**Liturgy of the word:** As in every Mass or liturgical celebration, the main portion of the liturgy of the word is found in the scripture readings and the songs between them. The service of the word is developed and made complete by the homily, creed, and prayer of the faithful. God himself talks to his people in the lessons, which are explained in the priest's homily. Present in the assembly of God's people by his word, the Lord Jesus is talking to them about salvation, and gives them spiritual help. In their singing of the responsorial psalm and the gospel acclamation, the people assimilate the word, and show that they are ready to keep it by professing their baptismal faith as they say the creed. God's word moves his people to plead in the prayer of the faithful for the needs of his Church and for salvation for all the world (GI, no. 23).

**Presidential introduction:** As president of the celebrating community, the priest is to lead the people into the liturgy of the word, before the readings begin. By a brief admonition, he helps the congregation to listen more attentively to the word of God. Care needs to be taken that these comments are concise and not wordy (GI, no. 11; Introduction to GI, no. 13; Liturgy constitution, no. 35: 3; see also Bulletin 40, pages 200-201).

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3 In Canada, however, the celebration of weddings is strongly discouraged on Sundays, holy days of obligation, and during Holy Week: see sacramentary, page 884; and Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1977 Liturgical Calendar, pastoral note 18f, page 35. The reason for avoiding weddings on the Lord's day is based on the whole renewal in the meaning of Sunday (see Liturgy constitution, no. 106; see also Bulletin 43, on Sunday and its meaning). The liturgy of Sunday and major feasts should be allowed to speak its message clearly to the full community; weddings should be celebrated on days when the wedding liturgy can speak fully and openly to the couple and those who have gathered to worship with them.
Silence: A moment of silent reflection and prayer may follow each reading and the homily, so that the Spirit may guide each member of the assembly into all truth (GI, no. 23; Liturgy constitution, no. 30).

Three readings are recommended on Sundays and feasts; their value in teaching God's plan of salvation to his people urges the use of three readings at weddings, particularly because they are intended to help the listeners to understand the celebration more fully and to grow in their love for God's word (GI, nos. 318, 320).

- During the Easter season, the general practice is to choose the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Old Testament reading: this tradition goes back at least to the time of St. Augustine (see Bulletin 50, page 232). Unfortunately, the lectionary for marriage does not provide a first reading from Acts for the Easter season. It would be quite in order to choose an appropriate text from Acts from among the first readings in the seasonal Masses (lectionary, nos. 44-62, 261-302).

- Old Testament reading: Eight choices are given in the lectionary, no. 774. Suggestions for choosing and preparing the readings are discussed in Preparing the wedding liturgy in this issue.

- Responsorial psalm: Seven psalms with twelve antiphons are provided in no. 776 (see also GI, no. 36).

- New Testament reading: Ten selections are included in no. 775.

- Gospel acclamation: Four texts are given in no. 777, for use with an Alleluia (see CBW, nos. 201-207); if the wedding takes place during Lent, another refrain is used (CBW, no. 208). If only one reading is read before the gospel, the psalm or gospel acclamation or both may be sung (see GI, nos. 37-39).

- Gospel reading: Ten texts are provided in the lectionary, no. 778. The place of the gospel and the manner of its proclamation are described in GI, nos. 34-35. Candles and incense enhance the dignity of the gospel procession and proclamation (GI, nos. 93-95, 235).

It is important to remember that the normal minister for proclaiming the gospel is a deacon; if there is no deacon present, another priest reads it. Only when no deacon or other priest is present should the presiding priest proclaim the gospel: he does it by default. It is the intention of the liturgy that the priest should listen to the gospel with the rest of the congregation.

- Homily: After listening to the readings, the presiding priest gives the homily at the chair or lectern (GI, no. 97).

The homily is an important part of the liturgy of the word, and is necessary for nourishing the Christian life of the hearers. It draws its content principally from scriptural and liturgical sources. The homily is a proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, showing how the mystery of Christ is made present and active within us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy (Liturgy constitution, no. 35: 2).

*The next issue of the Bulletin is no. 60, Liturgical Preaching. It provides help in understanding the nature of the homily in Christian celebrations.*
Through explaining some aspect of the scripture readings, or a prayer or text from the ordinary or proper of the day's Mass, or from the wedding rite, the priest is able to help his congregation benefit more fully from the richness of God's word.

The proper character of the homily should always be respected. It is a presentation of God's message contained in the biblical texts, and shown forth in the prayers and rites of the wedding and eucharistic liturgies. In the homily, the mysteries of our faith and the guiding principles for Christian living are explained from the word of God (Liturgy constitution, nos. 35, 52).

In pointing out that the homily is drawn from the scriptures, the rite says that the priest is to speak on Christian marriage as a mystery, on the dignity of the love of man and wife, on the graces given by this sacrament, and on the responsibilities placed by God on those who marry. Much help in these areas is available in the Vatican Council documents: on the Church (nos. 11, 35); the Church in the modern world (nos. 47-52); and the apostolate of the laity (nos. 11, 30).

In preparing and giving the homily, the priest is to take into account the circumstances of the couple (rite, no. 22) and the pastoral needs of those who are present.

**Liturgy of the Sacrament of Marriage**

A moment of silence may follow the homily (GI, no. 23). Then the rite of marriage begins. The entire community, including the bride and groom, stands throughout this rite.

**Address:** A brief address is provided in the rite (no. 23). The priest may use his own words for this, following the general meaning and brevity of the text provided as a model. This address is not to replace or duplicate the homily.

**Questions:** The priest asks three questions of the couple to determine that they are free, and that their consent is according to the Church's understanding of marriage. The man and woman answer each question. No answer is indicated in the ritual: a simple "yes" is adequate. The answers should be heard by the community (rite, no. 24).

These questions make public the declaration the couple has already made in their prenuptial questionnaire and discussions. They reinforce the educative value of the rite in teaching about the duties of marriage, and lead up to the declaration of consent.

- **Freedom:** The priest makes sure that they are marrying of their own free will, and that they are giving themselves to each other without placing any reservation on their consent.

- **Faithfulness:** The second question asks about their intention to love and honor each other in marriage for the rest of their lives. This intention is brought out once more in the individual declarations of consent, to be made right after these questions.
• *Children*: The parties are asked if they will accept children as coming from God, accepting them with love, and promising to raise them in accord with the will of Christ and his Church (see also Introduction to the rite, no. 4). In the case of an older couple, this question may be left out.

**Consent**: The free giving and receiving of each other's consent is the covenant of marriage. Once given, this consent is irrevocable (Introduction, no. 2). The expression of this consent is therefore the center of the rite, and is to be seen as the most solemn moment of the celebration (rite, no. 24). Undivided attention by all is needed: photographers and other distractions are completely out of order at this moment.

• *Invitation*: The priest asks the couple to join their right hands, and to make a declaration of their consent in the presence of God and his people, the Church. The bride and groom join their right hands.

Two methods are provided in the ritual for the exchange of consent, by declarations or by questions.

• *Declaration by each party*: The groom says the formula (“I, N., take you, N.”) by which he declares that he takes her to be his wife, that he will be true to her in all circumstances, and that he will love and honor her for the rest of his life. Using the same formula, the bride takes him as her husband.

It would seem best to have the groom and bride read the formula, instead of trying to say it from memory. Rather than have them read it from a loose sheet of paper, it is simpler to use the ritual, or to read it from a typed card clipped into the ritual. Then the priest or party can hold the book while each in turn reads it. These words should be read clearly and distinctly, and loudly enough to be heard by the whole congregation. It may be helpful to use a standing microphone here and for the entire rite.

• *Consent through questions*: Pastoral reasons may lead the priest to have them express their consent in answer to his questions. He asks the groom and then the bride by questions (“Do you, N., take N.”) to agree to what is contained in the usual declaration of consent, described above.

The priest should discuss during the time of preparation which manner of consent they wish to use. Pastoral reasons for using the question-and-answer method could include nervousness or functional illiteracy of the couple.

*What about homemade forms of consent?* This practice is now being advocated by a number of do-it-yourself wedding books. Several points should be noted:

— To be a proper sign, the form must express all that the Church normally expresses, and contain nothing contrary to the Church's faith or practice. Thus the form is to indicate that the other person is being accepted as husband or wife, that each will be faithful to the other, and that the marriage is lifelong. Each declares this separately to the other in the presence of the required witnesses and the community. The consent has to be unconditional: a proviso such as "as long as love shall last" invalidates the expression of consent in the eyes of the Church.
— Any priest faced with a couple wanting to develop their own form of consent, or encouraging them to do so, would be wise to consult the diocesan chancery or tribunal to make sure that the proposed formula meets the standards set by the Church. In general, homemade forms tend to be wordy, florid, confusing, rather than simple and clear (see Liturgy constitution, no. 34).

— It is interesting to note that some couples, who would never dream of writing their own invitation — they accept one from the choice offered them by some printer — have no hesitation about composing their own liturgy. In 2,000 years, the Church has developed a greater wisdom than that of the couple or their priest or their parish.

— Perhaps the couple would be better to use their creative energies in working on other formulas (such as exchange of rings, prayer of the faithful), which the Church invites them to develop, and accept the approved formula of consent.

**Declaration of consent:** In receiving the consent of the couple (no. 26), the priest notes that they have declared their consent before the Church or people of God, and asks the Father to make their consent strong, and to bless them. He concludes with Mt. 19: 6b.

**Blessing and exchange of rings:** Several forms are given for blessing the rings, which are seen as signs of the couple’s love and fidelity (no. 27). If only one ring is used, the formula is adapted.

As each places the ring on the other’s finger, a formula may be used. It is suggested that the couple may find it more sensible to rewrite and adapt this formula rather than expending their efforts on revising the formula of consent.

- **Crowning or veiling:** The ritual notes that the crowning or veiling takes place now, where this is the custom (no. 15).

**Creed** (no. 29): If required by the rubrics (Sundays and solemnities — GI, nos. 43-44), the creed is said. In Canada, an indult permits the use of the apostles’ creed. As a general rule, however, it is better not to celebrate weddings on such days.

**Prayer of the faithful:** The liturgy of the sacrament of marriage concludes with the general intercessions (no. 29). These follow the usual format, with some modifications. Further suggestions are offered in *Preparing the wedding liturgy*, below.

**Liturgy of the Eucharist**

In the wedding Mass, the liturgy of the eucharist is celebrated according to the order of Mass. A few changes are made, as described below (no. 30):

**Preparation of the gifts:** The couple may bring the bread and wine to the priest at the altar (no. 30). Further ideas are given in *Preparing the wedding liturgy*, below.

**Eucharistic prayer:** There are three proper prefaces (prefaces 72-74 in the sacramentary). A special insert (“Father, accept this offering”) is given for the Roman canon.
**Nuptial blessing:** This blessing is given during the communion rite, immediately after the Lord's prayer. The prayer "Deliver us" is omitted, and the priest uses one of the three formulas provided in the sacramentary. Various paragraphs may be adapted or omitted as described in the rubrics.

Each of the three blessings is arranged in this manner (nos. 33-34):

- **Invitation to prayer:** The priest invites the members of the community to ask God to bless this couple.
- **Silent prayer:** All remain in silent prayer for a short period of time.
- **Blessing:** The priest gives the blessing. It concludes with the usual form of offering it through Christ, and all answer *Amen*.

**Kiss of peace** (no. 35): All present are invited to show their love for one another and share the peace of Christ in a suitable way. While this may be a little less formal than at a Sunday liturgy, care needs to be taken that it does not become a three-ring circus, with people wandering all about the church. (Some thoughts on the meaning of this rite are given in *Kiss of Peace*, in Bulletin 48, pages 122-124.)

**Signing the civil register:** This is not a religious ceremony. The signing of the register and other civil forms may be explained by a brief introduction, following the prayer after communion:

> "Since good family life is the foundation of our country, both Church and civil government consider the setting up of a new home to be an important event in the life of the community. By their laws, Church and state protect marriage and family life.

> "The bridal party signs the public register of marriages: all will now know that their home is indeed blessed by God."

**Communion under both forms** (no. 36): While the 1969 ritual mentions the couple only, a later instruction (June 29, 1970) permits the episcopal conference to extend this faculty. The Canadian bishops now permit communion from the chalice for couples at their wedding Mass and for all other Catholics present (October 8, 1970).

**Solemn blessing** (no. 37): Several forms are provided in the sacramentary. These are celebrated exactly as the solemn blessing at Mass, except that they are directed toward the couple. The regular Trinitarian blessing is given to the people after the couple's blessing.

**Recessional:** No mention is made of the manner in which this recessional takes place. The priest and his ministers may leave in the usual manner, or wait until the bride and groom have begun to move away. Then the priest and ministers may go to the sacristy while the bridal processional continues on its way.

**Helpful readings:** The best thing to read about the wedding ceremony is the ritual itself. It is contained in Bulletin 30; in *Sunday Mass Book*, pages 1121-1126; and in other excerpts from the rite.

Other helpful books are mentioned after *Preparing the wedding liturgy.*
PREPARING TO CELEBRATE

PREPARING THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

This brief article proposes no short-range, instant solutions. It does suggest, however, some directions in which a serious Christian parish community should be moving in the next quarter century. Either we stand with Christ and for him, or we — and particularly our children — will be swept along in a growing flood of indifference to God and to his plan and values.

We recommend this article for serious discussion by parish councils and their committees, and by diocesan pastoral councils and priests’ senates.

The preparation for Christian marriage in a parish cannot stand alone: it cannot be a mere series of lectures or discussion sessions held in splendid isolation. Marriage preparation has to be part of an overall plan for parish conversion to God. It has to fit within a life of faith that penetrates deeply into the life of each family and of the community.

Some General Questions

God's plan for the world: What do the scriptures tell us of God's intention in creating the world? Why and how did he choose to save it? Where does Christ fit into his plan? Where do we fit into this plan?

Do we know what Vatican II teaches us about God's plan? (See the documents on the Church, the Church in the modern world, the Apostolate of the laity.) Do we understand and accept his plan for marriage and family in our society?

Where do God's honor and glory fit into our lives as individuals? as families? as parish communities? Are we seeking the kingdom of God first? Or do we seek everything else before God's kingdom? (See Lk. 12: 31.)

God's people in Christ: Today it is sometimes too easy to reject “Church” as a category we do not wish to consider any more. Instead of being satisfied with a stunted faith, instead of looking only at historical abuses or contemporary shortcomings, have we sincerely tried to see the mystery of the Church as revealed and given to us by God?

- In Christ: Our loving Father has chosen to save the world through his Son. God loved us so much that he gave us his only Son to be one of us, to be the source of eternal life for us (Jn. 3: 16). By the paschal mystery — the saving life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus, his sending of the Spirit, and the coming again of the Lord Jesus — God has redeemed us, and has made us his beloved people.

- People of God: Chosen by the Father from all eternity, we have been brought into God's plan in Christ. No longer are we aliens: now we are fellow citizens with the saints in the kingdom. God's reign continues in our lives. By serving him day after day, we continue to do his will and make his kingdom arrive more fully on earth. In his will do we find our peace.
By baptism, confirmation, and eucharist, we are brought into the paschal mystery of Christ. Washed, sealed, and nourished, we are God's holy people, chosen by him to live blameless lives in his sight. We are an *alleluia* people.

We are his temples: God dwells in the hearts of those who love him (see Jn. 14: 23). His Spirit is poured into our hearts, and we are set aside to sing God's praises.

- **Servant people**: Jesus came to serve, not to be served. He calls us to follow him in such service: we are followers of the suffering servant of Yahweh. Every Christian believer is called in a particular vocation or way of life to serve others. Jesus has given us his Spirit, who distributes talents and gifts to us as he wills — and these are given us for the building up of the Church, the body of Christ.

This service takes place in many ways, both in the works of organized ministries and in the day-to-day assistance to Christ in his hurting brothers and sisters (see Mt. 25: 31-46). There are many opportunities of service in today's world (see Bulletin 53, pages 115-119): it is up to us, individually and in community, to respond to these needs.

- **Prophets, priests, and shepherds with Christ**: As God's people, we are called to share with Christ in his work of giving glory to God and of helping to save the world. Christ calls us to carry on his teaching, to hand on and share the faith that has been passed on to us. He invites us to exercise our share in his priesthood by our worship and our prayer: full participation in the liturgy is the essential source of the true Christian spirit. With Christ we are called to be concerned for others, to have compassion for those in need, to help others on the path to God and his saving love. We are to be his missionary people, working with Christ for the salvation of all.

**People of prayer**: God has set us aside to sing his praises. He has dedicated us to be his people of praise and prayer. We are the high priests of his creation, the ones who voice the muted praise of other creatures, of the entire universe. As well as singing to God's glory, we come to him to plead for the needs of the Church and of all the human race. We pray for peace in the world and for salvation. We pray for civic and religious leaders. We pray for unity and for faith. We pray for the sick, the discouraged, the dying, the dead. We join Christ and all his people in unending intercession for all. This prayer of intercession goes on in the liturgy (especially in the Mass and in the liturgy of the hours), in our family prayer, and in individual prayer.

Whenever two or three of us gather together in Christ's name to praise God and to pray for ourselves and others, Jesus is in our midst (Mt. 18: 20). He offers our prayer to the Father, for it is also his prayer: he is praying through our lips and our love.

The prayer of God's people at home prepares them to take a fuller and more concerned part in the liturgy of the Church. The community's liturgy is both the source and inspiration for personal and family prayer. One without the other is far from the perfection demanded by God. (See Bulletin 44, *People of Prayer*, and Bulletin 58, *Day by Day We Give Him Praise*, for further development of these ideas.)
Christian attitudes: The way we look at things depends on our starting point. If we let the world and its thinking form our approach, our attitudes will be secularistic. If we base our thoughts and approaches to people and things on our faith, then our attitudes will be Christian and according to the mind of Christ (see Rom. 12: 2). The spiritual person, the one guided by the Holy Spirit, will think and act according to the Spirit and the mind of Christ. Read Rom. 8: 5-17: these are important words for today's Christians.

- Toward creation and material things: The basic Christian attitude toward the world is simple: God made it, and it is good. We are to use material things — not abuse them — in the service of God and for the benefit of his people. (See Attitudes toward creation, in Bulletin 50, pages 262-264.) We are not to seek created goods to the point where we impede our growth and life as believers (see Lk. 12: 13-34).

- Toward other people: Christians are the adopted children of God the Father, brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus and of one another, temples of the Holy Spirit. The bonds between believers are closer than those of blood. A strong and warm fraternal spirit should be evident among the followers of Christ. The sign of this love given at the kiss of peace during the Mass or at the end of morning and evening prayer should be based on true love and concern for the rest of God's family.

While Christians have a special love for other followers of Jesus, their love extends also to all humans: all are created and loved by God; he is Father to all, and sent his Son to die for all. God wills that all men and women and children be saved. As his children, we too must share in his desire, and work for the salvation of all: we are called to be a missionary Church.

Differences of color, language, religion, or nationality should never be a cause for prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Jesus is the Lord of all, the savior of all nations: he died for all, not just for whites or Europeans or North Americans. Continuing slights against others — against Jews or blacks or Orientals or native peoples or anyone else — are attacks against Christ: whatever we do to the least of his brothers and sisters, we are doing to him. The Church has already — finally! — begun to clean up slurs against the Jews in its prayers and readings. Every community should make sure that this is true in its preaching, in local housing ordinances, in hiring laws and practices, and in the conversation of all its members.

While continuing to have a missionary spirit toward those who are not Christians, we have to respect their religious beliefs, and are wise to benefit from the many insights they may have developed about God and his love for the human race. Among themselves, Christians should be praying and working for unity. (Many practical thoughts in these areas are developed in the Vatican Council documents on ecumenism, non-Christian religions, missionary activity, Christian education, and religious freedom.)

In a brief word, the attitude of Christians toward everybody is simply to be the attitude of Christ, who came to serve and not to be served. We are to be his servant Church, welcoming and serving all as people he loved to the point of
laying down his life for them as well as for us. They are our brothers and sisters in his blood.

- **Toward the Church**: The word “Church” applies first of all to the people of God, the body of Christ throughout the world and in eternity. It is also applied at times to those members of the Church who are called by the Spirit to serve their brothers and sisters in the ministries of holy orders (see Vatican II documents on the Church, the bishops, and the priests).

Our attitudes toward the Church should seek to imitate those of Christ: love for all, willingness to serve others, generous readiness to use the talents given to us by the Spirit for the building up of the body of Christ. We are the Church, and our attitudes should be positive: how can we serve better? how can we live as people of prayer? how can we be better witnesses of our Christian faith? how can we better serve Christ in others? how can we build up the Church by our work, our prayer, our penance?

Our attitudes toward the hierachy of the Church have been changing. Vatican II has moved the Church from a paternal, top-to-bottom pyramid model to a paternal-fraternal, within-the-circle model. The best image of the Church is that of the bishop, surrounded by his presbyters, other ministers, and the people, as they celebrate the eucharist together (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 41-42; GI, nos. 7, 74-75). A fuller look at the ministries of the Church, including those of the hierarchy, is contained in Bulletin 53, *Ministries and Liturgy*.

- **Toward the cross of Christ**: Every Christian is tempted — as was Christ — by the illusion of crown without cross, of glory without suffering, of Easter without Good Friday. To give in to this temptation means that we have failed to understand the paschal mystery. In our own times we have seen a similar attempt to avoid penance and to seek the kingdom without pain. Slowly, thank God, a ground swell is building up for a better observance of Friday and of Lent; much more, however, is needed if we are truly to be a Church which suffers with its suffering Lord. (See *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1977 Liturgical Calendar*, note 25, pages 44-45; also Bulletin 37, *Taking Lent Seriously*; Bulletin 42, *Call to Penance*.) Our attitudes should be one of sharing the cross of Christ each day to purify and build up his body, the Church. Like St. Paul, we must understand that we have to endure many trials before we enter the kingdom of heaven (see Acts 14: 21).

- **Toward marriage and family life**: Marriage is a vocation to which God calls most of his people. Between believing Christians, marriage is a sacrament, through which Jesus’ love is reflected and continued. Parents bring children into the world in co-operation with God’s creative power, and become the first teachers of the faith for their sons and daughters. Each Christian home is to be a little Church, a house of prayer, where Jesus is also present (Mt. 18: 20).

A parish interested in Christian family life will promote events such as marriage encounter and Cana courses.

Despite the attacks of our Western society on marriage, a Christian continues to hold that marriage and family life are sacred and salvific when lived according to God’s will, with the help of his grace. Marriage is between one man and one woman, and is permanent. By a free act of their wills, the couple make a mutual
covenant to set up a communion of conjugal life together; their union is permanent and for them alone, and is by its nature intended for bringing children into the world, and for raising them.

What is a Parish?

Place of the parish in the Church: In speaking of the Christian community's responsibility to become formed in true Christian attitudes toward marriage (including its preparation and celebration), and toward family life, we need to recall the place of the parish in today's Church.

- Local Church: The universal Church is made up of many Churches around the world. In its truest sense, the local Church is the Church — the people and ministers — surrounding the diocesan bishop: he is their source of unity among themselves and with all other Churches around the world. To help him to carry out his work as teacher, priest, and shepherd in the local Church (diocese), the bishop chooses presbyters to assist him by looking after congregations or gatherings of his people in parishes (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 41-42). The pastor acts in the name of the bishop and with his authority. It is the bishop's name which continues to be mentioned in the eucharistic prayer.

- What is a parish? Some people look at a parish as a collection of buildings — church, rectory, school, convent, hall — down at the corner of Division and Main Streets. Some see it as all the territory within certain boundaries. Some see it as the priests and sisters attached to the parish.

A parish should be seen as the people of God — actual and potential, active and negligent — living here, in this place. It is the people chosen by God in Christ from all eternity to be his children, his holy flock, his worshippers, his witnesses at this time and in this place.

The parish is the local community of believers, a family living in faith, hope, and love. It is a part of the diocesan family. It is the assembly of people called to praise the Lord, to worship him in word and sacrament and life. The parish is this community gathered around this altar, under the leadership of a pastor and their bishop.

- Role of the parish: Many parishes and most parishioners rarely think about their role: this is taken for granted, and parishes keep on doing what they have always done, with minor changes and adaptations now and then. What is necessary, however, is a serious look at the role of the parish in the light of the teachings of Vatican II.

A parish is not just a comfort station on the road to heaven, but part of the living, worshipping Church. The tasks of the parish are simply those of the Church, carried out in this place, and under the direction of bishop and pastor. The parish is to carry on the work of teaching the gospel message, of helping people to worship well and to grow in prayer, and of leading the people of God along the pilgrim way to the Father. Help and guidance in leading a Christian life, in discerning one's vocation, and in preparing for marriage, are part of the work of a responsible parish community.
The parish is not intended by Christ to be an entertainment or sports center, but a center of Christian living. Every parish has to continue to examine itself carefully and regularly in this area. What proportion of its energies are used for the work of God in your parish?

**Obstacles and Pressures**

Today there are many obstacles to a flourishing life for the Christian community, both as a parish and as a diocese. Some of these are outlined briefly here, but they need a much deeper study in each community. Local conditions and problems need to be seen clearly and faced. These obstacles are listed here, not in order to discourage or prevent action, but in order to promote strong action to overcome them.

**Ignorance of what it means to be Church:** Do all the people in your parish really understand what it means to be the Church of Christ? How many see the Church only as an authority? What do they understand of the Church’s mission in the modern world? Do they know that the Church is called to be a servant Church? What do they know of new opportunities for ministry? Do they see the Church as the family of God’s beloved children, redeemed in the precious blood of Christ and filled with his Spirit? We cannot live a Christian life today with a pre-Vatican II ecclesiology (theology or understanding of the Church).

Are they aware of the paschal mystery, and of their sharing in it? Do they realize their share in the priesthood of Christ, their right and duty to take part in the Church’s worship? Are they frightened by the changes and renewal in the Church? Do they understand them and why they are taking place?

Each one of us can learn more about our membership in the Church. Those who are only dimly aware of what it means today need to be helped by the rest of the community, by their brothers and sisters who reach out to teach them by prayer, by teaching, by witness, by loving concern. What is being done in your parish to help these people? At the same time, what is being done to give better instruction to those who are trying to be good members of the Church?

**Materialism:** In Canada and the United States today, there is a constant pressure on us to express ourselves through our possessions and the services that money can buy. A steady stream of clever advertising tries to seduce us into getting more goods, more modern appliances, things with the latest wrinkle of style and fashion. More and more toys are being purchased to entertain or distract adults: fancier radios and TV sets, motorboats, snowmobiles, muscle cars, vans, CBs. Countless families have vacation homes which are more elaborate than many dwellings.

Credit buying is rampant. Young people have been raised with this type of mentality, and expect to start out in their adult life with as many possessions — or even more — than their parents have after twenty-five or thirty years of marriage.

- **Christian message:** Jesus was quite blunt in his comments on property and riches. Our hearts will be where our treasure is: he recommended building up our riches in spiritual terms. Those who are rich will have a hard time entering the
kingdom: it is the poor in spirit who are termed blessed. He even invited some people to serve him by giving up all their possessions for his sake:

In practice, Christians have not always followed the ideals of their Lord. The Catholic Church in North America today still reflects too much of our culture of material possessions. We tend to judge a parish by the size and splendor of its buildings, or by the kind of cars its ministers drive. Our missionary support is not exactly spectacular, either in comparison to what some other Churches give, or when we look at what we spend in local improvements on the parish plant.

- *Christian action*: There is room for much more witness to be given by the Church — by clergy and religious, by ministers and parish councils, by families and individuals. Education in poverty of spirit is part of the responsibility of parishes and priests in teaching the gospel message. Teaching by example is particularly important: the lifestyle of the clergy, the emphasis on missionary work, the effort to use an increasing portion of parish revenues for spiritual purposes and for social action. Where does your parish stand? What does last year's annual report show of the work and attitudes of your parish community? Is the emphasis on material matters?

**Attitudes toward marriage**: What are the attitudes of young people, of parents, and of clergy toward marriage and family life? What do people think of Christ's teaching that marriage is between two people, and that it lasts for life? That adultery is wrong? That marriage is designed and ruled by God? Are people going along with society's current lax views on marriage, and condoning adultery, fornication, easy divorce, hasty marriages?

- *What can a parish do?* It is easy to give up, saying that the world's attitudes are too strong, and thus secede from the work of Christ and his Church. The ostrich approach is a flat denial of the victory of Christ over Satan, a capitulation unworthy of those called by God to be his holy people.

Parishes need strong leadership from their bishop and pastor. These spiritual leaders need to know the Church's faith and teach it firmly. Dioceses and parishes need to join with other Churches who share our beliefs on marriage, and start to move against the lax standards of our age.¹

Adequate preparation for marriage is necessary. Long-range preparation is being given by families, school, television, movies, magazines. What kind of things are young people learning about marriage and family life from these sources? What attitudes are being formed by these means?

What is the parish doing for parents of families to help them in their daily life? What is being done to strengthen family ties and to deepen the prayer life in the homes?

What sort of help and preparation for marriage is being provided by the parish for students of high school age? What kind of guidance and instruction are they

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¹ In February of this year, the administrative board of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops presented a brief to Parliament, in response to a Family Law report. The bishops called for more support for healthy family life; more community involvement in steps to strengthen family values; more effective marriage education programs, and laws which uphold marriage stability and the well-being of families. They also noted some recommendations of the report which should be rejected.
being given to help them to know and respond to the vocation to which God is
calling them? What kind of foundation for proper attitudes toward marriage is
being given to children in grade school? What of those in the public school system?
These are questions that the believing community and its ministers cannot ignore.

Preparation for those about to marry is discussed in the next six articles.

* * *

A matter of grave concern: If parishes and dioceses do not act firmly and
soon, what is going to become of Christian marriage? Where will the Church be? Who is going to live the gospel if Christians are ignoring its teaching?

Can we be content to sit idly by while the world and our society continue to
laugh at Christ's teaching on marriage? Are we going along with the rest?

Or are we going to stand up for Christ, ready to be fools for his sake, and
work for the victory of his cross over the "wisdom" of our secular age?

* * *

Helpful reading: Some publications which may be of help to a parish which
wishes to face some of the questions mentioned in this article:


Bulletin 45, Learning about Liturgy, pages 204-207, 224, 246.

Other publications are listed under "helpful reading" at the end of the next
article.

NEXT ISSUE

The September-October issue of the National Bulletin on Liturgy is entitled
Liturgical Preaching. Bulletin 60 will consider the place and meaning of preaching
in the liturgy today. After a brief glance at the history of Christian preaching, the
issue considers how the homily fits into the eucharist, the sacraments, the blessings,
and the liturgy of the hours. Emphasis is placed on the Sunday homily, including its
sources and its preparation, and on the role of the community in hearing God's
word as it is preached to them.

Like every number of the Bulletin, this issue is written for people working
at the parish level, and offers them help in their efforts to promote good liturgy
and worship.
SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

The previous article speaks of the general formation of the parish community in Christian attitudes toward marriage. This article begins to discuss the preparation of the couple and their families for the celebration of their wedding.

The spiritual preparation for marriage goes far beyond a few instructions or the completion of the prenuptial investigation forms. Some of the areas of spiritual preparation of the couple and of their families are outlined in this article.

Role of the Priest

When helping a couple prepare for marriage, it is the priest’s task to call them to faith and conversion, to help them deepen their dispositions for the celebration of this sacrament (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 9, 11, 32). He is to teach them the gospel message, lead them to prayer and worship, and help them to live a Christian life in the Church (see Decree on the ministry and life of priests, nos. 4-6). The Introduction to the rite sums up the priest’s role in nos. 5 and 7.

A ministry by married couples: It is the role of the priest to organize and support needed ministries in his community. One area that needs the devoted service of some volunteers is the preparation of young couples for marriage. The priest, parish council, and liturgy committee should invite some couples in the parish to work with them in developing a ministry for people preparing for marriage. This idea was suggested briefly last year in Bulletin 53, page 116: what has been happening in your parish to work toward such a ministry?

Instruction of the Couple

In preparing the couple for the celebration of their wedding, the priest or deacon should try to help them enter the married state with a full understanding and acceptance of the meaning of Christian marriage. It is recommended that he should relate what he is teaching to the lectionary readings on marriage (Introduction, no. 5).

Faith: The minister is to nourish the faith of the couple, and to help them to become stronger in their belief. The rite notes (no. 7) that the faith is both presupposed and demanded for the celebration of this sacrament (see Liturgy constitution, no. 59). He may invite them to make a retreat sometime during the period of preparation for their marriage.

- A believing couple: When the two young people preparing for marriage have a strong sense of faith, the role of the priest or deacon is somewhat easier. He should work with them to strengthen their faith and its practice, and to help them to have an adult understanding of Christianity. Since the home they are founding will become a source of help and example to the believing community, everything the priest does to deepen their life of prayer and their generosity in ministering to others will be for the building up of the Church of Christ.

- A couple weak in faith: What should a priest do with a couple whose faith is weak or minimal? His first efforts should aim at their conversion, inviting them
to return to Christ and his Church. He should preach the *kerygma* or missionary message to them: Christ died and rose to save them, to invite them to repent and change their lives. During the time of instruction, the priest should encourage them to pray for themselves, asking God to give them faith. He could also ask members of the community to offer prayer for such young couples. As noted in the previous article, much of the work of conversion has to go on over the years: when the couple comes to the rectory door, there is not much time for this.

The power of grace should not be underestimated, however. Marriage is an important step, a moment of transition in life, a time when people are more open to spiritual influences than we may realize. The fact that the couple will have to be the first teachers of the faith for their children in a few years should be placed before them: they will have to teach their children to believe, to pray, to worship, and they cannot do this if they themselves are spiritually bankrupt or unable to believe at an adult level.

- **Persons without instruction**: A person who was baptized a Catholic but who was given little instruction in the faith is described in chapter 4 of *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. A similar practice is followed for a person baptized in another Church and given little instruction in the Christian faith.

In both cases, the priest tries to stir up the gift of faith, given by God in baptism, but allowed to remain dormant over the years.

**Review of Christian living**: The preparation for marriage should include a complete review of the basic teachings of our faith (Introduction, no. 5). The Church's beliefs about marriage should also be taught and discussed (see Introduction, nos. 1-4), in order that the couple may deepen their faith and be better prepared to celebrate the sacrament of marriage.

The priest should seek to enrich these instructions by sharing the many insights into the faith given in other passages from the bible, from Vatican II documents, and from the rite of marriage, including both its introduction and the scripture passages selected for use in the marriage rite.

- **Basic teachings of the faith**: A fresh and mature perspective helps adults to appreciate their faith more fully. One method is to have them read the epistle to the Christians at Ephesus prayerfully. Through passages from this inspired letter, the priest can help the couple to discuss their beliefs and reflect on them, encouraging them to put them into practice in their daily living:
  - Eph. 1: What it means to be a Christian.
  - Eph. 2-3: Christ is our Lord. He has died for us and has been raised in glory. We share in Jesus' paschal mystery.
  - Eph. 4-5: In Christ we are to live a new life.
  - Eph. 5-6: Family life for those who follow Christ.
- **Christian morality**: It is not enough to say, "Lord, Lord" (Mt. 7: 21-27): we have to obey God's will for us if we are to be accepted as his children. Any community or priest trying to pussyfoot around the questions of Christian morality during marriage preparation would be compromising the gospel values of Jesus Christ.
Particularly in our time, the gospel is being contradicted by the ways of our society. The teaching of Christ and his apostles on marriage, and on the immorality of divorce, adultery, fornication, stealing, lying, and injustice, is rejected daily in many newspapers, TV programs, movies, novels, popular songs; in the mores of some popular stars, politicians, writers, commentators, and even students in high school and college.

The Church cannot go along with modern immorality. It cannot ignore rampant fornication and infidelity, or pretend that these things do not exist. The Church must be faithful to Christ and the tradition of the prophets of God: the Christian Church today — ordinary believers as well as priests and bishops — has to condemn what is wrong and invite people back to God's ways. At the same time, however, Christians have to make sure that their lives back up their preaching.

Prayer is important in the life of every Christian. The priest should help the couple to grow and mature in their prayer life, and guide them to pray in harmony with the Church's prayer. Many helps are offered in Bulletin nos. 44, 49, and 58, as described under “Helpful reading” at the end of this article; see also the section on “Growing in prayer” in Sunday Mass Book, pages 1286-1335. Pope Paul reminds us that a Christian family must pray daily if it is to live as a little Church.¹

If the couple is not praying, the priest should try to help them to begin once more. When he acts as a teacher of prayer, he is carrying out one of his basic responsibilities (see Bulletin 33, pages 65-66; Bulletin 35, pages 196, 217).

A brief daily prayer for the couple's use is given in SMB, page 1119.

Understanding Christian Marriage

In teaching the couple about Christian marriage, the priest may follow the points given in the Introduction, nos. 1-8. As the footnotes show, these are based mainly on the documents of Vatican II.

Important areas for discussion include:

Their matrimonial consent: It is the free consent of the couple during the marriage rite that makes their covenant irrevocable and lifelong. They need to understand what they are consenting to, and what it involves. The solemn declaration of consent in the celebration of marriage underlines the importance of this moment, and their freedom in expressing it: the rite of consent is the central and essential moment of the marriage celebration. During the time of preparation, the Church also shows its pastoral concern for their freedom and understanding as the prenuptial questionnaires are discussed and answered.

Where the couple is quite young (man under 20, or woman under 18), some dioceses are asking the priest to interview them and their parents. This is done in order to make sure the young people are free, and that they are mature enough to enter a stable, lifelong union.

¹ See Paul VI, Apostolic exhortation Marialis cultus, on devotion to the blessed virgin Mary (Feb. 2, 1974), no. 52. This 46-page booklet, with its reflections on Mary as the model for the worshipping Church, is available for $.60g plus postage from Publications Service: the address is on the inside front cover of this Bulletin.
Today ecclesiastical tribunals are using many new psychological situations as reasons to declare that some marriages are null and void from the beginning. It is urgent that every priest who is preparing a couple for marriage be fully aware of these new grounds for nullity, in order that he may make sure they are not present in this particular case before the marriage ceremony. (See When marriage fails, in this issue.)

If as much care, time, and money were used in preparing people for marriage as are used in dissolving broken marriages — both in our Church and in our civil society — marriage would be a much stronger institution today.

Marriage courses: The priest is wise to encourage young people to take a marriage preparation course sometime before their wedding. In many communities these are held at central locations, and are often ecumenical in their approach. All parishes encourage those planning to marry in the next year or so to become involved. These courses cover various facets of married life, including the financial, legal, and physical sides. Couples are encouraged to discuss various questions about their own attitudes, and thus be better prepared for life together. Pre-Cana courses are also held in some communities.

Where such courses are not available, a parish community should give serious consideration to its responsibility to help couples. This can be done by developing a simple form of a marriage course, with some of the sessions led by married couples from the parish.

Preparation of Families and Friends

The families and friends (peer groups) exert a strong influence on the couple. The priest should seek to enlist these people so that they will be able to help the couple in the preparation and celebration of a truly Christian marriage.

Long-range preparation of the entire parish community has already been discussed in the previous article, Preparing the Christian community. When a young couple is preparing to marry, the priest may suggest the idea of having an early meeting with the parents and close friends of the couple, with those who are going to be most closely involved in the wedding arrangements.

Some topics for discussion at this meeting could include:

- The place of religion in the lives of the families and friends; their prayer life.
- Their attitudes toward Christian marriage and its celebration.
- The couple could describe their plans for spiritual preparation in cooperation with the priest.
- The families could ask questions about the preparation and celebration of the wedding rite.

2 "Outside of the Church, which provides premarriage courses or Pre-Cana Conferences or some kind of preparation, society generally is spending more money to prepare youngsters to drive automobiles than to prepare for marriage." This startling statement appears in the preface of Your Marriage, by John F. DeYonker, DO, and Thomas E. Tobin, CSsR (1968, 1976, Liguorian, Liguori, Mo. 63057), page 5. Reviewed in Bulletin 54, page 188.
The priest can explain some of the Church's concerns during the time of preparation, and the kind of celebration desired for the rite of marriage.

The priest should help the families and friends to understand that the wedding rite is both sacred and serious, and ask them to help the couple in this time of preparation. They can do this by praying for them (a simple prayer is given in SMB, page 1120), by seeking to deepen their own faith and prayer life, and by working with the couple to make the celebration one which truly reflects the mind of the Church. During the weeks before the wedding, the families and friends can also be of assistance in avoiding a senseless round of parties, showers, and dances night after night, leaving the couple exhausted by their wedding day.

He could also invite the family and friends to make a retreat sometime before the wedding, and to come back to the sacraments if they have been neglecting them.

* * *

Helpful reading:


Rosemary Haughton, The Theology of Marriage (Theology Today series, no. 31; 1971, Fides, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556).

National Bulletin on Liturgy (see address on inside front cover of this issue):
  o No. 44, People of Prayer
  o No. 49, Blessed Be God and His Creation
  o No. 58, Day by Day We Give Him Praise.


“Diamonds are Forever,” in Intercom, vol. 7, no. 5, May 1976 (The Communications Center, Booterstown Avenue, Co. Dublin, Ireland).
MIXED MARRIAGES

This article discusses marriages celebrated between a Catholic and a person who is not a Catholic. The other person may be a baptized Christian or unbaptized. The question of mixed marriage is difficult, and one where the Church has had firm legislation for centuries. Since Vatican II, the Church is bringing new insights into this area of pastoral concern.

The more attitudes that a couple shares in common, the more easily they will be able to adjust and work together to build their marriage. Common attitudes toward permanence, goals, children, material goals, religion, prayer, and worship make it easier for them to be one in approaching many situations. Division over fundamental religious beliefs, values, and practices can cause many hardships and misunderstandings in family life. As the old folk say, "There are enough things to fight about in marriage without having to fight about religion."

Most religious bodies prefer that members marry other members. The Catholic Church does not discourage mixed marriages because of discrimination against other Christians and non-Christians. It encourages Catholics to marry Catholics first of all, and tries to encourage Catholics not to marry others because of the disunity that mixed religion or diversity of faith can bring into a home.

Marriages between Christians and non-believers have been present in our Church since the earliest days. St. Paul speaks of several situations in 1 Cor. 7: 12-16, 39. At the beginning of the third century, both Tertullian and Hippolytus speak of the implications and problems in the prayer life of a Christian woman whose husband is a pagan.

Some Distinctions

The Church has long recognized the difference between two types of mixed marriage: between two baptized persons, one of whom is a Catholic, and between a Catholic and an unbaptized person:

- Between a Catholic and a baptized member of another Christian Church, the marriage is a sacrament;
- Between a Catholic and an unbaptized person, there is a natural covenant, but this is not a sacrament. In former years, this union was described as having "disparity of cult," since the two parties offered worship in a radically distinct manner. The baptized Christian offers worship as a member of the priesthood of the faithful, while the unbaptized person worships through Christ in some manner, but not as part of his mystical body (see General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours, nos. 6-7). A special rite is provided in chapter III for this type of wedding.

The Second Vatican Council stated that one of its purposes was to promote whatever would deepen union among Christians (Liturgy constitution, no. 1). In its Decree on ecumenism (no. 13), the Council made clear distinctions among Orthodox, Anglican, and other Reformation Churches:

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The Second Vatican Council stated that one of its purposes was to promote whatever would deepen union among Christians (Liturgy constitution, no. 1). In its Decree on ecumenism (no. 13), the Council made clear distinctions among Orthodox, Anglican, and other Reformation Churches:
Eastern Churches: The Council emphasized the common faith that we share, the eucharist and the other sacraments, the apostolic succession. Eastern traditions are to be respected, and work is to continue to remove obstacles to union (Ecumenism, nos. 14-18).

Anglican Church: In the Reformation Churches in the West, the Churches of the Anglican communion hold a special place (Ecumenism, no. 13).

Other Churches and ecclesial communities: Because of the variety of Reformation Churches, the Council suggests some bases for ecumenical dialogue and activity with them (Ecumenism, nos. 19-24).

We are just beginning to see the results of these initiatives: many official documents and statements are beginning to modify attitudes and rules in the Church toward other Churches and toward mixed marriages.¹

- International dialogues have been held by Roman Catholics and Anglicans, leading to statements on the eucharist, ministry, authority, and mixed marriages.² International dialogues continue with Lutherans and with other Churches.

- In Canada, ecumenical steps have been underway for many years. The Canadian Center for Ecumenism was founded as the Catholic Inquiry Forum in Montreal in January 1952. A national office for ecumenism was established in the CCC in 1966. The Joint Working Group of the Canadian Council of Churches and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops began early in 1968. Some years ago, this group produced a kit, Counselling of Christian Mixed Marriages; at present, this kit is sold out and is being revised.

Dialogues are continuing with the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church, and the United Church of Canada, and with the Canadian Jewish Congress. Many dioceses have ecumenical commissions, and the Catholic Church in Canada continues to co-operate in the week of prayer for Christian unity, and with the Canadian Liturgical Society.

Mixed Marriages

All these activities, from international to parish level, are having a definite influence on the whole question of mixed marriages. In September 1971, the Canadian bishops presented definitive norms ³ based on the pope's 1970 letter on mixed marriage. These norms may be summarized under these ten headings:

a) Religious education of the children: In the preamble to these norms, the bishops recommend that the "question of the baptism and education of the children be settled before the marriage takes place. It cannot be a unilateral decision. It must be one in which the conscience of both parties is respected... When the couple can achieve no agreement on this most important matter, they should

¹ Many of these documents are given in full in Austin Flannery, Vatican Council II — the conciliar and postconciliar documents (1975, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn. 56321), pages 471-563 (documents 33-44).
² See for example the final report of the commission on mixed marriages, described under "Helpful reading" at the end of this article.
seriously consider dropping their marriage plans. For, if this issue cannot be settled, it would present a major obstacle to harmonious living.” (See Norms: preamble, nos. 9-10; norms, no. 5.)

b) Combined religious influence: Both parents are to work together to form the religious values of their children. Their combined religious influence is important for their children's lives. “This co-operative spirit implies that the couple strive valiantly for religious understanding in their home. In calm dialogue, in reading, in common prayer, in occasional attendance at each other's services, they can discover what they truly share in belief, and grow in esteem and respect for both communities of faith which have shaped their positive values” (Norms: preamble, nos. 11-12).

c) Preparation for marriage: In mixed marriages the clergy of both parties should work together to help the couple prepare for marriage, particularly in their spiritual preparation. The clergy should guide them as they prepare their marriage ceremony, and prepare them “for their future life as an interfaith couple” (Norms, no. 1).

d) Promises: The Catholic is to make several promises. These are made orally, and the other party is to be informed of them (Norms, no. 7). These promises bind the Catholic in conscience for life (Norms, no. 5). The Catholic party promises:

- To remain faithful to the Catholic faith, and the practices and laws of the Catholic Church (Norms, no. 3; preamble, no. 6).
- After discussion with the other party, to do the utmost to see that their children are baptized and raised as Catholics “while respecting the religious convictions of the non-Catholic partner and without placing their conjugal life in jeopardy” (Norms, no. 4).

e) Banns: Where the publication of banns is the custom, the bishops recommend that this be done in the church of each party (Norms, no. 8).

f) Canonical form: Normally a Catholic must marry before a Catholic priest in a Catholic church. The bishop may dispense from this for reasons which “concern in some important way the good of the parties, especially their spiritual well-being, the tranquility and peace of their personal or family relationships, or be based on some special relationship to a non-Catholic minister or place of worship” (see Norms, nos. 9-12).

g) Celebration: Several points are made under this heading:

- In a Catholic church, it is fitting for the priest to preside over the celebration, inviting the minister to take an active part in the Catholic rite; he may do this, for example, by reading a scripture lesson, making an address, or saying a prayer (Norms, nos. 13-14).
- In another church, the minister should preside at his own rite; where a dispensation has been granted from canonical form, the priest may accept the minister's invitation to participate in the ceremony (Norms, nos. 13-14).
- Only one ceremony may be celebrated (Norms, nos. 15-16).
The Catholic ceremony is normally celebrated with "sacred rites" (Norms, no. 17). When the wedding is celebrated between two baptized persons, chapter II of the Rite of Marriage is used; when it is between a Catholic and an unbaptized person, chapter III is used.

After discussion with the parties, the priest is to decide which rites are used to accompany the exchange of consent. This should be accompanied by a celebration of the word (Norms, no. 19).

Is the eucharist celebrated at a mixed marriage? This question is discussed in the next section of this article. (See Norms, nos. 19-20).

h) Witnesses: In a mixed marriage, persons of other denominations may act as witnesses or attendants (Norms, no. 21).

i) Registration of the marriage and the dispensation is in the Norms, nos. 22-24.

j) Continuing pastoral care: This subject is discussed in the final section of this article (Norms, no. 25).

Eucharist at a Mixed Marriage?

General rule: "Because of the differences in doctrine and sacramental life that exist between the Catholic Church and the other Christian Churches and communities of the West, it is generally more opportune that a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic be celebrated without Mass" (Norms, no. 20).

Some exceptions? In the norms, the bishops mention that it may be desirable in some circumstances to have a mixed marriage during the eucharist, but give no examples of such a case. They do warn that the general law on intercommunion is to be observed.

Strong recommendation: Subsequent to these norms, the Joint Working Group of the Canadian Council of Churches and the Canadian Catholic Conference made a further recommendation that the eucharist should not be celebrated during a mixed marriage:

"An inter-church wedding usually does not include a Mass. This is so for two reasons — the non-Catholic members cannot participate fully in the Mass; also, the Mass may be unfamiliar to the non-Catholic friends of the couple."

Continuing Pastoral Care

In order to assure the pastoral care of couples living in mixed marriages, Pope Paul said in 1970 that priests should work with ministers of other Churches. The Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission in 1975 quoted this reminder, and

4 "From Both Sides Now," page 7: Marriage Counselling of Christian Mixed Marriages, Joint Working Group, CCC/CCC.


6 Final Report, Commission on the Theology of Marriage and Its Application to Mixed Marriages, June 27, 1975: see nos. 73-76.

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urged the clergy of both Churches to work for a greater understanding and trust among themselves. They are to "promote better joint pastoral preparation and support for mixed marriages." By generous co-operation and sound pastoral care, clergy may help mixed marriages "to be an occasion of spiritual growth, ... an ecumenical opportunity."

The Canadian bishops have spoken of the co-operative spirit of the combined religious formation of the children (quoted in paragraph "b" above). They go on to note:

"The formation of this religious atmosphere, in turn, will call upon increased pastoral and ecumenical care by the communities to which the couple belongs. Clergy and counsellors are invited to act together as far as possible both to prepare the man and woman for marriage and to provide such aftercare as is necessary" (Norms: preamble, no. 13).

In norm 25, they repeat Pope Paul's request of 1970 for priests to work with other clergy in the pastoral care of those living in mixed marriages.

* * *

Helpful reading:

Vatican II documents: Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches; Decree on ecumenism; Declaration on Christian education; Declaration on the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions; Declaration on religious freedom.


CELEBRATING ENGAGEMENT

Blessing an engaged couple is an informal celebration to praise God and to ask his help for a young couple when they become engaged. The two families and close friends may wish to mark the occasion by prayer and rejoicing.

Suggested prayers and rites are given in Bulletin 51, pages 326-327.
PREPARING THE WEDDING LITURGY

This article provides a checklist for the couple who wish to prepare the liturgy for the wedding according to the mind of the Church.

The Church wants the couple and everyone else to realize that a wedding is an act of public worship. It is a celebration of faith, of our faith as Christians. It is the Church’s desire that all present should participate in this celebration as fully as they are able.

In the wedding celebration, there are many elements in which the couple may have some choice or decision. They should discuss these areas with the priest. Liturgy committees may also want to discuss them in order to develop some improved standards for celebrations in the parish.

Setting the Date and Place

Several matters need to be discussed before agreeing on the date and time for the wedding celebration:

Special seasons: The celebration of marriage is not forbidden during Lent or Advent, but it is certainly not encouraged. Lent is a time of universal penance in preparation for Easter, and the feasting and festivity that go with a wedding are out of character during this time. Advent is not a penitential season, but rather a period of meditative preparation for Christmas; a wedding at this time is more of a distraction from the Church’s prayer. If a wedding takes place during these seasons, however, the Church asks the couple, their families, and their friends to respect the special nature of these seasons by avoiding too much pomp and festivity (Introduction to rite, no 11).

It is part of the general formation of the Christian community to learn to schedule and celebrate weddings in the other forty-two weeks of the year.

Special days: In Canada, the Church strongly discourages weddings on Sundays, the days of Holy Week, or holy days of obligation, in order to avoid a conflict between the needs of community worship and the interests of particular families.

The time for a wedding on Saturday should not be too close to the scheduled times for celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation or for the first Mass of Sunday celebrated on Saturday evening. The parish liturgy committee might suggest a time beyond which no wedding celebration may begin. When two or more weddings are on the same day, the scheduling has to allow adequate time for unhurried celebration, taking into consideration the delays often resulting from dilatory brides, friendly gatherings, and the taking of photographs after the ceremony.

The date and time for the wedding should not be considered fixed until the parish priest has been consulted. People who presume to arrange the date with the caterer, florist, and orchestra before seeing the priest show a woeful failure to understand priorities.

Place: The usual custom is to have the wedding in the Church of the bride. For any good reasons, it may be celebrated in any Catholic church or chapel with the consent of the local clergy.
In these days of secularized weddings, we hear of foolish ministers who preside at weddings on the beach, in a park, on a hilltop at sunrise, in the air, or underwater. This type of Hollywood theatrics must be avoided in worship: the only normal and proper place for a Catholic wedding is in church. A wedding is for us a public act of Christian worship, celebrated as the liturgy of the entire believing community. It can never be the private affair of the couple and their families.

Entrance Rite

Further notes on the parts of the Mass and on the wedding ceremonies are given in Our present rites in this issue. The notes below indicate where choices are available.

Participation will depend on the tradition and liturgical education of the community, and on the help offered to the assembly by the ministers leading it in prayer. Catholic Book of Worship (pew edition, pages 3-11) and Sunday Mass Book (pages 1121-1126) are helpful in preparing and celebrating the wedding liturgy.

Choices of wedding music are discussed in the article on Music and singing.

1. Procession: There are two forms: the priest and his ministers accompany the bridal party to the sanctuary; or the bride enters with her attendants, and meets the groom at the front of the church. These are described in Our present rites. The first alternative is recommended as better liturgy.¹

2. Places for the wedding party: These may be outside or inside the sanctuary, according to local custom. While it is good to have the couple and the witnesses near the altar during the wedding Mass, it is not fitting to have them stand around the priest as though they were concelebrating priests. The parish liturgy committee could give consideration to their own church’s layout, and see which place or places would be most suitable for the couple and their two main witnesses. (The others in the wedding party are liturgically superfluous, and are best left in the front pews.)

3. Opening prayers are taken from one of the three wedding Masses (Canadian sacramentary, nos. 446-448, pages 884-893). The couple may want to choose one of the three sets, or leave this to the priest.

¹ Walking in procession is a liturgical act: see the note on this in Bulletin 56, page 288.
Liturgy of the Word

The couple may wish to work with the priest in making choices or decisions about the following elements:

4. Presidential introduction to the liturgy of the word (GI, no. 11). They may work with the priest in preparing this, or may leave it to him. It is to be based on the scripture readings chosen for the wedding Mass, and is normally quite brief.

5. Readings: Two decisions are to be made here: the number of readings, and then the choice of specific texts.

   - Number of readings: Two may be chosen (one from the OT or NT, and a gospel passage), or three as in the Sunday liturgy (OT, NT, gospel).

   - Choice of specific texts: The readings should be selected from those provided in the lectionary (see Lectionary for Mass, nos. 774-778, pages 831-389; Weekday Lectionary — study edition, nos. 774-778, pages 1149-1168; Together for Life; Sunday Mass Book, pages 1127-1128).

When they have agreed on the choice of readings, the couple would be wise to read them and pray over them each day, whether alone or together. The priest will also keep these readings in mind during his instruction of the couple (see Introduction, no. 5); he could consider helping them to understand these more fully by an exegesis of their contents.

   - Secular readings or poems have no place in a wedding Mass or other sacramental celebration. If the couple wants to have this sort of thing read at their guests, let it be done at the wedding banquet. (See Bulletin 56, page 291; Bulletin 51, page 217.)

6. Silent prayer: It is important to have moments of silent prayer in any liturgical celebration (see Liturgy constitution, no. 30). In the wedding Mass, these may follow each reading and the homily, as well as coming after the invitation, “Let us pray.” A similar pause for silent prayer is made at the beginning of the nuptial blessing.

   After the first reading, for example, the period of silence may be introduced in these or similar words:

   The Lord has spoken his word to us.
   Let us pause for a moment
   to let the Spirit continue to speak to us.

7. Responsorial psalm: The Church wants us to sing this: a cantor sings the refrain, and all repeat it; the cantor sings each verse, and all repeat the refrain after it. The refrains are simple, and seasonal ones may be used: see CBW, nos. 192-200, for examples. The congregation can pick them up easily during the Mass, without any need for practice or lengthy explanations.

   The couple may choose the responsorial psalm and its antiphon from those given in the rite (lectionary, no. 776; SMB, pages 1127-1128), or a seasonal or common psalm and refrain may be chosen.
8. Gospel acclamation: The cantor or choir sings the triple “alleluia,” and all repeat it. Then a verse is sung, and all repeat the alleluia. The couple may choose the chant of the alleluia (see CBW, nos. 201-207), and the text of the verse (lectionary, no. 777; SMB, page 1128). If the wedding has to take place during Lent, another chant (such as CBW, nos. 208, 224) replaces the alleluia.

9. Homily: The homily is the pastoral responsibility of the priest who celebrates the wedding Mass. It draws its content principally from scriptural and liturgical sources: thus will reflect the readings, prayers, and other rites used during this celebration. The homily is not a time to read the bride’s favorite poem or to recall the groom’s prowess on the football field; it is not a time to drop in long quotations from secular writers: it is a time to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Liturgy of the Sacrament

The couple has the opportunity of making a number of choices in the wedding liturgy:

10. Address: The couple may ask the priest to bring in some aspect of the marriage that is reflected in the scripture readings they have chosen for this celebration. The address in the rite (no. 23) is a good model in length and content; it is not to become another homily.

11. Consent: The couples may choose between the statement or question format. As noted in Our present rites, it is not desirable to have the couple or the priest compose a special form for the expression of consent. (Those who do had better attach a copy of it to the marriage papers, so that it may be available to the matrimonial tribunal if the wedding’s validity is ever challenged.)

12. Blessing and exchange of rings: The couple may choose from among the formulas provided in the rite (no. 27). In some cases, the couple may wish to propose another suitable formula, perhaps based on the berakah tradition (see Bulletin 49 for further helps in preparing blessings).

The formula used in presenting the rings to each other is only a suggested one, but one that expresses the faith of the Christian Church. A couple may wish to prepare another formula, similar in nature and length to the one offered in the ritual (no. 28). Or they may, if they wish, simply present the rings in silence.

13. Prayer of the faithful: This is another area where the couple may wish to create suitable texts for their wedding Mass. In doing so, they are to follow the nature and structure of this prayer, as described below. (Further information is given in Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — 1977 Liturgical Calendar, note 7h, pages 20-21.)

- Invitation to pray: In a few words, the priest invites the congregation to join him in praying to God for this couple and for the whole Church.
- Petitions: In a wedding Mass, the petitions may more closely reflect the nature of this celebration, without losing sight of the fact that this community is part of the universal Church, and shares in its concerns.
The National Liturgical Office suggests the following as a suitable list of petitions:

- For the needs of the Church, universal and diocesan;
- For the salvation of the world;
- For those crushed by troubles and needs;
- For the parish and civic community;
- For the couple;
- For their families and friends;
- For the salvation of all present;
- or: for peace in the world.

These should be worded in a simple form, and lead into the response normally used in the community. All the petitions should be addressed to Christ, or all should be addressed to the Father. Examples of general intercessions are given at the back of the sacramentary (Canadian edition, nos. 578-588).

The parish liturgy committee may wish to develop several model sets which the couple may adapt. Since the priest is responsible for this prayer and directs it, he should see and approve the petitions before they are read in public worship.

The priest does not read the petitions during the celebration: another person, even the reader, does this. The wedding couple may wish to choose a suitable person for this ministry.

**Concluding prayer:** The priest concludes the general intercessions with a brief collect, asking the Father to receive the prayers of this community of his believing people.

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**Liturgy of the Eucharist**

The liturgy of the eucharist has three parts: a brief rite of preparation of the altar and the gifts, leading to the eucharistic prayer, and to the communion rite. Some choices may be made by the couple in this part of the Mass.

**Preparation of the gifts**

14. **Preparation of the gifts:** The couple may bring the gifts — bread, wine, and water — to the priest. They do not say anything as they present them. It would be quite fitting for the bread to be baked by the families: the liturgy committee should test a suitable recipe. Where winemaking is common, the families may also wish to provide pure grape wine for the eucharistic celebration.

**Eucharistic prayer**

15. **Preface to the eucharistic prayer:** The couple may wish to choose which of the three prefaces will be used (nos. 72-74 in the sacramentary; SMB, pages 643-645).
16. Eucharistic prayer: The couple may express a preference for one of the four approved eucharistic prayers. No other eucharistic prayers may be used. If they choose the Roman canon, a special form of the prayer, “Father, accept this offering,” may be used. When the fourth eucharistic prayer is selected, the preface must be the one belonging to this prayer, and not one of the wedding prefaces, since it is inseparable (see Bulletin 54, page 169).

17. Memorial acclamation: They may suggest one of the four memorial acclamations after the narrative of institution.

Communion rite

18. Nuptial blessing: One of the three may be chosen by the couple (see SMB, pages 1123-1126).

19. Kiss of peace: The couple may wish to kiss each other at this time.

Concluding Rite

20. Solemn blessing: There are three forms of the solemn blessing of the bride and groom at the end of the Mass. They may choose one of these, or leave this to the priest.

Other Notes

Invitations: Wedding invitations should place the emphasis on the religious aspects of the celebration, and invite Catholics to participate fully by receiving communion. Suggestions and ideas about this could be discussed by the liturgy committee, and passed on to the community several times a year through the parish bulletin.

It should be noted here that the wedding Mass is not a private or family function. Through the parish bulletin, the entire parish could be invited to come and to participate fully. Only the wedding reception or banquet is the private preserve of the families and their guests.

Rehearsal: The rehearsal is usually held the night before the wedding. It provides an opportunity for all who so wish to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. The priest should discuss this with the couple, and see if they wish to have another priest present. They may also discuss the possibility of a brief penance celebration leading to individual confession and absolution. The couple should advise all who are coming to the rehearsal of this opportunity for celebrating the sacrament of penance, and should make sure that there is adequate time for all to celebrate it without haste.

Banners: In a community where the liturgy committee has provided a number of banners for wedding celebrations, the couple may wish to choose one or more suitable ones.  

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2 For further ideas on banners, see A fresh look at banners, in Bulletin 48, pages 108-113.
**Flowers:** It is better to have a few flowers, well placed, rather than many baskets which block the free movement of the ministers involved in the celebration. Most of the flowers can go to the bride's home and to the place where the reception is held.

* * *

During the weeks before the wedding, the priest should try to help the couple and their families to keep the religious aspects of the marriage in first place. As the Vatican Council reminds us, they have to come to the sacrament with proper dispositions and in a spirit of faith in order that the liturgy may produce in them its full effects (see Liturgy constitution, no. 11).

* * *

**Helpful reading** for those preparing for marriage:


* K. J. MacDonald, *Celebrating Your Love in Marriage* (Catholic Pastoral Centre, 788 Wolseley Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 1C6).

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**WAYS OF USING THIS BULLETIN**

There are many ways you can use Bulletin 59 in working for improvements in the preparation and celebration of marriage.

Some of the people who can use this Bulletin in your parish include:

- Couples preparing for marriage
- Families of those preparing for marriage
- Parish council, committees, organizations, groups
- Diocesan commissions, councils, senates
- High school classes
- Catechists, teachers
- Ministers of other churches in your area.
The choice of people to be involved in the celebration of the wedding rite is far more important than the choice of texts and music. The people who act as witnesses, readers, and other ministers should be living signs of the faith that is being proclaimed in the celebration. Their marriages and their lives should reflect the Christian way of life.

1. Principal witnesses: In our country, three witnesses are required by Church law and civil law in the celebration of marriage: two principal witnesses (best man, maid or matron of honor), and the duly delegated clergyman or other official. (Some countries, such as West Germany, require a civil marriage before a civil official; Catholics then celebrate the “church marriage” afterwards.)

In a truly Christian marriage, the couple will want to make sure that those who take a more direct part in the rite are examples of what Christian living is intended to be. People who follow scandalous modes of life, who are divorced, weak in faith, or who have almost given up the practice of religion should not be asked to take part as principal witnesses in a celebration of faith. People who cannot or will not participate fully in the wedding Mass by receiving communion are best left in the pews as spectators.

2. Other attendants: The law in the Church and in most, if not all, countries requires two chief witnesses or attendants for the bride and groom. Nothing prevents the couple from having more attendants, but pastoral experience tends to show that the whims of fashion and style grow stronger as the number of bridesmaids, flower-girls, and ring bearers is increased. The Vatican Council’s suggestion that rites should be marked by noble simplicity (Liturgy constitution, no. 34) is not out of place here.

3. Priest: Normally, it is one of the priests in the bride’s parish who prepares the couple for marriage, and who celebrates the wedding Mass. Since each celebration of marriage is a further step forward in the growth and development of the believing community, the priest is both interested and involved in the celebration. For this reason he will want to help the couple in their spiritual preparation; with the liturgy committee of the parish, he will work with the couple in planning the wedding celebration.

What about an outside priest, a relative or close friend of the couple? From a liturgical point of view, it would seem more desirable to have the local priest celebrate the eucharist and the wedding rite. He is appointed to serve the believing community in that place, and is more concerned with helping the couple to prepare for their wedding and for married life. It is not fitting to split the duties, with one priest presiding over the wedding while another presides over the eucharist; the visiting priest could concelebrate during the Mass. Over a period of time, a variety of visiting celebrants can weaken the family sense of a parish community.
4. Readers and other ministers: For a good celebration, it is desirable that there be one reader for each of the readings before the gospel (GI, no. 71).1 If possible, a deacon reads the gospel; if there is no deacon, another priest reads it. Only when no deacon or other priest is present should the celebrating priest proclaim the gospel reading; normally he listens to it with the rest of the congregation, and then preaches the homily.

Families often request that a relative or friend of the family should read at a wedding Mass. As long as these persons are suitable and capable of fulfilling the ministry well, this may be permitted (see Bulletin 56, page 291). When possible, it would seem better to have regular readers from the parish to read at a wedding Mass.

Should the bride or groom read one of the readings? It is better for them to concentrate on their principal role, and leave the reading to another minister (see Liturgy constitution, no. 28): they should listen to the word which is, in a particular way, directed to them in this celebration.

- Other ministers: The ministry of the cantor and musicians is discussed in the following article, Music and singing. When persons in the parish have been instituted in the ministry of acolyte, these should serve the wedding Mass. Until that ministry comes into more common practice, young people or adults will be chosen to serve. Dignity and responsibility are required of all who take part in the liturgy, since it is a celebration of faith and an act of worship.

Ushers have a particular ministry in the Christian assembly: their role in any celebration is to meet people as they enter the church, to lead them to their seats, and to direct processions (see GI, no. 68b). While most wedding parties provide their own ushers, it would not be out of order for the parish liturgy committee to recommend that one of the regular parish ushers be on hand to see that everything goes well.

* * *

A final form of ministry might also be considered: the friends and families of the bride and groom would contribute greatly to the proper celebration of the marriage by not running the couple ragged in the weeks preceding the wedding day. A little more time spent in praying and less in playing would be helpful.

Families and friends should pray earnestly for the couple, and ask God to bless them in their vocation. A suitable prayer for daily use in the months before the wedding is given in Sunday Mass Book (page 1120).

Heavenly Father,
bless N. and N. as they prepare
for their marriage in Christ.
Teach them to love you more each day,
and help them to remain always in your love.

We ask this grace through Christ our Lord. Amen!

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1 Bulletin 56, Training Readers, offers many ideas for the parish liturgy committee in selecting and forming readers.
MUSIC AND SINGING

Music holds an important place in the celebration of a marriage. Areas of concern to good liturgy are described in this article, and should be discussed with the couple and their families during the months of preparation for marriage.¹

Some General Principles

Choosing music for worship: In any service of worship, the music, psalms, hymns and other musical selections are to be chosen with care. Each piece has to be sacred and serious, with words that express the faith of the Christian Church. Each selection has to be appropriate for the part of the service where it is sung or played; it should not prolong or delay the celebration. Its quality is to be in keeping with its use in church. The choice and type of music should contribute to and not prevent active participation of the community, for this is their right as sharers in the priesthood of Christ.

A wedding is a public service of worship: The celebration of marriage today is of concern to the whole community. For the Church, a wedding is a sacred event, a celebration of the believing community, which expresses the faith and worship of the entire community. The wedding celebration cannot be considered to be only a private or family affair: its celebration belongs to the realm of community prayer and worship.

Words are important: The words in hymns sung at a wedding must be appropriate for Christian worship. At a wedding, believers should sing of God’s love for us, of the saving death and rising of his Son, of his love for his Church, of salvation, of praise and thanksgiving. Love songs from stage, screen, or hit parade are not suitable, and should be saved for the dance at the wedding reception, if used at all.

The Vatican Council has pointed out that the words being sung must always be in harmony with Catholic beliefs. They should come mainly from scripture and from liturgical sources (see Liturgy constitution, no. 121).

Choosing wedding music: “The principles governing the choice of music are those that govern the choice for any service of worship. Whatever is suitable for one is suitable for the other. All that is sung or played should be an offering in praise of God.”²

¹ For previous discussions of music at weddings, see Bulletin 32, page 44; Bulletin 34, page 170; Bulletin 35, pages 198, 230-232. These last three pages give guidelines for wedding music issued by one diocese.

² Service Book for the use of ministers conducting public worship, the United Church of Canada (1969, Ryerson, Toronto): see page 189.

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Participation by the Assembly

Most of the singing and music at the celebration of a wedding — or in any other worship service — is to be shared by all. It is not to be a concert or performance by a soloist, small group, or choir while the congregation listens.

Familiar to all: The music chosen for the wedding liturgy should be familiar to the people of the church where the celebration takes place. The standard of participation should be that of a normal Sunday celebration. If the music is mostly new, or beyond the ability of the local congregation, it will limit their participation, and thus hamper the community's worship.

Soloists? The renewed Catholic liturgy promotes the role of cantor or psalmist, a minister who leads the assembled worshippers in singing the responsorial psalm and in the gospel acclamation. Our tradition does not encourage the use of a soloist at other parts of the wedding liturgy.

Groups or choirs who sing at weddings have to learn the difference between singing at worship and singing on a concert stage:

- On the stage, the musicians and singers dominate the action, and others follow their words, rhythm, and actions. They and their music are at the center of what is happening: they are what is happening.

- In liturgy, however, the musicians are ministers, servants. Their role is subservient to the worship of the community, and should help the people to give God greater praise. The ministers of music are there to intensify the spirit of prayer and worship, not to entertain the people. Their music is to fit into the mood and action of the various parts of the rite, and is to help its progress.

Aids to participation: In order to help the members of the assembly take a fuller part in the singing, a parish community needs to make sure that all have the words to be sung, if these have not been committed to memory. The pew edition of Catholic Book of Worship provides an adequate selection of music for the people, while the choir edition provides accompaniment, guidelines, and often harmony as well. Those places which are prone to duplicate music or words should remember that copyright is a matter both of civil and moral law.

Place of Music in the Rite

Music has an important place in the celebration of marriage. All the places where it may be used are mentioned here, along with possible options and alternatives. The actual choice of music is discussed under “Choosing wedding music,” below.

1. Responsorial psalm: This is sung by a cantor, with the people singing the refrain. It should not be replaced by a hymn.

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3 See Ministry of liturgical music in Bulletin 53, pages 101-104.

2. Acclamation: Particular efforts should be made to sing these during the Mass:
   - **Gospel acclamation**: Sung before the reading of the gospel. If not sung, it may be omitted.
   - **Holy, holy, holy Lord**: Coming at the end of the preface of the eucharistic prayer, this chant is one of praise to the Father. It is desirable for the priest to sing the preface.
   - **Memorial acclamation**: After the narrative of institution in the eucharistic prayer.
   - **Great Amen**: Concluding and sealing the praise offered in the eucharistic prayer.

3. **Our Father**: The Lord's prayer is the communion hymn of the Christian people. It is sung at the beginning of the communion rite.

4. **Other chants** are sung at other points during the Mass. These include several which the choir may sing alone: **Glory to God, Lamb of God**, during the preparation of the gifts (no. 5, below), after the communion procession hymn, and during the signing of the marriage register. If the **Lord, have mercy** is sung, choir and people alternate it.

5. **Processional songs**: There are four processions in the Mass, at the entrance, preparation of gifts, communion, and recessional. These are properly accompanied by community singing. At the preparation of the gifts, the choir may sing while the assembly listens. It is more proper for the assembly to sing during the entrance procession rather than to have only organ music.

6. **Prelude and postlude**: Before the service begins, the organist may play quietly to set an appropriate atmosphere of prayer and reverence for the celebration. Similarly, a postlude may be played after the service is over, until all the people have left.

### Choosing Wedding Music

A checklist of the music for a wedding, in the order that these are sung, is set out below. The items which are in boldface should be sung in every wedding Mass. The others may be sung if desired. The ones marked with an asterisk may be sung by the choir alone or by the whole congregation.

- **Entrance hymn**
- **Lord, have mercy**
- **Glory to God** *
- **Responsorial psalm**
- **Gospel acclamation**
- **Hymn during the preparation of the gifts** *
- **Holy, holy, holy Lord**
Memorial acclamation

Great Amen

Lord's prayer

Lamb of God *

Communion hymn (during the communion procession)

Other hymns during communion time *

Hymn of praise after communion *

Hymn or music during the signing of the register *

Recessional hymn or music *

* * *

Helpful reading:


**WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES**

The Church encourages couples to celebrate wedding anniversaries with Mass and prayer. This is particularly true of 25th and 50th wedding anniversaries.

Resources provided in the liturgical books:

* Sacramentary: The Mass of thanksgiving (nos. 550-551, pages 1011-1012) may be celebrated with special prayers:
  * Anniversary of marriage: no. 449, page 894.
  * Twenty-fifth anniversary of marriage: no. 450, page 895.
  * Fiftieth anniversary of marriage: no. 451, page 896.

* Lectionary: Suitable readings are found in the Masses for thanksgiving (nos. 881-884) and in the texts for wedding celebrations (nos. 774-778).

A prayer for the couple's use on their wedding anniversary is given on page 1127 in *Sunday Mass Book*. A blessing for a wedding anniversary is included in Bulletin 51, page 328.
OTHER NOTES

WHEN MARRIAGE FAILS

Father Francis G. Morrisey, OMI, is Dean of the Faculty of Canon Law at St. Paul's University in Ottawa. In this article he gives a brief outline of the work of marriage tribunals today, and stresses the need for careful preparation for marriage.

In spite of many efforts to prepare adequately for marriage, and in spite of numerous sacrifices on the part of either husband or wife, it often happens today that a couple cannot continue to live together in peace and harmony, and the civil effects of their union are terminated by a decree of divorce.

The question immediately arises whether, in the eyes of the Church, they are free to enter into a new union. The teaching on the indissolubility of sacramental marriage is one of the hallmarks of the Catholic faith, and something that the Church as a whole must continue to profess if it is to be faithful to the commands of its Founder.

Defective unions: Nevertheless, there are instances where it becomes evident that the first union was defective. In those cases, the Church, through its representatives, judges that the union was indeed so defective that, in reality, it never truly existed; the parties of the former union are then authorized to enter into a new union which will be blessed by the Church.

The nullity of an existing union is recognized today by the tribunals or marriage courts of the Church. Usually, each diocese has its own tribunal; in some cases, as in Canada, the courts are grouped on a regional basis. The personnel of the courts, who usually have followed extensive courses in Church law, examine each particular situation to see whether it meets the teaching of the Church regarding the sanctity, the dignity, and the permanence of marriage.

Reasons for nullity: Marriages are declared null by Church courts today for a number of reasons. Most of the cases studied fall into the category of defect of consent. This means that either one or both parties did not consent to marriage as it is understood by the Church, or could not consent to it because of some disorder of a psychic nature, or, even if they could consent and intended to do so, they could not carry out the obligations they had taken upon themselves.

For instance, some people lack the basic knowledge required to understand what it means to give themselves to another for life; they might even possibly be victims of fraud, deceit or ignorance (as in some cases of alleged pregnancy). On the other hand, some people know what is expected of them, but do not have the right intention when getting married: they might not intend their union to be lasting, they might not intend to be faithful to their partner, or they might not even intend to be truly married (as in some cases of force and fear when a couple get married simply to avoid prosecution or shame because of pregnancy outside marriage). Many others, who might well know what marriage is and who could intend to carry out its obligations are unable to live a married life and be faithful to their promises;
they suffer from some form of mental illness (such as schizophrenia), or from some disturbance that makes it impossible for them and their partner to live a true community of conjugal life and to share conjugal love in its fullest and most beautiful meaning. Some of the cases that fall into this last category are those of acute alcoholism, or certain defined instances of personality disorders, and so forth.

The court must evaluate a person's intention or state of mind at the time of the wedding. In the case of events occurring only in the course of married life, the tribunal must determine whether the situation causing these events (such as depressions) truly existed at the time of the wedding.

Expert assistance: In many instances, the lawyers of the Church courts do not have the expertise necessary to evaluate the various disorders that affect a person's character or personality, especially in relation to past events. Thus, they have recourse to medical specialists, such as psychiatrists, or to other qualified persons, such as psychologists, who will help them understand the parties' personalities, character traits, and so forth. This is a very delicate process, where the greatest respect must be shown to the persons involved, while at the same time, trying to determine the precise cause of the failure of a marriage.

If a union is declared null and void, it often happens that the Church will not allow the party who was unable to carry out the responsibilities of the first marriage, to enter into a second one, because the same situation would only repeat itself. The other party would be free, though, to marry before the Church.

Because of the increasingly high number of divorces granted today in Canada, especially among young people, and because of the shortage of trained and qualified personnel to carry out the investigations, it often happens that there are lengthy delays before a couple is able to receive the decision of the court. Great efforts are being made to simplify the rules to be followed by the courts, but the Church does not proceed too hastily, especially since a great value is at stake here: the protection of Christian marriage.

Current situation: There has been a renewal in Tribunal activity in recent years. This was brought about by a number of factors: the large number of people coming before the courts, the acceptance of the contribution that the behavioral sciences can make to our understanding of people and their attitudes, a more earnest desire to provide justice to all the People of God, and a renewed understanding of the nature of Christian marriage and of its responsibilities. Yet, this does not mean that every marriage that breaks up may be declared null. Indeed, only a small proportion of potential cases arrive at a decision in favor of nullity. Marriages often break up because of ill-will, and not because of personality disorders.

* * *

Careful preparation needed: The work of the tribunal shows forth very clearly the necessity of preparing carefully for marriage. There are important responsibilities on the part of the priest and on the part of the couple. A serious mistake made at a time when people do not consider the consequences of their acts, may have effects for a lifetime. In its pastoral work in the marriage courts, the Church
is trying to bring assistance to many people, to provide for their happiness and spiritual well-being, but it cannot do so at the cost of being unfaithful to the Lord's teaching.

If a marriage has broken up, and it is impossible to restore common life, the parties should consult with the personnel of one of the courts to see whether their first marriage was truly a sacramental union. The courts are an essential service of the Church, and the people working there are trying to do their utmost to help those in need.

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES IN SCRIPTURE

A new program of guided studies in the Catholic faith is being made available this year. Intended for individuals or groups, for families, parishes, or religious communities, this new program is prepared and administered by the Divine Word Center.

The program is supported and encouraged by the Catholic Conference of Ontario, the Canadian Religious Conference of Ontario, and the Canadian Religious Conference.

Subscribers will have the opportunity, by mail, to assess their understanding of the topics being studied.

First program: The first program will present 20 lessons on the Old Testament, and is entitled Journey, Part One. Consultants for this program are Rev. Carroll Stuhlmueller, CP, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, and Rev. Walter Vogels, WF, of St. Paul's University, Ottawa.

The second program, Journey, Part Two, is on the New Testament, and will be available in 1978. In subsequent years, other courses will be added, including one or more courses in liturgy.

Subscription: Individual subscription, $60.00; lower rates for groups mailing a single response prepared by a group.

For application forms and further information, please write to:

Guided Study Programs
260 Colborne Street
LONDON, Ontario N6B 2S6
Canada.

Applications must be received before July 1, 1977, in order to arrange for printing of course material. Courses will be mailed beginning in September, 1977.

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The National Liturgical Office is pleased to recommend this project to the readers of the National Bulletin on Liturgy.
**BRIEF BOOK REVIEWS**


Night prayer is intended to be the last prayer a Christian says before going to bed, even if this is after midnight (see General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours, no. 84). This booklet provides a simple form for use each night of the week.

Following the texts and style of the *Liturgy of the Hours*, each night's prayer includes an introduction, a time for examination of conscience, words of a hymn (mostly with familiar melodies), one or two psalms with a psalm prayer, a brief reading, responsory, gospel canticle of Simeon, prayer, and conclusion.

Four appendices provide prayers for forgiveness, antiphons in honor of Mary, poetry selections, and a commentary on the nine psalms used in night prayer. A brief introduction explains the elements of night prayer.

We recommend this booklet to individual families wishing to pray the Church's night prayer before they go to bed.

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Those who know Father Hovda's work from the past will have no hesitation in sending immediately for a copy of this book on the one who presides in the liturgy, especially in eucharistic celebrations. With his usual concise and penetrating prose, he looks at the spirit of the presider, at his role in planning, and at his preparation by prayer and work. Elements of presiding — environment, presence, and style — are also described in a sound manner.

We recommend this book to every priest and liturgy committee: it points the way for present and future celebration according to the spirit and mind of the Church.

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*Books from the Liturgical Commission* of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, prepared under the care of Father Michael Sequeira, commission secretary:


This booklet contains four excellent papers on Christian initiation for adults and children, one by Aidan Kavanagh, OSB, and three by Father Sequeira. The penetrating guidelines of the episcopal conference on the sacraments of initiation are also included, and are worth serious study.

  In this booklet, Fr. Sequeira presents many clear ideas on renewal and adaptation in the liturgy. In the second part of the booklet, he speaks on the prayer life of a parish community. Many positive and pastoral ideas are discussed.


  This mimeographed booklet offers a simple commentary on the celebration of the rite of penance, with many useful pointers on pastoral practice. We note that the diagram giving an example of a room for reconciliation is taken from Bulletin 52, page 55.

  We recommend these three booklets to parish liturgy committees and to diocesan liturgical commissions. Though written primarily for the Caribbean pastoral situation, they contain many valuable points for discussion here too. We would suggest that the sum of $3.00 (U.S. dollars) is not too much to send in payment for these books and for postage. Order from:

  Rev. Michael Sequeira
  Liturgical Commission
  21 Hopefield Avenue
  P.O. Box 43
  Kingston 6
  JAMAICA, West Indies.

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  The authors have provided 23 penance celebrations for use during the year. Nine of these and the examination of conscience are taken from the official Rite of Penance, and the rest suggest prayers and readings for use in church, school, or home.

  This book can be useful for parish liturgy teams and catechists as they work with their priests in preparing celebrations throughout the year.

* * *

- **A Place for Reconciliation**, prepared by Richard S. Vosko, Walter Kroner, and Bruce Kunkel (1976, FDLC, St. Pius X Abbey, Pevely, Mo. 63070). Illustrations, 29 pages. $1.00 (50¢ each for 25 or more).

  This booklet has been prepared by a liturgist and two architects, and provides helpful notes and diagrams which explain the meaning and celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation. It enables priests and liturgy committees to develop a deeper appreciation of the signs involved in celebrating this sacrament well.
Many helps are offered in developing a proper place for its full celebration. We recommend this booklet for priests and liturgy committees, even if they have already adapted their church for this sacrament.

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(Copies are available for $12.50 from Theological Book Agency, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J. 08540, U.S.A., or for £7-20 from B.H. Blackwell Ltd., Broad Street, Oxford, England OX1 3BQ.)

Dr. Old, a Presbyterian minister, spent seven years in the European cities where the great Reformers lived. He studied their works from a liturgical point of view. His particular interest is to show how many of the liturgical reforms they made were based on the practices of the early Church and on the teaching of the Fathers.

It is fascinating to be taken into the Reformers' minds through the patristic books they owned and studied, and to see how deeply they were influenced by the thought and practices of the early centuries of the Church's life.

After showing us the various reform movements — both Catholic and Reformed — at work from 1500-1542, the author goes through the patristic knowledge of the Reformers; sometimes he is able to describe their thoughts from their own handwritten notations in their personal copies of the Fathers. Then he looks at their thought and work in renewing the prayers, the proclamation of the word, and the Lord's supper in the light of the Fathers' writings and of the state of Catholic liturgy in the early 1500s.

This book is of far-reaching ecumenical importance. It helps us to realize clearly that we Catholics have basically been doing in the late twentieth century what the reformed Churches did in the sixteenth: the rites of the eucharist "are now to be restored to the earlier norm of the holy Fathers" (Vatican II, Liturgy constitution, no. 50). As a result, we are witnessing today a rapprochement of major Churches in the theology and celebration of the eucharist and the other sacraments of initiation.

We recommend this book to all who are seriously interested in the liturgical and ecumenical movements.

* * *


This book is based on a 1977 television series on the bible, a popular introduction to the scriptures for ordinary people. The booklet follows thirteen TV programs from the beginnings, the meaning of the bible, through the Old Testament to the New. Individual chapters cover Paul, the synoptic gospels, John,
the way various Churches regard the bible, and concludes with a chapter on the bible today.

We recommend this booklet as a useful aid for families, catechists, study groups, and for everyone interested in understanding the bible and its background more fully.

(Father FitzGerald contributed an article, *Words of consecration are communication*, in Bulletin 46, pages 272-275.)

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It is a pleasure to read through this book. Prepared as part of the senior cycle of the Irish catechetical program, it presents a broad view of the history of Christianity from its beginnings to the present. The eight chapters of the book show how Christian ideals have been expressed in music, architecture, painting, and the other arts. Many references to the liturgy are included in this book. The text is well written and is easy to read.

We recommend this book for school and parish libraries, and for every family wanting to learn more about our heritage.

(An earlier book by Father Forristal, *Oliver Plunkett*, was reviewed in Bulletin 51, page 334.)

* * *


This book is intended for parents who are preparing to have their child baptized. It provides them with reflections, questions, and prayers that they may use; it also helps them to understand the meaning of baptism and the responsibilities they are taking on when they ask for baptism for their child. The rites and ceremonies of the baptism celebration are explained. In appearance and layout, the parents' book is uncluttered and pleasant to read.

The parish leader's book has thirteen pages of suggestions and outlines added to the parents' book. It gives practical suggestions for three meetings with parents of children who are being baptized together.

We recommend this publication, but we do question seriously their failure to acknowledge extensive copyright material from ICEL and several quotations from *The Jerusalem Bible*. The subtitle of the book makes it sound as though the parents were going to do it themselves.
CLASSIFYING A LITURGICAL LIBRARY

Part II: This article continues the material presented in Bulletin 58, pages 121-128. It was prepared by the Pastoral Center for Liturgy in the Archdiocese of Toronto.

E. Sacraments of Christian Initiation

Baptism
1 — General works
2 — Theology
3 — History
5 — Pastoral applications

Confirmation
7 — General works, including history
8 — Theology
10 — Pastoral applications

Eucharist
13 — General works, including history and theology

○ Liturgy of eucharistic celebration
15 — General works
17 — New order of Mass
19 — Commentaries on the Mass

○ Introductory rites
22 —

○ Liturgy of the word
25 — History
26 — Theology of proclamation
28 — Pastoral application of proclamation
30 — Proclamation of scripture
31 — Responsorial psalmody, alleluias, etc.
33 — Homilies and homiletic aids, collected
34 — By subject, A-Z

○ Liturgy of the eucharist
(Preparation of the gifts, eucharistic prayer, communion)
35 — General works and history
36 — Theology

○ Preparation of the gifts
38 — Preparation of the gifts (offertory)
39 — Meaning of the collection

186
- Eucharistic prayer
  41 — General works
  43 — Celebration texts
  44 — Experimental texts
- Communion rite
  46 — Communion: meaning
  48 — Various rites, forms, formulas
- Concluding rite
  51 —
- Eucharistic worship outside Mass
  54 —

F. Other Sacraments and Rites

Penance and reconciliation
  1 — General works
  2 — History of penance and its discipline
  3 — Theology of penance
  5 — Pastoral practice
  8 — New form of celebration
  9 — Penance celebrations
  11 — Room for reconciliation

Marriage
  13 — General works, including history
  14 — Theology
  15 — Marriage preparation
  17 — Celebration of marriage
  19 — Pastoral perspectives

Orders and ministries
  22 — General works
  23 — History
  24 — Theology of orders
  25 — Celebration of the sacrament of orders
  28 — Bishops
  29 — Priests
  30 — Deacons
  31 — Readers and acolytes
  32 — Other, A-Z
  34 — Women in relation to orders and ministries
  36 — Other special topics
Rites for sickness and death

- Pastoral care of the sick
  40 — General works
  41 — History and theology
  43 — Visits and prayers with the sick
  45 — Communion of the sick
  46 — Anointing of the sick

- Pastoral care of the dying
  49 — General works
  50 — Viaticum
  52 — Prayers for the dying

- Liturgy for the dead
  55 — General works
  56 — History of the rites
  58 — Prayer vigil or wake services
  60 — Funeral service
  62 — Christian burial
  65 — Cemeteries

Sacramentals

G. Prayer

  2 — General works
  4 — Theology of prayer
  6 — Bible and other prayer vigils
  7 — Other paraliturgical events

Collections of prayers, prayerbooks, etc.

  11 — General
  12 — Prayers from scripture
  14 — Special devotions, A-Z
  16 — Other Christian denominations, A-Z
  17 — Jewish
  18 — Others, A-Z
  19 — Ecumenical and interdenominational

H. Liturgical Books

  1 — General works on the liturgical books

Sacramentaries

  3 — General works, including history
  4 — The order of Mass
  6 — Texts, A-Z by country, subarrange by date
  8 — Commentaries, etc.
Lectionaries
11 — Texts, A-Z by country, subarrange by date
12 — Commentaries
14 — Commentaries on both sacramental and lectionary

Ordines
17 — Roman
18 — Other

Roman missal
20 — Texts, by date
21 — Commentaries

Rituals
24 — General works, including history
25 — Texts, A-Z by country, subarrange by date
26 — Commentaries
27 — Pontificals
29 — Special rituals, including excerpts, by topic, A-Z
31 — Commentaries

Liturgy of the hours
35 — General works, including history
  • Roman breviary
36 — Texts, by date
37 — Commentaries
38 — Other rites
  • New office books (1970- )
41 — Texts, by date
42 — Commentaries, etc.
43 — Experimental liturgies of the hours
45 — Other Churches

Liturgical calendars
48 — Roman
49 — National, A-Z by country
50 — Diocesan or regional, A-Z
51 — Religious communities, A-Z

Books of ceremonies
53 —
J. Liturgical Year

This section needs further subdivisions.

K. Music

1 — General works on music
2 — Societies
3 — Conferences, congresses, etc.
4 — Dictionaries and encyclopedias
5 — Bibliography

Liburical music

○ Official documents

8 — Papal, by date
9 — Other Roman, by date
10 — National and diocesan, A-Z, by date
14 — General works on liturgical music
15 — History of liturgical music
17 — Gregorian and other chant
18 — Other forms of liturgical music
20 — Use of folk music in the liturgy

○ Song repertoires

23 — Chant books
24 — Sung liturgy of the hours
26 — Sung psalms

○ Hymn books

29 — Catholic
30 — Other denominations
31 — Ecumenical
32 — Interdenominational
34 — Hymns for special occasions or functions, A-Z
36 — Folk and other popular forms

L. Art and Architecture

1 — Societies and conferences
2 — Bibliography
3 — Dictionaries and encyclopedias

Official documents

4 — Roman, by date
6 — National and diocesan, A-Z, by date
Art

9 — General works
10 — History
11 — Art, by country, A-Z
13 — Symbolism in art
15 — Special symbols, A-Z
16 — Special subjects in art, A-Z
19 — Religious sculpture
20 — Church windows

Architecture

25 — General works, including history
26 — Architectural styles
28 — Modern church design, including books of plans
30 — Special churches
31 — Renovation of church buildings
32 — Decoration of church buildings

Vestments

36 — General, including history
37 — Symbolism
40 — Regulations
42 — Design and preparation

Church furnishings

45 — General
46 — Special, A-Z

M. Eastern Rites

1 — General works
2 — History
4 — Liturgical books
5 — By rite, A-Z

N. Orthodox Churches

1 — General works
2 — History
4 — Liturgical books

P. Other Christian Denominations, and Other Religions

Christian denominations

1 — General works, including history
2 — Works on individual denominations, A-Z
4 — Liturgical books, by denomination, A-Z
5 — Interdenominational books
Jewish

8 — General works
10 — History
11 — Liturgical books

Other religions

14 — General, including history
15 — Liturgical books

Q. History—Church and Secular

This section needs further subdivisions.

R. Social Sciences

Anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc.

. . . Relation of liturgy to . . .

* * *

A firm step forward: While no system is perfect, the outline suggested above provides many valuable ideas for cataloguing libraries of liturgical resources.

Help wanted: May we ask you to take this list, and see how it fits your needs and situation. Are other classifications needed? Should some be subdivided further?

Ideas and suggestions may be sent to Sister Anne Murray, IBVM, Pastoral Center for Liturgy, 2661 Kingston Road, Scarborough, Ontario M1M 1M3. A revised edition of the classification system could be published in the Bulletin in due time.

ACADEMY REPORTS

The North American Academy of Liturgy, founded several years ago, brings together many liturgists in the United States and Canada to share their work with one another. As last year, a summary of the work group reports from the 1977 meeting will be published in the July issue of Worship.

These reports will be helpful in showing current trends and emphases among liturgical scholars in various Christian Churches, and are recommended for your careful study.