

Reception of the new Order of Celebrating Matrimony

Introduction

Now that the new *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* has been approved it would be helpful to emphasize a few details that might imply a change from previous practice in the preparation for Matrimony. We now have an English text that is in sync with the Spanish translation that has been in use since 2010.

Beginning, September 8, 2016, feast of the Birth of Mary, we may start using the New *Order of Matrimony* in English and it must be fully implemented in all parishes no later than December 30, 2016, the feast of the Holy Family.

As with any change people are more receptive to it, if they have first been given a suitable explanation of the reasons for the change. Therefore, it is imperative that appropriate catechesis be offered to those seeking marriage through the Catholic Church.

Changes and Additions

Some changes and additions in this new edition include the following: an expanded Introduction from 18 paragraphs to 44, more Scripture passages, prayer texts have been expanded or retranslated and new Chant notations are included for the Invitation and the Nuptial Blessing(s). The reception of the Consent now has two options from which to choose. The cultural adaptations of the arras and the lazo or veil are now included in the English translation. There are examples of general intercessions. A new Order of Blessing for the Engaged couple, the Order of Blessing a married couple within Mass on the Anniversary of Marriage are now included in the contents of the ritual. There is a new posture and place of the couple for the Nuptial Blessing and finally the rubrics have changed with respect to the signing of the Marriage record.

Preparation process for Matrimony

I would call to your attention, paragraph 35 of the *Prenotanda* which highlights the main elements of the celebration of marriage: The Liturgy of the Word, the Consent of the contracting parties, the Nuptial blessing, and the Eucharistic Communion. The catechesis of the couple preparing to celebrate matrimony should focus on these elements of the Ritual.

Frequently asked questions

May other than scripture readings be used in the celebration?

Readings must always be taken from sacred scripture whether or not the wedding ceremony takes place in the context of Mass. The options for the choice of readings depends on the liturgical requirements for the date chosen. In the planning sessions with the representative of the parish the couple should receive an adequate explanation of the options available to them for their chosen date.

May a non-Catholic read at the wedding ceremony?

Normally only a fully initiated Catholic may read at a Eucharistic celebration in the Catholic church. In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, a priest presiding at a wedding may, for a just cause, permit a validly baptized member of a non-Catholic church or ecclesial community to be a reader at the Eucharistic celebration.

May a non-Catholic minister play a role in a Catholic wedding?

In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the priest presiding at a wedding may invite the minister of the party of the other church or ecclesial community to participate in the celebration of the marriage by reading from scripture, giving a brief exhortation, and/or blessing the couple. This person may not ask for and receive the consent of the parties.

Must the wedding take place in the church building?

According to canon law 1118.1 "A marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic party and a non-Catholic baptized party is to be celebrated in a parish church." For a wedding to take place outside a Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the permission of the Regional Bishop is required.

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

The ritual says that, "The procession to the altar then takes place in the customary manner" (46). The custom of the procession with a cross, servers, presider, and the wedding party including the parents of the bride and groom is given as a preferred option. The visual presentation of the bride and groom accompanied by their parents or family members reflects the scriptural reference "leaving father and mother and clinging to one another" (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:15; Ephesians 5:31) as the two join as one in covenantal relationship in the sacrament of Matrimony. The liturgical vision of the celebration offers a perspective different from the conventional practice. The bride's father may accompany his daughter down the aisle. It is up to the minister preparing the couple to discern with them the most suitable manner for the wedding party to process to the altar at the beginning of the celebration.

Can a deacon officiate at the celebration of matrimony when the marriage is celebrated within Mass?

The specific duties of a deacon at a wedding within Mass are to proclaim the Gospel and the General Intercessions, to invite the assembly to share the Sign of Peace, and to send forth the community at the dismissal. In cases where the spouses and/or their family have a special relationship to a deacon, the pastor may allow the deacon to participate in the Mass in a greater way (which could include preaching the homily, receiving the couple's vows, or imparting the nuptial blessing). As a rule, it is recommended that the celebration of matrimony take place within Mass, especially if the bride and groom want to receive Communion at their wedding ceremony. It is not recommended that Holy Communion be distributed at a wedding celebrated outside of Mass. Deacons may preside at the "Order of Matrimony without Mass" and at the "Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or non-Christian" also outside of Mass.

Is a cantor required?

An experienced cantor helps the assembly to unite in sung prayer and praise on the wedding day. The liturgy has many dialogical moments between the presider and the assembly that are easily facilitated by a good cantor. It is worth the effort and expense to fulfill this liturgical role with a competent singer.

Can weddings be celebrated during Holy Week or other major feasts of the Church Year?

Weddings should never be celebrated on Good Friday or Holy Saturday. In addition, the choice of certain dates for a wedding date does impact the readings that can be used. When the date falls on a feast ranked numbers 1 through 4 in the Table of Liturgical Days (GIRM), the Mass orations would be those for the day, and not for Matrimony. However, one of the readings may be taken from the texts provided for the celebration of Marriage (nos. 144-187), OCM 34.

Can flowers be placed in front of Mary?

It is still permitted for the bride to bring flowers and pray in front of an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary at a wedding. A groom may also bring flowers and pray in front of an image of St. Joseph. Even better, the couple may want to pray together at an image of the Holy Family for the good of their marriage.

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