

# ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY

## INTRODUCTION

### I. The Importance and Dignity of the Sacrament of Matrimony

1. The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish a lifelong partnership between themselves,<sup>1</sup> derives its force and strength from creation, but for the Christian faithful it is also raised up to a higher dignity, since it is numbered among the Sacraments of the new covenant.
2. A Marriage is established by the conjugal covenant, that is, the irrevocable consent of both spouses, by which they freely give themselves to each other and accept each other. Moreover, this singular union of a man and a woman requires, and the good of the children demands, the complete fidelity of the spouses and the indissoluble unity of the bond.<sup>2</sup>
3. Furthermore, the institution of Marriage itself and conjugal love are, by their very nature, ordered to the procreation and formation of children and find in them, as it were, their ultimate crown.<sup>3</sup> Children are thus truly the supreme gift of Marriage and contribute greatly to the good of the parents themselves.
4. The intimate community of life and love, by which spouses ‘are no longer two, but one flesh,’<sup>4</sup> has been established by God the Creator, provided with its own proper laws, and endowed with that blessing which alone was not forfeited by punishment for original sin.<sup>5</sup> This sacred bond, therefore, does not depend on human choice, but rather on the Author of Marriage, who ordained it to be endowed with its own goods and ends.<sup>6</sup>
5. Indeed Christ the Lord, making a new creation and making all things new,<sup>7</sup> has willed that Marriage be restored to its primordial form and holiness in such a way that what God has joined together, no one may put asunder,<sup>8</sup> and raised this indissoluble conjugal contract to the dignity of a Sacrament so that it might signify more clearly and represent more easily the model of his own nuptial covenant with the Church.<sup>9</sup>
6. By his presence, Christ brought blessing and joy to the wedding at Cana, where he changed water into wine and so foreshadowed the hour of the new and eternal covenant: ‘For just as of old God made himself present to his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so now the Saviour of the human race’<sup>10</sup> offers himself to the Church as Spouse, fulfilling his covenant with her in his Paschal Mystery.
7. Through Baptism, which is the Sacrament of faith, a man and a woman are once and for all incorporated into the covenant of Christ with the Church in such a way that their conjugal

1 Cf. C.I.C. can. 1055, §1.

2 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 48.

3 Cf. *ibid.*

4 Matthew 19:6.

5 Cf. Nuptial Blessing.

6 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 48.

7 Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

8 Cf. Matthew 19:6.

9 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 48.

10 *Ibid.*

community is assumed into Christ's charity and is enriched by the power of his Sacrifice.<sup>11</sup> From this new condition it follows that a valid Marriage between the baptized is always a Sacrament.<sup>12</sup>

8. By the Sacrament of Matrimony Christian spouses signify and participate in the mystery of unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church;<sup>13</sup> therefore, both in embracing conjugal life and in accepting and educating their children, they help one another to become holy and have their own place and particular gift among the People of God.<sup>14</sup>
9. Through this Sacrament the Holy Spirit brings it about that, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her,<sup>15</sup> Christian spouses also strive to nurture and foster their union in equal dignity, mutual giving, and the undivided love that flows from the divine font of charity. In this way, uniting divine and human realities, they persevere in good times and in bad, faithful in body and mind,<sup>16</sup> remaining complete strangers to any adultery and divorce.<sup>17</sup>
10. The true development of conjugal love and the whole meaning of family life, without diminishment of the other ends of Marriage, are directed to disposing Christian spouses to cooperate wholeheartedly with the love of the Creator and Saviour, who through them increases and enriches his family from day to day.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, trusting in divine Providence and developing a spirit of sacrifice,<sup>19</sup> they glorify the Creator and strive for perfection in Christ, as they carry out the role of procreation with generous, human and Christian responsibility.<sup>20</sup>
11. For God, who has called the couple to Marriage, continues to call them to Marriage.<sup>21</sup> Those who marry in Christ are able, with faith in the Word of God, to celebrate fruitfully the mystery of the union of Christ and the Church, to live it rightly, and to bear witness to it publicly before all. A Marriage that is desired, prepared for, celebrated, and lived daily in the light of faith is that which is 'joined by the Church, strengthened by a sacrificial offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by Angels, and ratified by the Father... How wonderful the bond of the two believers: one in hope, one in vow, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one Father and servants of the same Master, with no separation of spirit and flesh. Indeed, they are two in one flesh; where there is one flesh, there is also one spirit.'<sup>22</sup>

## II. Duties and Ministries

12. The preparation and celebration of Marriage, which above all concern the future spouses themselves and their families, belong, as regards pastoral and liturgical care, to the

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11 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 13: A.A.S. 74 (1982), 95; cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 48.

12 Cf. *C.I.C.*, can. 1055, §2.

13 Cf. Ephesians 5:25.

14 Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:7; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, no. 11.

15 Cf. Ephesians 5:25.

16 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, nos. 48, 50.

17 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 49.

18 Cf. *ibid.*, no. 50.

19 Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:5.

20 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 50.

21 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 51: A.A.S. 74 (1982), 143.

22 Tertullian, *Ad uxorem*, II, VIII: CCL I, 393.

Bishop, to the pastor and his associates, and, at least to some degree, to the entire ecclesial community.<sup>23</sup>

13. It is for the Bishop, who is to take into account any norms or pastoral guidelines that may have been established by the Conference of Bishops regarding the preparation of engaged couples or the pastoral care of Marriage, to regulate the celebration and pastoral care of the Sacrament throughout the diocese by organizing assistance for the Christian faithful so that the state of Marriage may be preserved in a Christian spirit and advance in perfection.<sup>24</sup>
14. Pastors of souls must take care that in their own community this assistance is provided especially:
  1. by preaching, by catechesis adapted to children, young people, and adults, and through means of social communication, so that the Christian faithful are instructed about the meaning of Christian Marriage and about the role of Christian spouses and parents;
  2. by personal preparation for entering Marriage, so that those to be married are disposed to the holiness and duties of their new state;
  3. by a fruitful liturgical celebration of Marriage, so that it becomes clear that the spouses signify and participate in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church;
  4. by help offered to those who are married, so that, faithfully preserving and protecting the conjugal covenant, they daily come to lead a holier and fuller family life.<sup>25</sup>
15. Sufficient time is required for a suitable preparation for Marriage. Engaged couples should be made aware of this necessity in advance.
16. Led by the love of Christ, pastors are to welcome engaged couples and, above all, to foster and nourish their faith: for the Sacrament of Matrimony presupposes and demands faith.<sup>26</sup>
17. The engaged couple, having been reminded, if appropriate, of the fundamental elements of Christian doctrine mentioned above (nos. 1-11) should be given catechesis not only about the Church's teaching on Marriage and the family but also about the Sacrament and its rites, prayers, and readings, so that they may be able to celebrate it thoughtfully and fruitfully.
18. Catholics who have not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation are to receive it to complete their Christian initiation before they are admitted to Marriage if this can be done without grave inconvenience. It is recommended to the engaged couple that in preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony they receive the Sacrament of Penance, if necessary, and that they approach the Most Holy Eucharist, especially within the celebration of Marriage itself.<sup>27</sup>
19. Before a Marriage is celebrated, it must be established that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration.<sup>28</sup>

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23 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 66: A.A.S. 74 (1982), 159-162.

24 Cf. *ibid.*; cf. C.I.C., can. 1063-1064.

25 Cf. C.I.C., can. 1063.

26 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 59.

27 Cf. C.I.C., can. 1065.

28 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 1066.

20. In conducting the preparation, pastors, taking into account prevailing attitudes toward Marriage and the family, should endeavour to evangelize the couple's authentic and mutual love in the light of faith. Even the requirements of law for contracting a valid and licit Marriage can serve to promote a living faith and fruitful love between the couple, ordered toward establishing a Christian family.
21. But if every effort fails, and an engaged couple openly and expressly demonstrate that they reject what the Church intends when the Marriage of baptized persons is celebrated, the pastor of souls is not permitted to celebrate the Sacrament. Though reluctant, he must take note of the situation and convince those involved that, in these circumstances, it is not the Church, but they themselves, who prevent the celebration they are asking for.<sup>29</sup>
22. With regard to Marriage, it is by no means rare for special cases to arise: such as Marriage with a baptized non-Catholic, with a catechumen, with a person who is simply unbaptized, or even with a person who has explicitly rejected the Catholic faith. Those in charge of pastoral care should keep in mind the norms of the Church pertaining to these types of cases, and they should, if the occasion requires, have recourse to the competent authority.
23. It is appropriate that the same Priest who prepares the engaged couple should, during the celebration of the Sacrament itself, give the homily, receive the spouses' consent, and celebrate the Mass.
24. It also pertains to a Deacon, after receiving the faculty from the pastor or from the local Ordinary, to preside at the celebration of the Sacrament,<sup>30</sup> without omitting the Nuptial Blessing.
25. Where there is a shortage of Priests and Deacons, the Diocesan Bishop can delegate laypersons to assist at Marriages, after a prior favourable vote of the Conference of Bishops and after the permission of the Apostolic See has been obtained. A suitable layperson is to be selected, who is capable of giving instruction to those preparing to be married and able to perform the Marriage liturgy properly.<sup>31</sup> The layperson asks for the consent of the spouses and receives it in the name of the Church.<sup>32</sup>
26. Other laypersons, however, can play a part in various ways both in the spiritual preparation of the engaged couple and in the celebration of the rite itself. Moreover, the entire Christian community should cooperate to bear witness to the faith and to be a sign to the world of Christ's love.
27. The Marriage is to be celebrated in the parish of one or other of the engaged persons, or elsewhere with the permission of the proper Ordinary or pastor.<sup>33</sup>

### III. The Celebration of Marriage

#### *The Preparation*

28. Since Marriage is ordered toward the increase and sanctification of the People of God, its celebration displays a communitarian character that encourages the participation also of the parish community, at least through some of its members. With due regard for local customs and as occasion suggests, several Marriages may be celebrated at the same time or the celebration of the Sacrament may take place during the Sunday assembly.

29 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 68: A.A.S. 74 (1982), 165.

30 Cf. C.I.C., can. 1111.

31 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 1112, §2.

32 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 1108, §2.

33 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 1115.

29. The celebration itself of the Sacrament must be diligently prepared, as far as possible, with the engaged couple. Marriage should normally be celebrated within Mass. Nevertheless, with due regard both for the necessities of pastoral care and for the way in which the prospective spouses and those present participate in the life of the Church, the pastor should decide whether it would be preferable to propose that Marriage be celebrated within or outside of Mass.<sup>34</sup> The following should be chosen with the engaged couple, as the circumstances so suggest, the readings from Sacred Scripture, which will be explained in the homily; the form for expressing mutual consent; the formularies for the blessing of rings, for the Nuptial Blessing, for the intentions of the Universal Prayer or Prayer of the Faithful, and for the chants. Moreover, attention should also be given to the appropriate use of options provided in the rite as well as to local customs, which may be observed if appropriate.
30. The chants to be sung during the Rite of Marriage should be appropriate and should express the faith of the Church, with attention paid to the importance of the Responsorial Psalm within the Liturgy of the Word. What is said concerning the chants applies also to the selection of other musical works.
31. The festive character of the celebration of Marriage should be suitably expressed even in the manner of decorating the church. Nevertheless, local Ordinaries are to be vigilant that, apart from the honours due to civil authorities in keeping with the norm of liturgical laws, no favouritism be shown to private persons or classes of persons.<sup>35</sup>
32. If a Marriage is celebrated on a day having a penitential character, especially during Lent, the pastor is to counsel the spouses to take into account the special nature of that day. The celebration of Marriage on Friday of the Passion of the Lord and Holy Saturday is to be avoided altogether.

### *The Rite to Be Used*

33. In the celebration of Marriage within Mass, the rite described in Chapter I is used. In the celebration of Marriage without Mass, the rite should take place after a Liturgy of the Word according to the norm of Chapter II.
34. Whenever Marriage is celebrated within Mass, the Ritual Mass ‘The Celebration of Marriage’ is used with sacred vestments of the colour white or of a festive colour. On those days listed in nos. 1-4 of the Table of Liturgical Days, however, the Mass of the day is used with its own readings, with inclusion of the Nuptial Blessing and, if appropriate, the proper formula for the final blessing.  
  
If, however, during Christmas and Ordinary Time, the parish community participates in a Sunday Mass during which Marriage is celebrated, the Mass of the Sunday is used.  
  
Nevertheless, since a Liturgy of the Word adapted for the celebration of Marriage has a great impact in the handing on of catechesis about the Sacrament itself and about the duties of the spouses, when the Mass ‘For the Celebration of Marriage’ is not said, one of the readings may be taken from the texts provided for the celebration of Marriage (nos. 179-222).
35. The main elements of the celebration of Marriage are to stand out clearly, namely: the Liturgy of the Word, in which are expressed the importance of Christian Marriage in the history of salvation and the responsibilities and duties of Marriage to be attended to for the

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 78.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, art. 32.



sanctification of the spouses and of their children; the consent of the contracting parties, which the person assisting asks for and receives; the venerable prayer by which the blessing of God is invoked upon the bride and bridegroom; finally, Eucharistic Communion of both spouses and of others present, by which, above all, their charity is nurtured and they are raised up to communion with the Lord and with their neighbour.<sup>36</sup>

36. If a Marriage takes place between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, the rite for celebrating Matrimony without Mass (nos. 79-117) should be used. If, however, the situation warrants it, the rite for celebrating Matrimony within Mass (nos. 45-78) may be used, with the consent of the local Ordinary; but with regard to admission of the non-Catholic party to Eucharistic Communion, the norms issued for various cases are to be observed.<sup>37</sup> If a Marriage takes place between a Catholic and a catechumen or a non-Christian, the rite given below (nos. 152-178) is to be used, with the variations provided for different situations.
37. Although pastors are ministers of Christ's Gospel for all, they should, nonetheless, direct special attention to those, whether Catholics or non-Catholics, who never or rarely take part in the celebration of Marriage or the Eucharist. This pastoral norm applies in the first place to the spouses themselves.
38. If Marriage is celebrated within Mass, in addition to those things required for the celebration of Mass, The Order of Celebrating Matrimony and rings for the spouses should be prepared in the sanctuary. There should also be prepared, if appropriate, a vessel of holy water with an aspergillum and a chalice of sufficient size for Communion under both kinds.

#### **IV. Adaptations to Be Prepared by the Conferences of Bishops**

39. It is for the Conferences of Bishops, by virtue of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,<sup>38</sup> to adapt this Roman Ritual to the customs and needs of the particular regions, so that, once their decisions have been accorded the recognition of the Apostolic See, the edition may be used in the regions to which it pertains.
40. In this regard, it is for the Conferences of Bishops:
  1. To formulate the adaptations indicated below (nos. 41-44).
  2. If necessary, to adapt and supplement this Introduction of the Roman Ritual from no. 36 and what follows (in 'The Rite to Be Used'), so as to achieve the conscious and active participation of the faithful.
  3. To prepare versions of the texts, so that they are truly accommodated to the nature of different languages and the character of diverse cultures, and to add, whenever appropriate, suitable melodies for singing.
  4. In preparing editions, to arrange the material in a form more suitable for pastoral use.
41. In preparing adaptations, the following points should be kept in mind:
  1. The formulas of the Roman Ritual may be adapted and, if necessary, even supplemented (even the questions before the consent and the words of the consent themselves).

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36 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 3; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, no. 12.

37 Cf. *C.I.C.*, can. 844.

38 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 37-40 and 63b.

2. Whenever the Roman Ritual gives several optional formulas, it is permitted to add other formulas of the same kind.
  3. Provided the structure of the sacramental rite is preserved, the order of the parts may be adapted. If it seems more appropriate, the questions before the consent may be omitted, provided the law is observed that the person assisting ask for and receive the consent of the contracting parties.
  4. Should pastoral need so demand, it can be determined that the consent of the contracting parties always be sought by questioning.
  5. After the giving of rings, in keeping with local customs, the crowning of the bride or the veiling of the spouses may take place.
  6. Wherever the joining of hands or the blessing and giving of rings are incompatible with the culture of the people, it may be decided that these rites be omitted or replaced by other rites.
  7. It should be carefully and prudently considered what elements from the traditions and culture of particular peoples may appropriately be adopted.
42. In addition, in accordance with the norm of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (art. 63b), each Conference of Bishops has the faculty to draw up its own Marriage rite appropriate to the customs of the place and the people, with the decision approved by the Apostolic See, provided the law is observed that the person assisting must ask for and receive the consent of the contracting parties<sup>39</sup> and the Nuptial Blessing must be given.<sup>40</sup> The Introduction in the Roman Ritual is to be prefixed even to a proper ritual,<sup>41</sup> except for those points that refer to the rite to be used.
43. In the usages and ways of celebrating Marriage prevailing among peoples now receiving the Gospel for the first time, whatever is honourable and not indissolubly connected with superstition and errors should be sympathetically considered and, if possible, preserved intact, and in fact even admitted into the Liturgy itself as long as it harmonizes with a true and authentic liturgical spirit.<sup>42</sup>
44. Among peoples for whom the Marriage ceremonies customarily take place in homes, even over a period of several days, these ceremonies should be adapted to the Christian spirit and to the Liturgy. In this case the Conference of Bishops, in accordance with the pastoral needs of the people, may determine that the rite of the Sacrament itself can be celebrated in homes.

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39 Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 77.

40 Cf. *ibid.*, art. 78.

41 Cf. *ibid.*, art. 63b.

42 Cf. *ibid.*, art. 37.

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