

Liturgy Planning Worksheet

Introduction

The Wedding Liturgy is first and foremost **the public worship of God**. In other words, even though it focuses on the bride and groom, the wedding liturgy is the total community's act of worship within which the bride and groom's exchange of vows takes place.

What happens at Sunday Mass is the model to be used in planning a wedding. Therefore, the easiest way for a couple to plan and prepare this liturgy is to think about what happens at Sunday Mass.

Choice of Ministers

The bride and groom are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage. The best man and maid/matron of honor are the legal witnesses. Other than the two legal witnesses (who must be 18 years of age or older), there is no function for the other attendants at the wedding. Therefore, try to keep the number of attendants at a minimum. The use of children under the age of four in the wedding party is discouraged.

Rather than honoring friends and relatives by asking them to be part of the wedding party, the bride and groom should consider honoring them by asking them to minister at the wedding liturgy.

Cross Bearer – The procession that begins each sacramental service is intended to focus the attention of the community on the Lord and the fact that we have gathered to worship. The processional cross is that focal point. You should choose a family member or friend to carry the processional cross. This person should be present at the rehearsal and should be strong enough and old enough to be able to carry the processional cross.

Lectors – The lectors proclaim the first two Scripture readings and the Prayer of the Faithful (petitions). You may choose to have one lector read all three or you may divide the responsibility among two or even three lectors. Ideally, the lectors you choose will be someone who proclaims the Scriptures in their church. However, anyone who is a baptized Catholic or Christian of another denomination and who reads well may proclaim the Scriptures. One lector also carries the Book of the Gospels in the opening procession. Lectors should be present at the rehearsal.

Eucharistic Ministers – If the wedding is celebrated within Mass, five ministers of communion will be needed to assist the priest in the distribution of Holy Communion. If you have friends or relatives who perform this service at their parish, you might ask them to assist in distributing Communion at your wedding. These ministers must be practicing Catholics and they should be present at the rehearsal.

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Gift Bearers – If the wedding is celebrated within Mass, you will need two gift bearers to present the bread and wine on behalf of all who are present. Anyone who is a baptized Catholic or Christian of another denomination may serve as a gift bearer. They should be present at the rehearsal.

Musicians – Sung prayer (music) is an integral part of the Catholic wedding ceremony and, therefore, is a part of every wedding celebration at St. Mary. The parish Director of Liturgical Music is the primary musician at all weddings, whether within Mass or outside of Mass. A parish cantor is also required at all wedding celebrations and will assist in helping those in attendance join in the sung prayer of the celebration.

List of Chosen Liturgical Ministers

Ministers of Hospitality (Ushers): _____

Cross Bearer: _____

Lector(s): _____

Gift Bearers: _____

Ministers of Communion (5): _____

Wedding Party

Best Man: _____

Maid/Matron of Honor: _____

Attendant Couples: _____

Any others involved in the liturgy (Flower girls, ring bearers, etc.):

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The Wedding Liturgy should allow for the full, active and conscious participation of the people you have invited. They are not merely spectators, but are present to pray for and with you on this most special day in your lives. The parish will print an order of worship that will list the order of the wedding ceremony, as well as the songs that are to be sung.

The Gathering Rites

Your Ministers of Hospitality should warmly welcome the people as they arrive at church. It would be particularly appropriate if you and your parents would also greet the people as they arrive, as they are your guests and not the guests of the Ministers of Hospitality. During this time of gathering before the Entrance Procession, the prelude music is played. [Please note: tape-recorded music or accompaniments may not be played either as a prelude or at any other time during the ceremony.]

The priest, lector and other ministers gather with you, your parents and the wedding party in the Gathering Space of church. The Entrance Procession is symbolic of God's people, the Church, gathering together for worship. Therefore, the procession takes the following form at St. Mary:

The cross bearer
The lector carrying the Book of the Gospels
The wedding party (attendants), as couples
The best man and maid of honor
[The flower girl and/or ring bearer]
The presider
The groom with his parents/family
The bride with her parents/family

Processional Music and Gathering Song:

These will be chosen when meeting with the Director of Liturgical Music.

Your parents will be seated in the front pews. The attendant couples are seated in the pews one section over from your parents.

As the primary ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage, the bride and groom assume a prominent place in the sanctuary so that they are visible to all in the assembly.

After the procession, the presider will begin the liturgy with the Sign of the Cross. All will join in singing the Gathering Song, and then the priest will offer the Opening Prayer.

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The Liturgy of the Word

Your readings from Scripture must include a gospel text, to be preceded by two other Scripture readings. Normally, the first reading is taken from the Old Testament and the second reading is taken from the New Testament. All options for Scripture readings are found online at:

www.stmaryhc.org/PlanningAWedding (Access Code: Matrimony).

- ❖ The Catholic Church requires that one of the three readings speak specifically about marriage. These readings are marked with an asterisk (*). The one required reading may be chosen from the Old Testament, the New Testament, or the Gospels.

Choice of First Reading: Number OT-B _____

Proclaimed by: _____

Responsorial Psalm:

A psalm or canticle from Scripture is sung. This will be chosen when you meet with the Director of Liturgical Music.

Choice of Second Reading: Number NT-D _____

Proclaimed by: _____

A sung acclamation always precedes the Gospel reading. This is usually a series of intoned “alleluias” repeated by the assembly, coupled with a short psalm sentence and followed by the same series of “alleluias.”

Choice of Gospel Reading: Number G-F _____

Proclaimed by the priest or deacon, who will then preach a homily based upon the readings.

The Rite of Marriage

After the homily, the presider will invite you to stand in front of the altar, facing the assembly. Your wedding party will also join you in the sanctuary. The presider will then ask you to state your intentions by asking three questions. These ascertain the freedom of your decision, the permanence of your commitment, and your commitment to family life.

After answering these three questions, you exchange your vows. You may repeat the words of your vows after the presider or you may choose to memorize them.

_____ memorize

_____ repeat

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The marriage vows are the essence of the sacrament. Therefore, the Church requires that one of the following forms must be used:

Option 1

____ I, N., take you, N., to be my husband/wife. I promise to be faithful to you, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and to honor you all the days of my life.

Option 2

____ I, N., take you, N., for my lawful husband/wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do us part.

The wedding rings will then be blessed and exchanged. Each of you will say the following, while placing the ring on your spouse's finger:

N., receive this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The wedding party returns to their pews.

[Optional – The Wedding Candle: Because the primary ritual sign of marriage is the exchange of vows and rings, it must be emphasized that the candle lighting ceremony is not an official part of the wedding ritual. It would more appropriately be placed at the reception as part of the prayer before everyone sits down to eat. However, if you wish to have a candle lighting within the ceremony, it takes place at this time.]

____ Lighting of the Wedding Candle during the liturgy: yes no

Music is played during the lighting of the candle.

The presider introduces the Prayer of the Faithful (petitions). The couple is encouraged to write petitions based upon the samples provided online and with the help of the Wedding Coordinator. www.stmaryhc.org/PlanningAWedding (Access Code: Matrimony)

Prayer of the Faithful read by: _____

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The Liturgy of the Eucharist

If your wedding is celebrated outside of Mass, the ceremony will omit the indented sequence that follows and will continue with the Lord's Prayer.

If your wedding is celebrated within Mass, the gift bearers will present the gifts of bread and wine at this time. You will join the priest in standing behind the altar.

The sung acclamations (Holy, Holy, Memorial Acclamation, and Amen) will be chosen by the Director of Liturgical Music.

The priest will select the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is prayed by all of the people.

At the Sign of Peace, the bride and groom will normally go together to share this greeting with their parents and then return to their place at the altar.

Choice of Song(s) during Communion:

A Communion Hymn is sung while the Assembly receives Communion. This will be chosen when you meet with the Director of Liturgical Music.

The Concluding Rights

The presider will pray a concluding prayer and give the final blessing.

After the blessing, the wedding couple will be formally presented.

- ❖ There is no invitation such as, "You may now kiss the bride," in the wedding ceremony. The appropriate time for the couple to kiss one another is at this time when they are introduced as husband and wife.

Recessional Music:

This will be chosen when you meet with the Director of Liturgical Music.