

V. WEDDING CEREMONY

FORM A

Call to Worship

Dearly Beloved, We are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the presence of these witnesses, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is an honorable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that exists between Christ and His Church. This holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with His presence and first miracle that He wrought, in Cana of Galilee, and St. Paul commended as being honorable among all men. It is, therefore, not to be entered into unadvisedly, but reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these persons present now come to be joined.

Giving of the Bride

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

Response (by the father, or whoever gives the bride in marriage): Her mother and I do.

Prayer

Declaration of Intent

The minister shall say unto the man:

_____, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her, so long as you both shall live?

Response: I will.

Then shall the minister say unto the woman:

_____, will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love, honor, and keep him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto him, so long as you both shall live?

Response: I will.

Vows

The man shall repeat after the minister:

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded 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, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my faith.

The woman shall repeat after the minister:

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, 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, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my faith.

Prayer

O Eternal God, Creator and Preserver of all mankind, Giver of all spiritual grace, the Author of everlasting life, send Your blessing upon these Your servants, this man and this woman, whom we now bless in Your name; that as Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant made between them this hour and may ever remain in love and peace together, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pronouncement of Marriage

Then shall the minister say: Forasmuch as this man and woman have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and have declared the same by joining of hands, I pronounce that they are husband and wife together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together let not man put asunder. Amen.

You may kiss your bride.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Presentation of Couple

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my privilege to present to you Mr. and Mrs. _____

148 RITUALS ~ WEDDING CEREMONY

FORM B

Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here in God's presence to witness the marriage of _____[man's name] and _____[woman's name], and to ask God to bless them. By our presence we accept the responsibility for supporting them in the new relationship they are about to enter. We are called to rejoice in their happiness, to be patient when they make mistakes, to help them in times of trouble, and to remember them in our prayers.

On their behalf, I want to thank you for joining us on this wonderful occasion. Here, in the presence of the Almighty God, your attendance has made their celebration complete.

Marriage is an honorable estate instituted in the time of man's innocence. It was sanctioned and adorned by Christ's presence at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, and it was likened by St. Paul to the mystical union which subsists between Christ and His church.

Marriage is therefore not to be entered into lightly or thoughtlessly, but reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons now desire to enter.

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

*Most commonly the father responds by saying, "Her mother and I."
The father shall present his daughter's hand to the groom, who shall escort his bride to the minister.*

Prayer

O God of love, today, we invoke the presence of Christ our Lord to grace this wedding celebration. Though You are unseen, please grace these moments with Your unmistakable nearness.

We have not come to this hour lightly or casually. And, thus, we beseech Your grace to be upon us now. Bless _____[man's name] and _____[woman's name] as they pledge their lives and love to each other. May the sacredness of their vows and the reality of Your regal presence never be forgotten by this lovely couple.

This we ask through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Exhortation

God, Himself, designed marriage. He designed it to be lasting and lovely, a re-flection of the Godhead's mutual harmony and happiness. Marriage is to be our testimony to the world of the relationship Christ shares with His church. In the Scriptures, St. Paul admonishes "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...Let each one of you in particular so love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." (Eph. 5:25, 33)

Christ valued humanity enough to leave heaven's splendor and come to us. His death on the cross was a demonstration of His self-giving love. _____[Man's name], Christ's love for us is to be your example for loving _____[woman's name]. That love is not soft and effeminate, but sacrificial, strong and selfless. She will feel your love as you develop a relationship that is trusting, committed and graciously understanding. You are to esteem her not only with nurturing words, but through character and conduct that makes her proud to say, "That's my husband." Your love will be her happiness and will inspire her respect.

_____ [Woman's name], God said that it is not good for man to be alone. _____ [Man's name] will function at his best when he is nurtured by your respect and bolstered by your encouragement, cheerfulness and confidence. Even if people forget him, lose confidence in him, and turn their backs on him, you must not. It has been truly said that behind every successful man stands a more successful woman. You will inspire him when you believe in him and dream with him. As you verbalize your pride in him and tell him you feel safe by his side, it will make him feel respected and will motivate his love for you.

This kind of a relationship is the happy haven of love and respect that God de-signed for marriage. If you will ask your Heavenly Father, the Designer, He will grace your home with His presence, His wisdom and His enabling. Seek Him first and He will supply your needs. Honor Him and He will honor you. Love Him and He will embrace you. Love like Him and He will bless your marriage with closeness, strength and spiritual unity.

Declaration of Intent

And now, in token that your hearts are joined together in love, you will please join your hands. 150 RITUALS ~ WEDDING CEREMONY

_____ [Man's name], as you stand in the presence of God, your family and friends, do you take this woman, whose hands you hold, choosing her alone, to be your wedded wife? Will you promise to keep God first in your life and in your home? Will you promise to lead and guide _____ [woman's name], to protect her and provide for her? Do you promise to listen to her, encourage her, comfort her, and to stand by her always? Will you love her and be faithful to her at all times? As you begin your life as one, will you promise to keep yourself only unto her, forsaking all others, as long as you both shall live? Do you so promise?

Groom responds: I do

_____ [Woman's name], as you stand in the presence of God, your family and friends, do you take this man, whose hands you hold, choosing him alone to be your wedded husband? Will you promise to keep God first in

your life and in your home? Will you promise to follow _____[man's name] direction and leadership as he follows Christ? Do you promise to listen to him, encourage him, comfort him, and to stand by him always? Will you love him with patience and kindness through good times and bad, honor him at all times, and be faithful to him? As you begin your life as one, will you promise to keep yourself only unto him, forsaking all others, as long as you both shall live? Do you so promise?

Bride responds: I do

Vows

The minister shall say:

Repeat after me: I, _____[man's name], do take you _____[woman's name], — to be my lawful wedded 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 — and to be faithful to you alone — until death do us part.

I _____[woman's name], do take you _____[man's name], — to be my lawful wedded husband — 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 — and to be faithful to you alone — until death do us part.

Bible Ceremony (optional)

_____ [Man's name], what do you give to _____ [woman's name] as an expression of your Christian devotion and the foundation of your home?

Groom hands Bible to bride for them to hold together.

Groom: _____ [Woman's name], I give you a Bible, God's Holy Word. It is to be the foundation of our home. Upon its precepts we will build our lives and our future. To the great and Almighty God we will bow our knees in prayer. And, in the end, we will live with Him forever.

Unity Candle (optional)

Therefore, shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they together shall be one flesh. Hitherto you have shone as two lights; henceforth you shall shine as one. May the grace of God sustain the great flame of your souls and shine through you to light the paths of others.

Prayer

The minister may use an extemporaneous or the following prayer.

The minister shall say:

Please join your right hands.

O God, You have established marriage for the welfare and happiness of man-kind. You said, "It is not good for man to be alone, I will make a helper who is just right for him." (NLT) Now our joys are doubled since the happiness of one is the happiness of the other. And our burdens are lightened as we share the load.

Father, _____ [man's name] and _____ [woman's name] have prayed together many times. But here they kneel at their first family altar on their wedding day. Make their home your sanctuary and their family altar blessed by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Bless _____ [man's name]! Bless this husband. Bless him as provider of food and clothing, and sustain him in all the pressures of life. May his strength be [woman's name]'s protection, his character be her boast and her pride, and may he so live that she will find in him the haven for which the heart of a woman truly longs.

Bless _____[woman's name]! Bless this loving wife. Give her tenderness that will make her great, a deep sense of understanding and a great faith in You. Give her that inner beauty of soul that never fades, that eternal youth that is found in holding fast the things that never age.

Teach them that marriage is not merely for each other; it is two uniting and join-ing hands to serve You. Give them a great spiritual purpose in life. May they seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the other things shall be added unto them.

May they not expect that perfection of each other that belongs alone to You. May they minimize each other's weaknesses and see each other through a lover's kind and patient eyes.

Now make such assignments to them on the scroll of Your will that will bless them and develop their characters as they walk together. Give them enough tears to keep them tender, enough hurts to keep them humble, enough failure to keep their hands clenched tightly in Yours, and enough success to make them sure they walk with You.

May they never take each other's love for granted, but always experience that breathless wonder that exclaims, "Out of all this world you have chosen me."

When life is done and the sun is setting, may they be found then as now hand in hand, still thanking God for each other. May they serve You happily, faithfully, and consistently, until at last one shall lay the other in the arms of God.

This we ask through Jesus Christ, great lover of our souls, Amen.

Minister places his hand on theirs.

Forasmuch as you _____[man's name] and you, _____[woman's name], have consented together in holy matrimony and have pledged your faith to each other in the sight of God and in the presence of these witnesses; now, therefore in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, I pronounce you husband and wife. Whom God hath joined together let not man put asunder.

You may kiss your bride.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Please turn and face the congregation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my privilege to present to you, Mr. and Mrs. _____ [couple's name].

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Please turn and face the congregation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my privilege to present to you, Mr. and Mrs. _____ [couple's name].