

Something Old, Something New:
Music references in
the revised *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*

INTRODUCTION

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. The following should be chosen with the engaged couple, as 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.

40. In this regard, it is for the Conferences of Bishops: . . . (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 . . .

CHAPTER 1: THE ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY WITHIN MASS

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

The First Form:

46. The procession to the altar then takes place in the customary manner. Meanwhile, the Entrance Chant takes place.

The Second Form:

50. Then during the Entrance Chant, the Priest approaches the altar, reverences it with a profound bow, and venerates it with a kiss. After this, he goes to the chair.

53. The Penitential Act is omitted. The Gloria in excelsis (Glory to God in the highest) is said according to the rubric of the Roman Missal.

(Editorial note regarding the Gospel Acclamation during Lent: The refrain printed in the revised Order of Celebrating Matrimony is “Sing joyfully to God our strength.” However, other Gospel acclamation refrains for Lent may be used, as listed in the Lectionary at no. 223.)

AFTER THE RECEPTION OF THE CONSENT:

65. The Priest invites those present to praise God: “Let us bless the Lord.” All reply: “Thanks be to God.” Another acclamation may be sung or said.

AFTER THE BLESSING AND GIVING OF RINGS (AND THE ARRAS OR COINS):

68. Then a hymn or canticle of praise may be sung by the whole community.

CHAPTER II: THE ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY WITHOUT MASS THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

The First Form:

81. The procession to the altar then takes place in the customary manner. Meanwhile, the Entrance Chant takes place.

The Second Form:

(Editorial note: Music is not mentioned here. However, singing the Entrance Chant would seem appropriate, as done during a Mass.)

(Editorial note: Nothing is mentioned about a Penitential Act or Gloria.)

(Editorial note: The rite includes the same Acclamation after the Reception of the Consent as at Mass [no. 99] and the optional hymn or canticle of praise after the Blessing and Giving of Rings [no. 102]).

107. It is praiseworthy to end the celebration with a suitable chant.

(If Holy Communion is to be distributed:)

113. During the distribution of Communion, a suitable chant, if appropriate, may be sung.

CHAPTER III: THE ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY BETWEEN A CATHOLIC AND A CATECHUMEN OR A NON-CHRISTIAN

(Editorial note: Although an entrance procession is presumed, music is not mentioned here, but would seem to be appropriate.)

(Editorial note: The rite includes the same Acclamation after the Reception of the Consent as at Mass [no. 130], and the optional hymn or canticle of praise after the Blessing and Giving of Rings [no. 134]).

(Editorial note: The rite includes the same prescription as no. 107 about ending the celebration with a chant [no. 142]).

CHAPTER IV: VARIOUS TEXTS TO BE USED IN THE RITE OF MARRIAGE AND IN THE MASS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

(Music is provided for the Nuptial Blessing at nos. 205-207.)

APPENDICIES

In Appendix II, "The Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple:

Following the Scripture reading:

228. If appropriate, there may be said or sung the following Responsorial Psalm or another suitable liturgical song.

236. It is a praiseworthy practice to end the celebration with a suitable chant.

Section on Matrimony from Chapter 5 of the 2007 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) document, *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*:

216. The lifelong bond established by the marriage covenant between a man and a woman derives its force from creation. Jesus Christ has raised this natural covenant to a higher dignity as a sacrament of the new and eternal covenant. Above all else, the “grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ’s cross, the source of all Christian life.”

217. “According to the Latin tradition, the spouses as ministers of Christ’s grace mutually confer upon each other the Sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church.” Therefore, while the celebration of marriage concerns the spouses and their families, it is not only a private matter. Since their consent is given in the presence of the Church, the celebration of marriage is governed by the appropriate liturgical norms. The Church desires that a person’s wedding day be filled with joy and grace. When preparing the Liturgy, pastors should address any concerns with the couple with due pastoral sensitivity and sound judgment.

218. The preparation of the Liturgy must concern not only those involved but also the norms of the ritual itself. The marriage Liturgy presents particular challenges and opportunities to planners. Both musicians and pastors should make every effort to assist couples to understand and share in the planning of their marriage Liturgy. Since oftentimes the only music familiar to the couple is not necessarily suitable to the sacrament, the pastoral musician will make an effort to demonstrate a wide range of music appropriate for the Liturgy.

219. It is helpful for a diocese or a parish to have a definite but flexible policy that provides clear guidance and also allows for pastoral sensitivity regarding wedding music. This policy should be communicated early to couples as a normal part of their preparation in order to avoid last-minute crises and misunderstandings.

220. Particular decisions about choice and placement of wedding music should be based on the three judgments proposed above (see nos. 126ff.): the liturgical judgment, the pastoral judgment, and the musical judgment. As indicated previously, all three of these judgments must be taken into account, since they are aspects of a single judgment. Additionally, music should reflect the truth that all the sacraments celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Secular music, even though it may emphasize the love of the spouses for one another, is not appropriate for the Sacred Liturgy. Songs that are chosen for the Liturgy should be appropriate for the celebration and express the faith of the Church.

221. If vocal soloists are to be employed in the celebration of the sacrament, they should be instructed on the nature of the Liturgy and trained in the unique aspects of singing in a liturgical context. Either the soloist should be trained to carry out the ministry of psalmist and cantor, or else another singer should be secured for this liturgically important role. In all cases, soloists should be aware that their talents are offered at the service of the Liturgy. Vocalists may sing alone during the Preparation of the Gifts or after Communion, provided the music and their manner of singing does not call attention to themselves but rather assists in the contemplation of the sacred mysteries being celebrated. Soloists should not usurp parts of the Mass designated for congregational participation.

222. If the Rite of Marriage is celebrated within Mass, the norms for music within Mass as described in nos. 137-199 of this document apply. The entrance procession—consisting of the ministers, attendants, witnesses, bride, and groom—is accompanied by a suitable song or instrumental music. If instrumental music is played, the assembly may join in a song once all have taken their places. The Liturgy of the Word proceeds as usual with a Responsorial Psalm, which may be sung. Following the homily, the sacrament is celebrated with the exchange of consent and the Church’s reception of

consent. After the blessing and exchanging of rings, a song or hymn of praise may be sung. Depending on the local custom and the culture of the families, after the exchange of rings, the veiling of the bride and groom and other customary actions may be added, during which an appropriate psalm or song may be sung.

223. When, for pastoral reasons, the sacrament is celebrated outside of Mass, the Liturgy should begin with an entrance song or instrumental piece. If instrumental music is played, the assembly may join in a song once all have taken their places. The Liturgy of the Word takes place in the usual manner, with the possibility of singing a Responsorial Psalm. Following the homily, the sacrament is celebrated with the exchange of consent and the Church's reception of consent. After the blessing and exchanging of rings, a song or hymn of praise may be sung. When the sacrament is celebrated outside of Mass but Communion is distributed, a chant or song may accompany the distribution of the sacrament, as well as the period of thanksgiving after Communion is distributed.

224. Since the celebration of marriage is a communal celebration, participation aids should be provided to the congregation so that they might follow the ritual with understanding. This, in turn, allows them to have full and active participation in the celebration. Participation aids should include especially those elements of the Liturgy unique to the marriage rite, as well as translations of any songs not sung in the vernacular. Such participation aids should also include proper copyright notices for permission to use copyrighted music in the program.

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Q & A from the Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship (BCDW) August 2016 Newsletter:

How is the new acclamation after the Reception of the Consent to be handled?

The second edition of the Marriage rite introduces a new conclusion to the Reception of the Consent: the celebrant says "Let us bless the Lord," and the congregation replies "Thanks be to God." This is not an optional part of the ceremony, although the rubric notes that "Another acclamation may be sung or said" (nos. 65, 99, and 130). As a new element in the OCM in English, this dialogue will not likely be familiar to regularly practicing Catholics, let alone to visitors who are present at the wedding, so carrying it out gracefully presents a challenge. Various suggestions have been made that might help overcome this difficulty.

One obvious solution is to include the dialogue in the program or worship aid, although the acclamation takes place at a point in the ceremony when attention will be focused on the bride and groom, and people might not be following along in a printed text. At the very least, practicing the verse and response of the acclamation should be included in the wedding rehearsal. Singing the dialogue could be helpful, especially if the celebrant has worked in advance with the cantor, who would lead the response. Adapting the text to a familiar melody can facilitate participation, such as the melodies found in the *Roman Missal* with the dialogue "The Lord be with you / And with your spirit" or "Go in peace / Thanks be to God." Also, the option to use another acclamation could be employed, and a familiar setting of "Alleluia" might be used, for example.

This moment provides an important opportunity for the assembly to participate actively in the ceremony; as alternate forms for this acclamation are being considered, it is essential that it retain its dialogical character. In other words, the acclamation should not be replaced by a vocal solo in which the assembly does not participate. Through advance planning, appropriate creativity, and repeated exposure to the dialogue, this will, in time, become a natural part of participation at a Catholic wedding.

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