

2. The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage

Concerning the Service

This rite is appropriately celebrated in the context of the Holy Eucharist and may take place at the principal Sunday Liturgy. This rite then replaces the Ministry of the Word. A bishop or priest normally presides. Parallel texts from *Enriching Our Worship 1* are included as options for elements of this rite.

At least one of the couple must be a baptized Christian.

Two or more presenters, who may be friends, parents, family members, or drawn from the local assembly, may present the couple to the presider and the assembly.

As indicated in the opening address, the consent, and the blessing of the rings, the rite may be modified for use with a couple who have previously made a lifelong commitment to one another.

The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage

The Word of God

Gathering

The couple to be blessed joins the assembly.

A hymn of praise, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

The Presider says the following, the People standing

Presider Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People Blessed be God, now and for ever. Amen.

In place of the above may be said

Presider Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.

People Glory to God for ever and ever.

From Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost

Presider Alleluia. Christ is risen.

People The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

In place of the above may be said

Presider Alleluia. Christ is risen.

People Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Then may be said

Presider Beloved, let us love one another,

People For love is of God.

Presider Whoever does not love does not know God,

People For God is love.

Presider Since God so loves us,

People Let us love one another.

The Presider may address the assembly in these words

Dear friends in Christ, or Dearly beloved,
in the name of God and the Church
we have come together today with N. N. and N. N.,

to witness the vows they make,
 committing themselves to one another
 in marriage according to the laws of the state [or civil jurisdiction] of X.
 Forsaking all others,
 they will bind themselves to one another
 in a covenant of mutual fidelity and steadfast love,
 remaining true to one another in heart, body, and mind,
 as long as they both shall live.

The lifelong commitment of marriage
 is not to be entered into lightly or thoughtlessly,
 but responsibly and with reverence.
 Let us pray, then, that God will give them the strength
 to remain steadfast in what they vow this day.
 Let us also pray for the generosity
 to support them in the commitment they undertake
 and for the wisdom to see God at work in their life together.

Or this, for those who have previously made a lifelong commitment to one another

Dear friends in Christ, or Dearly beloved,
 in the name of God and the Church
 we have come together today with N. N. and N. N.
 to witness the sacred vows they make this day
 as they solemnize their marriage
 according to the laws of the state [or civil jurisdiction] of X.,
 and reaffirm their commitment to one another.
 Forsaking all others,
 they will renew their covenant of mutual fidelity and steadfast love,
 remaining true to one another in heart, body, and mind,
 as long as they both shall live.

Let us pray, then, that God will give them the strength
 to remain steadfast in what they vow this day.
 Let us also pray for the generosity
 to support them in the commitment they undertake,
 and for the wisdom to see God at work in their life together.

The Collect of the Day

<i>Presider</i>	The Lord be with you.	or	God be with you.
<i>People</i>	And also with you.		
<i>Presider</i>	Let us pray.		

The Presider says one of the following Collects

God of abundance:
 assist by your grace N. and N.,
 whose covenant of love and fidelity we witness this day.
 Grant them your protection, that with firm resolve
 they may honor and keep the vows they make;
 through Jesus Christ our Savior,
 who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

or this

Almighty and everliving God:
 look tenderly upon N. and N.,
 who stand before you in the company of your Church.
 Let their life together bring them great joy.
 Grant them so to love selflessly and live humbly,
 that they may be to one another and to the world
 a witness and a sign of your never-failing love and care;
 through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, to the ages of ages. Amen.

or this

O God, faithful and true,
 whose steadfast love endures for ever:
 we give you thanks for sustaining N. and N. in the life they share
 and for bringing them to this day.
 Nurture them and fill them with joy in their life together,
 continuing the good work you have begun in them;
 and grant us, with them, a dwelling place eternal in the heavens
 where all your people will share the joy of perfect love,
 and where you, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, live and reign,
 one God, now and for ever. Amen.

or this, for those who bring children

Holy Trinity, one God,
 three Persons perfect in unity and equal in majesty:
 Draw together with bonds of love and affection
 N. and N., who with *their families*
 seek to live in harmony and forbearance all their days,
 that their joining together will be to us
 a reflection of that perfect communion
 which is your very essence and life,
 O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 who live and reign in glory everlasting. Amen.

The Lessons

The people sit. Then one or more of the following passages of Scripture is read. If the Holy Communion is to be celebrated, a passage from the Gospels always concludes the Readings. When the blessing is celebrated in the context of the Sunday Eucharist, the Readings of the Sunday are used, except with the permission of the Bishop.

Ruth 1:16–17

1 Samuel 18:1b, 3; 20:16–17; 42a;
 or 1 Samuel 18:1–4

Romans 12:9–18

1 Corinthians 12:31b–13:13

2 Corinthians 5:17–20

Galatians 5:14, 22–26

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

Song of Solomon 2:10–13; 8:6–7

Micah 4:1–4

Ephesians 3:14–21

Colossians 3:12–17

1 John 3:18–24

1 John 4:7–16, 21

When a biblical passage other than one from the Gospels is to be read, the Reader announces it with these words

Reader A Reading from _____.

After the Reading, the Reader may say

The Word of the Lord.
 or Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.
 or Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.

People Thanks be to God.

Between the Readings, a psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate psalms are Psalm 65, Psalm 67, Psalm 85:7–13, Psalm 98, Psalm 100, Psalm 126, Psalm 127, Psalm 133, Psalm 148, and Psalm 149:1–5.

Appropriate passages from the Gospels are

Matthew 5:1–16	John 15:9–17
Mark 12:28–34	John 17:1–2, 18–26
Luke 6:32–38	

All standing, the Deacon or Priest reads the Gospel, first saying

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to _____.
 or The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to _____.

People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

After the Gospel, the Reader says

The Gospel of the Lord.
 People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

The Sermon

The Witnessing of the Vows and the Blessing of the Covenant

The couple comes before the assembly. If there is to be a presentation, the presenters stand with the couple, and the Presider says to them

Presider Who presents N. and N., as they seek the blessing of God and the Church on their love and life together?

Presenters We do.

Presider Will you love, respect, and pray for N. and N., and do all in your power to stand with them in the life they will share?

Presenters We will.

The Presider then addresses the couple, saying

N. and N., you have come before God and the Church to exchange *and renew* solemn vows with one another and to ask God’s blessing.

The Presider addresses one member of the couple, saying

Presider N., do you freely and unreservedly offer yourself to N.?

Answer I do.

Presider Will you *continue* to live together in faithfulness and holiness of life as long as you both shall live?

Answer I will, with God’s help.

The Presider addresses the other member of the couple, saying

Presider N., do you freely and unreservedly offer yourself to N.?

Answer I do.

Presider Will you *continue* to live together in faithfulness and holiness of life as long as you both shall live?

Answer I will, with God's help.

The assembly stands, the couple faces the People, and the Presider addresses them, saying

Presider Will all of you gathered to witness these vows do all in your power to uphold and honor this couple in the covenant they make?

People We will.

Presider Will you pray for them, especially in times of trouble, and celebrate with them in times of joy?

People We will.

The Prayers

The Presider then introduces the prayers

Presider Then let us pray for N. and N. in their life together and for the concerns of this community.

A Deacon or another leader bids prayers for the couple.

Prayers for the Church and for the world, for the concerns of the local community, for those who suffer or face trouble, and for the departed are also appropriate. If the rite takes place in the principal Sunday worship of the congregation, the rubric concerning the Prayers of the People on page 359 of the Book of Common Prayer is followed.

Adaptations or insertions may be made to the form that follows.

A bar in the margin indicates a bidding that may be omitted.

Leader For N. and N., seeking your blessing and the blessing of your holy people;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,

People Hear our prayer.

Leader For a spirit of loving-kindness to shelter them all their days;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,

People Hear our prayer.

Leader For friends to support them and communities to enfold them;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,

People Hear our prayer.

Leader For peace in their home and love in their family;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,

People Hear our prayer.

Leader For the grace and wisdom to care for the children you entrust to them [or may entrust to them];

Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,

People Hear our prayer.

Leader For the honesty to acknowledge when they hurt each other, and the humility to seek each other's forgiveness and yours;

Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,

People Hear our prayer.

Leader For the outpouring of your love through their work and witness;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For the strength to keep the vows each of us has made;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.

The leader may add one or more of the following biddings

Leader For all who have been reborn and made new in the waters of Baptism;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For those who lead and serve in communities of faith;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For those who seek justice, peace, and concord among nations;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For those who are sick or suffering, homeless or poor;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For victims of violence and those who inflict it;
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For communion with all who have died [especially those whom we remember
this day: _____];
Loving God, or Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.

The Presider concludes the Prayers with the following or another appropriate Collect

Giver of every gift, source of all goodness,
hear the prayers we bring before you for N. and N.,
who seek your blessing this day.
Strengthen them as they share in the saving work of Jesus,
and bring about for them and for all you have created
the fullness of life he promised,
who now lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

If the Eucharist is to follow, the Lord's Prayer is omitted here.

<p>Leader As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,</p> <p>People and Leader Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,</p>	<p>And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,</p>
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your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Marriage

The People sit. The couple stands, facing the Presider.

Presider N. and N., I invite you now, illumined by the Word of God and strengthened by the prayer of this community, to make your covenant before God and the Church.

Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the hand of the other and says

In the name of God,
I, N., give myself to you, N.
I will support and care for you by the grace of God:
in times of sickness, in times of health.
I will hold and cherish you in the love of Christ:
in times of plenty, in times of want.
I will honor and love you with the Spirit's help:
in times of anguish, in times of joy,
forsaking all others, as long as we both shall live.
This is my solemn vow.

or this

In the name of God,
I, N., give myself to you, N.
I will support and care for you:
in times of sickness, in times of health.
I will hold and cherish you:
in times of plenty, in times of want.
I will honor and love you:
in times of anguish, in times of joy,
forsaking all others, as long as we both shall live.
This is my solemn vow.

If rings are to be exchanged, they are brought before the Presider, who prays using the following words

Let us pray.

Bless, O God, these rings
as signs of the enduring covenant
N. and N. have made with each other,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The two people place the rings on the fingers of one another, first the one, then the other, saying

N., I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow,
and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you,
in the name of God. or in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

If the two have previously given and worn rings as a symbol of their commitment, the rings may be blessed on the hands of the couple, the Presider saying

Let us pray.

By the rings which they have worn, faithful God,
N. and N. have shown to one another and the world
their love and faithfulness.
Bless now these rings,
that from this day forward
they may be signs of the vows N. and N. have exchanged
in your presence and in the communion of your Church,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pronouncement

The Presider says

Now that N. and N. have exchanged vows of love and fidelity
in the presence of God and the Church,
I pronounce that they are
married according to the laws of the state [or civil jurisdiction] of X.
and bound to one another
as long as they both shall live. Amen.

Blessing of the Couple

As the couple stands or kneels, the Presider invokes God's blessing upon them, saying

Let us pray.

Most gracious God,
we praise you for the tender mercy and unending care
revealed to us in Jesus the Christ
and for the great joy and comfort bestowed upon us
in the gift of human love.
We give you thanks for N. and N.,
and the covenant of faithfulness they have made.
Pour out the abundance of your Holy Spirit upon them.
Keep them in your steadfast love;
protect them from all danger;
fill them with your wisdom and peace;
lead them in holy service to each other and the world.

The Presider continues with one of the following

God the Father,
God the Son,
God the Holy Spirit,
bless, preserve, and keep you,

and mercifully grant you rich and boundless grace,
that you may please God in body and soul.
God make you a sign of the loving-kindness and steadfast fidelity
manifest in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior,
and bring you at last to the delight of the heavenly banquet,
where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

or this

God, the holy and undivided Trinity,
bless, preserve, and keep you,
and mercifully grant you rich and boundless grace,
that you may please God in body and soul.
God make you a sign of the loving-kindness and steadfast fidelity
manifest in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior,
and bring you at last to the delight of the heavenly banquet,
where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

The Peace

The Presider bids the Peace.

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People And also with you.

In place of the above may be said

Presider The peace of Christ be always with you.

People And also with you.

The liturgy continues with the Holy Communion. When the Eucharist is not celebrated, the Presider blesses the people. The Deacon, or in the absence of a Deacon, the Priest, dismisses them.

At the Eucharist

The liturgy continues with the Offertory, at which the couple may present the offerings of bread and wine.

The following proper preface may be said

Because in the giving of two people to each other in faithful love
you reveal the joy and abundant life you share
with your Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The following postcommunion prayer may be said

God our strength and joy,
we thank you for the communion of our life together,
for the example of holy love that you give us in N. and N.,
and for the Sacrament of the Body and Blood
of our Savior Jesus Christ.
Grant that it may renew our hope
and nourish us for the work you set before us
to witness to the presence of Christ in the world,
through the power of your Spirit,
and to the glory of your Name. Amen.