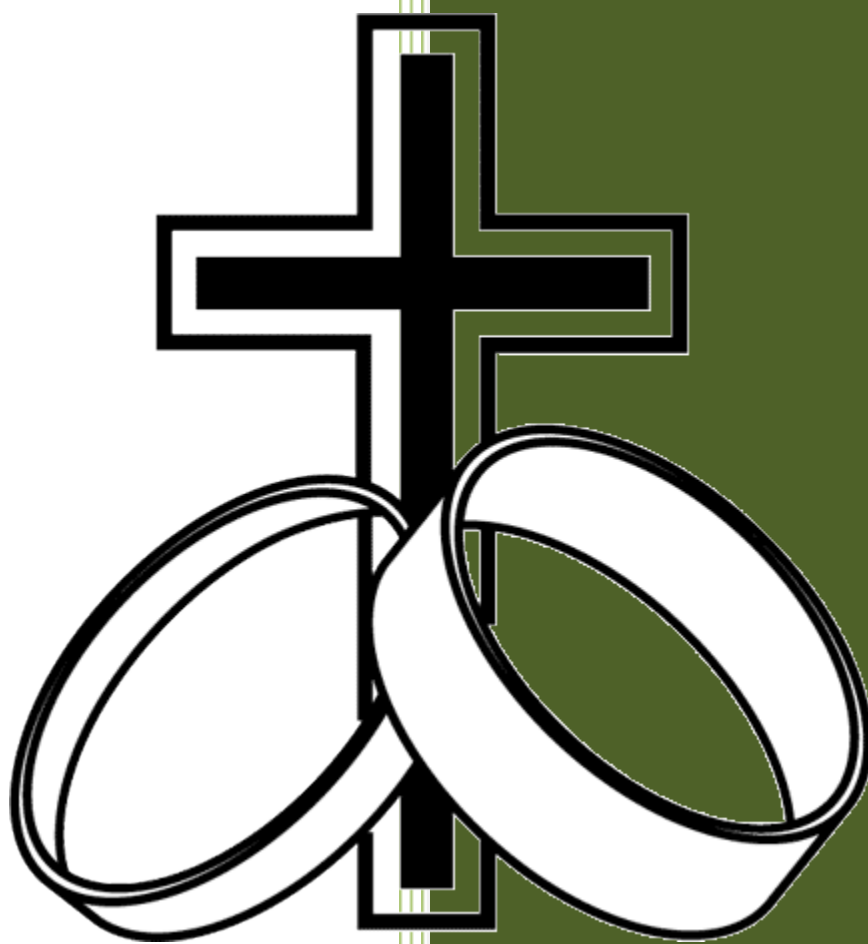


Getting Married at St. Boniface Catholic Church



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INTRODUCTION

This information is intended to give basic information on marriage preparation in the Catholic Church at St. Boniface Parish. It cannot substitute for a conversation with the pastor or deacon about your specific situation and needs, but it can provide you with a sense of the normal requirements and procedures at St. Boniface Church.

In their pastoral plan on ministry with young adults, *Sons and Daughters of the Light*, the U.S. Bishops said, "Young adults approach the Church to be married for a number of reasons, including parental pressure, the desire to have a church wedding, or to reunite themselves with the Church. Regardless of why they come, the Church and its ministers need to welcome them as Christ welcomes them, with understanding, love, and acceptance, challenging them with the gospel message, and giving them hope that a lifelong commitment is possible."

We hope you experience this hospitality and welcoming throughout your marriage preparation process. It is in this spirit that we offer you this guide to *Getting Married at St. Boniface Catholic Church*.

CATHOLIC TEACHING ABOUT MARRIAGE

For most people, marriage is one of the most important decisions and realities of their life; in it they form a community of love. For Catholics, marriage is not merely a civil contract but a covenant between a man and a woman before God. If both are baptized, the marriage is a sacrament, a symbol of the unity of Christ and the Church. A sacramental marriage is a means of grace, giving strength to the husband and wife to live out their commitment and to help each other on the path to holiness.

As you prepare for marriage, you'll be asked to reflect carefully and prayerfully on the nature of this sacrament. Before we look at some of the steps of that preparation process, consider some of the points made in the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) (references* are to paragraph number):

***1660** The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament.

1661 The sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved his Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life.

1662 Marriage is based on the consent of the contracting parties, that is, on their will to give themselves, each to the other, mutually and definitively, in order to live a covenant of faithful

and fruitful love.

Any marriage involving a Catholic is subject to Church norms known as "canon law." Catholics are obliged to marry in the Catholic Church, following the marriage rite of the Catholic Church. Their exchange of vows must be witnessed by either a priest or deacon and two other witnesses. A Catholic can receive permission to marry a non-Catholic and they may be married in the church of the non-Catholic party, but if their exchange of vows will be witnessed by a minister of that denomination, the Catholic must seek a written dispensation from the local Catholic Bishop. Any priest or deacon in one of our local parishes can assist in this matter.

PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

First, notify the parish!

Most couples reserve a reception location as much as a year in advance. Before you do that, or contract with a photographer, or think about invitations, or make any other agreements, you need to talk to your parish. Diocesan guidelines say you should do so at least 6 months before the time you would like to get married. Be sure to allow extra time if either of you require an annulment. **Both the bride and groom must be active in the practice of their faith and at least one of them must be a registered member of St. Boniface Parish in order to get married here.**

Once you speak with the pastor, you will begin a formal process of marriage preparation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains:

1632 So that the "I do" of the spouses may be a free and responsible act and so that the marriage covenant may have solid and lasting human and Christian foundations, preparation for marriage is of prime importance.

Preparation for marriage involves a process of discernment, which is meant to be an affirming experience as you become more aware of your readiness to enter Christian married life. This process is meant to help you assess your personal faith and your relational readiness, not to make those judgments for or about you.

Initial interview

The process begins when you sit down for an initial conversation with the pastor or deacon who will be responsible for your marriage preparation. This shouldn't be done over the phone or with the parish secretary. This is an opportunity for you to get to know one another, to explain the marriage preparation process, to determine that you are free to marry (according to Church law and civil law), and to identify any special needs or requests you may have regarding the wedding (place, long-distance preparation, etc.). You'll be told about the different documents you will need to provide (recent copies of your baptismal certificates, any necessary permissions or dispensations, and, if necessary, affidavit of free status, annulment papers, or death certificate of previous spouse).

Faith readiness

One of the most important aspects of the discernment process is the assessment of your faith readiness. Because the marriage of two baptized Christians is a sacrament, it requires the presence of faith in those who receive it. No two people are at the same place in their journey of faith, however. Through the marriage preparation process, you should be able to better identify and deepen your faith, both as individuals and as a couple.

Marriage readiness

Another aspect of the discernment process looks at your readiness to marry. While there is no possible way to determine this definitively, there are clear indicators that can predict potential problems or even the areas for discussion. You will be asked to complete a premarital inventory called FOCCUS, which will give both of you an opportunity to reflect on your attitudes and your relationship. This isn't a test, but is an aid for you and the pastor or deacon to use in highlighting important areas for discussion.

Formational programs

This part of the marriage preparation process is intended to help you understand better both the human and Christian aspects of marriage, and to introduce you to persons and resources that are available to help strengthen your marriage. Any formational program should include discussion of the following "key elements":

- The context of marriage today
- Communication and conflict resolution
- The meaning of permanence and ongoing forgiveness
- The role of faith, prayer, and church attendance and participation within marriage
- The roles, expectations, and responsibilities within marriage
- Self-awareness, personal healing and individual growth
- Sex and sexuality
- The value of children and responsible Catholic parenting

The priest or deacon will work with you in selecting a formational program that best suits your needs. There are a number of options available in this diocese, including Engaged Encounter, Weekend for the Engaged, Pre-Cana, and Remarriage Seminars. When you've completed one of these programs, the priest or deacon will meet with you to discuss the results.

THE WEDDING MASS/LITURGY

Where will the wedding take place?

To highlight the sacredness of the celebration, and to underscore the relationship between your marriage and the Christian community, the Catholic Church stipulates that Catholic weddings take place in Catholic churches. Permission will not be given for outdoor weddings or unusual locations. Normally, the wedding will be celebrated in the parish where either of the Catholic parties resides. If you are marrying a non-Catholic Christian or a non-baptized person, you may request permission to have the wedding take place elsewhere (e.g., in another Christian church, a synagogue, or in another suitable place).

Preparing the liturgy

The wedding liturgy, like all other sacramental celebrations, is by its very nature communal -- a celebration of the whole Church. Yet, it is unique in being the only sacrament where it is the couple themselves who are the ministers of the sacrament; the priest or deacon is a witness.

Catholic weddings follow the general norms for liturgical celebrations, but there are a number of options available for you to choose that will enable you to enrich the celebration with expressions of your own faith. The priest or deacon will assist you in understanding the nature of the liturgy, and the various options and choices available regarding music, readings, and the ritual. Reflecting prayerfully on these together can be an important part of your spiritual preparation for the sacrament.

The wedding liturgy should be planned to encourage the participation of the assembly through song and prayer. It should express both your faith and commitment and that of the gathered community. It provides an opportunity for the community to pray for you, and to promise you their support in your married life.

Ministries of the liturgy

There are a variety of ministries in each liturgical celebration. Some roles can only be filled by a Roman Catholic (for example, an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion); other ministries, such as that of reader, can be done by qualified persons of other faith traditions. Take care in selecting and preparing people to fill these roles, making sure they have the skills and gifts necessary.

The Rite

The Church provides three different rites for marriage:

- a. a sacramental rite during the Eucharist, which is the usual (but not mandatory) form when both parties are Catholic;
- b. a sacramental rite outside the Eucharist, which is the proper form when one party is baptized, but not Catholic;
- c. a non-sacramental rite between a Catholic and an unbaptized person.

The *Entrance Procession* will include the liturgical ministers and presider, as well as the bride and groom, family members, and attendants. There are many ways to plan it -- a liturgical procession (as at a Sunday mass) followed by procession of the wedding party; attendants entering as couples rather than the bridesmaids alone; bride and groom accompanied by all parents or relatives in the procession; or the bride escorted by her father.

The *Liturgy of the Word* follows the format as at any Mass. The readings may be selected from the many options given in the lectionary, or may be other appropriate Scriptures. Non-scriptural readings are not used. The psalm is sung, as is the Gospel Acclamation (Alleluia). The general intercessions should address the needs of the world and the universal Church, as well as the needs of the couple.

For the *Rite of Marriage*, the couple should be clearly visible to the entire assembly as they exchange vows, because they are the focus of the rite.

Music

Our parish has specific policies about music. As soon as your wedding is scheduled with the pastor or deacon, you will need to contact the Director of Worship to schedule an appointment to plan the music for your wedding and to review parish guidelines. In general, when deciding what music to use, consider the following questions:

- a. Is this a well-written piece of music?
- b. Are the text and music in keeping with the nature of the liturgy?
- c. Can the music be used to help the assembly to pray?

The music used before or during the liturgy should be clearly identifiable as prayer by all present. Secular love songs and ballads that have personal meaning to the couple are best played or sung at the reception and generally are not allowed at the marriage ceremony. In addition, certain songs, such as Wagner's "Bridal Chorus" (a.k.a., "Here Comes the Bride) and Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" are not permissible by the diocese as the musical works from which they come do not demonstrate Christian values. At your meeting, the Director of Worship will play through many suggested pieces which are appropriate in order to help you in selecting the music for your wedding.

Cultural adaptations

The Church allows cultural adaptations within the ceremony as long as they are in keeping with the nature and spirit of the liturgy. Such adaptations should not be overpowering, though. Be careful not to duplicate symbols that might have similar meanings; for example, the *lasso* and the *unity candle* are both cultural adaptations which emphasize the union of two persons into a new life in Christ.

The wedding rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal may be conducted by the priest or deacon witnessing the marriage. This is part of the preparation process and offers an excellent opportunity for the wedding party to join together in prayer. The Catechism notes (para. 1622), "It is ... appropriate for the bride and groom to prepare themselves for the celebration of their marriage by receiving the sacrament of penance"; many priests will offer this at the rehearsal for the couple and for members of the wedding party who may desire it. Generally, the rehearsal takes place the evening before the wedding. The time for the rehearsal will be arranged with the pastor or deacon in the final stages of the preparation. **All in attendance are expected to be on time and dressed properly.**

The rehearsal will last less than an hour.

After the wedding ...

In the months of marriage preparation, you're not simply preparing for an hour-long wedding, but for a lifetime together -- a lifetime of joy and happiness, we hope, but also of surprises and challenges. The best marriage preparation can never anticipate all that will happen in your life together, but it can help assist as you live together all the days of your married life!

Of Note

Marriage Times

Weddings may be scheduled on Saturdays after 11:00 a.m. but no later than 2:00 p.m. The Wedding Party must be completely out of the Church by 3:30 p.m. in order to prepare the church for Saturday evening Mass. Weddings do not take place on Saturday evenings, Sundays, during Lent or Advent or other days of parish events, i.e., Bonifest weekend.

Dressing for the Wedding

Men in the wedding party are to come to the church already dressed for the wedding. It is recommended that bridesmaids do likewise. The bride's room is in the Lower Level of the Church. Nothing of value should be left in the room during the ceremony. The room is to be cleaned after the wedding.

Food, Drink and Clean up

Food and drink is forbidden in the church. However, food and drink is allowed in the Lower Level. **Alcohol is not allowed anywhere on the church campus. Anyone in the wedding party partaking in any consumption of alcohol before, during, or immediately after the wedding will jeopardize the wedding ceremony from occurring.** The wedding party is responsible for cleaning up the church, lower level, and Bride's Room following the wedding. Please have someone assigned to remove any boxes, bows, tissues, programs, etc. when the ceremony is completed. A rule of thumb: *What you have brought into the church when you arrived, you are expected to take with you when you leave!*

Decorations

St. Boniface Church is very beautiful and so it is recommended that additional decorations be kept simple. If the wedding takes place when the church is decorated for a liturgical feast or season, church decoration may not be disturbed. Flowers may be placed near the altar, but never on it or in any way which will obstruct view or movement. Candelabra and aisle candles are not permitted in the church. If bows are used on the pews, they are to be fastened in place by elastic or ribbon, never with tape, wire, or tacks. If you choose to have the unity candle, it is your responsibility to provide the candles. Our Art and Environment Team is also available to assist you with decorations for a minimal fee.

Photographs and Video

Those assigned to photograph and video your wedding must do this in a professional manner. They are not permitted in the Sanctuary (altar) and must complete their work 30 minutes following the ceremony. You are encouraged to take wedding pictures prior to the wedding.

Take Note

The throwing of rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals, etc. is strictly forbidden as this causes a hazard. Aisle runners are also not permitted for this reason. Guest Book registry is not recommended due to the fact that most people arrive a few minutes before the start of the wedding and their signing the guest book would delay the start of the wedding.

Music

Music is an integral part of the wedding liturgy. When the Mass is celebrated, all parts of the Mass are sung and led by the Cantor. The couple will need to meet with the parish’s Director of Worship to plan the music. The Diocesan Guidelines must be followed in selecting music for a wedding in church regardless of whether or not it is a Mass or Ceremony outside of Mass. Sacred music is the only choice for weddings. Other secular music is more suitable for your reception. Vocalists are not to “perform” but to lead you and your guests in prayer. The use of an outside vocalist, while not encouraged, is permitted upon approval from the pastor and Director of Worship. The vocalist must have prior experience and not be just a friend with a nice voice. We ask that you use our Parish organist and musicians since they are familiar with the Catholic Marriage Ritual. Only an authorized organist will be permitted to use the organs within the church and chapel. Prior permission from the parish’s Director of Worship will be required if another organist is to be used.

Fees (as of February 2018)

Fees are as listed below. Separate checks must be written for each of the following:

Check made payable to:	Amount	
St. Boniface Church	\$25	Due at the time of FOCCUS testing
St. Boniface Church	\$300 (parishioner) \$400 (non-parishioner)	For use of the church
Priest or Deacon	Discretion of the couple	
Jill Griffin	\$125	Organist
Cantor	\$100 & up, depending on which cantor is scheduled	
Instrumentalists	\$75 - \$150 each, as negotiated prior to the wedding	

All fees (except for FOCCUS testing) are due on MONDAY prior to the wedding date. Fees can be either mailed to the parish office or dropped off during normal business hours.

WEDDING LITURGY PLANNER

ST. BONIFACE CATHOLIC CHURCH - EDWARDSVILLE, IL

Please complete this form as best as you can and bring it with you to your meeting with the Director of Worship. Any blanks will be worked through at the meeting.

WEDDING DATE: _____	TIME: _____ PRESIDER: _____
BRIDE: _____	GROOM: _____
E-MAIL: _____	E-MAIL: _____
PHONE: _____	PHONE: _____
ADDRESS: _____	ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____	CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

LITURGY DETAILS

Our wedding liturgy will be a: Full Mass, with communion Liturgy without Mass

Number of bridesmaids in processional: _____ Number of children in Processional: _____
(Please include the maid/matron of honor and any junior bridesmaids.) *(Flower girls / ring bearers)*

Altar Servers *(Optional)*: No Yes If “Yes,” check number of servers to be included: 1 2

Readers *(1 - 3 required)*: First Reading (Old Testament) _____
(List name)

Second Reading (New Testament) _____
(List name)

General Intercessions *(may be read by the Presider)* _____
(List name)

MUSICIANS

The required services of the Director of Worship/Organist are already assumed. Please indicate here the additional musicians you may be interested in hiring for your wedding liturgy. Please note that extra fees will apply for each musician hired.

CANTOR (\$100 - \$150, DEPENDING ON CANTOR CHOSEN)

MALE CANTOR FEMALE CANTOR NO PREFERENCE REQUESTED CANTOR: _____
(A cantor is required for ALL weddings, even without a Mass) *(Please list name of preferred cantor)*

INSTRUMENTALISTS [\$75 (COLLEGE-LEVEL) UP TO \$150 (PROFESSIONAL LEVEL) EACH]

1 TRUMPET 2 TRUMPETS VIOLIN OBOE FLUTE

STRING QUARTET (2 VIOLINS, 1 VIOLA, 1 CELLO) OTHER: _____

MUSIC

PRELUDE MUSIC (*Seating of Grandparents takes place during the final song of the prelude music*)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

Order of Procession

Server(s)

Reader(s)

Presider

SONG: _____

Groom and his parents

Mother of the Bride & escort
(family member, usher, etc.)

Bridesmaids and Groomsmen

Maid of Honor and Best Man

SONG: _____

Ring Bearer and Flower Girl
(if applicable)

Bride and Father *(or both parents)*

SONG: _____

Parents' lighting of the unity candle
(Optional)

INTRODUCTORY RITES

Sign of the Cross + Greeting + Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading (Old Testament) # _____ Citation: _____

Psalm (Sung by Cantor) _____

Second Reading (New Testament) # _____ Citation: _____

Alleluia (Sung by Cantor) _____

Gospel # _____ Citation: _____

Homily

RITE OF MARRIAGE

Consent

Exchange of Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Blessing Prayer

Lightning of the Unity Candle
(If applicable)

SONG: _____

General Intercessions

FOR FULL MASSES ONLY

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Preparation of the Gifts

Giftbearers: _____

SONG _____

Eucharistic Acclamations (*Holy, Mystery of Faith, Amen*)

MASS SETTING: _____

Eucharistic Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Sign of Peace Song (*The couple will offer peace to wedding party and parents*)

Presentation of Flowers to Mary (*Optional*)

SONG: _____

Lamb of God

MASS SETTING: _____

Communion

Ministers of Holy Communion (*Minimum of 2*):

1. _____

2. _____

SONG _____

Prayer After Communion

FOR WEDDING CEREMONIES OUTSIDE OF MASS:

The Lord's Prayer

Sign of Peace (*The couple will offer peace to wedding party and parents*)

Presentation of Flowers to Mary (*Optional*)

FOR WEDDINGS INSIDE & OUTSIDE OF MASS

CLOSING RITE

Blessing + Introduction + Dismissal

How would you like to be introduced? _____

(e.g., "Mr. & Mrs. John Smith," "John and Mary Smith")

Recessional

SONG: _____

WEDDING MUSIC SUGGESTIONS

PRELUDE MUSIC

INSTRUMENTAL

CANON IN D • JOHANN PACHELBEL
FOUR SEASONS • ANTONIO VIVALDI
LARGO • GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL
AIR • GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL
AIR • JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

VOCAL SOLO

HOW BEAUTIFUL • TWILA PARIS
THE PRAYER • DAVID FOSTER (DION/BOCELLI)
THE LORD'S PRAYER • MALLOTTE
THE WEDDING SONG (THERE IS LOVE) • PAUL STOOKEY
I WILL BE HERE • STEVEN CURTIS CHAPMAN

PROCESSIONAL

INSTRUMENTAL

TRUMPET VOLUNTARY • JEREMIAH CLARKE
TRUMPET TUNE • HENRY PURCELL
PRELUDE TO THE TE DEUM • MARC-ANTOINE CHARPENTIER
RONDEAU • JEAN-JOSEPH MOURET
CANON • JOHANN PACHELBEL
JESU, JOY OF MAN'S DESIRING • J. S. BACH
SHEEP MAY SAFELY GRAZE • J.S. BACH

SUNG

JOYFUL, JOYFUL, WE ADORE YOU
PRAISE TO THE LORD, THE ALMIGHTY
NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD
FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH
ALL CREATURES OF OUR GOD AND KING
HEAR US NOW, OUR GOD AND FATHER
GOD, WHO CREATED HEARTS TO LOVE
GATHER US IN

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PSALM 103 • DAVID HAAS
PSALM 103 • JEANNE COTTER
PSALM 145 • DAVID HAAS
PSALM 33 • JAMES MOORE

REFRAIN: "THE LORD IS KIND AND MERCIFUL."
REFRAIN: "THE LORD IS KIND AND MERCIFUL."
REFRAIN: "I WILL PRAISE YOUR NAME, MY KING AND MY GOD."
REFRAIN: "TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD."

FIRST READING

The first reading is taken from the Old Testament.

Please select 1 of the following 9 options:

OPTION #1

Genesis 1: 26-28, 31a

Male and female he created them.

A reading from the Book of Genesis

Then God said:

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,

the birds of the air, and the cattle,

and over all the wild animals

and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.”

God created man in his image;

in the image of God he created him;

male and female he created them.

God blessed them, saying:

“Be fertile and multiply;

fill the earth and subdue it.

Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air,

and all the living things that move on the earth.”

God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

There are two accounts of the creation of the world and of humankind in Genesis. In this first account, the creation of man and woman represents the climax of creation; they are created in the image and likeness of God, man and woman together constituting this image and likeness of God. The wonderful dignity of man and woman is taught in this story as well as their complementarity, the essence of the gift of sexuality which God pronounced very good.

OPTION #2

Genesis 2: 18-24

The two of them become one body.

A reading from the Book of Genesis

The Lord God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone.

I will make a suitable partner for him."

So the Lord God formed out of the ground

various wild animals and various birds of the air,

and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them;

whatever the man called each of them would be its name.

The man gave names to all the cattle,

all the birds of the air, and all wild animals;

but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man.

So the Lord God cast a deep sleep on the man,

and while he was asleep,

he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

The Lord God then built up into a woman the rib

that he had taken from the man.

When he brought her to the man, the man said:

"This one, at least, is bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

This one shall be called 'woman,'

for out of 'her man' this one has been taken."

That is why a man leaves his father and mother

and clings to his wife,

and the two of them become one body.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

This is the second and, according to today's standards, less popular account of creation. In the past, this description of the creation of the first woman from the rib of man was sometimes used to point out the subordination of woman to man as his helpmate. But contemporary scholars point out that the Hebrew word for help does not indicate subordination. It is used, for example, of God as the helper of Israel. The version of the Bible which is used in Catholic liturgy translates helpmate properly as partner. This story might be used if the wedding homily were to teach of the sanctity of physical creation, including human sexuality. Man and woman in marriage are to be one flesh; so it has been ordained by God.

OPTION #3

Genesis 24: 48-51, 58-67

In his love for Rebekah, Isaac found solace after the death of his mother.

A reading from the Book of Genesis

The servant of Abraham said to Laban:

“I bowed down in worship to the Lord,
blessing the Lord, the God of my master Abraham,
who had led me on the right road
to obtain the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son.

If, therefore, you have in mind to show true loyalty to my master,
let me know;
but if not, let me know that, too.

I can then proceed accordingly.”

Laban and his household said in reply:

“This thing comes from the Lord;
we can say nothing to you either for or against it.

Here is Rebekah, ready for you;

take her with you,
that she may become the wife of your master’s son,
as the Lord has said.”

So they called Rebekah and asked her,

“Do you wish to go with this man?”

She answered, “I do.”

At this they allowed their sister Rebekah and her nurse to take leave,
along with Abraham’s servant and his men.

Invoking a blessing on Rebekah, they said:

“Sister, may you grow
into thousands of myriads;
And may your descendants gain possession
of the gates of their enemies!”

Then Rebekah and her maids started out;

they mounted their camels and followed the man.

So the servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

Meanwhile Isaac had gone from Beer-lahai-roi

and was living in the region of the Negeb.

One day toward evening he went out ... in the field,

and as he looked around, he noticed that camels were approaching.

Rebekah, too, was looking about, and when she saw him,

she alighted from her camel and asked the servant,

“Who is the man out there, walking through the fields toward us?”

“That is my master,” replied the servant.

Then she covered herself with her veil.

The servant recounted to Isaac all the things he had done.

Then Isaac took Rebekah into his tent;

he married her, and thus she became his wife.

In his love for her Isaac found solace

after the death of his mother Sarah.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

Many of the people at your wedding will not be familiar with this story. In order for the reading to make sense, the homilist will need to explain the verses in chapter 24 that precede it. If that is done, this reading will be revealed as a beautiful reading which emphasizes how God proved his fidelity by providing an appropriate wife for Abraham’s son, Isaac. The first of the three nuptial blessings from the *Rite of Marriage* mentions the holy women whose praises were sung in the Scriptures. Rebekah was one of those holy women. This reading might be used to stress God’s fidelity to you in marriage as well as the importance of the companionship and consolation husband and wife can offer each other in difficult times. So, it should be, as Rebekah consoled Isaac after the loss of his mother.

OPTION #4

Tobit 7: 6-14

May the Lord of heaven prosper you both. May he grant you mercy and peace.

A reading from the Book of Tobit

Raphael and Tobiah entered the house of Raguel and greeted him.

Raguel sprang up and kissed him, shedding tears of joy.

But when he heard that Tobit had lost his eyesight,

he was grieved and wept aloud.

He said to Tobiah:

“My child, God bless you!

You are the son of a noble and good father.

But what a terrible misfortune

that such a righteous and charitable man

should be afflicted with blindness!”

He continued to weep in the arms of his kinsman Tobiah.

His wife Edna also wept for Tobit;

and even their daughter Sarah began to weep.

Afterward, Raguel slaughtered a ram from the flock

and gave them a cordial reception.

When they had bathed and reclined to eat,

Tobiah said to Raphael, “Brother Azariah,

ask Raguel to let me marry my kinswoman Sarah.

Raguel overheard the words;

so he said to the boy:

“Eat and drink and be merry tonight,

for no man is more entitled to marry my daughter Sarah

than you, brother.

Besides, not even I have the right to give her to anyone but you,

because you are my closest relative.

But I will explain the situation to you very frankly.

I have given her in marriage to seven men,

all of whom were kinsmen of ours,

and all died on the very night they approached her.

But now, son, eat and drink.

I am sure the Lord will look after you both.”

Tobiah answered, "I will eat or drink nothing
until you set aside what belongs to me."

Raguel said to him: "I will do it.

She is yours according to the decree of the Book of Moses.

Your marriage to her has been decided in heaven!

Take your kinswoman;

from now on you are her love,

and she is your beloved.

She is yours today and ever after.

And tonight, son, may the Lord of heaven prosper you both.

May he grant you mercy and peace."

Then Raguel called his daughter Sarah, and she came to him.

He took her by the hand and gave her to Tobiah with the words:

"Take her according to the law.

According to the decree written in the Book of Moses she is your wife.

Take her and bring her back safely to your father.

And may the God of heaven grant both of you peace and prosperity."

He then called her mother and told her to bring a scroll,

so that he might draw up a marriage contract

stating that he gave Sarah to Tobiah as his wife

according to the decree of the Mosaic law.

Her mother brought the scroll,

and he drew up the contract,

to which they affixed their seals.

Afterward they began to eat and drink.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary

This and the following reading from Tobit are parts of the same story. But as in the previous reading from Genesis, one needs to know something of the story of the Book of Tobit to grasp the full significance of these selections from the account. Tobit, a devout and charitable man, lived in exile at Ninevah. His kinsman Raguel lived at Ecbatana. Each had a serious problem. Tobit was blind and Raguel's daughter Sarah had seven bridegrooms in succession killed on the wedding night by demon Asmodeus. God heard the prayer of Tobit and Sarah; he sent Tobit's son Tobiah to Raguel, married him to Sarah (and he was not killed on the wedding night) and gave him a cure for his father's blindness. The story has a certain human warmth and gentle humor. Tobit's talk of following the law of Moses refers to the patriarchal custom of keeping marriage within the clan. Making God and trust in God the foundation of your marriage is a formula for success.

OPTION #5

Tobit 8: 4b-8

Allow us to live together to a happy age.

A reading from the Book of Tobit

On their wedding night Tobiah arose from bed and said to his wife,

“Sister, get up. Let us pray and beg our Lord
to have mercy on us and to grant us deliverance.”

Sarah got up, and they started to pray
and beg that deliverance might be theirs.

They began with these words:

“Blessed are you, O God of our fathers;
praised be your name forever and ever.

Let the heavens and all your creation
praise you forever.

You made Adam and you gave him his wife Eve
to be his help and support;
and from these two the human race descended.

You said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone;
let us make him a partner like himself.’

Now, Lord, you know that I take this wife of mine
not because of lust,
but for a noble purpose.

Call down your mercy on me and on her,
and allow us to live together to a happy old age.”

They said together, “Amen, amen.”

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

If one knows of Sarah’s experience on her seven previous wedding nights, one can understand the urgency of both Sarah’s and Tobiah’s prayer. It is a lovely scene. Tobiah shows great respect for Sarah in his prayer. God created man and woman to be companions, partners. So he does not take her for any lustful motive, but in singleness of heart. To love each other with singleness of heart is a grace to be sought for in every marriage. And it is one God fully intends to grant, because fidelity and love in marriage are ordained to point to the faithful love of God for us. Marriage is to be a mystery pointing to the mysterious union of Christ with his Church.

OPTION #6

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

The woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

A reading from the Book of Proverbs

When one finds a worthy wife,
 her value is far beyond pearls.
Her husband, entrusting his heart to her,
 has an unfailing prize.
She brings him good, and not evil,
 all the days of her life.
She obtains wool and flax
 and makes cloth with skillful hands.
She puts her hands to the distaff,
 and her fingers ply the spindle.
She reaches out her hands to the poor
 and extends her arms to the needy.
Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting;
 the woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
Give her a reward of her labors,
 and let her works praise her at the city gates.
The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

Proverbs is an anthology of didactic poetry designed to inform and train the young about making good choices, and partly to provide advanced training in wisdom. This passage speaks of finding a “woman of worth,” extolling her value in practical, domestic terms. She is a priceless gift, not only to her husband, but to the needy to whom “she extends her arms.”

There is another feminine entity, Wisdom, which is extolled in the first nine chapters of the same Book of Proverbs. If you read the later passage through the lens of the earlier, the “woman of worth” is also the “woman of wisdom.” This, of course, in addition to enhancing her mystery and attractiveness, enhances many fold her value to her husband.

“Happy the man who finds wisdom,
 the man who gains understanding!
For her profit is better than profit in silver,
 And better than gold is her revenue;
She is more precious than corals,
 And none of your choice possessions can compare with her.”
(Proverbs 3:13-15)

If husband and wife were alert not so much to the charm or beauty of the other but to the wisdom the other gained through the years, wouldn't their interest in one another keep advancing year after year?

OPTION #7

Song of Songs 8: 8-10, 14, 16a; 8:6-7a

Stern as death is love.

A reading from the Song of Songs

Hark! my lover – here he comes

springing across the mountains,
leaping across the hills.

My lover is like a gazelle

or a young stag.

Here he stands behind our wall,

gazing through the windows,
peering through the lattices.

My lover speaks; he says to me,

“Arise, my beloved, my dove, my beautiful one, and come!

“O my dove in the cleft of the rock,

in the secret recesses of the cliff,

Let me see you,

let me hear your voice,

For your voice is sweet,

and you are lovely.”

My lover belongs to me and I to him.

He says to me:

“Set me as a seal on your heart,

as a seal on your arm;

For stern as death is love,

relentless as the nether-world is devotion;
its flames are a blazing fire.

Deep waters cannot quench love,

nor floods sweep it away.”

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

Some commentators, both Jewish and Christian, interpret the Song of Songs, which means „the greatest of all songs,” allegorically. That is, they see the relationship of lover and beloved in the poems as pointing to various moments in the love relationship between God and Israel or between Christ and the Church. Other scholars see the book as a collection of hymns to true love sanctified by union. The inclusion of the Song of Songs in the canon of holy Scripture leads us to interpret the work as an analogy of the love of God for us; this interpretation also affirms the goodness and sanctity of sexual love. The passionate love of God for us is a mystery as is the passionate love of man and woman. It is as strong as death. The love of God for us in Christ conquered death forever and God’s Spirit of love given to us is the guarantee of our living and loving forever.

OPTION #8

Sirach 26: 1-4, 13-16

*Like the sun rising in the Lord's heavens,
the beauty of a virtuous wife is the radiance of her home.*

A reading from the Book of Sirach

Blessed the husband of a good wife,
twice-lengthened are his days;
A worthy wife brings joy to her husband,
peaceful and full is his life.
A good wife is a generous gift
bestowed upon him who fears the Lord;
Be he rich or poor, his heart is content,
and a smile is ever on his face.

A gracious wife delights her husband,
her thoughtfulness puts flesh on his bones;
A gift from the Lord is her governed speech,
and her firm virtue is of surpassing worth.
Choicest of blessings is a modest wife,
priceless her chaste soul.
A holy and decent woman adds grace upon grace;
indeed, no price is worthy of her temperate soul.
Like the sun rising in the Lord's heavens,
the beauty of a virtuous wife is the radiance of her home.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

Much of the Book of Sirach consists of advice from a father to his son and includes advice on sex and marriage. No doubt, many couples today will not choose this reading given the viewpoint taken in it. The selection is a description of a good wife from the husband's point of view which seems to place too great an emphasis on her function to provide him happiness. Roles and relationships change in society. But even in the second century before Christ, which is reflected in this reading, the centrality of one's marriage partner in one's life is clearly spelled out. There is a lesson here for us today when often two careers in one household, or the temptation to materialism which financial security and affluence brings, puts serious stresses on marriage relationships and tempts one to think that one's marriage partner is just one among many important things in one's life. That is not the message in Sirach.

OPTION #9

Jeremiah 31: 31-32a, 33-34a

I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

The days are coming, says the Lord,

when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel
and the house of Judah.

It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers:

the day I took them by the hand
to lead them forth from the land of Egypt.

But this is the covenant which I will make

with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord.

I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts;

I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

No longer will they have need to teach their friends and relatives

how to know the Lord.

All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

For the nomadic peoples of the desert, a covenant was a bond as strong as blood. The welfare of a covenant partner meant as much to you as your own welfare; whenever in need, what is mine is yours, what is yours is mine. The covenant in this reading from Jeremiah is that promised to Israel as the people of God and fulfilled, according to Christian faith, in Christ. If you choose this for the first reading and Ephesians for the second, you would highlight the relationship between God's covenant with his people and the marriage covenant. It is the faith of the Church that marriage is the privileged place where the covenant of God's love may be most effectively embodied among God's people. Marriage covenant love ought to be a pledge and an anticipation of the love shown in the kingdom of heaven. Marriage is, in a true sense, a herald announcing that kingdom.

SECOND READING

The second reading is taken from the New Testament.

Please select 1 of the following 13 options:

OPTION #1

Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39

What will separate us from the love of Christ?

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

If God is for us, who can be against us?

He did not spare his own Son

but handed him over for us all,

will he not also give us everything else along with him?

Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones?

It is God who acquits us.

Who will condemn?

It is Christ Jesus who died, rather, was raised,

who also is at the right hand of God,

who indeed intercedes for us.

What will separate us from the love of Christ?

Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine,

or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

No, in all these things, we conquer overwhelmingly
through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,

nor angels, nor principalities,

nor present things, nor future things,

nor powers, nor height, nor depth,

nor any other creature will be able to separate us

from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

For Saint Paul, the power of the love of God was demonstrated by the obedient death of Jesus on the cross. The death and resurrection of Jesus was the definitive victory over all of life's troubles, including death, so that nothing in the future can interfere with God's love for us; nothing can take us out of God's reach. God's powerful and unconditional love is the ideal of love married persons should strive for: first between themselves, then for all their brothers and sisters. While this reading fits well into any series of readings in the marriage Lectionary, it might be very fitting after the reading from the Song of Songs (OT-7). It is difficult for humans to imagine the depth and breadth of God's unconditional love for them; we are so conscious of our own limits, our pride and self-centeredness. But we must resist the temptation to model God's love on our own rather strive to model our love on God's, relying on the Spirit who is love to empower us.

OPTION #2 - LONG FORM

Romans 12: 1-2, 9-18

Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God,
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.

Do not conform yourselves to this age
but be transformed by the renewal of your mind
so that you may discern what is the will of God,
what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Let love be sincere;
hate what is evil,
hold on to what is good;
love one another with mutual affection;
anticipate one another in showing honor.

Do not grow slack in zeal,
be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

Rejoice in hope,
endure in affliction,
persevere in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the holy ones,
exercise hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you,
bless and do not curse them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice,
weep with those who weep.

Have the same regard for one another;
do not be haughty but associate with the lowly;
do not be wise in your own estimation.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil;
be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all.

If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

The Commentary for this reading follows the Short Form of this reading on the next page.

OPTION #2 - SHORT FORM

Romans 12: 1-2, 9-13

Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God,
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.

Do not conform yourselves to this age
but be transformed by the renewal of your mind
so that you may discern what is the will of God,
what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Let love be sincere;
hate what is evil,
hold on to what is good;
love one another with mutual affection;
anticipate one another in showing honor.

Do not grow slack in zeal,
be fervent in spirit,
serve the Lord.

Rejoice in hope,
endure in affliction,
persevere in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the holy ones,
exercise hospitality.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

Paul urges the Christians at Rome to put their beliefs into practice so that their Christian behavior might become a sacrifice to God. He follows this with a warning not to model their lives on the behavior patterns of the world. Married couples would do well to frame this passage on Christian love and pray over it daily. Paul includes hospitality among the qualities Christians should manifest; this is a special virtue of married couples who should not be turned in on themselves, but make their home a place of welcome for others. In our society which encourages expectations of affluent living, our dreams of the future should encompass the welfare of all people, especially the poor, not just our own families.

OPTION #3

Romans 15: 1b-3a, 5-7, 13

Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you.

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

We ought to put up with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves;
let each of us please our neighbor for the good,
for building up.

For Christ did not please himself.

May the God of endurance and encouragement
grant you to think in harmony with one another,
in keeping with Christ Jesus,
that with one accord you may with one voice
glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you,
for the glory of God.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

This passage offers some tough but vital advice to those entering marriage. Here's why: married people, over time, get to appreciate one another's strengths. Inevitably, however, they also discover one another's weaknesses with a clarity they did not have on the day of their wedding. When this happens in their relationship, when they are surprised, disappointed and, perhaps, worried, they should read and be strengthened by this passage from Saint Paul, starting with his prayer: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace..." Have hope, he says, that the Holy Spirit will empower you to love one another well.

This means that, when necessary, you can "put up with the failings of the weak." The primary literal meaning of the Greek word translated here as "put up with" is actually much stronger. It means "support" or "carry." It seems that Paul is asking for more than toleration; rather, he is asking for serious, sustained assistance for the weak. And his next phrases show that he understands what that will sometimes ask for the partner: we ought "not to please ourselves; let each of us please our neighbor for the good, for building up."

This can be a tall order. But, lucky for us, Christian marriage is not limited to reliance on one's own resources to make it successful. Christ, "who did not please himself," has won for us and shared with us the power of the Holy Spirit. Our God is a god "of endurance and encouragement" who shares those dispositions with us so that we may endure difficulties for the sake of one another and be able to encourage one another when one's weaknesses challenge one's hope.

The meaning of God's gift to us in Jesus Christ is that if we die to ourselves out of love, we can discover a deeper, fuller life both here and hereafter. "Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God."

OPTION #4

1 Corinthians 6: 13c-15a, 17-20

Your body is a temple of the Spirit.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord,
and the Lord is for the body;
God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?
Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.
Avoid immorality.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body,
but the immoral person sins against his own body.

Do you not know that your body
is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,
whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

For you have been purchased at a price.

Therefore glorify God in your body.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

Do not be put off by Paul's chastening tone; the passage contains a very important Christian affirmation: the flesh and all material creation are holy and belong to the Lord. Paul uses two images to stress the sanctity of the human body: he reminds the Christians that their bodies are members of Christ's body and that they are temples of the Holy Spirit. We are not our own; we have been bought and paid for by the life and death of Jesus. There is evidence that this reading was already in use in some Christian marriage services in the sixth century.

OPTION #5

1 Corinthians 12: 31-13: 8

If I do not have love, I gain nothing.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts.

But I shall show you a still more excellent way.

If I speak in human and angelic tongues

but do not have love,

I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.

And if I have the gift of prophecy

and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge;

if I have all faith so as to move mountains,

but do not have love, I am nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind.

It is not jealous, is not pompous,

it is not inflated, it is not rude,

it does not seek its own interests,

it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury,

it does not rejoice over wrongdoing

but rejoices with the truth.

It bears all things, believes all things,

hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

Paul teaches us that, while talent and knowledge are wonderful gifts, love is the one thing required of us in this life. But love is demanding; it encompasses patience, humility, selflessness, courtesy and respect. Love puts good interpretations on what others say and do; it does not resent others' success but rejoices in it and in the truth. Love is ready to forgive, to trust and to endure. Little more needs to be said about the heart of a marriage relationship. But the source of such a love, which is promised to every couple in the sacrament of marriage, can only be God.

OPTION #6 - LONG FORM

Ephesians 5: 2a, 21-33

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

Brothers and sisters:

Live in love, as Christ loved us
and handed himself over for us.

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord.

For the husband is head of his wife
just as Christ is head of the Church,
he himself the savior of the body.

As the Church is subordinate to Christ,
so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ loved the Church
and handed himself over for her to sanctify her,
cleansing her by the bath of water with the word,
that he might present to himself the Church in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.

So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself.

For no one hates his own flesh
but rather nourishes and cherishes it,
even as Christ does the Church,
because we are members of his Body.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.

This is a great mystery,
but to speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself,
and the wife should respect her husband.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

The Commentary for this reading follows the Short Form of this reading on the next page.

OPTION #6 - SHORT FORM

Ephesians 5: 2a, 25-32

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

Brothers and sisters:

Live in love, as Christ loved us
and handed himself over for us.

Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ loved the Church
and handed himself over for her to sanctify her,
cleansing her by the bath of water with the word,
that he might present to himself the Church in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.

So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself.

For no one hates his own flesh
but rather nourishes and cherishes it,
even as Christ does the Church,
because we are members of his Body.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.

\ This is a great mystery,
but to speak in reference to Christ and the Church.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

This reading is part of what scholars call a household code. Taken by early Christianity from Hellenistic Judaism, these codes set forth the duties of husband, wives, parents, children, masters and slaves. In some cases the codes were borrowed almost without change, but his passage in Ephesians added a special elaboration on the meaning of marriage by comparing it to the relation between Christ and his Church. The reading reflects the subordinations pattern of societal relationships in force at the time. Notice, however, that this is not the distinctly Christian element in the household code presented here. The Christian community, including our own, is never exempt from cultural conditioning. The inspiring heart of this passage, however, portrays the love of husband and wife as so special that it can be compared analogously to the great love of Christ for the Church.

OPTION #7

Philippians 4: 4-9

The God of peace will be with you.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians

Brothers and sisters:

Rejoice in the Lord always.

I shall say it again: rejoice!

Your kindness should be known to all.

The Lord is near.

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,

by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
make your requests known to God.

Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding
will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters,

whatever is true, whatever is honorable,
whatever is just, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious,
if there is any excellence
and if there is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things.

Keep on doing what you have learned and received
and heard and seen in me.

Then the God of peace will be with you.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

“For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, don’t worry!” This is what Saint Paul could be saying to you if you choose the Philippians passage for your wedding liturgy. He describes in a few lines the Christian formula for peace of heart in all circumstances. “Have no anxiety at all,” he says.

Looking back on your experience of life so far and looking ahead to the challenges, known and unknown, in your life together, an anxiety-free life may seem like a fool’s dream. Yet, that is what is promised us in this inspired reading. The formula for peace sounds simple: pray. Pray, first of all, for stronger faith and trust that “the Lord is near.” Pray for yourselves and for others. Don’t hesitate to ask for what you need but (and this is the key to the formula) do it in a context of gratitude, or thanksgiving.

It can be correctly said that gratitude is the foundational Christian attitude. People who habitually count their blessings and give thanks to God are fundamentally peaceful people. Try it. Try living just one day conscious that all you are and have is pure gift. You will then understand why the central prayer of the Church is Eucharist-thanksgiving, reverent acknowledgement of God’s dominion and extraordinary love.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding does not mean simply the absence of conflict. It is deeper than that, a gift from God that is beyond our mind’s calculations, yet is promised to those who are grateful and who pray.

OPTION #8

Colossians 3: 12-17

*And over all these put on love,
that is, the bond of perfection.*

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians

Brothers and sisters:

Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,
bearing with one another and forgiving one another,
if one has a grievance against another;
as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.

And over all these things put on love,
that is, the bond of perfection.

And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,
the peace into which you were also called in one Body.

And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,
as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another,
singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
with gratitude in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, in word or in deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

This is another household code but some distinctive Christian elements in human relationships are highlighted in it. In the wedding liturgy, special emphasis might be placed on the special need of forgiveness in love relationships. It is God's love and forgiveness of us that is the reason for and the model of our forgiveness of another. The author urges us to let the word of Christ dwell in us and to speak with each other with the wisdom granted us by the Spirit. Communication on a regular, sustained basis is absolutely essential to a healthy marriage.

OPTION #9

Hebrews 13: 1-4a, 5-6b

Let marriage be held in honor of all.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

Brothers and sisters:

Let mutual love continue.

Do not neglect hospitality,

for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.

Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment,

and of the ill-treated as of yourselves,

for you also are in the body.

Let marriage be honored among all

and the marriage bed be kept undefiled.

Let your life be free from love of money

but be content with what you have,

for he has said, I will never forsake you or abandon you.

Thus we may say with confidence:

The Lord is my helper;

and I will not be afraid.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

These ethical admonitions at the conclusion of the letter to the Hebrews apply to all people, but for those entering marriage they are singularly appropriate: maintaining mutual love for one another, offering hospitality in your new home—your domestic church, not being so preoccupied with one another that you forget the marginalized and are unable to identify with them, fidelity to one another in sexual matters, being content with what you have, not making money more important than it deserves to be.

What supports this kind of Christian married life are the gifts of faith and trust in God's promises, such as: "I will never forsake you or abandon you." Clearly marriage, which should be honored by all, demands regular listening to the Word of God and celebration of the sacred mysteries entrusted to us so that one will be constantly reminded of how much God loves us and how faithful God has always been to the promises made to God's people. If a couple is grounded in gratitude to God, it is much easier for them in their married life to be light for one another and a sign of God's kingdom to the world.

OPTION #10

1 Peter 3: 1-9

Be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter

Beloved:

You wives should be subordinate to your husbands so that,
even if some disobey the word,
they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct
when they observe your reverent and chaste behavior.

Your adornment should not be an external one:

braiding the hair, wearing gold jewelry, or dressing in fine clothes,
but rather the hidden character of the heart,
expressed in the imperishable beauty
of a gentle and calm disposition,
which is precious in the sight of God.

For this is also how the holy women who hoped in God

once used to adorn themselves
and were subordinate to their husbands;
thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him "lord."

You are her children when you do what is good
and fear no intimidation.

Likewise, you husbands should live with your wives in understanding,
showing honor to the weaker female sex,
since we are joint heirs of the gift of life,
so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Finally, all of you, be of one mind, sympathetic,
loving toward one another, compassionate, humble.

Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult;
but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called,
that you might inherit a blessing.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

The first part of this household code is directed to Christian women whose spouses are pagan. It suggests that by their conduct they might win over their husbands to the faith. There follows a diatribe against the use of cosmetics! If one can make allowances for the cultural setting of this reading which calls woman "the weaker sex" and extols Sarah who called her husband her master, the reading does commend some important Christian virtues that every marriage relationship should take to heart, in particular, not returning wrong for wrong or anger for anger, but returning a blessing when one has been harmed. The successful marriage is one which seeks the truly good things in life: a forgiving atmosphere, peace in the home, fidelity and hospitality.

OPTION #11

1 John 3: 18-24

Love in deed and in truth.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

Children, let us love not in word or speech
but in deed and truth.

Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth
and reassure our hearts before him
in whatever our hearts condemn,
for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us,
we have confidence in God
and receive from him whatever we ask,
because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

And his commandment is this:
we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ,
and love one another just as he commanded us.

Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them,
and the way we know that he remains in us
is from the Spirit that he gave us.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

If we do what God commands, we will abide in God. Sometimes it is not an easy thing to know what God's desires are for us or for others. This reading addresses this situation and reminds us that even if we are uncertain as to how we stand before God, we should trust that God understands us better than we know ourselves. If we have faith in Jesus and try to love one another as God loves us, we should be confident that God will care for us. Couples will have to make many decisions, the rightness or wrongness of which may not always be clear. A well informed conscience, marked by honesty, by careful inquiry and by prayer, will guarantee peace of mind. But our love must not reside in words alone; it must issue in deeds.

OPTION #12

1 John 4:7-12

God is love.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

Beloved, let us love one another,

because love is of God;

everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.

Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.

In this way the love of God was revealed to us:

God sent his only-begotten Son into the world

so that we might have life through him.

In this is love:

not that we have loved God, but that he loved us

and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us,

we also must love one another.

No one has ever seen God.

Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us,

and his love is brought to perfection in us.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

The author can testify that the Christian community believes that God is love because they have seen and felt the Father's love in Jesus, his son. Only the person who loves, the reading goes on to say, can truly know God because God is love. The invitation to love which marriage is, is an invitation to enter more deeply as time goes by into the mystery of your marriage partner and into the mystery that is God. It is the outpouring of God's love for us that brought us into being and enables us to live and love. Since we are made in God's image and likeness, we are called to imitate the love of God. Since God loved us first, we are called to love others first. We love others not because they love us, but because they are in themselves beautiful creations of our Father and worthy of our love as they are the objects of his.

OPTION #13

Revelation 19:1, 5-9a

Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

A reading from the Book of Revelation

I John, heard what sounded like the loud voice
of a great multitude in heaven, saying:

“Alleluia!
Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God.”

A voice coming from the throne said:

“Praise our God, all you his servants,
and you who revere him, small and great.”

Then I heard something like the sound of a great multitude
or the sound of rushing water or mighty peals of thunder,
as they said:

“Alleluia!
The Lord has established his reign,
our God, the almighty.
Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory.
For the wedding day of the Lamb has come,
his bride has made herself ready.
She was allowed to wear
a bright, clean linen garment.”

(The linen represents the righteous deeds of the holy ones.)

Then the angel said to me,

“Write this:
Blessed are those who have been called
to the wedding feast of the Lamb.”

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

The lamb is the symbol of Jesus in the Book of Revelation. This passage is a hopeful and faith-filled look into the future of our world when it will be transformed into a kingdom of peace and justice. It is a song of joy at the nuptials between Christ and his bride, the Church, at the end of time. Marriage can be and ought to be a foretaste, for the couple and for those who are touched by them, of that special time of union and peace. That is its prophetic character. Not only is marriage, therefore, a symbol of the mystical union now existing between Christ and his Church, but it points to the final union between the Messiah and the redeemed. Some commentators attribute the custom of the bride wearing white and to the white clothing of the saints who appear in the Book of Revelation.

GOSPEL READING

The gospel reading is taken from the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

Please select 1 of the following 9 options:

OPTION #1

Matthew 5: 1-12a

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain,
and after he has sat down, his disciples came to him.

He began to teach them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.
Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward will be great in heaven.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

In the Gospel according to Matthew, the sermon containing the Beatitudes is situated on a mountain, suggestive of Mount Sinai. The sermon is seen as the new law corresponding to the old law given to Moses. It spells out how a Christian should live in order to have joy and it is most appropriate advice for a married couple. It is not the self-satisfied, materialistic people who will be blessed and happy, but it is those who show mercy, who treat others gently, who endeavor to make peace, who are unencumbered in spirit and free to be loving who will be happy. Strengthening these habits within the marriage relationship enables partners to radiate a Christian presence beyond their home. Those who are willing to pay the price that love of and commitment to another entails will be rewarded.

OPTION #2

Matthew 5: 13-16

You are the light of the world.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus said to his disciples:

“You are the salt of the earth.

But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?

It is no longer good for anything

but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

You are the light of the world.

A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.

Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket;

it is set on a lamp stand,

where it gives light to all in the house.

Just so, your light must shine before others,

that they may see your good deeds

and glorify your heavenly Father.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

Jesus describes the nucleus of the future church as the salt of the earth, a city on a hill and a light to the world. On your wedding day, you are clearly the center of attention, the city, the light that brightens the day and the salt that gives it flavor. You are called by God to continue to be salt, light and a beacon for others. That is achieved only by loving as Jesus loved us. The quality of a bride and groom can be felt on their wedding day by the way they are concerned for others, even on that special day honoring them. It is a good time to try and live that selfless love that will continue to make you a light for others throughout your life.

OPTION #3 - LONG FORM

Matthew 7:21, 24-29

A wise man built his house on rock.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’
will enter the Kingdom of heaven,
but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them
will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.

The rain fell, the floods came,

and the winds blew and buffeted the house.

But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock.

And everyone who listens to these words of mine

but does not act on them

will be like a fool who built his house on sand.

The rain fell, the floods came,

and the winds blew and buffeted the house.

And it collapsed and was completely ruined.”

When Jesus finished these words,

the crowds were astonished at his teaching,

for he taught them as one having authority,

and not as their scribes.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

The commentary for this option is found following the short form on the next page.

OPTION #3 - SHORT FORM

Matthew 7:21, 24-25

A wise man built his house on rock.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Not everyone who says to me, „Lord, Lord,“
will enter the Kingdom of heaven,
but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them
will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.

The rain fell, the floods came,

and the winds blew and buffeted the house.

But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

You are about to build a life together in Christian marriage. Vows made on your wedding day have to be fulfilled through a thousand acts of fidelity, compassion and love. Marriage cannot be built on shifting sands but must be built on the rock of Christ and his teachings if it is to last. This part of the Sermon on the Mount was directed to certain prophets and healers who were upsetting the Church. The test of their work, it asserts, will not be their flashy achievements, but their obedience to the righteousness set forth in the sermon.

OPTION #4

Matthew 19: 3-6

What God has united, man must not separate.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Some Pharisees approached Jesus, and tested him, saying,

“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?”

He said in reply, “Have you not read that from the beginning

the Creator *made them male and female* and said,

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother

and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?

So they are no longer two, but one flesh.

Therefore, what God has joined together, man must not separate.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

The Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus into taking sides in a dispute about the interpretations of a section of the Torah (the law) dealing with divorce. The Torah said that a man could divorce his wife for “some unseemly thing.” Naturally the argument revolved around what was meant by “some unseemly thing.” One side claimed it meant adultery; the other claimed it meant anything that displeased the husband.

Jesus, in answer, harkens back to the original order of creation. It was Moses who permitted divorce as a concession to human weakness; Jesus, however, holds to the ideal that man and wife are joined together forever. The couple, assisted by God’s grace in the sacrament of marriage, is called to be truly a foretaste of heavenly conditions – of fidelity beyond one’s natural strength, of patience beyond one’s own means. It is a prophetic vocation which deserves the support of friends and the Christian community.

OPTION #5

Matthew 22: 35-40

This is the greatest and the first commandment.

The second is like it.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

One of the Pharisees, a scholar of the law, tested Jesus by asking,

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

He said to him,

“You shall love the Lord, your God,

with all your heart,

with all your soul,

and with all your mind.

This is the greatest and the first commandment.

The second is like it:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

This summary of the law is also found in an earlier Jewish work called the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, but Jesus links the two commandments in a new way. Love of God without love of neighbor is a deception, and love of neighbor without love of God can turn out to be self-love. There are three loves which make up the two essential commandments: love of God with your whole being, love and esteem of yourself as a precious creation of God, and love of neighbor equal to the love you have for yourself. To love in this manner poses a severe challenge to us; our world does not reward or commend those who live for others. Self-centeredness (not the same as self-love) and “looking out for Number One” seem to be rewarded. Married love can stand out like a beacon of hope in this dark world when it reaffirms the values of commitment, fidelity, generosity and compassion

OPTION #6

Mark 10: 6-9

They are no longer two, but one flesh.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

Jesus said:

*“From the beginning of creation,
God made them male and female.*

*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.*

So they are no longer two but one flesh.
Therefore what God has joined together,
no human being must separate.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

This is a Marcan parallel of Option 4. The only difference between the two is that the Matthew setting is one of debate; the Mark setting is not. Consult the commentary of Option 4.

OPTION #7

John 2: 1-11

Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

There was a wedding in Cana in Galilee,
and the mother of Jesus was there.
Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.
When the wine ran short,
the mother of Jesus said to him,
"They have no wine."
And Jesus said to her,
"Woman, how does your concern affect me?
My hour has not yet come."
His mother said to the servers,
"Do whatever he tells you."
Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial
washings,
each holding twenty to thirty gallons.
Jesus told them,
"Fill the jars with water."
So they filled them to the brim.
Then he told them,
"Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter."
So they took it.
And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine,
without knowing where it came from
(although the servants who had drawn the water knew),
the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him,
"Everyone serves good wine first,
and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one;
but you have kept the good wine until now."
Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee
and so revealed his glory,
and his disciples began to believe in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

This has been one of the most widely used texts in the Christian wedding liturgy since the Middle Ages. Jesus, who took upon himself our human flesh and condition, approves marriage by this gesture of compassion and love for the couple at Cana. The miracle is also a sign that God has broken into our history in a transforming way. Today, God promises to be with every couple in this sacrament of grace and power. Through the Spirit of Jesus granted to them, the clear, pure water of their lives together can be transformed into a fine wine, a cause of celebration for the Christian community.

OPTION #8

John 15: 9-12

Remain in my love.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said to his disciples:

As the Father loves me, so I also love you.

Remain in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love,
just as I have kept my Father's commandments
and remain in his love.

"I have told you this so that my joy might be in you
and your joy might be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

The commentary for this option is the same as the following option on the next page.

OPTION #9

John 15: 12-16

This is my commandment: love one another.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said to his disciples:

“This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

No one has greater love than this,

to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I no longer call you slaves,

because a slave does not know what his master is doing.

I have called you friends,

because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you

and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain,

so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

In giving up his life for us, Jesus set us an example of how to live and love. God wants us to be joyful; the way to that joy is obedience to God’s commands, chief of which is the command to love one another as Jesus has loved us. Our relationship with God is not that of servant to master, but of child to parent, a child who is called friend. We have been chosen to go forth and bear fruit. The fruit of this marriage will be the marriage itself and the love and progeny that will come from it. Pray to the Father in Jesus’ name so that your fruit may endure.

OPTION #10 – LONG FORM

John 17: 20-26

That they may be brought to perfection as one.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said:

“I pray not only for my disciples,
but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
so that they may all be one,
as you, Father, are in me and I in you,
that they also may be in us,
that the world may believe that you sent me.
And I have given them the glory you gave me,
so that they may be one, as we are one,
I in them and you in me,
that they may be brought to perfection as one,
that the world may know that you sent me,
and that you loved them even as you loved me.
Father, they are your gift to me.
I wish that where I am they also may be with me,
that they may see my glory that you gave me,
because you loved me before the foundation of the world.
Righteous Father, the world also does not know you,
but I know you, and they know that you sent me.
I made known to them your name and I will make it known,
that the love with which you loved me
may be in them and I in them.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

The commentary for this option is the same as the following option on the next page.

OPTION #10 – SHORT FORM

John 17: 20-23

That they may be brought to perfection as one.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said:

“Holy Father, I pray not only for my disciples,
but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
so that they may all be one,
as you, Father, are in me and I in you,
that they also may be in us,
that the world may believe that you sent me.

And I have given them the glory you gave me,
so that they may be one, as we are one,
I in them and you in me,
that they may be brought to perfection as one,
that the world may know that you sent me,
and that you loved them even as you loved me.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Commentary:

This reading is a love song by Christ to us. He wants us to be as he is with the Father, united in perfect union. The unity of Christians is to be a sign to the world that Jesus was sent by God. Marriage in a preeminent way is the sign of this love of God for the world. Christians strive for this kind of union but do it in a sinful world, conscious of our deep need for God’s grace to touch us and transform us. That special grace is guaranteed to the wedding couple in the sacrament of marriage, not just on their wedding day, but throughout their lives together.