

appendix

Liturgical Texts & Prayers



The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

OPENING PRAYER

Please select 1 of the following 7 options:

OPTION #1 (89.)

Presider: Be attentive to our prayers, O Lord,
and in your kindness
pour out your grace on these your servants (N. and N.),
that, coming together before your altar,
they may be confirmed in love for one another.
Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

OPTION #2 (188.)

Presider: O God, who consecrated the bond of Marriage
by so great a mystery
that in the wedding covenant you foreshadow
the Sacrament of Christ and his Church,
grant, we pray, to these your servants,
that what they receive in faith
they may live out in deeds.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

OPTION #3 (189.)

Presider: O God, who in creating the human race
willed that man and wife should be one,
join, we pray, in a bond of inseparable love
these your servants who are to be united in the covenant of Marriage,
so that, as you make their love fruitful,
they may become, by your grace, witnesses to charity itself.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

OPTION #4 (190.)

Presider: Be attentive to our prayers, O Lord,
and in your kindness
pour out your grace on these your servants (N. and N.),
that, coming together before your altar,
they may be confirmed in love for one another.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

OPTION #5 (191.)

Presider: Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that these your servants,
now to be joined by the Sacrament of Matrimony,
may grow in the faith they profess
and enrich your Church with faithful offspring.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

OPTION #6 (192.)

Presider: Be attentive to our prayers, O Lord,
and in your kindness uphold
what you have established for the increase of the human race,
so that the union you have created
may be kept safe by your assistance.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

OPTION #7 (193.)

Presider: O God, who since the beginning of the world
have blessed the increase of offspring,
show favor to our supplications
and pour forth the help of your blessing
on these your servants (**N.** and **N.**),
so that in the union of Marriage
they may be bound together
in mutual affection,
in likeness of mind,
and in shared holiness.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

The passages that follow may be used in the Mass “For the Celebration of Marriage” and in the celebration of Marriages without Mass. At least one reading that explicitly speaks of Marriage must always be chosen. These readings are designated by an asterick.

FIRST READING

There may be three readings, of which the First Reading should be from the Old Testament, but, during the Easter Time, from the Book of Revelation (page 46 of this booklet). 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.

continued...

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 Yahweh 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.

continued...

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 2: 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

Ephesians 4:1-6

One Body and one Spirit.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

Brothers and sisters:

I, a prisoner for the Lord,
urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received,
with all humility and gentleness, with patience,
bearing with one another through love,
striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit
through the bond of peace: one Body and one Spirit,
as you were also called to the one hope of your call;
one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
one God and Father of all,
who is over all and through all and in all.

The word of the Lord.

Commentary:

Paul writes to the Universal Church in his letter to the Ephesians, not to a specific local community. His main concern is how people will live the Christian life in the world. The verses of this reading, which comes from the beginning of chapter 4, emphasize the unity of all in the one Body of Christ, the Church. Notice in the reading that this unity is sevenfold; Paul uses the word “one” seven times in reference to unity.

Living in unity with your spouse and the Church does not mean that everyone does things the same way, as it did for Paul when he instructed the Ephesians. Paul recognized that unity in the Church is maintained and preserved best when people use the variety of gifts God generously gives them. Allow your unique gifts to shine forth as you live out your relationship with each other. In so doing, you will build up the Body of Christ and all God’s world around you.

OPTION #7 – 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 #7 – 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 #8

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 #9

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 #10

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 #11

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 #12

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 #13

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 #14

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.

MARRIAGE VOWS

Please select 1 of the following 4 options:

FORM A

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

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

FORM B

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

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

FORM C

To the Bridegroom: **N.**, do you take **N.** to be your wife? Do you promise to be faithful to her in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love her and honor her all the days of your life?

Bridegroom: I do.

To the Bride: **N.**, do you take **N.** to be your husband? Do you promise to be true to him in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love him and honor him all the days of your life?

Bride: I do.

FORM D

To the Bridegroom: **N.**, do you take **N.** for your **lawful** wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do you part?

Bridegroom: I do.

To the Bride: **N.**, do you take **N.** for your **lawful** husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do you part?

Bride: I do.

THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER

Prayer of the Faithful/Petitions

There are two options which are edited electronically and submitted to the office or the Director of Liturgy. See the Cathedral's website for instructions.

OPTION #1

Priest: Filled with Joy of this celebration, we bring before God our prayers for **N.** and **N.**, for the church and for the world.

Lector:

1. For the Church throughout the world and for the parish communities where **N.** and **N.** have in the past and will in the future find fellowship in Christ (especially [**list parishes**]), we pray ...
2. For our nation and this city, and for those who serve in our government, we pray...
3. For the poor, the homeless, and the unemployed, and for all who suffer under persecution, we pray...
4. For **N.** and **N.** and all married couples, for their faithfulness to each other and for their faithful service of the gospel, we pray...
5. For the parents and families of **N.** and **N.**, for their godparents, and for all who formed them in faith, we pray...
6. For the deceased relatives of **N.** and **N.**, especially [**list names**]; for the sick and for those unable to be with us today, we pray...

Presider: Gracious God, your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, poured forth blessings on the wedding couple at Cana. Look with kindness on **N.** and **N.**, as they pledge their lives to one another in the presence of your church. May they cherish one another and be heartened by our love. Through them, may your church be blessed. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Option #2 follows on the next page.

OPTION #2

Presider: Dear brothers and sisters, let us accompany this new family with our prayers, that the mutual love of this couple may grow daily and that God in his kindness will sustain all families throughout the world.

Lector:

1. For this bride and groom, and for their well-being as a family, let us pray to the Lord...
2. For their relatives and friends, and for all who have assisted this couple, let us pray to the Lord...
3. For young people preparing to enter Marriage, and for all whom the Lord is calling to another state in life, let us pray to the Lord...
4. For all families throughout the world and for lasting peace among all people, let us pray to the Lord...
5. For the Church, the holy People of God, and for unity among Christians, let us pray to the Lord...
6. For all members of our families who have passed from this world, and for all the departed, especially [list names], let us pray to the Lord...

Presider: Lord Jesus, who are present in our midst,
as N. and N. seal their union
accept our prayer
and fill us with your Spirit.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Please select 1 of the following 3 options:

OPTION #1

Priest: Receive, we pray, O Lord,
the offering made on the occasion
of this sealing of the sacred bond of Marriage,
and, just as your goodness is its origin,
may your providence guide its course.
Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

OPTION #2

Priest: Receive in your kindness, Lord,
the offerings we bring in gladness before you,
and in your fatherly love
watch over those you have joined in a sacramental covenant.
Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

OPTION #3

Priest: Show favor to our supplications, O Lord,
and receive with a kindly countenance
the oblations we offer for these your servants,
joined now in a holy covenant,
that through these mysteries
they may be strengthened in love for one another and for you.
Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

If the Nuptial Blessing is not sung, please select 1 of the following 3 options.

OPTION #1

The Priest, with hand joined, calls upon those present to pray, saying,

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord
that on these his servants, now married in Christ,
he may mercifully pour out
the blessing of his grace
and make of one heart in love
(by the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood)
those he has joined by a holy covenant.

And all pray in silence for a while.

Then the Priest, with hand extended over the bride and bridegroom, continues:

O God, who by your mighty power
created all things out of nothing,
and, when you had set in place
the beginnings of the universe,
formed man and woman in your own image,
making the woman an inseparable helpmate to the man,
that they might no longer be two, but one flesh,
and taught that what you were pleased to make one
must never be divided;

O God, who consecrated the bond of Marriage
by so great a mystery
that in the wedding covenant you foreshadowed
the Sacrament of Christ and his Church;

O God, by whom woman is joined to man
and the companionship they had in the beginning
is endowed with the one blessing
not forfeited by original sin
nor washed away by the flood.

Look now with favor on these your servants,
joined together in Marriage,
who ask to be strengthened by your blessing.
Send down on them the grace of the Holy Spirit
and pour your love into their hearts,
that they may remain faithful in the Marriage covenant.

May the grace of love and peace
abide in your daughter **N.**,
and let her always follow the example of those holy women
whose praises are sung in the Scriptures. (*Continued next page...*)

May her husband entrust his heart to her,
so that, acknowledging her as his equal
and his joint heir to the life of grace,
he may show her due honor
and cherish her always
with the love that Christ has for his Church.

And now, Lord, we implore you:
may these your servants
hold fast to the faith and keep your commandments;
made one in the flesh,
may they be blameless in all they do;
and with the strength that comes from the Gospel,
may they bear true witness to Christ before all;
(may they be blessed with children,
and prove themselves virtuous parents,
who live to see their children's children).

And grant that,
reaching at last together the fullness of years
for which they hope,
they may come to the life of the blessed
in the Kingdom of Heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

OPTION #2

The Priest, with hands joined, calls upon those present to pray, saying:

Let us pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who come to the altar as they begin their married life,
that (partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ),
they may always be bound together by love for one another.

And all pray in silence for a while.

Then the Priest, with hands extended over the bride and bridegroom, continues.

Holy Father,
who formed man in your own image,
male and female you created them,
so that as husband and wife, united in body and heart,
they might fulfill their calling in the world;

O God, who, to reveal the great design you formed in your love,
willed that the love of spouses for each other
should foreshadow the covenant you graciously made with your people,
so that, by fulfillment of the sacramental sign,
the mystical marriage of Christ with his Church
might become manifest
in the union of husband and wife among your faithful;

Graciously stretch out your right hand
over these your servants (N. and N.), we pray,
and pour into their hearts the power of the Holy Spirit.

Grant, O Lord,
that, as they enter upon this sacramental union,
they may share with one another the gifts of your love
and, by being for each other a sign of your presence,
become one heart and one mind.

May they also sustain, O Lord, by their deeds
the home they are forming
(and prepare their children
to become members of your heavenly household
by raising them in the way of the Gospel).

Graciously crown with your blessings your daughter N.,
so that, by being a good wife (and mother),
she may bring warmth to her home with a love that is pure
and adorn it with welcoming graciousness.

Bestow a heavenly blessing also, O Lord,
on N., your servant,
that he may be a worthy, good and
faithful husband (and a provident father).

Grant, holy Father, that, desiring to approach your table
as a couple joined in Marriage in your presence,
they may one day have the joy
of taking part in your great banquet in heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.

OPTION #3

The Priest, with hands joined, calls upon those present to pray, saying:

Let us humbly invoke by our prayers, dear brothers and sisters,
God's blessing upon this bride and groom,
that in his kindness he may favor with his help
those on whom he has bestowed the Sacrament of Matrimony.

All pray in silence for a while.

Then the Priest, with hands extended over the bride and bridegroom, continues:

Holy Father, maker of the whole world,
who created man and woman in your own image
and willed that their union be crowned with your blessing,
we humbly beseech you for these your servants,
who are joined today in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

May your abundant blessing, Lord,
come down upon this bride, N.,
and upon N., her companion for life,
and may the power of your Holy Spirit
set their hearts aflame from on high,
so that, living out together the gift of Matrimony,
they may (adorn their family with children
and) enrich the Church.

In happiness may they praise you, O Lord,
in sorrow may they seek you out;
may they have the joy of your presence
to assist them in their toil,
and know that you are near
to comfort them in their need;
let them pray to you in the holy assembly
and bear witness to you in the world,
and after a happy old age,
together with the circle of friends that surrounds them,
may they come to the Kingdom of Heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Please select 1 of the following 3 options:

OPTION #1

Priest: By the power of this sacrifice, O Lord,
accompany with your loving favor
what in your providence you have instituted,
so as to make of one heart in love
those you have already joined in this holy union
(and replenished with the one Bread and the one Chalice).
Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

OPTION #2

Priest: Having been made partakers at your table,
we pray, O Lord,
that those who are united by the Sacrament of Marriage
may always hold fast to you
and proclaim your name to the world.
Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

OPTION #3

Priest: Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that the power of the Sacrament we have received
may find growth in these your servants
and that the effects of the sacrifice we have offered
may be felt by us all.
Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

SOLEMN BLESSING AT THE END OF MASS

Option #1

The Priest, with hands extended over the bride and bridegroom, says:

May God the eternal Father
keep you of one heart in love for one another,
that the peace of Christ may dwell in you
and abide always in your home.

℟. Amen.

May you be blessed in your children,
have solace in your friends
and enjoy true peace with everyone.

℟. Amen.

May you be witnesses in the world to God's charity,
so that the afflicted and needy who have known your kindness
may one day receive you thankfully
into the eternal of dwelling of God.

℟. Amen.

And he blesses all the people, adding:

And may almighty God bless all of you, who are gathered here,
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

℟. Amen.

Option #2

The Priest, with hands extended over the bride and bridegroom, says:

May God the all-powerful Father grant you his joy
and bless you in your children.

℟. Amen.

May the Only Begotten Son of God
stand by you with compassion in good times and in bad.

℟. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit of God
always pour forth his love into your hearts.

℟. Amen.

And he blesses all the people, adding:

And may almighty God bless all of you, who are gathered here,
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

℟. Amen.

Option #3

The Priest, with hands extended over the bride and bridegroom, says:

May the Lord Jesus,
who graced the marriage at Cana by his presence,
bless you and your loved ones.

℟. Amen.

May he, who loved the Church to the end,
unceasingly pour his love into your hearts.

℟. Amen.

May the Lord grant
that, bearing witness to faith in his Resurrection,
you may await with joy the blessed hope to come.

℟. Amen.

And he blesses all the people, adding:

And may almighty God bless all of you, who are gathered here,
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

℟. Amen.