

MARRIAGE LITURGY GUIDELINES CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF EVANSVILLE

Liturgical celebrations are celebrations of the whole Church. As such, they are to be celebrated as the public worship of the Church. Marriage liturgy is worship. It is also one of the more difficult liturgies to plan. The day is loaded with emotions; joy for beginnings, sorrow for endings.

By the same token the Church's worship is filled with symbolism and ritual which can and do help articulate the depth of the new relationship between bride and groom, their families and the Lord.

The covenant, the commitment made by the couple to one another is a visible expression of the union or covenant that God has with us, the Church.

Because the wedding liturgy is part of the public worship of the church, one's personal likes and dislikes cannot be what govern the planning of the ceremony. These likes and dislikes cannot be the only criteria for making choices about the wedding.

The readings and prayers for the liturgy are spelled out in the Marriage Ritual. During the Liturgy of the Word, only readings from holy scripture are to be proclaimed. (Other readings may be used as reflection after communion.)

The more difficult planning comes when choosing music. The following is based on the Document: "Music in Catholic Worship". This is an official statement from the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy which was issued in 1972 by the U. S. Catholic Conference.

In choosing music for any liturgical celebration a "threefold judgment must be made: musical, liturgical and pastoral." (paragraph 25)

THE MUSICAL JUDGMENT

"Is the music technically, aesthetically, and expressively good? This judgment is basic and primary and should be made by competent musicians." (26.)

The words being sung should express the faith of the church. They should be rooted in the scriptures or in liturgical sources. (God speaking to the church or the church speaking to God - never some love ballad or pop song between two human lovers.)

The musical quality should be artistic, not cheap or trite like much of the popular music. Shallow sentiment should never be a substitute for an expression of the deep faith of the church. Let a qualified liturgical musician make such a judgment.

One thing to keep in mind: we can make an error if we confuse the judgment of music with the judgment of musical style. "We must judge value within each style." (28.)

THE LITURGICAL JUDGMENT

"The nature of the liturgy itself will help determine what kind of music is called for, what parts are to be preferred for singing and who is to sing them." (30.)

The choice of the musical parts, "the balance between them and the style of musical setting used should reflect the relative importance of the parts of the Mass (or other service) and the nature of each part." (31.) To illustrate: the important parts of the Liturgy of the Word are the psalm that responds to the first reading and the gospel acclamation. If there is to be any music at all, these should be attended to first. If there is music at a less important part, e.g. the entrance, then the more important parts are also to be sung.

To illustrate further: if the marriage is to take place within mass, then, during the Liturgy of the Eucharist the "Holy, Holy, Holy" is to be sung, not recited. So, too, the Memorial Acclamation and the Great Amen.

The music is to express and interpret the text correctly and make it more meaningful. The form of the text is to be respected. "In making these judgments the principal classes of texts must be kept in mind: proclamations, acclamations, psalms and hymns, and prayers. Each has a specific function which must be served by the music chosen for the text." (32.)

The music chosen is to contribute to the active participation of those who have assembled for the celebration. The people are gathered as church, and as such are to take part as the church at prayer. A soloist is not to take the place of the congregation in the acclamations and psalms and hymns. A soloist or cantor is to lead, assist, and support the congregation in their parts.

THE PASTORAL JUDGMENT

"The pastoral judgment governs the use and function of every element of celebration. Ideally this judgment is made by the planning team or committee. It is the judgment that must be made in this particular situation, in these concrete circumstances. Does music in the celebration enable these people to express their faith, in this place, in this age, in this culture?" (39.)

If this particular assembly is to express their shared faith, the music chosen should be somewhat familiar to them.

THESE THREE JUDGMENTS should be applied in planning any liturgy. For a wedding some selections that are beautiful or mean a lot to the couple or have been used frequently or are very popular will still be inappropriate when the needs of the worshipping church are considered. Some such songs may overlook community; some songs ignore the specific Christian aspect of their married love as an expression of God's love for His Church.

Play the couple's favorite songs and the pop songs at the reception. People will appreciate these more at the reception because they can dance to them and just enjoy listening to them.

There is music that has been used at weddings that contradict Christian values. The song from "Romeo and Juliet", for example, reminds us of lovers who committed suicide; the "Bridal Chorus" from Wagner's "Lohengrin" is background for an illegal and illicit ceremony, while the "Wedding March" by Mendelssohn is from a ceremony making fun of marriage.

THE WEDDING LITURGY

(the following are the possible music moments in the liturgy)

As people enter the church, they are becoming an assembly, gathering as church, to worship. Music during this time should reflect this.

THE ENTRANCE PROCESSION is just that. At any liturgy there is an entrance procession, the completion of the gathering of all who are present to worship. Even at weddings the entrance procession can include not only the bridal party but also the ministers of the liturgy and the parents of the bride and groom. Music for this can be instrumental, or an entrance hymn (as at other liturgies). If a hymn is sung, it should reflect the coming together of this worshipping community.

The Liturgy of the Word

THE PSALM RESPONSE follows the first scripture reading. The cantor sings the antiphon, and the congregation repeats it. The cantor then sings or says the verses of the psalm; the congregation sings the antiphon after each verse. (Psalms are songs and are to be sung. If the psalm is to be recited, however, there should be soft music accompanying the prayerful recitation of the psalm verses.)

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION is a shout of joy. We are about to hear the "Good News". **Alleluia** ("All praise to Him Who Is") is that shout of joy. It is to be omitted if it is not sung.

The Marriage Rite

The Bride and Groom express their faith in God and in each other as they make their commitment in the exchange of their marriage vows. Rings are blessed and exchanged as signs of the pledged love. Any other rituals can tend to obscure the focus of this exchange of vows. The upcoming revision of the Rite of Marriage may provide rubrics that will call for a hymn of praise after the exchange of rings.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS begins with the bringing forth of the elements to be used in the Eucharist. Only the bread and wine are to be brought forward. A song may accompany the procession and preparation of the gifts. It is not always necessary or desirable. Instrumental music is also fitting at this time.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY LORD... following the preface is the joyful acclamation giving glory to the God who saves. It is to be sung by the congregation.

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION is an expression of our belief in the death, resurrection, glorification, and the final coming of Jesus. It is to be sung by the congregation.

THE FINAL DOXOLOGY concludes the Eucharistic prayer. We make this prayer of praise ours as all sing **THE GREAT AMEN**.

The Communion Rite

The **LORD'S PRAYER** is the prayer of all and is to be recited or sung by all present. It is inappropriate for this to be performed by a soloist.

LAMB OF GOD does not have to be sung by the people. It may be recited, or it may be sung by a choir or a cantor.

During the **RECEPTION OF COMMUNION** the hymn sung should express the unity that is signified in the receiving of the One Bread and the One Cup. The time **AFTER COMMUNION** is for quiet reflection or a hymn of thanksgiving.

Conclusion

After the prayer after communion brief announcements may be made. After the final blessing all depart. There is no special song prescribed at this time. If a hymn is to be sung it should be brief; it is to be of Praise or pertaining to the liturgical season. An instrumental recessional is more desirable, especially if there has been congregational participation throughout.

In planning the marriage liturgy there are some further things to be considered:

Flowers and candles (including candelabras) are to be used to enhance and not distract from the liturgy. They should also allow for movement in the sanctuary. The people and the symbols of the ceremony are the true beauty of the liturgy.

Photos are desirable, especially of the special moments in the wedding. However, the photographer(s) and video camera operator(s) should be careful not to be sources of distraction to the assembled worshipping community. Nor is the church to be changed into the atmosphere of the studio either during or after the ceremony. Care should be taken that there is reverence for the sacred space at all times.

M U S I C

Following is a sampling of some vocal music appropriate for wedding liturgies. It is a sampling. There is so much more; however it would be hoped that this list would give enough examples in order to model what kind of music is to be used at weddings.

From the hymnal "WORSHIP II" from GIA Publications:

Come, my way, my truth, my life

Lord, may their lives

Love divine all loves excelling

May the grace of Christ

O blessed are those who fear the Lord - Ps 128 (responsorial)

Thou art the way

It is also suggested by the publishers to look for other wedding music in the Topical Index of Worship II under the topics of: Adoration and Praise; Commitment; Love; Thanksgiving; Vocation.

The following are from the "MUSIC ISSUE" from Oregon Catholic Press:

Joyful, joyful, we adore thee
Come, Christians, join to sing
All people that on earth do dwell
Love divine all loves excelling
God is love
Alleluia! sing to Jesus
Lord of all hopefulness
Where charity and love prevail
The king of love my shepherd is
Christians, let us love one another
United as one seek ye first
Father of peace
I have loved you
May God bless you

The hymnal "LEAD ME GUIDE ME" from GIA Publications suggests the following to be used at weddings:

A wedding prayer
may the Lord bless you forever
Draw near this couple, Lord
I will bless the Lord at all times (Ps. 34)
Jesus
Jesus, in the morning
O perfect love
One bread, one body
The Lord is kind and merciful (Ps. 103) (responsorial)
This little light of mine

NALR Publishers have the following in their "GLORY AND PRAISE" series:

GLORY AND PRAISE I

All My Days
Dwelling Place
Hail Mary, Gentle Woman
In Him We Live
Like a Seal Set On Your Heart
Peace is Flowing Like a River

GLORY AND PRAISE II

All Our Joy
Anthem
I Have Loved You
On Eagle's Wings
One Bread, One Body
Our Blessing Cup

GLORY AND PRAISE III

May the Lord Bless You
May We Praise You
Rainbow
There is One Lord
Wherever You Go

Other publishers, e.g., J. S. Paluch and World Library Publ., all of these publish similar collections. Most of these are suitable for congregation participation. Again, this is just a sampling.

Similarly there are many collections of organ music for weddings. Some titles of such follow:

A Second Book of Wedding pieces from Oxford University Press
Preludes on Wedding Hymns by Gordon Young published by Harold
Flammer (contact Shawnee Press)
The Parish Organist: Wedding Music by Thomas Gieschen from
Concordia Publishing
Wedding Music (4 vols.) David N. Johnson, published by Augsburg
Fortress Publications

Again, these are only a few samples of collections available.

To assist the couple in planning their marriage, the following publications are available:

"TOGETHER FOR LIFE" by Rev. Joseph Champlin, Ave Maria Press,
Notre Dame IN 46556

"BEGINNING YOUR MARRIAGE", John L. Thomas, S.J., Buckley
Publications, 223 South Erie Street, Chicago IL 60611

"MARRIED IN THE LORD", Michael L. Prieur, S.T.D., Catechetical
Communications, Box 3095, Bethlehem PA 18017

"HANDBOOK OF CHURCH MUSIC FOR WEDDINGS", Office of Divine
Worship, Archdiocese of Chicago, 1800 N. Hermitage Ave., Chicago IL 60622