



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Groom with parents first, then bride with parents, suggests liturgist
Couples can memorize vows to speak from the heart
Liturgical roles let many participate

HAVING BOTH BRIDE, GROOM ESCORTED DOWN THE AISLE WITH PARENTS EXPRESSES EQUALITY, SAYS LITURGIST

WASHINGTON—Having both bride and groom escorted down the aisle by their parents expresses equality of the man and woman. That's also the suggestion of the Catholic Rite of Marriage, said Father Rick Hilgartner, associate director of the U.S. Bishop' Secretariat for Divine Worship.

"The bride and the groom enter freely and equally into marriage, and the entrance procession should reflect that," he said.

Father Hilgartner also recommended that the couple memorize their marriage vows rather than repeat them after the priest for a more meaningful and memorable occasion. He offered the suggestions in "Ten Things to Consider for Planning the Celebration of Your Marriage in the Catholic Church," a resource posted on the Web site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at <http://foryourmarriage.org>.

1. Marriage is a Sacrament!

A marriage between two Christians is a sacrament, that is, an encounter with Jesus Christ. The bride and the groom, pledge their selfless love for each other. All present can look at the bride and groom and see Jesus, as the bride and the groom look at each other and see Jesus' love.

2. The Bride and the Groom are the Ministers of the Sacrament.

The ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage are the bride and groom. The priest (or deacon) acts as the official witness of the church and the state, but the bride and the groom marry each other.

3. Marriage is a matter of faith.

Marriage presupposes, renews and strengthens faith. Preparation for marriage invites couples to reflect on God's presence in their lives and the grace He gives them to live daily in mutual and lasting fidelity.

4. The Scriptures: God's Word to you, and your word to the world

Couples normally choose three readings (one from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament letters, and one from the Gospels) for their wedding. Couples can reflect on what they believe God is saying to them and what they want to say about their own faith on that day.

5. Vows: what you say, what you promise, what you live

The heart of the Rite of Marriage is the exchange of vows. Some suggest that couples memorize their vows so they can experience the exchange of consent more powerfully, by speaking the vows from the heart, rather than repeating them after the priest. In this way, they can spend time pondering what the vows mean and remember the words for years to come.

6. Music: to stir the soul and lift the mind

Music adds beauty and has an important liturgical function. It accompanies the procession of the ministers and the bridal party and is an integral part of the Liturgy itself. The singing of the acclamations and responses by the assembly, hymns and songs at the entrance (gathering) and Communion procession are urged in the *Rite of Marriage*. Music should communicate the mystery of God's love in Jesus, especially as it pertains to the couple joined in marriage.

7. Procession: Here comes the bride... and the groom!

The bride and the groom enter freely and equally into marriage, and the entrance procession should reflect that. The *Rite of Marriage* suggests that the liturgical ministers (priest, deacon, reader, servers) lead the procession, followed by the bride and bridegroom, each escorted by "at least their parents and the witnesses." Perhaps the groom goes first, led by his attendants and escorted by his parents, followed by the bride, led by her attendants and escorted by her parents.

8. Ministries: more than just the bridal party

Relatives and friends both stand by as attendants but also perform a liturgical function as official witnesses of the marriage. Other liturgical roles include readers to proclaim the Bible readings and announce the general intercessions, family or friends to present the offertory gifts of bread and wine, servers to assist at the altar and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. The officiating priest (or deacon) can provide guidance throughout the process.

9. Family + Friends = Liturgical Assembly

Loved ones at the ceremony represent the community of the Church, who surround the couple with encouragement and prayers; they form a liturgical assembly that stands before the Lord with hearts open to his loving power.

10. Above all, pray!

The wedding liturgy (whether celebrated at Mass or apart from it) is an act of worship. It is a time to offer praise and thanks to God for his gifts, and to seek his continued blessings and help. It is a time to thank God for the gift of one's spouse and for the couple to ask the Lord's blessing and guidance as they become witnesses of His love for them and for the world.

In addition to the variety of resources that parishes provide for couples, many helpful resources are available online. Among them is www.foryourmarriage.org, a project of the Catholic Communication Campaign and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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