



*Creating the most unique wedding just for You*

*a Saint Miriam Wedding*



Dear Friends:

Let us first begin with our warmest congratulations and very best wishes! We also thank you for the trust that you have placed in us at Saint Miriam Parish!

Please remember that this is your wedding ceremony on your special day. We are here to help you make it into something beautiful and unique so that it reflects the two of you and your one-of-a-kind love.

We promise to be here for you and to put our whole heart and soul into making your wedding ceremony the greatest happening of your life! May your union be blessed with peace, love and joy forever.

This ceremony options package is designed to walk you through some important choices. It is our material, collected and modified over the years as professionals and we ask that you honor that by not sharing it before checking with us. You may also, of course, add other options, as you wish.

We hope that the choices here will help you to find ways that will reflect your dreams, aspirations, and define what marriage means to you and your new life as a married couple.

We are WeddingWire® rated again! This is our 8<sup>th</sup> year in a row and we are very proud to be honored in the top 2% of all officiants nationwide. A lot of care, work, understanding, and dedication went into our awards and reviews. We will be pleased to add you to our growing list!

So off we go to create a Saint Miriam Wedding! But remember, it really is all about you!

Warmly,

Monsignor Jim St. George,  
Pastor



# *Recommended Professionals*

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## **A Few Vendor Recommendations:**

*We take our wedding creation seriously and have been to many places and have witnessed and interacted with many vendors. So, when we recommend someone, you know to expect only the best!*

### **Butterflies:**

<http://amazingbutterflies.com/>

### **Doves:**

Say it With Doves

<http://www.sayitwithdoves.com/>

Ph: 610-868-3443 or (877) DOVES99

### **Flowers:**

#### **Petals Florist**

1170 E Dekalb Pike,  
King of Prussia, PA 19406  
(610) 265-6060  
Ask for: Tommy Strauss

### **Music:**

Pennsylvania String Ensemble ([www.pennstrings.com](http://www.pennstrings.com))

Romanza Music

Ph: 973-953-4425

[Marcello.steinberg@gmail.com](mailto:Marcello.steinberg@gmail.com)

### **Venue:**

The Stroudsmoor Inn. ([www.stroudsmoor.com](http://www.stroudsmoor.com))

Normandy Farms: (<http://www.normandyfarm.com/>)

### **Photographers and Wedding Film:**

Absolute Media Productions ([www.AbsoluteMediaProductions.com](http://www.AbsoluteMediaProductions.com))

Damon W. Dietz

Ph. 866.550.6334

Just Joey Productions (<http://justjoeyproductions.com/>)

David Thomas

Ph. 267-222-0995



# Wedding Gowns and A Priest? YES!



We teamed up with Amay Custom Wedding Gowns to give our brides exclusive pricing and the opportunity to have a custom made gown at a cost more affordable than many store bought gowns! You may also use them as a wedding planner service.

Contact Amay today and tell them we sent you!

[www.amaycustomweddings.com](http://www.amaycustomweddings.com)

## How to use this Guide.

# HOW TO BEGIN

Please do not be overwhelmed by the size of this publication. It is designed to appeal to a wide range of couples, of all denominations and backgrounds, who wish to have us preside at their ceremony.

The following guides may help:

- ❖ Begin at a time of calm.
- ❖ Please read through the *complete* offerings before trying to make any decisions.
- ❖ You may wish to read them separately, and then later as a couple.
- ❖ Afterwards, mark any selections that appeal to both of you; if any conflicts arise in the choice, dismiss that choice immediately.
- ❖ Note all selections that are to your liking as a couple.
- ❖ Send the selections - (headings only are all that is needed, e.g. *Foundation, Option 1*), unedited, to the priest in charge of your ceremony draft.
- ❖ A draft will be prepared and sent back by return email, arranged in the order based on experience and need for your review. This draft will also include 'Priest lines', those things that must be read or said by a priest to effectuate the sacrament.
- ❖ Reply with any changes or that all is "approved."



### A Few Helpful Tips!

The following hints may help:

- ❖ Remember in your planning to *not* miss the journey! This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!
- ❖ Do not get caught up in time details! Engage good people and let them help to get things started and run smoothly!
- ❖ On the day of your wedding, entrust someone to care for your Marriage License and final payments so you don't have to worry about those details and all are cared for and honored!
- ❖ Please do not allow your bridal party to drink before the ceremony! This is about timing and elegance *and you*...they can wait to enjoy a drink after the ceremony. Until then, keep them ready, relaxed, and prepared.
- ❖ Have a "back up plan" for outdoor weddings! Remember your guest's comfort in case of rain or extreme heat!
- ❖ Our priests prefer microphones be **non-hand** held devices like lapel or on a stand mics.

## A Few Notes to Remember:



**Timing is everything:** Your wedding should start on time. Often, we have more than one ceremony and allow for driving time and a few extra minutes of unexpected delays. However, if your ceremony should not start within 30 minutes of the original time given; we may have a problem making our other commitments.

Therefore, please ensure that all guests and participants know that an on-time start is crucial. If you are going to start extremely late, a late fee will apply and may cause the officiant to have to come back after a subsequent ceremony.

- ❖ **Unexpected Changes:** Any changes to the final wedding ceremony, or participants, should be made know to the officiant no later **than a week before** the actual ceremony date.
- ❖ **Limit Alcohol:** We recommend that you do not permit the consumption of alcohol for your wedding party *prior to the ceremony*. We all get very excited and can loose track of how much alcoholic drink we have consumed, which can ruin a ceremony.
- ❖ **Payment:** A deposit was made up front to secure the date; the amount is always the same at \$200, regardless of your chosen ceremony package. The balance is due at the rehearsal, if applicable, or on the day of the wedding at the time of signing of the marriage license. Your marriage license **must be present** for the ceremony to take place.
- ❖ **Gratuity:** As parish priests, and Franciscans, we ***do not*** take a salary from the parish, and earn our living by caring for you on your wedding day. A *gratuity* is a nice way to tell us that we did a great job. It is not expected, nor demanded, but is always a joy to receive. *Thank you for thinking of us.*
- ❖ **Ceremony Programs:** We recommend that all ceremony programs not include great details other than the names of participants, a note of thanks, and a basic ceremony outline. If you provide too many details, people in attendance tend to read along in the program during the ceremony rather than paying attention to the ceremony itself. You have spent so much time and effort creating a beautiful ceremony, why not allow all gathered to enjoy?
- ❖ **Note to Catholic Couples:** Marriage is a *Sacrament* within our Holy Mother Church and is given by Christ Himself. This means that Marriage itself is a sacred sign through which Christ gives us His Holy Spirit. This is found in the simplest of ways: the mutual promises, and the life in accordance with this promise. Therefore, the form of the sacrament has no jurisdictional formulae taken in and of itself, nor marriage ceremony by itself, but *the will* to belong to each other in love, freely chosen and given, until the day of your death. Catholics believe that a valid priest is needed whereby he will use the needed 'priest lines' to effectuate the sacrament. These taken together are a source of Grace, of Christ's holy presence, and of the Holy Spirit. This is the nature of the marriage, which Christians enter before God. This, then, must be found within the nature of the ceremony created and some options are not options!

# Outline of Standard Wedding Ceremony

Song (*optional*)  
Processional  
The Invocation  
A Prayer (*optional*)  
The Giving  
The Welcome  
The Foundation  
The Readings (*optional, Page 83*)  
Parental Honoring (*optional*)  
Silent Blessing (*optional*)  
The Hands Ceremony (*optional*)  
The Vows  
The Questions (*optional to Vows*)  
Ring Ceremony, *or*  
The Questions/Ring Ceremony Options  
Various Ceremony Options  
The Priest's Blessing (*not optional*)  
Prayer Options  
The Pronouncement  
The Benediction  
The Announcement  
Recessional



## ***Other Possibilities include:***

Butterfly Ceremony  
Sand Ceremony  
Releasing of Doves  
Breaking of The Glass  
Knot Tying Ceremony  
Ceremony for Honoring and Recognizing Children During the Wedding Ceremony  
Honoring the Directions (*optional*)  
Hand-Fasting Ceremony

*Anything Else That You Want!*

*Please see Page 50 and later for a sample listing.*

## **Need a Sample Wedding Ceremony?**

A *sample* of one of our completed wedding ceremonies is located at the back of this brochure (Page 85) and others are always available, too, just ask!



## The Wedding Options - Choices!

### **ProceSSIONAL** (*Optional, but traditional*)

The bride and the wedding party walk up the aisle to the altar, or front of ceremony room, usually accompanied by music. Oftentimes the Priest will escort the Groom's party and the Bridal party will enter to music after.

### **INVOCATIONS:** (*Not optional for priest to be present.*)

#### **Invocation** (*Option 1, preferred and Mandatory for Church Weddings*)

✠ ✠ ✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

#### **Invocation** (*Option 2*)

✠ ✠ ✠ Grace, peace, and mercy by unto you; from the One who is and was and is to come! *Amen.*

#### **Invocation** (*Option 3*)

*Priest:* Blessed be God: ✠ ✠ ✠ Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*People:* And blessed be God's kingdom, now and forever. *Amen.*



## **INVOCATIONAL PRAYER:**

*(Optional, but a beautiful way to begin for those who wish to start with a brief prayer.)*

### **Invocational Prayer (Option 1)**

*Let us pray:* Beloved Creator, Essence of Love, and Source of Hope, open our hearts and fill us with Your Presence. You graciously give to us the longing for love and the capability of loving, and we give you thanks for *N. and N.*, for their beautiful hearts and willing spirits, and for the example of love that they embody here today. Elevate us to an awareness of the Sacred and the Eternal, as we celebrate this miraculous moment in their lives. Be with them on this joyous occasion of showing their love and making their vows; and be with us, their witnesses, that we might all be inspired by the blessings shared today. *Amen.*

### **Invocational Prayer (Option 2)**

*Let us pray:* Almighty God, hear our prayers for *N. and N.* who have come here today to be united in the sacrament of marriage. Increase their faith in you and in each other, and through them bless your church. Make their love fruitful so that they may be living witnesses to your divine love in the world. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. *Amen.*

### **Invocational Prayer with Consent (Option 3)**

*N. and N.,* you have come together here today so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community of your family and friends. In this way, you will be strengthened to keep mutual and lasting faith with each other and to carry out the duties of marriage. And so, in the presence of the church this community of your family and friends, I ask you to state your intentions by the promises and vows you will declare before us this day. *Amen.*

### **Invocational Prayer (Option 4)**

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today in the sight of God to join this man, and this woman in holy matrimony. Not to be entered into lightly, holy matrimony should be entered into solemnly and with reverence and honor. Into this holy agreement these two persons come together to be joined. If any person here can show cause why these two people should not be joined in holy matrimony, speak now or forever hold your peace.

Marriage is a sacred union between husband and wife and shall remain unbroken. It is the basis of a stable and loving relationship and is a joining of two hearts, bodies and souls. The husband and wife are there to support one another and provide love and care in times of joy and times of adversity.

We are all here today to witness the joining in wedded bliss of *N. and N.* This joyous day celebrates the commitment and love with which *N. and N.* start their lives together. Through God, you are joined together in the most holy of bonds. Who gives this woman in holy matrimony to this man?

## **Invocational Prayer** (*Option 5*)

Heavenly Father, (*name of spouse*) and (*name of spouse*) are now about to vow their unending loyalty to each other. We ask you to accept the shared treasure of their life together, which they now create and offer to you. Grant them everything they need, that they may increase in their knowledge of you throughout their life together. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

## **The Giving:** *(Optional)*

### *Possible Responses:*

I do!

We do!

Her Family and I do!

Her Mother and I do!

## **The Giving** *(Option 1)*

And so, we begin by asking, who gives this woman to be married to his man?

## **The Giving** *(Option 2)*

Who presents this woman and this man to be married to each other?

## **The Giving** *(Option 3)*

Doubly blessed is the couple, which comes to the marriage altar with the approval and blessings of their families and friends. Who has the honor of presenting this woman to be married to this man?

## **The Giving** *(Option 4)*

Who supports this woman in her commitment to this man?

## **The Giving** *(Option 5)*

*Presider:* Who presents *N. and N.*, who seek the blessing of God and the Church on their love and life together?

*Presenter(s):* I/We do.

## **WELCOME:** *(Recommended)*

### **Welcoming** *(Option 1)*

Good *evening*. It is truly a blessing from heaven for two people to find one another and to love so deeply that they embrace the holy bond of marriage. That is why we are all here today, to witness and celebrate *N. and N.*'s commitment to their union. On behalf of them, I welcome all of you.

### **Welcoming** *(Option 2)*

Good *afternoon*. We gather here today to witness and celebrate an act of deep love. *N. and N.*, in their devotion, respect, and love for each other wish to unite in the holy bond of marriage, and to dedicate themselves to each other's happiness and wellbeing as life mates and partners. On behalf of them, I welcome all of you.

### **Welcome** *(Option 3)*

Good *afternoon* and welcome! We gather together here in family, to celebrate the love that *N. and N.* have for each other. To give social recognition to their decision to commit their lives and accept each other completely, to learn how to help and understand each other to build a family and together travel through life.

We hear in the pages of Sacred Scripture, the central role that love plays in every Marriage...St. Paul reminds us in his letter to the people at Corinth: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no records or wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always preserves. Faith, hope, love; these three, but the greatest of these is love!

### **Welcome** *(Option 4)*

*(A passage from Mark Twain)*

Good *Afternoon*, we begin with a short excerpt from noted author Mark Twain: Today will be the mightiest day in the history of their lives, the holiest, and the most generous towards both of them - for it makes of two fractional lives a whole; it gives to two purposeless lives a work, and doubles the strength of each whereby to perform it; it gives to two questioning natures a reason for living, and something to live for; it will give a new gladness to the sunshine, a new fragrance to the flowers, a new beauty to the earth, a new mystery to life... it will give a new revelation to love, a new depth to sorrow, a new impulse to worship. On this day, the scales will fall from their eyes and they shall look upon a new world.

## **Welcome (Option 5)**

Good *afternoon!* I will start by welcoming all of the guests present today, many who have traveled long distances to be here, to celebrate the uniting *N. and N.* in the bond of marriage. Marriage is a gift shared by two people who are in love, but it also directly touches the friends and family members who in various ways support and contribute to the relationship. Some of you have known *N. and N.* for many years, others for much less time, but all of you have meant something special to them, which is why you were asked to witness this special moment in their lives today.

## **Welcome (Option 6, Combines a Welcome and the Charge)**

Good *afternoon!* How beautiful is the day that is touched by love! May this be a moment to be remembered and cherished.

Marriage is a very special spiritual connection of two people united for a common purpose, bringing love and trust together into single focus. We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. God established the bond and covenant of marriage in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and His Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all who are gathered here.

The union of wife and husband in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God. Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

Into this holy union, *N. and N.* now come to be joined. If any of you can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, speak now; or forever hold your peace.

## **Welcoming Add-on (Optional *addition* to any Welcome above)**

And although this is their day, it is also a tribute to all of you. For knowing you and interacting with you has helped to make *N. and N.* whom they needed to be to find each other. They would like to thank you all for that.

Each of you are the threads of which are woven the tapestry of their lives. Each one of you is an important piece in the story it tells. It is the fabric that they wrap around themselves and take comfort in when the world seems cold. And on days like today when everything is right in their world, that tapestry is proudly spread out and displayed for everyone to see, with all the glorious colors and textures that your diversity adds.

Each of you hold a place in their hearts reserved for those that they have chosen to call "'Family' and 'Friends'" and they are deeply grateful for each and every one of you here today! On behalf of them, I welcome all of you.

## FOUNDATIONS:

### **Foundation (Option 1)**

Marriage is a gift from God, a miracle. After speaking to you both, it is obvious that you already know some of the great blessings marriage has to offer. It is an opportunity to feel the joy of taking care of someone who takes care of you, to be challenged towards growth yet gently nurtured, to love deeply and receive it in return. It is about trust, friendship and having a partner to share all life has to offer. It is a commitment to participate in a process of mutual evolution, understanding and forgiveness. It is indeed a sacred union to be treated with reverence.

Marriage is not a place to hide from the world. It is a safe place to grow and become wiser. It is a place to evolve into better people; so that you can go out in the world and make a difference by spreading the joy and wisdom that you have found with each other.

N., N., is a gift to you from God, but he is not a gift for you alone. It is God's will that in your love, *this man* might find within *himself* a greater sense of who he is meant to be. You are asked to see the good in this man, to accept him for who he is and who he shall be. In this way, God's purpose shall be accomplished in this relationship. May this *man* find the kingdom of heaven through the love you share.

And so, it is with you also N., that although N., is God's gift to you, *she* is not a gift intended for you alone. You are asked by God to so love *this woman*, that in your love she might find *herself* as God has created her; so beautiful and strong and true, so true that the entire world might be blessed by the presence of a *woman* who shines so. May *she* relax in your arms as she has never relaxed before. May *she* know, from now on, that there is one on whose love she can depend on forever.

May you both create, with God, a piece of heaven on earth.

### **Foundation (Option 2)**

Marriage is the beginning of a new life, a chance at fulfilling long held dreams, and an opportunity for great personal and spiritual growth. Marriage endures through the ages of trends and fads. Marriage thrives, and continues to live as a promise of a beautiful dream come true. As long as individuals are drawn together by God, marriage will be a natural unfolding of that relationship.

Feelings come alive at a wedding. Great happiness. Some sadness. Apprehension. And sometimes just pure relief! There is an acute awareness that something special, something that goes to the very heart of life, is about to happen. Something is gone forever, and something is born, brand-new and tender. Something to be nurtured and cared for, protected and cherished, challenged and strengthened your never before created marriage.

Each of you brings gifts to the other today. Gifts of hope and laughter, focus and seriousness of purpose. Sensitivity and recognition of the beautiful and the profound. Since childhood, you have searched for and dreamed about that special someone who would embody and express the gifts you now stand

ready to give and to receive. But these gifts are not to be yours alone. A strong and resilient marriage is not an escape from the world but a contribution to it.

*N. and N.*, may you now combine and strengthen your gifts, to be offered as a distinct and beautiful gift to the world. For the world is in need of the beautiful, the good and the holy and nothing is better suited to evoke that than a good marriage. And now you stand before this loving community of family and friends, ready to acknowledge to God and to the world: this is my beloved, the one with whom I choose to create the rest of my life.

## **Foundation (Option 3)**

Marriage is a supreme sharing; perhaps the greatest and most challenging adventure in the most intimate of human relationships. It is the joyful uniting of a man and a woman whose care and affection and understanding have flowered into a deep and abiding love. Those who take its sacred vows have their lives blended together into one, as the waters of two rivers are joined when they come together to form an even greater one.

A true spiritual marriage is an act of metamorphosis, a profound mystery of creation and rebirth, as two become one. It is not a giving up or loss of oneself, but rather a giving over of oneself to something greater, a transformation of self in which each one can say, "*I am no longer only I but also we.*" It is a process in which each can be challenged to discover new possibilities in themselves and each other.

In such a marriage, the wedding ceremony is the gateway into this mystery. For the lives the two of you have lived up until this moment are, in some sense, now truly completed and over. Together you now live within the creation of something wholly new and transcendent, something which has never existed before your miraculous marriage - an expression that is at once public and private, precious, sacred, and truly unique to the two of you. In this act, you open yourselves to a fuller experience and expression of the great, vast miracle of love.

Remember that no ceremony can create your marriage. Only you can do that through love, patience, dedication, perseverance through talking and listening and trying to understand through helping and supporting and believing in each other through learning to forgive, learning to respect and appreciate your differences, and learning to make the important things matter and to let go of the rest. What this ceremony can do is to witness and affirm the choice you have made to begin a new life today as husband and wife.

## **Foundation (Option 4)**

You were born together and together you shall be forevermore.  
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.  
And you shall be together in the silent memory of God.  
But let there be spaces in your togetherness.  
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.  
Love one another, but make not a bond of love.  
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.  
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.  
Give one another of your bread, but eat not from the same loaf.

Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone.  
Even the strings of the lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.  
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.  
For only the hand of life can contain your hearts.  
And stand together yet not to near together.  
For the pillars of the temple stand apart.  
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

## **Foundation (Option 5)**

Sooner or later we begin to understand that love is more than verses on valentines and romance in movies. We begin to know that love is here and now, real and true, the most important thing in our lives. For love is the creator of our favorite memories and the foundation of our fondest dreams. Without love, we merely exist. With love, we truly begin to live!

For love is a promise that is always kept, a fortune that can never be spent, a seed that can flourish in even the most unlikely place. And this radiance that never fades, this mysterious and magical joy is the greatest treasure of all - one known only by those who truly love.

And so, we here today together as friends, relatives, and family to mark the end of one beginning and to recognize officially a new beginning which for *N. and N.* serves as a public affirmation of their friendship and their love.

Someone once said: *"The most wonderful of all things in life, is the discovery of another human being with whom one's relationship has a growing depth, beauty and joy as the years increase. This love between two human beings is a most marvelous thing; it cannot be found by looking for it or by passionately wishing for it. It's a Divine destiny."*

*N. and N.*, would like this day to mean something special to you, as their guests. Those who are married may want to silently renew and reaffirm your vows today by gently taking the hand of your partner during this ceremony. Others may want to also join hands and think about what it means to be a friend, for marriage is built first on friendship.

*N. and N.*, remember that there are no ties on earth so sweet, none so tender as those you are about to assume. There are no vows so solemn as those you are about to make. There is no institution of earth so sacred as that of the union you will form, for the true home is not only the place in which you will live, but is also the dwelling place where each lives in the heart and mind of the other.

## **Foundation (Option 6)**

Marriage is a promise made in the sight of God years ago and only yesterday. It is a promise kept day in, day out, for years and years, while two individuals become different people than when they first met, yet remain the same, until one of them takes their last breath. Before and after children, with and without children, even because of the children, marriage means they work together at everything from maximizing joy to making the mortgage payments.



They work hard at everything from doing the laundry to bringing home flowers in the middle of winter, whether the winter is seasonal or emotional. They make a promise, and marriage is a promise kept.

Marriage is a couple who discovers a little bit more each day, to their surprise and delight and sometimes shock and chagrin, that in their togetherness and individuality they have an ongoing experience of intimacy with God. A God who is Love, and who inspires each of them to become much more than they are.

## **Foundation** (*Option 7, long form*)

*N. and N.*, I remind you both that true marriage is the holiest of all earthly unions. It is to be entered into reverently, consciously and with full understanding of its significance. To be complete, marriage must be spiritual as well as an earthly estate. When it is Spiritual in thought, purpose, plan and action, it becomes the harmonious, peaceful and happy union for man and woman.

The state of matrimony is true marriage only when it is based upon a deep, inner communion of two souls who find completion, each in the other. Today, your separate lives, each with your individual memories, desires and hopes, merge into one life.

But happiness in marriage is never something that *just* happens. A good marriage must be *created*. In the art of marriage, the little things are the big things. Remember that in a strong marriage:

- It is never being too old to hold hands.
- It is remembering to say, "I love you" (*out loud*), at least once a day.
- It is never going to sleep angry.
- It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.
- It is at no time taking the other for granted. . . for what you take for granted, disappears.
- It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in a spirit of joy.
- It is having the capacity to forgive and not bring it up later.
- It is a common search for the good and the beautiful in each other.
- It is not expecting the husband to wear a halo or the wife to have the wings of an angel.
- It is not looking for perfection in each other.
- It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humor.
- It is not only marrying the right partner, it is *being* the right partner.

Such a love requires that you be totally honest with yourself and your mate, that you ask for what you want, act even though you are afraid, share your feelings and listen but leave your partner free to be who they really are. In other words, always love your partner for who they are, not for who you think they should be. Always remember, "*Relationships are something that must be worked on all the time, not only when they are broken and need to be fixed. Never stop doing the things that brought you together in the first place.*"

So now your friends and family gather here today, as they accept for you a love that brings out your magnificence, a love that gives you the courage to stand apart and the willingness to stand together. When times call for you to be apart, may you always return to your togetherness in the same spirit of love that you are feeling in this moment. But most of all, at the end of your lives on this earth, we pray

you will look into each other's eyes and be able to say: *"Because you have loved me, you have given me a faith in myself, and because I have faith in myself, you has made me complete."*

## **Foundation** (*Option 7a, short form*)

*N. and N.*, I remind you both that true marriage is the holiest of all earthly unions. It is to be entered into reverently, consciously and with full understanding of its significance.

The state of matrimony is a true marriage only when it is based upon a deep, inner communion of two souls who find completion, each in the other. Today, your separate lives merge into one life.

You must always remember that a good marriage must be created. For a strong marriage is one where you never be too old to hold hands and where you always remember to say, 'I love you', at least once a day. It is when you never go to sleep angry, or take the other for granted. It is a common search for the good and the beautiful in the other. For marriage is always characterized by kindness, passion, and courage that join to make a lasting love.

So now your friends and family gather here today, as they accept for you a love that brings out your magnificence, a love that gives you the courage to stand apart and the willingness to stand together. When times call for you to be apart, may you always return to your togetherness in the same spirit of love that you are feeling in this moment. But most of all, at the end of your lives on this earth, we pray you will look into each other's eyes and be able to say: *"Because you have loved me, you have given me a faith in myself, and because I have faith in myself, your love has made my life complete."*

## THE CHARGE & CONSENT:

### **The Charge:** *(Optional)*

To the Assembly:

Into this holy union, *N. and N.* now come to be joined. If any of you can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, speak now; or else forever hold your peace.

To the couple:

*N. and N.*, I require and charge you both, here in the presence of God Almighty, that if either of you know any reason why you may not be united in marriage lawfully, and in accordance with God's word, you do now confess it.

To the Assembly:

And, I now inquire of all present here: will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these two persons in their marriage?

People: We will.

### **The Charge:** *(Catholic Version; Mandatory for Church weddings)*

*N. and N.*, you have come together in this church so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community. Christ abundantly blesses this love. He has already consecrated you in baptism and now he enriches and strengthens you by a special sacrament so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of the Church, I ask you to state your intentions.

*The priest then questions them about their freedom of choice, faithfulness to each other, and the acceptance and upbringing of children.*

*N. and N.*, have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Will you love and honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives?

*The following question may be omitted if, for example, the couple is advanced in years.*

Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?

*Each answers the questions separately. The priest then invites the couple to declare their consent.*

*Priest:*

Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, join your right hands, and declare your consent before God and his Church.

*The couple then declares their Vows and the Rings are Blessed and Exchanged.*

## **The Charge & Welcome:** *(Combined Version)*

Dear friends in Christ, we have gathered together today to witness *N. and N.* publically committing themselves to one another and, in the name of the holy Church, to bless their union: a relationship of mutual fidelity and steadfast love, forsaking all others, holding one another in tenderness and respect, in strength and bravery, as long as they live.

If any of you can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, speak now; or else for ever hold your peace.

*Then the Presider says to the persons to be married:*

I require and charge you both, here in the presence of God, that if either of you know any reason why you may not be united in marriage lawfully, and in accordance with God's Word, you do now confess it.

Therefore, in the name of Christ, let us pray that they may be strengthened for the promises they make this day, and that we will have the generosity to support them in what they undertake and the wisdom to see God at work in their life together.

## **HONORING:**

### **Parental Honoring (*Optional*)**

*N. and N.* want to acknowledge their parents on this occasion. *N. and N.* offer their profound gratitude to their parents for all the love and care they showed in raising them. The unconditional gifts of love and support that you have continually offered have inspired them to become who they are today, and they thank you, from the bottom of their hearts, for guiding them to this celebration of love here today. Without you, this day would not be possible.

### **Silent Blessing (*Optional*)**

*N. and N.* would like to pause to remember those who could not be with us today. Though they are absent physically, we invoke, through our thought and prayers, their loving presence. We pray that God might multiply beyond measure the blessings from these loved ones to this loving couple, and any children who might one day be a part of this union.

Now, from our hearts, we ourselves visualize and sanctify all the blessings we would bestow on *N. and N.* in their lives as a couple and a family that they now create. And in our sincere desire to bless, we in turn, are blessed also. Let us now pause briefly, close our eyes, and bring to mind any loved ones who could not be here today.

*(a brief time of silence is honored)*

Priest: Blessed Be.

### **Silent Blessing & Parental Honoring (*Combined Version*)**

*N. and N.* want to acknowledge their parents on this occasion. They offer their profound gratitude to their parents for all the love and care they showed in raising them. The unconditional gifts of love and support that you have continually offered have inspired them to become who they are today, and they thank you, from the bottom of their hearts, for guiding them to this celebration of love here today. Without you, this day would not be possible.

*N. and N.*, also wish to remember those who could not be with us today. Though they are absent physically, we invoke, through our thought and prayers, their loving presence.

We pray that God might multiply beyond measure the blessings from these loved ones to this loving couple. We now close our eyes and bring to mind any loved ones who could not be here today. And in our sincere desire to bless, we in turn, are blessed also.

*(a brief time of silence is honored)*

Priest: Blessed Be.

## **The Mother's Kiss** (*Option for Honoring Mothers*)

And now it is time for *N. and N.*'s last kiss as single people before they become husband and wife. *N.*, and *her* mother, *N.*, and *N.*, and *his* mother, *N.*, will now offer this kiss.

Their mother's lips were the first to kiss them and bring them into this world, and today a mother's love - together with their blessings - will be first to send them on their way to their new life together as husband and wife.

*Mothers. . . please kiss the Bride and Groom!* (or, *N. and N*)

## **RINGS AND VOWS**

*(Note: To combine 'Rings' with 'Vows', please see Vows – Option 8, Page 27)*

### **The Vows Selections:**

*Couples may say their own prepared vows or choose from samples below.*

Please note that all *Vows may be:*

- a) read entirely by priest;*
- b) read phrase by phrase by priest and repeated by wedding partners;*
- c) read entirely by wedding partners*
- d) read in unison after phrase given by priest*

**Note to Catholic Couples:** The following phrase should be added '*In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*' to any Vows choice.

**Vows** *(Optional Introduction spoken by one partner to the other; may be used with any set of Vows, but normally not combined in unison.)*

N., in just a moment I will say "I do" to a few promises and I want you to know that I have never been so sure of anything before as I am, right now, in this moment, here with you. "For better or for worse," are so much more than words to me. I pray everyday that as I live by your side I will be the living proof that I mean what I say when I say 'I do' .

So, from this day on, these hands will always hold you up and give strength when you just aren't strong enough, and I promise that what tomorrow brings, I will stand by you in sickness and in health for however long we have on this earth. So please take my hand, and accept the ring, that will soon follow, and know that I will always love you through anything. And as the years march on like a beating heart, I will live into these words 'til death do us part'. I love and adore you. Always.

**Vows** *(Optional Preface 1) – used with any form below in advance of the Vows*

*N. and N., since it is your intention to marry, join your hands, and with your promises bind yourselves to each other as husband and wife.*

**Vows** *(Optional Preface 2) – used with any form below in advance of the Vows*

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

## **(Vows -Option 1) –Couple writes their own vows**

A) *N. and N.*, having thus committed themselves, now wish to declare their love for one another in words that they have written.

Or,

B) *N. and N.*, wishing now to thus commit themselves to one another, will declare their love for one another in words that they have written.

## **Vows – Advice – for couples who wish to write their own vows!**

Penning your own wedding vows is no easy task -- it's like writing poetry, public speaking and having the deepest conversation of your life all at once. Putting your promises on paper is an emotional, eye-opening and often extremely memorable experience. Up for the challenge? Here's the homework you need to do (*and the questions you should ask*) to make your vows perfect!

*A Note to Catholic Couples:* The most important part of a Catholic wedding is what is commonly known as the *exchange of vows*. These words are the heart – *the essential element* – of the Sacrament of Marriage as they form the covenant that establishes the couple's marriage. The Holy Church calls the exchange of vows, *consent* – that is, the act of will by which a man and a woman give themselves to each other, and accept the gift of the other. The marriage cannot happen without the declaration of consent. The *Rite of Marriage* does provide several wording options for the exchange of consent, which are found below in their proper categories. However, one of the ways that the Church expresses the unity of all believers is through the unity of the liturgy (*in this case, the wedding ceremony*), especially in its essential parts. The mutual consent of the bride and groom to be married to one another is what brings about the *grace of the sacrament* and because the required consent is what makes the marriage, it is important for everyone to be clear that the bride and groom have actually declared their mutual consent. Please let any of our priests know if you have concerns or questions.

1

### **Get Clearance**

Make sure your ceremony officiant knows that you will be using personalized vows. Certain celebrants may require you to recite a specific set of traditional vows. And remember: Even some of the most accommodating officiants will want to review your words in advance.

2

### **Start Early**

We can't say this enough: Don't leave writing your vows until the day before the wedding! You'll be too nervous, excited and rattled to give them the time and thought they deserve. Give yourselves at least a month, or work on your vows in that pocket of time after you've set up all your major vendors



and before you have to start thinking about the details. Vow writing should be done in a relaxed, not rushed, frame of mind. Some loose deadlines to aim for: Try to get a first draft together about three weeks before the wedding and have your final version completed at least one week out.

Finally, send a copy to your officiant just to be sure and/or to ask for his input; after all, they have done hundreds of weddings and their advice could prove to be invaluable! Then, give the task of safe-keeping to one of your chosen attendants.

### 3

#### Look to Tradition

To get inspired, start by reading traditional, by-the-book vows -- from your own religious tradition, if you practice a certain faith, but others, as well -- to see what strikes a chord with you. You can incorporate these into the original words you write, or simply use them as a jumping-off point to base your personalized vows on.

### 4

#### Set the Tone

Before putting pen to paper (or keystroke to screen!), decide what overall tone you want to achieve. Humorous, but touching? Poetic *and* romantic? It's your call -- the most important thing is that your vows *ring true* and sound like they're from your heart. One word of advice: While your vows can be lighthearted (or even hilarious), they should, in some way, acknowledge the seriousness of the commitment you're about to make. One way to do that is to weave little jokes into traditional vows (for example: "I promise to love you, cherish you and always watch Monday Night Football with you"). *But always end on a serious note.*

### 5

#### Figure Out the Logistics

Make sure you and your fiancé are both on the same page. Are you each going to write your own vows, or will you write them together? If you're writing them separately, will you want to run them by each other before the wedding? If you're writing them together, will they be completely different for each of you, or will you recite some of the same words and make the same promises to each other, as you would with traditional vows? If you want them to be a surprise on your wedding day, make sure you both send a copy of what you've written to your officiant or to one friend or family member so they can check that your vows are about the same length and similar in tone.

### 6

## Make a Vow Date

When it's time to come up with the actual content of your vows, go out to dinner or set aside an evening at home to brainstorm. Talk about your relationship and what marriage means to each of you. Discuss what you expect from each other and the relationship. What are you most looking forward to about married life? Why did you decide to get married? What hard times have you gone through together? What have you supported each other through? What challenges do you envision in your future? What do you want to accomplish together? What makes your relationship tick? Answering these questions will help you make and keep your promises, and talking about your bond may expose your inner Wordsworth and help you come up with phrases and stories you can incorporate into your vows.



## Schedule Some Alone Time

After chatting with your future spouse, take some self-reflection time to think about how you feel about your partner. What did you think when you first saw them? When did you realize you were in love? What do you most respect about your partner? How has your life gotten better since meeting your mate? What about them inspires you? What do you miss most about them when you're apart? What qualities do you most admire in each other? What do you have now that you didn't have before you met? You may be surprised how these answers may lead you to the perfect words.



## Steal Ideas

Borrow freely from poetry, books, religious and spiritual texts -- even from romantic movies. Jot down words and phrases that capture your feelings. Widely recognized works ring true for a reason.



## Create an Outline

An outline can get you started by helping to establish a structure. For example, plan to first talk about how great your fiancé is and then about how you work together as a couple; pause to quote your favorite writer and then go into your promises to each other.



## Remember Your Audience

Don't make your vows so personal that they're cryptic -- or embarrassing! You've invited your family and friends to witness your vows in order to make your bond public, so be sure everyone feels included

in the moment. That means putting a limit on inside jokes, deeply personal anecdotes and obscure nicknames or code words, or at least explain them!

11

### **Time It Right**

Don't make them too long -- aim for about one minute or so (it's longer than it sounds!). Your vows are the most important element of your ceremony, but that doesn't mean they should go on for hours. Get at the heart of what marrying this person means to you with your vows; pick the most important points and make them well. Save some thoughts for the reception toasts -- and for the wedding night.

12

### **Practice Out Loud (*Seriously!*)**

These are words meant to be heard by a *live* audience, so check that they sound good when spoken. Read your vows out loud to make sure they flow easily. Watch out for tongue twisters and super-long sentences -- you don't want to get out of breath or stumble.

### **(Vows - Option 2)**

Please join hands, look into each other's eyes, and repeat *together* after me:

From this day forward,  
I make a promise:  
what ever happens,  
you shall not walk alone.  
I'll stand by your side,  
and sleep in your arms,  
I'll be the joy in your heart,  
and the food for your soul,  
Through our brightest days  
and our darkest nights,  
I take you,  
into my heart.  
May God bless us,  
with a great light,  
around our hearts,  
and around our home.

I see your beauty,  
your innocence and light.  
May it shine.  
May the world see how beautiful you are  
as I see how beautiful you are,  
but may there be a special light  
that only I can see.  
I give you my heart.  
May we feel this joy forever.

### **(Vows - Option 3)**

From this day on  
I choose you to be my beloved soul mate,  
to live with you and laugh with you;  
to stand by your side and sleep in your arms;  
to be joy to your heart and food to your soul;  
to bring out the best in you always;  
to be the best I can be, just for you;  
to celebrate with you in the good times;  
to struggle with you in the bad;  
to solace you when you are downhearted;  
to wipe your tears with my hands;  
to care for you with my entire being;  
to share with you everything that I have;  
as we treat each other  
with tenderness, compassion and love.

### **(Vows - Option 3a, Modified)**

*N. and N.:* From this day on do you choose you the other to be your beloved soul mate? Will you live with one another and laugh with another; Will you stand by each other and care for one another, always being joy to your hearts and food for your souls? Will you always endeavor to bring out the best in the other always, by being the best you can be, just for the other; celebrating in the good times; and struggling together in the bad; comforting when downhearted and caring for the other with your entire being; sharing everything that you have; as you treat one another with tenderness, compassion and love, for the rest of your days?

*R: I do/We do!*

### **(Vows Option 4-Traditional Vows)**

Please join hands, as you look into each other's eyes, and repeat after me:

I, N., take thee, N., for my lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health as long as we both shall live.

I, N., take thee, N., for my lawful wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health as long as we both shall live.

## **Vows** (*Option 5*)

*The couple faces each other, and the Priest says to the bridegroom,*

N., do you take N. to be your wedded wife, to share your life openly, standing with her, in sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, in hardship and in ease, to cherish and to love, so long as you both shall live?

*The priest says to the Bride,*

N., do you take N. to be your wedded husband, to share your life openly, standing with him, in sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, in hardship and in ease, to cherish and to love, so long as you both shall live?

## **Vows** (*Option 6 – with Children*)

And now, N., do you promise to love and respect your parents as husband and wife? Do you promise to support their marriage and new family and accept the responsibility of being their child, and to encourage them and support them in your new life together?

## **Vows** (*Option 7*)

This ring, without beginning or ending, is a symbol of my undying love for you. I give you this ring freely as I give you my love.

## **Vows** (*Option 8 – Combined with Rings*)

N. and N., will exchange their rings and declare their vows as they begin their life together as one.

Priest: Do you have your rings? (*Response: "Yes"*)

God, the Father, bless these rings ✕ ✕ ✕ and the two who exchange them. Fill them with your Holy Presence. Keep them safe in the circle of Your protection and love.

*Please join hands and repeat after me:*

I, N., take thee, N., for my lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health as long as we both shall live.

I, N., take thee, N., for my lawful wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health as long as we both shall live.

## **Vows** (*Option 9*)

Groom/Partner:

I promise to love and care for you, and I will try in every way to be worthy of your love.  
I will always be honest with you, kind, patient and forgiving.  
I promise to try to be on time.  
But most of all, I promise to be a true and loyal friend to you.  
I love you.

Bride/Partner:

I promise to love and care for you, and I will try in every way to be worthy of your love.  
I will always be honest with you, kind, patient and forgiving.  
I promise to keep a sense of humor.  
But most of all, I promise to be a true and loyal friend to you.  
I love you.

## **Vows** (*Option 10*)

I promise to be your lover, companion and friend,  
Your partner in parenthood,  
Your ally in conflict,  
Your greatest fan and your toughest adversary.  
Your comrade in adventure,  
Your student and your teacher,  
Your consolation in disappointment,  
Your accomplice in mischief.  
This is my sacred vow to you, my equal in all things.

## **Vows** (*Option 11*)

On this day,  
I give you my heart,  
My promise,  
That I will walk with you,  
Hand in hand,  
Wherever our journey leads us,  
Living, learning, loving,  
Together,  
Forever.

## **Vows** (*Option 12*)

I believe in you, the person you will grow to be and the couple we will be together. With my whole heart, I take you as my wife/husband, acknowledging and accepting your faults and strengths, as you do mine.

I promise to be faithful and supportive and to always make our family's love and happiness my priority.

I will be yours in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health, in failure and in triumph.

I will dream with you, celebrate with you and walk beside you through whatever our lives may bring.

You are my person -- my love and my life, today and always.

## **Vows** (*Option 12a – unity version*)

*The Bride begins by repeating after the priest:*

N., I believe in you, the person you will grow to be and the couple we will be together. With my whole heart, I take you as my wife/husband, acknowledging and accepting your faults and strengths, as you do mine. I promise to be faithful and supportive and to always make our family's love and happiness my priority.

*The Groom concludes with the last passage by repeating after the priest:*

N., I will be yours in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health, in failure and in triumph. I will dream with you, celebrate with you and walk beside you through whatever our lives may bring.

*Then, together they say in unison by repeating after the priest:*

You are my person -- my love and my life, today and always. Today I give you my heart.

## **Vows** (*Option 13*)

You are my lover and my teacher,

You are my model and my accomplice,

And you are my true counterpart.

I will love you, hold you and honor you,

I will respect you, encourage you and cherish you,

In health and sickness,

Through sorrow and success,

For all the days of my life.

## **Vows** (*Option 14, Catholic Traditional*)

*Priest: Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, join your right hands, and declare your consent before God and his Church.*

*(repeated version)*

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

*Or, (response version)*

**Priest:** N. do you take N., to be your *wife*? Do you promise to be true 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?

**Groom:** I do.

**Priest:** 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.

## **Vows** (*Option 15*)

The Groom says:

I, N., take you, N., to be my wife;  
and I promise,  
before God and these witnesses,  
to be your loving and faithful husband;  
in plenty and in want;  
in joy and in sorrow;  
in sickness and in health;  
as long as we both shall live.

The Bride says:

I, N., take you, N., to be my husband;  
and I promise,  
before God and these witnesses,  
to be your loving and faithful wife;  
in plenty and in want;  
in joy and in sorrow;  
in sickness and in health;  
as long as we both shall live.

## **Vows** (*Option 16*)

The Groom says:

Before God and these witnesses,  
I, N., take you, N., to be my wife,



and I promise to love you,  
and to be faithful to you,  
as long as we both shall live.

The Bride says:

Before God and these witnesses  
I, N., take you, N., to be my husband,  
and I promise to love you,  
and to be faithful to you,  
as long as we both shall live.

## **Vows** (*Option 17, Based on The Covenant Hymn*)

N., wherever you go, I will follow, wherever you live will be my home. Through days of blessing or sorrow, through mountains before us, even if vast, wherever you go, I am always with you. I will never leave you alone.

Whatever you dream, I will support you and when the stars call your name in the night, I will stand to help guide you. Though shadows of mist of cloud come in our future, together we bear until there's light. Like Abram and Sarah we will stand, with only a simple promise in our hand, but lead where you dream and I will follow.

And if you should fall, you will find me, when no other friend can you claim; or when foes beat you down or betray you, and others desert you in shame. When home and dreams just aren't enough, faithful to you I will remain.

Wherever you die, I will be there, to sing you to sleep with a psalm, to soothe you with tales of our journey, your fears and your doubts I will calm. We'll live when journeys are done forever, in memory as one, and we will be buried together, and awaken to greet a new dawn.

I promise you won't ever be alone; wherever you go, I am here.

## **Vows** (*Option 18*)

**Groom:**

I, N., offer myself to you N.,  
to be your husband,  
your friend, your lover and your lifelong companion;  
to share my life with yours;  
to build our dreams together,  
to support you through times of trouble,  
to help you become the person that you aspire to be,  
and rejoice with you in times of happiness;  
to treat you with respect, love and loyalty  
through all the trials and triumphs of our lives together.

This commitment is made in love,  
kept in faith, lived in hope,  
and eternally made new.

**Bride:**

I, N., offer myself to you N.,  
to be your wife,  
your friend, your lover and your lifelong companion;  
to share my life with yours;  
to build our dreams together,  
to support you through times of trouble,  
to help you become the person that you aspire to be,  
and rejoice with you in times of happiness;  
to treat you with respect, love and loyalty  
through all the trials and triumphs of our lives together.

This commitment is made in love,  
kept in faith, lived in hope,  
and eternally made new.

## **Vows** (*Option 19*)

**Groom:**

N., across the years, I will walk with you,  
in deep green forests;  
on shores of sand;  
and when our time on earth is through,  
in heaven too,  
you will have my hand.

**Bride:**

N., across the years, I will walk with you,  
in deep green forests;  
on shores of sand;  
and when our time on earth is through,  
in heaven too,  
you will have my hand.

## **Vows** (*Option 20*)

I, N., take you N., to be my *wife/husband*  
For a time I thought I would never know  
a deep and peaceful love again.

Then, you came along  
and offered me your heart.  
You restored my faith in love.  
In my own goodness and value.  
In the idea of good things coming to those who wait.  
You are all good things to me.  
I promise you my undying affection, support, respect and admiration.  
I promise you that I will lift you up, as you have lifted me  
I promise that I will do my best and always try  
May my heart be your shelter and my arms be your home.  
Today I give you my heart.

## **Vows** (*Option 21*)

In the name of God,  
I, *N.*, give myself to you, *N.*, as your husband/wife/spouse  
I will support and care for you by the grace of God:  
enduring all things, bearing all things.  
I will hold and cherish you in the love of Christ:  
in times of plenty, in times of want.  
I will honor and love you with the Spirit's help:  
forsaking all others,  
as long as we both shall live.  
This is my solemn vow.

*or this,*

In the name of God,  
I, *N.*, give myself to you, *N.*, as your *husband/wife/spouse*  
I will support and care for you:  
enduring all things, bearing all things.  
I will hold and cherish you:  
in times of plenty, in times of want.  
I will honor and love you:  
forsaking all others,  
as long as we both shall live.  
This is my solemn vow.

## **Vows** (*Option 22*)

Because of you, I laugh, I smile and I dare to dream more than I ever have. Thank you for the miracle of you. You are, and always will be, the love of my life, my soulmate, my person. On this day, I give you what you already own, my heart.

### **Vows** (*Option 23*)

I take you to be my best friend, my faithful partner, and my pone true love. I promise to encourage and inspire you and to love you truly through good times and bad. I will forever be there to laugh and lift you up, and to love you unconditionally through all of our adventures in life together.

### **Vows** (*Option 24*)

I promise to love you without condition, to honor you each and every day, to laugh with you when you're happy, to support you when you're sad, to guide you when you ask for direction, to challenge you to do the same for me, to be your biggest fan and your ever present listening audience. I willingly choose, on this day, to give you my whole heart.

## **The Questions** *(often used in place of Vows)*

*N. and N.*, if you are ready to step into the holy circle of matrimony, assuming all its rights, obligations and abundant joys, please so indicate by joining hands.

Do you, N. take this man, N. as your husband, to love him and to honor him, to nurture, serve and support him, in times of joy and in times of difficulty? Do you promise to remain by his side regardless of what trouble befalls you, and in the presence of temptation to forsake this love, do you promise to remain steadfast and true? Do you promise with all your heart and soul to honor this vow till death do you part?

Response: "I do"

Do you, N. take this woman, N. as your wife, to love her and to honor her, to nurture, serve and support her, in times of joy and in times of difficulty? Do you promise to remain by her side regardless of what trouble befalls you, and in the presence of temptation to forsake this love, do you promise to remain steadfast and true? Do you promise with all your heart and soul to honor this vow till death do you part?

Response: "I do"

# The Ring Ceremony Selections:

## Ring Ceremony (*Option 1*)

And so we come N. and N., to the presentation of rings by which you symbolize and bind your love.

The circle has long been a symbol of spirit and the power of God. The sky and the earth are round. The wind in its greatest power whirls. The sun and moon, both round, come forth and go down again in a circle. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing and always come back again to where they were. Without beginning or end and with no point of weakness, the circle is a reminder of the eternal quality of God and of unending strength. Let the seamless circle of these rings become the symbol of your endless love and unending faithfulness. Your wedding rings are most special because they say that even in your uniqueness you have chosen to be bonded, to allow the presence of another human being to enhance who you are. Your rings carry a potent double message: We are individuals and yet we belong; we are not alone. As you wear them through time, they will reflect not only who you are but also the glorious union that you are now creating.

*Join me as I ask for God's blessing upon these rings,*

God, the Father, bless these rings ✠ ✠ ✠ and the two who exchange them. Fill them with your Holy Presence. Keep them safe in the circle of Your protection and love.

N., place the ring on N.'s finger and repeat after me:

"With this ring, I pledge my love and faithfulness to you, today, tomorrow and always."

Or,

"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine."

Or,

"As this ring has no end, neither shall my love for you."

Or,

The couple place the rings on the fingers of one another, first the one, then the other, saying:

N., receive this ring as a symbol of my abiding love.

Or,

With this ring, I pledge my love and faithfulness to you. In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Or,

N., take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Or,

This ring I give you, as a sign of our constant faith and abiding love, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Common Ending:**

May you wear these rings as the enclosing bond of reverence and trust, and fulfill the circle of love that now makes your lives one.

**Ring Ceremony (Option 2)**

And so, N. and N., we come to the presentation of rings by which you symbolize and bind your love.

*Rings are handed to the priest and he continues,*

Traditionally, the passage to the status of “husband and wife” is marked by the exchange of rings.

These rings are a symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end, no giver and no receiver for each is the giver and each is the receiver. As often as either of you looks at this symbol, I hope that you will be reminded of the commitment to love each other, which you have made today.

*Join me as I ask for God's blessing upon these rings,*

May God Bless these rings ✕ ✕ ✕ and N. and N., who give them and who will wear them; may they ever abide in unity, love and happiness for the rest of their lives.

Will you, N., accept this ring as a loving symbol of N.'s vows this day?

**Bride:** I will

Will you, N., accept this ring as a loving symbol of N.'s vows this day?

**Groom:** I will

*Then, N., please place the ring on N.'s left hand and repeat after me,*

**Groom:** N., I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you.

*By the same token Lauren, you may place a ring on Matt's finger and repeat after me,*

**Bride:** N., I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you.

May you wear these rings as the enclosing bond of reverence and trust, and fulfill the circle of love that now makes your lives one.

## Questions/Ring Ceremony (*Combined Version*)

Do you have your rings? (*They respond, "Yes"*)

The circle has long been a symbol of God. Without beginning or end and with no point of weakness, the circle is a reminder of the eternal quality of God and of unending strength. Let the seamless circle of these rings become the symbol of your endless love. Your wedding rings are most special because they say that even in your uniqueness you have chosen to be bonded, to allow the presence of another human being to enhance who you are. Your rings carry a potent double message: We are individuals and yet we belong; we are not alone. As you wear them through time, they will reflect not only who you are but also the glorious union that you are now creating.

*Join me as I ask for God's blessing upon these rings,*

God, the Father, bless these rings ✠ ✠ ✠ and the two who exchange them. Fill them with your Holy Presence. Keep them safe in the circle of Your protection and love.

N., as you place this ring on N., I now ask you: Do you take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife? Do you promise God, N., and all of us here that from this point forward, your arms may be her shelter and your heart may be her guide? Do you promise to support her and nourish her and to love and respect and honor her for the rest of your days on earth?

Response: "I do."

N., as you place this ring on N., I now ask you: Do you take this man to be your lawful wedded husband? Do you promise God, N., and all of us here that from this point forward, your arms may be his shelter and your heart may be his guide? Do you promise to support him and nourish him and to love and respect and honor him for the rest of your days on earth?

Response: "I do."

## **Catholic Ring Blessing** (*Replaces standard blessing above in Ring Ceremony Options; may be used by other denominations.*)

Heavenly Father, bless these rings in the Name of God the Father, ✠ ✠ ✠ God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and grant that they who wear them may do so with a deep abiding faith in their love for each other. May they both do your will and always live together in Peace, Love abiding Joy. We ask this through Christ Our lord. *Amen.*

*Or,*

In the Presence of God, your families and friends, seal your promises now with these rings; signs and tokens of the life you are about to enter together. Bless ✠ ✠ ✠ O Lord the giving of these rings that they who wear them may do so in abiding Peace, Love, and Good Will forever more. *Amen.*



*Or,*

Lord, bless ✠ ✠ ✠ and consecrate *N. and N.* in their love for each other. May these rings be a symbol of true faith in each other, and always remind them of their love. Through Christ our Lord.

*Or,*

May the Lord bless ✠ ✠ ✠ these rings, which you give to each other as the sign of your love and fidelity.

*Or,*

By your blessing, O God, ✠ ✠ ✠ may these rings be to *N. and N.* symbols of unending love and faithfulness, reminding them of the covenant they have made this day, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **Ring Warming Ceremony** (*Optional*)

As you have blessed this marriage with your words, *N. and N.* now ask that you also bless their rings with your prayers. As the ceremony proceeds, the families of *N. and N.* will warm their rings by passing them down the row. As you hold them in your hands, pause for a moment, and make your wishes and prayers for the couple and for their future together before you pass them on to the next person. These rings will not only be a gift from one to another but will be given with the love, support and wisdom of their family and friends.

*(Both rings to be passed down the family rows)*

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## **BLESSINGS:** *(Mandatory for all Weddings where Priest is Celebrant)*

### **Blessing 1** *(Option)*

*N. and N., you now have the opportunity for expressing through your union and partnership, God's glory, love and healing. How could this be? Through devotion and service to each other. Through patience, kindness, total acceptance of each other, tempered by the willingness to change. You will be tempted, as time goes by, to take for granted the love which today seems so precious and dear, to speak to and treat each other in ways that do not reflect the highest good in both of you. Resist it. Promise to always see the goodness in your partner, even when it's especially difficult. God will provide you the way, if you are willing. He is the key to your success as a married couple. Call on Him devotedly and consistently to guide your thinking and bless your home. May this marriage be to you a heavenly sanctuary. God bless you.*

### **Blessing 2** *(Option)*

*Go forth in power, full of the Spirit of God. Let love be genuine, hold fast to what is good, rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer. May God the Father, ✠ ✠ ✠ God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit bless and keep you always. Amen.*

### **Blessing 3** *(Option)*

*O Heavenly Father, we ask you to bless and consecrate this couple in their love for each other. May the rings that they have exchanged be a reminder of the love and faithfulness they have pledged to one another. Amen.*

### **Blessing 4** *(Option)*

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

### **An Irish Blessing 5** *(Option)*

You are the star of each night,  
You are the brightness of every morning,  
You are the story of each guest,  
You are the report of every land.  
No evil shall befall you, on hill nor bank,  
In field or valley, on mountain or in glen.  
Neither above, nor below, neither in sea,  
Nor on shore, in skies above,  
Nor in the depths.

You are the kernel of my heart,  
You are the face of my sun,  
You are the harp of my music,  
You are the crown of my company.

## **Apache Marriage Blessing 6** *(Option)*

Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be the shelter for each other. Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be the warmth for the other. Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before. Go now to your dwelling place to enter into the days of your life together. And may your days be good and long upon the earth.

Treat yourselves and each other with respect, and remind yourselves often of what brought you together. Give the highest priority to the tenderness, gentleness and kindness that your connection deserves. When frustration, difficulty and fear assail your relationship - as they threaten all relationships at one time or another - remember to focus on what is right between you, not only the part which seems wrong. In this way, you can ride out the storms when clouds hide the face of the sun in your lives - remembering that even if you lose sight of it for a moment, the sun is still there. And if each of you takes responsibility for the quality of your life together, it will be marked by abundance and delight.

## **Good Years' Blessing 7** *(Option)*

*N. and N.*, may God bless and keep you, may the sun of many days and years shine upon you, may the love you have for one another grow and hold you close.

May the good true light within you guide your way together. May your dreams come true and when they don't may new dreams arise.

And long, long years from now, may you look at one another and be able to say, 'Because of you I have become the person I longed to be'.

## **Traditional Catholic Wedding Blessing 8** *(Option)*

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 (*At Mass: 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 hands extended over the bride and bridegroom, continues:*

(A)

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 and 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;

Look now with favor on *N. and N.*, 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.

Lord, we pray you: may *N. and N.* 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, Through Christ our Lord.

*Response:* Amen.

***Or,***

(B)

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. 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.

We pray this, through Christ our Lord.

*Response:* Amen.

***Or,***

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/or 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.

*Response:* Amen.

## **Traditional Blessing 9 (Option)**

The grace of Christ attend you, the love of God surround you, the Holy Spirit keep you, that you may live in faith, abound in hope, and grow in love, both now and forevermore. *Amen.*

## **Traditional Blessing 10** (*Option*)

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord be kind and gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. *Amen.*

## **PRONOUNCEMENTS:**

### **Pronouncement (*Option 1*)**

*N. and N.*, in the presence of God, your family and friends today, you have spoken the words and performed the rites which unite your lives. It is my legal right as a minister legally authorized to do so, and my greatest joy and privilege as a priest in Christ's One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, to declare you husband and wife.

N., you may now kiss the bride. (or "As kisses are messengers of love, please kiss now and let soul meet soul on each other's lips.")

### **Pronouncement (*Option 2*)**

Forasmuch as you, N., and you, N., have openly declared your wishes to be united in marriage, and in the presence of these witnesses have pledged love to each other, and have confirmed the same by joining hands, exchanging rings and declaring your vows, I, as a priest in Christ's One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and as a minister legally authorized to do so, to declare you husband and wife.

N., you may now kiss the bride.

(or "As kisses are messengers of love, please kiss now and let soul meet soul on each other's lips.")

### **Pronouncement (*Option 3*)**

Before God and in the presence of this assembly, *N. and N.*, have made their solemn vows to each other. They have confirmed their promises by the joining of hands and by the giving and receiving of rings. Therefore, I proclaim that they are now husband and wife. Blessed be the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit now and forever.

### **Pronouncement (*Option 4*)**

Inasmuch as *N. and N.*, have exchanged vows of love and fidelity in the presence of God and the Church, I now pronounce that they are bound to one another as husbands/wives/spouses/spouses for life in a holy covenant, as long as they both shall live. Amen.

### **Pronouncement (*Optional ending, may be added to all versions*)**

*The priest says (and the congregation may join)*

Those whom God has joined together let no one separate!

## **PRAYERS:**

### **Prayer (Option 1)**

*Let us Pray:* Dear God, thank you for this joyous day. Thank you for Your Light that has entered N. and N.'s life. Thank you for all the miracles and blessings. Please bless this union. Help them find the perfect place in this world for their love to flourish. Let the radiant light of their love shine on all those around them. May all their future creations be blessed. God, bless them with the inner gifts of trust, compassion, forgiveness and truth that they may live and grow together in love and peace. *Amen.*

### **Prayer (Option 2)**

*Let us Pray:* Father of mankind, whose nature is love, look with favor upon this woman and this man who desire to make their vows before you. We are grateful for the providence that has led to this union. Grant this to be more than an outward union, but also the blending of hearts and spirits and purposes. Bless each with the inward qualities of integrity, trust, cooperation and forgiveness that they may live together in love and peace. *Amen.*

### **Prayer (Option 3)** adapted from *Illuminata* by Marianne Williamson

*Let us Pray:* Dear God, please make of this relationship a great and holy adventure. May their joining be a sacred space. May the two of them find rest here, a haven for their souls. Remove from them any temptation to judge themselves or each other or to direct each other. May they surrender to You their conflicts and their burdens. We know You are their Answer and their rock. Help them not forget. Bring them together in heart and mind as well as body and guide them in the ways of holiness. May this relationship be a burst of light. May it be a fount of love and wisdom for them, for their family, for their community, and for their world. May this bond be a channel for Your love and healing, a vehicle of Your grace and power. As lessons come and challenges grow, let them not be tempted to forsake each other. Let them always remember that in each other they have the most beautiful woman, the most beautiful man, the strongest one, the sacred one in whose arms we are repaired. May they remain young in this relationship. May they grow wise in this relationship. Bring them what You desire for them. And show them how you would have them be. Thank You, dear God. *Amen.*

### **The Lords' Prayer (Option 4)**

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallow be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.) *Amen.*

## **The Hail Mary (Option 5)**

Hail Mary, full of grace. Our Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,  
Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death.  
*Amen.*

## **Prayer (Option 6)**

*Let us pray:* Gracious God, spirit of life and love, we ask all blessings upon *N. and N.* in their life together. May they be blessed with patience, to see them through times of tensions or conflict. May they be blessed with kindness, to enable them to nurture and care for one another in times of pain or sorrow. May they be blessed with a spirit of play and joyfulness that they may participate fully in the beauties and pleasures of creation. May they be blessed, finally, with a knowledge of the ever-flowing presence of love in the world, that they may be channels of this love to one another and to all whom they meet in their life's journey. *Amen.*

## **Navajo Prayer (Option 7)**

When you were children, you talked like children, but now that you've grown, you should be done with childish things and put them away. When you were children, you looked into a mirror that gave only a blurred reflection of reality. But with love and maturity, you shouldn't be afraid to look into that mirror and see each other face to face. Be swift like the wind in loving each other. Be brave like the sea in loving each other. Be gentle like the breeze in loving each other. Be patient like the sun who waits and watches the four changes of the earth in loving each other. Be wise like the roaring of the thunder clouds and lightning in loving each other. Be shining like the morning dawn in loving each other. Be proud like the tree who stands without bending in loving each other. Be brilliant like the rainbow colors in loving each other. Now, forever, forever, there will be no more loneliness because your worlds are joined together with the world. Forever, forever. *Amen.*

## **Time Travelers Prayer, "Compass of Your Heart" (Option 8)**

May you take on the world together with all your hopes and dreams. May you be each other's anchor in smooth and rocky seas. May you bend to the world's winds and brave stalls and storms. May you find common ground in all its changing forms. May you cross stubborn boundaries and turn many a stone. May you find haven for your souls; may you have heart and home. And if some days are gray, and some nights are long and cold, may you be each other's sun and moon, as your destinies unfold. And should you lose sight of each other, and start to drift apart, may you circle back by following, the compass of your heart.



## **BENEDICTIONS:**

### **Benediction (Option 1)**

May God's blessings rest upon you, may God's peace abide with you, and may God's presence illuminate your hearts, now and forevermore. *Amen.*

### **Benediction (Option 2)**

May the Peace that passes all understanding be yours now and forevermore. *Amen.*

### **Benediction (Option 3)**

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. *Amen.*

### **Benediction (Option 4)**

The two of you are now joined in one unbroken circle. Wherever you go, may you always return to one another in your togetherness. May you two find in each other the love for which all men and women long. May you grow in understanding and in compassion. May the home that you establish be such a place of sanctuary that all who visit will find there a friend. And may the Lord bless you and keep you forevermore. *Amen.*

### **Benediction (Option 5) *The Irish Wedding Blessing***

May the road rise to meet you.  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
The rains fall soft upon the fields.

May the light of friendship guide your paths together.  
May the laughter of children grace the halls of your home.  
May the joy of living for one another trip a smile from your lips, a twinkle from your eye.  
And when eternity beckons,  
at the end of a life heaped high with love,  
May the good Lord embrace you  
with the arms that have nurtured you  
the whole length of your joy-filled days.

### **Benediction (Option 6)**

And now, *N. and N.*, may the Lord God ✠ ✠ ✠ bless you *and* keep you forevermore, may God be with you and bless you, may you see your children's children, may you be poor in misfortune, Rich in blessings, may you know nothing but happiness;

From this day forward, May the road rise to meet you  
May the wind be always at your back  
May the warm rays of sun fall upon your home  
And may the hand of a friend always be near

May green be the grass you walk on  
May blue be the skies above you  
May pure be the joys that surround you  
May true be the hearts that love you.

## **Benediction** (*Option 7*)

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to make the way of the cross to be the way of life. We thank you, also, for consecrating the union of man and woman in His Name. By the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing upon *N. and N.*

Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death. Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, forever and ever. *Amen.*

## **Benediction** (*Option 8*)

May God bless you, hold and keep you; May God's mercy shine on you...guide your work and guard your resting, keep your love forever new. *Amen.*

## **Benediction** (*Option 9*)

O God, who not only honored a wedding feast by thy holy presence, but did begin there thy wounded work of miracles, be pleased to bless at this the opening of their married life, these your holy servants, *N. and N.*. Grant to them the harmony of love and lasting charity, the beauty of restraint, a humble respect for each other. Grant them also the discipline of behavior that is pleasing to thee. And, in all things, let them have the dignity of a sincere and strong faith. May the angel of God be their unfailing protection. May their days be many and peaceful. Their children, their joy, that both on earth and in Heaven, they may be crowned by God. *Amen.*

## **Benediction** (*Option 10*)

Eternal God, without your grace no promise is sure. Strengthen this loving couple with the gift of thy Holy Spirit, so they may fulfill the vows they have made today. Keep them faithful to one another and fill them with such love and joy that they may build a home where no one is ever a stranger. Guide

them by your word to serve you all the days of their lives, through Jesus Christ Our Lord who honor and glories, be forever and ever. *Amen.*

### **Benediction** (*Option 11*) *A Scottish Wedding Prayer*

Lord help us to remember when  
We first met and the strong  
love that grew between us.  
To work that love into  
practical things so that nothing  
can divide us.  
We ask for words both kind  
and loving and hearts always  
ready to ask forgiveness  
as well as to forgive.  
Dear Lord, we put our  
marriage into your hands.

### **Benediction** (*Option 12*) *An Irish Wedding Blessing*

Happy is the bride that rain falls on  
May your mornings bring joy and your evenings bring peace.  
May your troubles grow few as your blessings increase.  
May the saddest day of your future  
Be no worse than the happiest day of your past.  
May your hands be forever clasped in friendship  
And your hearts joined forever in love.  
Your lives are very special,  
God has touched you in many ways.  
May his blessings rest upon you  
And fill all your coming days.  
We swear by peace and love to stand,  
Heart to heart and hand to hand.  
Hark, O Spirit, and hear us now,  
Confirming this our Sacred Vow.

And now may God be with you and bless you.  
May you see your children's children.  
May you be poor in misfortune, rich in blessings,  
May you know nothing but happiness.  
From this day forward.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

### **Announcement (Option 1)**

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my highest honor and privilege to present to all of you for the very first time, *Mr. and Mrs. John (use of middle name optional) Smith!*

### **Announcement (Option 2)**

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my highest honor and privilege to present to all of you for the very first time, *N. and N. Smith!*

### **Announcement (Option 3)**

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my highest honor and privilege to present to all of you for the very first time, newlyweds, *N. and N. Smith!*

### **Announcement (Option 4)**

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my highest honor and privilege, to present to all of you, for the very first time publicly, *The Family of N. and N. Smith!*

### **Introduction as a Family (Option 5)**

It is my pleasure to present to you *N. and N.* in their new relationship as husband and wife, and their son/daughter/children, *N.*

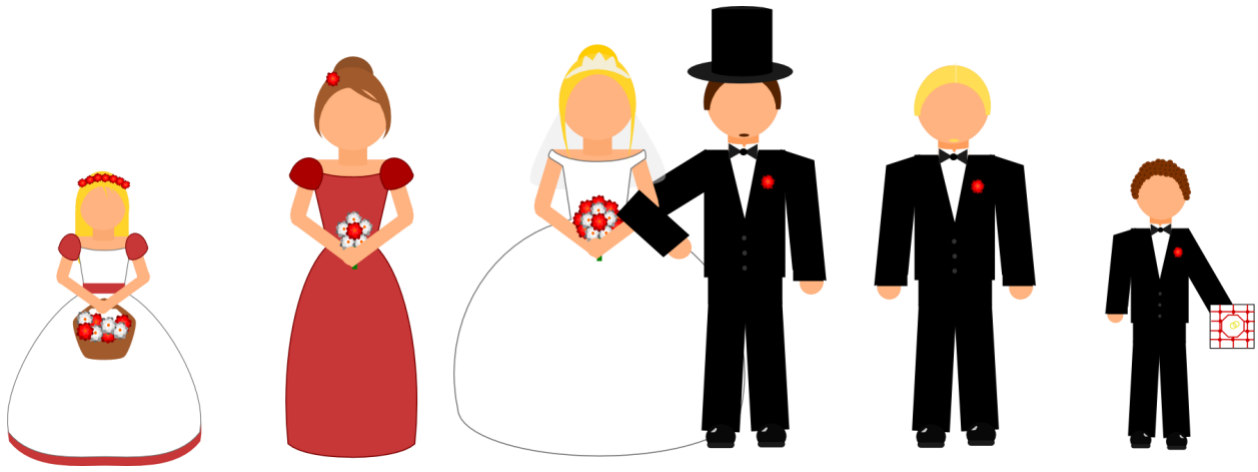
### **Announcement (Option 6) (using Wedding Bells)**

*N. and N.* have chosen bells to symbolize their marriage today! Wedding bells have long been used as a symbol of marriage all over the world, but the tradition can be traced to Celtic origins, where the bells were used to ward off evil spirits that might inflict harm on the happy couple during their wedding day. In Scotland, the bells were also used to announce to the local people that a wedding had taken place, and they were rung as the couple left the church. And in Ireland, wedding bells still play a big part in wedding traditions, as newly married couples are always given a marriage bell as a wedding gift, and this must be placed in a prominent position within their home. The marriage bell can be used throughout married life to bring an end to an argument without either partner having to admit that they are wrong.

Today, the *parents* and *grandparents* of our happy couple have bells to celebrate the happy occasion, and as they begin to ring theirs, they ask that you then join them as the couple walks down the aisle as a newly married couple. And, so, it is my great pleasure...

## **Recessional** (*Optional*)

The End (Note...more truthfully, *the Beginning!*)



## A FEW ADDITIONAL OPTIONS:

### Ceremonies, Songs, Readings, & Poems (Optional)

#### CEREMONIES:

### Candle Lighting Ceremony (*Option 1 – long version*)

*(Note: This ceremony can be done with 4 candles, as its written here, or can be modified to use the Unity Candle, which has 3 candle. Kindly bring candles and candleholders)*

Within each human being burns the spark of the Divine. When two people love one another with devotion and freedom, they kindle the awareness of that spark in each other as nothing else quite can do. The lighted candle is symbolic of the cosmic creation and the light and truth in the human heart, mind and soul. Fire also symbolizes both purity and passion. For many, the flame means the security of home and family, the warmth of the hearth.

Take into your beings the warmth, radiance and light that the divine flame represents. Let it light your way on the journey of life that you are about to embark on.

In committing to one another today, in the spirit of being born new to one another, you kindle each other's divine light and promise always to see that light in one another-to nurture and tend that divine flame in your partner as best you can each day-especially at the times it may be hardest to see, and the times your partner may doubt or forget the existence of that light within him-or herself.

N., take this candle now and symbolically enter the sacred trust to honor the divine spark in N. by lighting it from this candle representing the Divine Source. *(She lights candle)*

N., take this candle now and symbolically enter the sacred trust to honor the divine spark in N. by lighting it from this candle representing the Divine Source. *(He lights candle)*

If at this time you wish to affirm your free choice to unite as partners in marriage, please light the unlit candle together now. *(They light unlit candle together)* As you bring your individual flames together to

symbolically form the new and greater flame of your marriage, never forget that the light of your union is made up of your unique, individual expressions of light and is continually sustained and renewed by your connection to the Divine Spark, the eternal light of God.

The candle you lit together symbolizes your marriage, your willingness to surrender to something greater than yourselves. May the light of your marriage, *N. and N.*, be a beacon in the night, a safe harbor from the storms of life. May your future be made infinitely brighter by the light and the love that you share.

### **Candle Lighting Ceremony (*Option 2 – simple version, a*)**

*N. and N.* have chosen candles to represent their love and commitment today. The candles together symbolize their marriage, and willingness to surrender to something greater than themselves. May the light of their marriage be a beacon in the night, a safe harbor from the storms of life. May their future be made infinitely brighter by the light and the love that you share.

### **Candle Lighting Ceremony (*Option 3 – simple version, b*)**

*N. and N.* have chosen candles to represent their love and commitment today. The Unity Candle is both a symbol of the union of two separate lives into one and a sign of God's light and presence. I encourage you to light this candle on each anniversary remembering this day, of the promises made and God's promise to dispel the darkness and be present with you in your marriage always.

### **Candle Lighting Ceremony (*Option 4 - by the Mothers'*)**

*Intro: After everyone else is seated, and before the Bride enters, the music changes and both mothers enter together. They approach the table with the candles and light each of the single tapers. They then take their seats, the bride enters, and the Invocation begins.*

### **Candle Lighting Ceremony (*Option 5 – simple, God*)**

*N. and N.* have chosen candles to represent their love and commitment today. The Unity Candle is both a symbol of the union of two separate lives into one and a sign of God's light and presence.

The individual candles, lighted at the beginning of our ceremony today by your respective mothers, is a sign of your lives and family; lives that will now be combined *into one*.

I encourage you to light a candle on each anniversary remembering this day, of the promises made and God's promise to dispel the darkness and be present with you in your marriage always.

### **Candle Lighting Ceremony (*Option 6 – Honoring Child/ren*)**

*N. and N.*, have chosen candles to represent their love and commitment today. The candles together symbolize their marriage, and willingness to surrender to something greater than themselves.

The lighting of the center candle represents not only the union of *N. and N.*, in marriage, but the unity formed in this new family in which their lives will now shine as one family, with *N.N.*, too!

As you light this candle today, may the brightness of the flame shine throughout your lives. May it give you courage and reassurance in darkness, warmth and safety in the cold, and strength and joy in your bodies, minds, and spirits. May your union be forever blessed.

## **The Breaking of Glass: (Optional)**

### **The Breaking of Glass with Announcement:**

We conclude the ceremony with the traditional breaking of the glass. The breaking of the glass, like the commitment you make today, is irrevocable and permanent. As the groom breaks the glass, I invite everyone to shout, "Mazel Tov" which means "Congratulations and Good Luck!"

Just as church bells are sometimes rung at the end of a Christian marriage, people of the Jewish faith smash a wine glass. Among the many interpretations of these two customs, one is that the loud noise of both the church bells and the breaking of the glass scares away evil spirits wishing harm to the newly married couple.

The Breaking of a glass today summons the Jewish culture's notion that sweetness can only exist alongside bitterness – breaking the glass reminds us that although this wedding has provided joy, the world is still in turmoil, and requires our care and love. Its breaking is not only a reminder of sorrow, but also an expression of hope for a future free from all violence. Frailty of the glass also suggests the frailty of human Relationships. The glass, then is broken to "protect" the marriage with the implied prayer, "As this glass shatters, so may your marriage never break."

*[The couple breaks glass wrapped in cloth; Please note: a lightbulb makes for a louder 'pop' and is safer than a hard or ridged glass.]*

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my highest honor and privilege to present to all of you for the very first time, *Mr. and Mrs. N. N.!*

## **The Hands Ceremony (Optional)**

*N. and N.*, Please face each other and take each other's hands, so that you may see the gift that they are to you.

These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and full of love for you, that are holding yours on your wedding day as you promise to love each other today, tomorrow and forever.

These are the hands that will work along side yours as together you build your future and that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, and with the slightest touch will comfort you like no other.



These are the hands that will hold you when fear or grief temporarily comes your way and that will countless times wipe the tears from your eyes, tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

These are the hands that will tenderly hold your children and give you support and encouragement to chase down your dreams.

These are the hands that will hold you tight as you struggle through difficult times and give you strength when you need it most.

These are the hands that will lift your chin and brush your cheek as they raise your face to look into eyes that are filled with overwhelming love for you.

And lastly, these are the hands that even when wrinkled and aged will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch.

Together as a team, everything you wish for can be realized. God, bless these hands that you see before you this day. May they always be held by one another.

## **The Hand Fasting/Binding** (*Optional – Traditional Version*)

*N. and N.* have chosen a traditional *hand fasting ceremony*. In Europe, until the mid 1700's, few unions were sanctified in the Church or a synagogue. Rather, they were celebrated by a simple hand fasting ceremony in which the two partners joined hands over the village anvil, in the fields or in the groves of trees. Today, we build upon this tradition as *N. and N.* link their hands to form an infinity circle, symbolizing the entirety of the universe as represented in their relationship.

In the earliest of days, the hands of the bride and groom would be bound with whatever was available - vines, colorful cords, or scarf. Today we will use a **simple ribbon** (*Note: this can be a cord and also the Priest's stole, if selected*) to symbolize the binding, or promises.

*N. and N.*, please join hands in the form of an infinity circle.

Please know now before you go further, that since your lives have crossed in this life you have formed ties between each other. As you seek to enter this state of holy matrimony you should strive to make real, the ideals, which give meaning to both this ceremony and the institution of marriage.

With full awareness, know that within this circle you are not only declaring your intent to be hand fasted before your friends and family, but you speak that intent also to God. The promises made today and the ties that are bound here greatly strengthen your union; they will cross the years and lives of each soul's growth.

Do you still seek to enter this ceremony?

Couple: We do!

### **The first promise (binding)**

Groom, will you be Bride's faithful partner for life?

R:/ I will

Bride, will you be Groom's faithful partner for life?

R:/ I will

\*To Both\*

Will you be each other's constant friends and one true love?

R:/ We will

And so the binding is made.

\*The cord is wrapped around the couple's wrist.\*

### **The second promise (binding)**

Bride, do you promise to love Groom without reservation?

R:/ I do.

Groom, do you promise to love Bride without reservation?

R:/ I do.

\*To Both\*

Will both of you stand by one another in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want?

R:/ We will

And so the binding is made.

\*The cord is wrapped around the couple's wrist.\*

### **The third promise (binding)**

Bride, will you stand together with Groom your times of joy and sorrow?

R:/ I will

Groom, will you stand together with Bride your times of joy and sorrow?

R:/ I will

\*To Both\*

Will you share the burdens of each so that your spirits may grow in this union?

R:/ We will

And so the binding is made.

\*The cord is wrapped around the couple's wrist.\* Bride

**The forth promise (binding)**

Groom, will you always to be open and honest with Bride, for as long as you both shall live?

R:/ I will

Bride, will you always to be open and honest with Groom, for as long as you both shall live?

R:/ I will

\*To Both\*

Will you dream together to create new realities and hopes for this marriage?

R:/ We will.

And so the binding is made.

\*The cord is wrapped around the couple's wrist.\*

**The fifth promise (binding)**

Bride, Will you honor this man?

R:/ I will

Groom, Will you honor this woman?

R:/ I will

\*To Both\*

Will you both seek to cherish and strengthen that honor?

R:/ We will

And so the binding is made.

\*The cord is wrapped around the couple's wrist.\*

### **Binding of all promises**

\*Remove cord while saying:\*

The knots of this binding are not formed by these chords, but instead by your vows. Either of you may drop the chords, for as always, you hold in your own hands the making or breaking of this union.

*\*Once chord is removed, it is placed on altar or handed to a member of the immediate family\**

## **The Hand Fasting (*Optional – Simple Version with Priest's Stole*)**

*N. and N.* have chosen a traditional *hand fasting ceremony*. In Europe, until the mid 1700's, few unions were sanctified in the Church or a synagogue. Rather, they were celebrated by a simple hand fasting ceremony in which the two partners joined hands over the village anvil, in the fields or in the groves of trees. Today, we build upon this tradition as XX and XY link their hands to form an infinity circle, symbolizing the entirety of the universe as represented in their relationship.

In the earliest of days, the hands of the bride and groom would be bound with whatever was available - vines, colorful cords, or scarf. Today we will use a **simple ribbon** (*Note: this can be a cord or the Priest's stole, if selected*) to symbolize the binding, or promises.

*N. and N.*, please join hands in the form of an infinity circle.

Please know now before you go further, that since your lives have crossed in this life you have formed ties between each other. As you seek to enter this state of holy matrimony you should strive to make real, the ideals, which give meaning to both this ceremony and the institution of marriage.

With full awareness, know that within this circle you are not only declaring your intent to be hand fasted before your friends and family, but you speak that intent also to God. The promises made today and the ties that are bound here greatly strengthen your union; they will cross the years and lives of each soul's growth.

Do you still seek to enter this ceremony?

Couple: We do!

**\*\*The hands of the couple are bound by the priest with hi stole, a symbol of his office and willingness to serve others. This will become the thread to which the couple will now pledge themselves to one another\*\***

Priest: Will you be each other's constant friends and one true love? Will both of you stand by one another in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want? Will you share the burdens of each so that your spirits may grow in this union? Will you dream together to create new realities and hopes for this marriage? Will you both seek to cherish and strengthen that honor?

R: We will.

*\*The Stole is removed and returned to the shoulders of the Priest, and he then blesses the Hands of the couple\**

Priest: God bless these hands that we see before this day, may they always be held by the other. Amen.

## **The Fisherman's Knot Ceremony** *(Optional)*

*N. and N*, I have just sealed your relationship with the blessing, giving, and receiving of your rings. Today, their relationship is further symbolized by the tying of a Fisherman's knot; a true lovers knot, for is the strongest there is; its bond will not break, becoming ever stronger under pressure.

*N. and N*, I will now ask you to please tie this knot.

These two cords represent your past, each of you as individuals, and the unique and special gifts you each bring to your marriage. As you fasten your pieces together, these actions represent the present; this moment when you join your two lives into one common purpose. The completed knot represents your future, secure in the knowledge that your relationship will continue to be strong despite the inevitable changes that life will bring. Although the fisherman knot is one of the simplest knots to tie, it is also one of the sturdiest. As stress is applied, the knot becomes even stronger.

It is the goal of marriage to achieve the blending of hearts, and lives, but like the spaces between these cords for and by the knot, but they're also be spaces in your new life together, so you each may incur a judge and nurture the individual growth of one another.

I ask that you now pull on this rope to see it strengthen under pressure while still allowing us to see the individual cords - just as your support of one another as beautiful and blessed individuals strengthens your union.

As you hold one another in mutual concern and shared respect, may you continue holding each other tightly in your hearts and form a strong bond, now and forever. Let this knot indicate the strength of your love and be a symbol of your unity from this day forward.

## **The Arras/Arrhae Ceremony** *(common among many Hispanic traditions)*

### Notes on Sequence:

The sequence for a traditional ceremony, even outside of a Mass, is as follows:

1. Lighting of the candles usually takes place before the readings.
2. The sharing/exchange of the Wedding Coins/ Arrhae/ Arras takes place immediately after the exchange of rings.
3. The Couple's Veil is placed over the shoulders of the couple as they kneel side-by-side. This is usually done immediately after the exchange of Arras and before the POF's or Blessing.
4. The placing of the Cord follows after the Veil is in place.

*Note:* A sample of this *completed* sequence, combining Candles and Coins, with the Veil/Cord follows the two sections here:

## **The Arras Ceremony:**

The Arras/ Arrhae are 13 silver coins that represent N.'s commitment of love for N. and to care for N. and the family that they will raise together.

Groom: *N.*, receive these arras as a symbol of my love for you and as a commitment that I will take care of you and provide for you and our children for test of my life.

Bride: *N.*, I accept these arrhae and will care for them as a symbol of the care I will have for you, for our children, and for our home.

## **The Lasso Ceremony** (*Combined with Vows; common among Hispanic traditions*)

*N. and N.* have chosen to incorporate the lasso ritual into their wedding ceremony today. Lassoing is a declaration of intent, where *N. and N.* clearly state that they are marrying of their own free will.

*N. and N.* since your lives have crossed in this life, you have formed eternal and sacred bonds to each other. As you enter this state of matrimony you should strive to make real the ideals that to you, give meaning to this ceremony and to the institution of marriage. With full awareness, know that within this unity you are not only declaring your intent to be bound together before your friends and family, but you speak that intent also to God. The promises made today and the ties that are bound here greatly strengthen your union and will carry over to the years and lives of each souls' growth.

*Please respond to the following with 'we will'*

Will you honor and respect one another, and seek to never break that honor?

Will you share each other's pain and seek to ease it?

Will you share the burdens of each so that your spirits may grow in this union?

Will you share each other's laughter, and look for the brightness on life, and the positive in each other?

*(The Parents drape the lasso around the couple's shoulders)*

You are now bound together, so, too, your lives and spirits are joined in a union of everlasting love and trust. Above you are the stars and below you is the earth. Like the stars, your love should be a constant source of light; like the earth, a firm foundation from which to grow.

*Let us pray:* Father in heaven, you ordained marriage for your children, and you gave us the gift of love. We present to you, *N. and N.*, who come this day to be married. May the covenant of love they make be blessed with true devotion and spiritual commitment. We thank You for giving them the strength and courage to keep the covenant they have made. God, we thank You for helping them to create future children and a peaceful stable home of love as a foundation on which they can build their lives. When selfishness shows itself, grant them generosity. When mistrust is a temptation, give them moral strength. When there is a misunderstanding, give them a strong foundation and an abiding love. We ask this in the Name of our Lord. Amen.

## **The Arras/Lasso/Veil/Cord Combined Option with Candle:**

*Within proper sequence the following occurs:*

### **The Candle Ceremony:**

*N. and N.* will now light the Unity Candle together. The Unity Candle is both a symbol of the union of two separate lives into one and a sign of God's light and presence. It is also larger because the middle candle represents Christ, who has brought you both together for this moment and to remind you that He is with you always as a partner in your marriage, to guard and to guide you in all that you do. I encourage you to light this candle on each anniversary remembering this day, of the promises made and God's promise to dispel the darkness and be present with you in your marriage always.

### **The Reading(s):** *(Choose Option)*

### **The Vows:** *(Choose Option)*

### **The Ring Ceremony** *(Choose Option)*

### **The Arras:**

*Priest: (name of Coin Bearer) will present the Arras coins.*

The arras are 13 silver coins that represent *N. and N.*'s commitment of love and to care for one another, and the family that they will raise together.

**Groom:** *N.*, receive these arras as a symbol of my love for you and as a commitment that I will take care of you and provide for you and our children for rest of my life.

**Bride:** *N.*, I accept these arras and will care for them as a symbol of the care I will have for you, for our children, and for our home.

### **The Veil and Lasso:**

*(Celebrant reads as Cord and Veil Sponsors come forward)*

*N. and N.*, at Baptism you were clothed with the white garments symbolizing the new life of purity and joy in the Lord, to which the Risen Christ has called you. We clothe you again with precious garments, as you enter into the new phase of your life with God in Marriage.

*(Veil/Cord Sponsors stand ready to lace after introduction.)*

The *veil* signifies union and oneness. We have two individuals before us now, who after this day, will become as one, sharing one home, one name, and one family. The Veil covers this couple today reminding them, and those of us gathered here today, that Christ covers all of us in His love. May their new home together be a place where God dwells because this couple chooses to be under the mantel of his love.

The *cord* symbolizes the love of God, which brings your hearts and souls together. May your love grow stronger and bind you closer together through years, from here to eternity. May this cord also remind you to face your life together courageously and to be mutual in support of each other in carrying out your duties and responsibilities as a couple, and may your love grow stronger and bind you closer together through the years. We ask this from the Father, through Christ our Lord.

So now let no distance, nor barrier, separate their hearts and minds. *Nicole and Blanco*, together you will build a future for yourselves through love and perseverance.

*(The veil and cord are now placed on the shoulders of the Bride and Groom.)*

*N. and N.*, since your lives have crossed in this life, you have formed eternal and sacred bonds to each other. As you enter this state of matrimony you should strive to make real the ideals that to you, give meaning to this ceremony and to the institution of marriage. With full awareness, know that within this unity you are not only declaring your intent to be bound together before your friends and family, but you speak that intent also to God. The promises made today and the ties that are bound here greatly strengthen your union and will carry over to the years and lives of each souls' growth.

You are now bound together, so, too, your lives and spirits are joined in a union of everlasting love and trust. Above you are the stars and below you is the earth. Like the stars, your love should be a constant source of light; like the earth, a firm foundation from which to grow.

**The Blessing:** *(Choose Option)*

**The Sand Ceremony:** *(Optional)*

*N. and N.* have chosen sand to represent their love and commitment, as today they join their separate lives together. The two separate bottles of sand symbolize your separate lives, separate families and separate sets of friends. They represent all that you are and all that you'll ever be as an individual. They also represent your lives before today. As these two containers of sand are poured into the third container, the individual containers of sand will no longer exist, but will be joined together as one. Just as these grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into the individual containers, so will your marriage be.

**The Salt Ceremony/Covenant of Salt:** *(Optional)*



*This ceremony can be used for couples or families with modification. To purchase, try this link:  
<http://www.etsy.com/shop/CenteredCeramics>*

*N. and N. have chosen to use salt to represent their love and commitment today. From earliest times, salt has been known as a preservative and purifier that prevents decay and corruption. It is eternal, enduring, never changing, and abiding forever, it is the very symbol of God's character and reliability. And the term "Covenant of Salt," is indicative of the everlasting nature of the Covenant relationship between the children of God and their Creator. Entering into a Covenant of Salt means binding oneself to another in utmost loyalty and truthfulness, even suffering death, rather than breaking the covenant. For this very reason, a Covenant of Salt was never done lightly or haphazardly it deserves serious respect.*

*A Marriage Salt Covenant does the same thing by asking N. and N. to combine their grains of salt. Their commitment to each other cannot be broken unless they can each retrieve their own grains of salt. Since this is not possible it is a symbol of an unbreakable covenant and vow of eternal love. At this time, N. and N. ask their children to join them in their commitment of love and unity, by participating in a Family Salt Ceremony. Before each of you is a vial of salt, which represent your individuality as well as your hopes, dreams, desires and promises for the success of this marriage and the unity of the family it is creating. By blending your salt with everyone else's, you enter into a Covenant that symbolizes your acceptance of this marriage and your vow to become one family. Once blended, you promise to honor that vow throughout your life and only if you can retrieve your own grains of salt, can you ever break the covenant. Please now blend your salts and know that as these grains of salt are forever joined together, may you all be forever joined as a *couple/family*.*

## **The Unity Heart Ceremony: (Optional)**

*To purchase this item: <http://www.davidsbridal.com/>*

*At: [http://www.davidsbridal.com/images/product/other/P\\_15369\\_7\\_380729.jpg](http://www.davidsbridal.com/images/product/other/P_15369_7_380729.jpg)*

*N. and N. have chosen a *Unity Heart* to represent their love and commitment today. The Unity Heart is a unique way to celebrate the joining of their lives together as one. This sculpture will call them to combine and to willingly assemble the pieces of a single heart that represents the joining of two into one. The N., as the groom, will place the outer heart in the wood base. Then, N., as the bride will place the more delicate heart inside the groom's heart. This Unity Heart will be displayed in their home after our wedding ceremony today, as a reminder of their special wedding day and the union they will now share forever.*

*If children are present and included, this will be added:*

*Then, their child/ren, N., will help secure the heart with the crystal rod to make of all their lives, one single family.*

## **The Letter Box Ceremony: (Optional)**

*And now, before the official pronouncement, N. and N., along with *their parents* will each place a letter in this box. For Rob and Geneva this represents a union of their families wishes and messages for the future. They will be read on the couple's first anniversary.*

## **The Water Ceremony (*Optional*)**

There is a saying in Eastern tradition that when you have love, even plain water is sweet. The clear water that you share today reflects the beauty and simplicity that is available to you both in remembering and devoting yourselves to the principal of love in your marriage. May it grow sweeter with each passing year. You may now drink from this fountain of love. (Couple gives each other a drink from the same glass)

## **The Wine Ceremony (*Optional*)**

*N. and N.* have decided to use wine as sign or their marriage today. In this glass before us are the fruits of God, Mankind and Mother Earth. The years of our lives are like a cup of wine that is poured out for the sake of labor, honor, and love.

Many are the days they will sit at the same table and eat and drink together. Many are the experiences they will share. As with a glass of wine, one may find it sweet, the other perhaps dry or somehow different.

So then, *N. and N.*, let the drink you share today serve as a reminder that although you may perceive things very differently, being right is never more important than being happy. With this space that you give each other, always putting your commitment to love and honor one another first, your lives together will grow deeper, richer and greatly satisfying, like a rare and fine wine.

You may now drink from this fountain of love and may your days be happy and long upon this earth together!

*(Couple gives each other a drink from the same glass)*

## **The Wine Box Ceremony (*Optional*)**

*N. and N.*, have chosen the Wine Box Ceremony to represent their commitment today. This box contains a bottle of wine, two glasses, and a *love letter* from each to the other. The letters describe the good qualities they find in one another, the reasons they fell in love, and their reasons for choosing to marry.

The letters are sealed in individual envelopes and they have not seen what the other has written. In other words, they have created their very own “romantic” time capsule to be opened on their 5th wedding anniversary.

*N. and N.*, I recommend that you keep this box in a place of honor prominently displayed in your home as a constant reminder of your commitment to each other and should you ever find your marriage enduring insurmountable hardships, you - as a couple - open this box, sit and drink the wine together, then separate and read the letters you wrote to one another when you were united as a couple in marriage.

By reading these love letters you will reflect upon the reasons you fell in love and chose to marry each other here today.

Our hope and prayer is, of course, that you will never have a reason to open this box. And if this is the case, you are to open this box to share and enjoy on your 5th year wedding anniversary!

*N. and N*, you may now seal the box.

## **Honoring the Directions** (*Often used in earth honoring traditions*)

In many ancient religious traditions, it is customary to bring a service of worship or celebration by calling on the four directions. This is a way of symbolically inviting all of creation to be present and take part in the festivities. This morning, we, too, want to invite the whole of creation to be with us here and now.

Oh, Great Spirit of the North, we come to you and ask for the strength and the power to bear what is cold and harsh in life. We come like the buffalo ready to receive the winds that truly can be overwhelming at times. Whatever is cold and uncertain in our life, we ask you to give us the strength to bear it. Do not let the winter blow us away. Oh, Spirit of Life and Spirit of the North, we ask you for strength and for warmth.

Oh, Great Spirit of the East, we turn to you where the sun comes up, from where the power of light and refreshment come. Everything that is born comes up in this direction the birth of babies, the birth of the puppies, the birth of ideas and the birth of friendship. Let there be the light. Oh, Spirit of the East, let the color of fresh rising in our life be glory to you.

Oh, Great Spirit of the South, spirit of all that is warm and gentle and refreshing, we ask you to give us this spirit of growth, of fertility, of gentleness. Caress us with a cool breeze when the days are hot. Give us seeds that the flowers, trees and fruits of the earth may grow. Give us the warmth of good friendships. Oh, Spirit of the South, send the warmth and the growth of your blessings.

Oh, Great Spirit of the West, where the sun goes down each day to come up the next, we turn to you in praise of sunsets and in thanksgiving for changes. You are the great colored sunset of the red west, which illuminates us. You are the powerful cycle, which pulls us to transformation. We ask for the blessings of the sunset. Keep us open to life's changes.

## **The Rose Ceremony** (*Option 1*)

Your gift to each other for your wedding today has been your wedding rings - which shall always be an outward demonstration of your vows of love and respect; and a public showing of your commitment to each other. You now have what remains the most honorable title that may exist between a man and a woman - the title of "husband" and "wife." For your first gift as husband and wife, that gift will be a single rose.

*(Roses are handed to couple by priest and exchanged)*

In the past, the rose was considered a symbol of love and a single rose always meant only one thing - it meant the words "I love you." So, it is appropriate that for your first gift - as husband and wife - that gift would be a single rose. Please exchange your first gift as husband and wife. (*couple exchanges roses*)

In some ways, it seems like you have not done anything at all. Just a moment ago you were holding one small rose - and now you are holding one small rose. In some ways, a marriage ceremony is like this. In some ways, tomorrow is going to seem no different than yesterday. But in fact, today, just now, you both have given and received one of the most valuable and precious gifts of life - one I hope you always remember - the gift of true and abiding love within the devotion of marriage.

*N. and N.*, I would ask that where ever you make your home in the future - whether it be a large and elegant home - or a small and graceful one - that you both pick one very special location for roses; so that on each anniversary of this truly wonderful occasion you both may take a rose to that spot both as a recommitment to your marriage - and a recommitment that THIS will be a marriage based upon love.

In every marriage, there are times where it is difficult to find the right words. It is easiest to hurt those who we most love. It is easiest to be hurt by those who we most love. It might be difficult some time to be able to express the words "I am sorry" or "I forgive you" or "I need you" or "I am hurting". If this should happen, if you simply can not find these words, leave a rose at that spot which both of you have selected - for that rose than says what matters most of all and should overpower all other things and all other words.

That rose says the words: "I still love you." The other should accept this rose for the words, which cannot be, found, and remember the love and hope that you both share today.

*N. and N.*, if there is anything you remember of this marriage ceremony, it is that it was love that brought you here today, it is only love, which can make it a glorious union, and it is by love which your marriage shall endure.

## **The Rose Ceremony (*Option 2*)**

*Crystal and Christopher* before you are officially pronounced, I would ask that you exchange these two roses with one another.

*(Roses are handed to couple by priest and exchanged)*

In some ways it seems like you have not done anything at all. Just a moment ago you were holding one small rose - and now you are holding one small rose. In some ways, a marriage ceremony is like this. In some ways, tomorrow is going to seem no different than yesterday. But in fact, today, just now, you both have given and received one of the most valuable and precious gifts of life - one I hope you always remember - the gift of true and abiding love within the devotion of marriage.

In every marriage, there are times where it is difficult to find the right words. It is easiest to hurt those who we most love. It is easiest to be hurt by those who we most love. It might be difficult some time to be able to express the words "I am sorry" or "I forgive you" or "I need you" or "I am hurting". If this should happen, if you simply cannot find these words, leave a rose at a spot which both of you have selected in advance in your home. And that rose will say the words you fail to find: "I still love you." The other should accept this rose for the words, which cannot be, found, and remember the love and hope that you both share today.

*Crystal and Christopher*, if there is anything you remember of this marriage ceremony, it is that it was love that brought you here today, it is only love, which can make it a glorious union, and it is by love, which your marriage shall endure. That is our wish for you today.

## **The Pinning of the Tartan (*Optional*)**

In a Traditional Scottish Wedding, after the couple has been pronounced Husband and Wife, the ancient Scottish tradition of “Pinning The Tartan” takes place.

We will honor this ancient tradition today for *N. and N.*

The mother of the groom will come forward with a sash of the family tartan and either drapes the sash over the shoulder of the bride or fastens a small piece of the tartan to her wedding dress with an appropriate kilt pin such as the Highland Dancer Scottish Piper (the Thistle, which is the emblem of Scotland or the Luckenbooth brooch, which is composed of intertwining hearts that is exchanged between lovers.)

Then, the Bride’s clan does the same as the roles are reversed.

*(When mothers are not present any member of the receiving clan can do the Pinning Of The Tartan.)*

## **Butterfly or Dove Ceremonies:**

*(In which live, beautiful butterflies or doves are released to the Heavens)*

See **Vendor Recommendations.**

### **Butterfly release: (according to an American Indian Legend)**

If anyone desires a wish to come true they must first capture a butterfly and whisper that wish to it.

Since a butterfly can make no sound, the butterfly can not reveal the wish to anyone but the Great Spirit who hears and sees all.

In gratitude for giving the beautiful butterfly its freedom, the Great Spirit always grants the wish.

So, according to legend, by making a wish and giving the butterfly its freedom, the wish will be taken to the heavens and be granted.

We have gathered to grant this couple all our best wishes and are about to set these butterflies free in trust that all these wishes will be granted.

# Dove Release: *(with Optional Poems)*

## Intro #1

For many centuries, the White Dove has been an emblem of Peace, Love and New Beginnings. As a symbolic gesture, to seal their marriage vows, (bride and groom) are now going to release these two pure white birds. The Doves will fly upwards and circle above us a few times, then fly home together, as a pair.

This symbolizes our newly wed couple setting off on their journey in life together, in harmony. (bride and groom), we wish for you, that your life together will be long, rich and rewarding. May your marriage carry with it all the wonderful qualities that the White Dove represents.

## Poem #2

As you begin your new journey as husband and wife,  
let this pair of doves symbolize the love and devotion  
that will grow through your years together.  
The memory of these two of nature's creatures,  
who bond together for life, will serve as  
inspiration as you both go forth -- traveling a path  
started by two, and combining as one  
with a never-ending love for one another.

## Poem #3

The Legend of the Doves One the Lord of Heaven chose two doves,  
both young and fair and told them of a very special journey they would share.  
"Go now upon the earth and seek two hearts where you may dwell,  
and there I shall surely come and make my home with you as well.  
We'll join the two and make them one. A Husband and a Wife,  
my spirit will endow their love with everlasting life.  
" Today the Doves still bring the sacred promise from above,  
to those whose hearts are open to the miracle of love.  
- Author Unknown

## Poem #4

On Wings of Love these white birds are a symbol  
of a public confession of true love. Spreading news for all to see,  
this marriage is made of Peace, Harmony and Unity.  
White winged messengers, set free today,  
are sent with blessings that will never fade away.

## Poem #5

*N. and N.* are now going to release these two pure white doves.  
The Doves will fly upwards and circle above us a few times, then fly home together as a pair.

This symbolizes our newly-wed couple setting off on their life together, in harmony. *N. and N.*, we pray that your life together will be prosperous in spirit, soul and body. May your marriage carry with it all the wonderful qualities of the Holy Spirit that the White Dove represents.

### Poem #6

Dove Poem Two doves meeting in the sky Two loves hand in hand,  
eye to eye Two parts of a loving whole Two hearts and a single soul  
Two stars shining big and bright Two fires bringing warmth and light  
Two songs played in perfect tune Two flowers growing into bloom  
Two Doves gliding in the air Two loves free without a care  
Two parts of a loving whole Two hearts and a single soul.  
- Author Unknown

### The Tree Ceremony: *(Optional)*

*N. and N.* have chosen an apple tree to symbolize their union. The tree itself was harvested from an (orchard, et al) near where *N.* grew up, and the rich soil comes from *N.*'s family garden where he was raised. The tree, and it required care, for *N. and N.* are symbols of love truth, peace, beauty and honesty; all things required in their new life together as husband and wife.

May their relationship and love be like this tree planted today. May it grow tall, strong, and resilient as together they endure the challenges of daily life, and may they always remember to nourish one another, with words of encouragement, trust, kindness and love, so that indeed they may grow together and reach their fullest potential - just like this tree.

## **Honoring and Recognizing Children during The Wedding:**

(Note: Below you will find the Family Medallion ceremony, which can be modified however you like to fit your situation and preferences. Instead of medallions, you can give your child/children flowers, jewelry, hugs or anything else. The important part is to make the child/children feel like they are a part of the festivities.)

### **Ceremony for Honoring Children: (Option as preamble or entirety)**

Often marriage is viewed as the union of two individuals. However, marriage is much broader. As we give thanks to God for the love that brings *N. and N.* together, so too we recognize the merging of families taking place and the additional love and responsibility that family and friends bring to this relationship.

We are, in fact, all members of one family, of Gods family, a relationship emphasized in the scriptures. And it was a happy day for God when we received our new lives, through the truth of God's work and we become, as it were, the first children in God's new family.

As part of the family nature of God's creation we recognize *N.* and the significant role he/she/they play(s) in this marriage today celebrated.

*(Child/children may be brought forward by grandparents or others if they are too young to stand as members of the wedding party.)*

### **Presentation of Medallions (or any other suitable object such as a rose, flower or piece of jewelry)**

*N. and N.* present to *N.* this/these Family Medallion(s) created as a symbol for new family relationship and in recognition of the hope and joy made visible through this marriage.

(Addressing child/children), *N.*, In the placing of this/these medallion(s), *N. and N.* pledge to you their continuing love even as they surround him/her now with their arms of support and protection.

### **Reading on Children (by Kahil Gibran)**

Our children are gifts entrusted to us not as objects to be controlled but as human beings, each unique in their own personality, each separate in their own identity. Consider the words from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran:

*"You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for they dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward not tarries with yesterday. You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth. "*



## Prayer for the Family

Creator God, you have made us in your own image, male and female, that together, we may live as members of your one family. As you surround us with never-ending love, strengthen us that we, too, might reflect your love, becoming ever supportive of one another in times of sorrow, forgiving of one in other in times of anger, patient in those moments when we seek to rebuild.

We give thanks, O Lord, for the relationship here celebrated. In your presence we are humbled by the recognition that, today, we face a new future, one which love has unfolded and is unfolding before our very eyes. May *N. and N.*, ever respect the sanctity of this gift and the strength of a deepening love for one another. Amen.

*N. and N.*, go forth bound together by the love of God. Go forth with hope and joy and a heart full of dreams, knowing that God is always with you.

## Introduction of the Family *(could also use at the end of the ceremony)*

It is my pleasure to present to you *N. and N.* in their new relationship as husband and wife and their son/daughter/children, *N.*

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## READINGS:

**Sample Readings, Poems and Prayers that can be used within your ceremony:**

### **The Invitation** *by Oriah*

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living.

I want to know what you ache for and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love for your dream for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon...

I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow

if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain mine or your own without moving to hide it or fade it or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy mine or your own if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful to be realistic to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true.

I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself.

If you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul.

If you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see Beauty even when it is not pretty every day.

And if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure yours and mine and still stand at the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, "Yes."

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have.

I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair weary and bruised to the bone and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here.

I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied.

I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

# The Key to Love

The key to love is understanding...

The ability to comprehend not only the spoken word,  
but those unspoken gestures,  
the little things that say so much by themselves.

The key to love is forgiveness...

to accept each others faults and pardon mistakes,  
without forgetting, but with remembering  
what you learn from them.

The key to love is sharing...

Facing your good fortunes as well as the bad, together;  
both conquering problems, forever searching for ways  
to intensify your happiness.

The key to love is giving...

without thought of return,  
but with the hope of just a simple smile,  
and by giving in but never giving up.

The key to love is respect...

realizing that you are two separate people, with different ideas; that you don't belong to each other,  
that you belong with each other, and share a mutual bond.

The key to love is inside us all...

It takes time and patience to unlock all the ingredients that will take you to its threshold;  
it is the continual learning process that demands a lot of work... but the rewards are more than worth  
the effort...

and that is the key to love.

## 1 Corinthians 13 *(often used in Christian weddings)*

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful;

it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect;

but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child;

when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.

So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

## **Psalm 1** (*often used in Jewish or interfaith weddings*)

Blessed are the man and the woman who have grown beyond themselves and have seen through their separations. They delight in the way things are and keep their hearts open, day and night. They are like trees planted near flowing rivers, which bear fruit when they are ready. Their leaves will not fall or wither. Everything they do will succeed.

## **On Friendship by Roy Croft** (*also called 'Love'; also called 'To my Friend'*)

I love you, not for what you are, but what I am, when I am with you.

I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but what you are making of me.

I love you for the part of me that you bring out.

I love you for putting your hand into my heaped up heart and passing over all the frivolous and weak things that you cannot help seeing there, and for drawing out into the light all the beautiful and radiant things that no one else has looked quite far enough to find...

I love you because you have done more than any creed could have done to make me good, and more than any fate could have done to make me happy.

You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign.

You have done it by being yourself.

Perhaps that is what being a friend means after all.

## **What is Love?** ~ *Susan Polis Schultz* ~

Love

Love is the strongest feeling known

an all-encompassing passion

an extreme strength

an overwhelming excitement

Love is trying not to hurt the other person

trying not to change the other person

trying not to dominate the other person

trying not to deceive the other person

Love is understanding each other

listening to each other

supporting each other

having fun with each other.

Love is not an excuse to stop growing

not an excuse to stop making yourself better

not an excuse to lessen one's goals  
not an excuse to take the other person for granted  
Love is being completely honest with each other  
finding dreams to share  
working towards common goals  
sharing responsibilities equally  
Everyone in the world wants to love  
Love is not a feeling to be taken lightly  
Love is a feeling to be cherished, nurtured and cared for  
Love is the reason for life

## **From This Day Forward**

From this day forward, let us laugh together, and plan together,  
let us find our favorite places, and go together...  
Let us enjoy the sunshine, and the rain,  
being alone together, and in crowds together...  
From this day forward, together,  
Let us love!  
Let Us Walk Together  
Let us walk together yet not as one, but such that our shadows are separate and distinct, such that  
our souls are unbound and free.  
Let us share our time, yet do not give all your time, nor take all of mine for in order to develop to the  
fullest, to be free, we must have solitude and individuality.  
Let me wander in solitude, when I need to be alone, yet be near, when I need you.  
Let us share our love.  
Give freely of your love, but do not smother me, my soul must breathe a free air.  
Take my love, but do not demand it, for love given of obligation, is stale and without life.  
Let us share our lives.  
Share my life, but do not try to shape it.  
Let me share your life, but do not let it revolve around me.  
Let us share ourselves.  
Accept me as I am, do not attempt to change me to fit your dreams.  
Respect me for what I am, not for what I was or one day may be.  
Share yourself with me, but do not allow me to limit your freedom or bind your soul.  
Let us share our minds, thoughts, goals, values and dreams.  
Let us develop these within ourselves without restriction or loss of freedom  
Thus our two free souls, may wander together as they develop in freedom.  
As we share our lives, as we walk through life together, know my love is yours, but not my soul for it  
must be free.

**From 'Letters to a Young Poet' ~ Rainer Maria Rilke ~**

For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation. Loving does not at first mean merging, surrendering, and uniting with another person - it is a high inducement for the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world in himself for the sake of another person; it is a great, demanding claim on him, something that chose him and calls him to vast distances.

## **From *To Know Yourself* ~ Swami Satchidananda ~**

A wedding is between two reflections of God. Two pairs of eyes see one vision. They are dedicated to serve one another and the humanity at large. Two minds come together to help each other realize their true nature. Going side by side with the right partner is a good way to reach God quickly. When the husband's and the wife's love for each other blends together and becomes love of God, marriage is a divine institution.

## **The Next Passage ~ Prophet Kahlil Gibran ~**

And what of Marriage, master?

And he answered saying:

You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore.  
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.  
Ay, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.  
But let there be spaces in your togetherness,  
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love:  
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.

Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.  
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.  
Sing and Dance together and be joyous, but each one of you be alone.  
Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.  
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.  
And stand together yet not too near together:  
For the pillars of the temple stand apart, And the oak tree and the cypress grow  
not in each other's shadow

## **Love Sonnet XVII ~ Pablo Neruda ~**

I do not love you as if you were a salt rose, or topaz  
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.

I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,  
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms  
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;  
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,  
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.  
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;  
So I love you because I know no other way

than this: where I does not exist, nor you,  
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,  
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

## **When You Love Someone** ~ *Anne Morrow Lindburgh* ~

“When you love someone you do not love them all the time, in exactly the same way, from moment to moment. It is an impossibility. The only continuity possible, in life as in love, is in growth, in fluidity, in freedom, in the sense that dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern.

The only real security is not in owning or possessing, not in demanding or expecting, not in hoping even. Security in a relationship lies neither in looking back to what was in nostalgia, nor forward to what might be in dread or anticipation, but living in the present relationship and accepting it as it is now. One must accept the security of the winged life, of ebb and flow, of intermittency.”

## **Blessing for A Marriage** ~ *James Dillet Freeman* ~

May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, and may life grant you also patience, tolerance, and understanding.

May you always need one another - not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness. A mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the mountain less, but more; and the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. So let it be with you and you.

May you need one another, but not out of weakness.

May you want one another, but not out of lack.

May you entice one another, but not compel one another.

May you embrace one another, but not out encircle one another.

May you succeed in all important ways with one another, and not fail in the little graces.

May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you!" and take no notice of small faults.

If you have quarrels that push you apart, may both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back.

May you enter into the mystery, which is the awareness of one another's presence - no more physical than spiritual, warm and near when you are side-by-side, and warm and near when you are in

separate rooms or even distant cities.

May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy.

May you have love, and may you find it loving one another.

## **Excerpt from *The Bridge Across Forever* ~ Richard Bach ~**

A soul mate is someone who has locks that fit our keys, and keys to fit our locks. When we feel safe enough to open the locks, our truest selves step out and we can be completely and honestly who we are; we can be loved for who we are and not for who we're pretending to be. Each unveils the best part of the other. No matter what else goes wrong around us, with that one person we're safe in our own paradise. Our soul mate is someone who shares our deepest longings, our sense of direction. When we're two balloons, and together our direction is up, chances are we've found the right person. Our soul mate is the one who makes life come to life.

## **Marriage Joins Two People in The Circle Of Its Love**

*~ Edmund O'Neill ~*

Marriage is a commitment to life, the best that two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other relationship can equal. It is a physical and an emotional joining that is promised for a lifetime.

Within the circle of its love, marriage encompasses all of life's most important relationships. A wife and a husband are each other's best friend, confidant, lover, teacher, listener, and critic. And there may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing, and the love of the other may resemble the tender caring of a parent for a child.

Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life. Happiness is fuller, memories are fresher, commitment is stronger, even anger is felt more strongly, and passes away more quickly.

Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life, new experiences, and new ways of expressing a love that is deeper than life. When two people pledge their love and care for each other in marriage, they create a spirit unique unto themselves, which binds them, closer than any spoken or written words. Marriage is a promise, a potential made in the hearts of two people who love each other and takes a lifetime to fulfill.

## **On Love ~ Thomas Kempis ~**

Love is a mighty power,

a great and complete good.

Love alone lightens every burden, and makes rough places smooth.

It bears every hardship as though it were nothing, and renders all bitterness sweet and acceptable.

Nothing is sweeter than love,

Nothing stronger,



Nothing higher,  
Nothing wider,  
Nothing more pleasant,  
Nothing fuller or better in heaven or earth; for love is born of God.

Love flies, runs and leaps for joy.  
It is free and unrestrained.  
Love knows no limits, but ardently transcends all bounds.  
Love feels no burden, takes no account of toil,  
attempts things beyond its strength.

Love sees nothing as impossible,  
for it feels able to achieve all things.  
It is strange and effective,  
while those who lack love faint and fail.

Love is not fickle and sentimental,  
nor is it intent on vanities.  
Like a living flame and a burning torch,  
it surges upward and surely surmounts every obstacle.

## **What Is Love?** ~ *Author Unknown* ~

Sooner or later we begin to understand that love is more than verses on valentines and romance in the movies. We begin to know that love is here and now, real and true, the most important thing in our lives. For love is the creator of our favorite memories and the foundation of our fondest dreams. Love is a promise that is always kept, a fortune that can never be spent, a seed that can flourish in even the most unlikely of places. And this radiance that never fades, this mysterious and magical joy, is the greatest treasure of all - one known only by those who love.

## **True Love** ~ *Author Unknown* ~

True love is a sacred flame  
That burns eternally,  
And none can dim its special glow  
Or change its destiny.  
True love speaks in tender tones  
And hears with gentle ear,  
True love gives with open heart  
And true love conquers fear.  
True love makes no harsh demands  
It neither rules nor binds,  
And true love holds with gentle hands  
The hearts that it entwines.

# The Art of Marriage

The little things are the big things.

It is never being too old to hold hands.

It is remembering to say "I love you" at least once a day.

It is never going to sleep angry.

It is at no time taking the other for granted; the courtship should not end with the honeymoon, it should continue through all the years.

It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives.

It is standing together facing the world.

It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.

It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the spirit of joy.

It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.

It is not expecting the husband to wear a halo or the wife to have wings of an angel.

It is not looking for perfection in each other.

It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humor.

It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.

It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.

It is finding room for the things of the spirit.

It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.

It is establishing a relationship in which the independence is equal, dependence is mutual and the obligation is reciprocal.

It is not only marrying the right partner, it is being the right partner.

## Sonnet XVII (*100 Love Sonnets, 1960*)

I don't love you as if you were the salt-rose, topaz

or arrow of carnations that propagate fire:

I love you as certain dark things are loved,  
secretly, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that doesn't bloom and carries

hidden within itself the light of those flowers,

and thanks to your love, darkly in my body

lives the dense fragrance that rises from the earth.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where,

I love you simply, without problems or pride:

I love you in this way because I don't know any other way of loving

but this, in which there is no I or you,  
so intimate that your hand upon my chest is my hand,  
so intimate that when I fall asleep it is your eyes that close.

## Remembrance Poem

Remembrance poems that aren't cloying or overly sentimental are hard to find, even with the wealth of material on the Internet. However, if all else fails, here's a simple and meaningful one to include with your tribute to lost family members.

We Remember You.

We remember you in the spring, when the world bursts to life and flowers crest faraway hills and fields.

We remember you in the summer when the sun bakes our skin and waves of heat rise from the pavement.

We remember you in the fall when the cool winds blow and the sun shines down through rainbow trees.

We remember you in the winter when our breath hangs still and heavy in the crisp air and ice sparkles on the grass.

We remember you on this day and always and want you to know you are always with us.

## Union ~Robert Fulghum ~

You have known each other from the first glance of acquaintance to this point of commitment. At some point, you decided to marry. From that moment of yes to this moment of yes, indeed, you have been making promises and agreements in an informal way. All those conversations that were held riding in a car or over a meal or during long walks – all those sentences that began with “When we’re married” and continued with “I will” and “you will” and “we will” – those late night talks that included “someday” and “somehow” and “maybe” – and all those promises that are unspoken matters of the heart. All these common things, and more, are the real process of a wedding.

The symbolic vows that you are about to make are a way of saying to one another, “You know all those things we’ve promised and hoped and dreamed – well, I meant it all, every word.”

Look at one another and remember this moment in time. Before this moment you have been many things to one another – acquaintance, friend, companion, lover, dancing partner, and even teacher, for you have learned much from one another in these last few years. Now you shall say a few words that take you across a threshold of life, and things will never quite be the same between you. For after these vows, you shall say to the world, this is my husband, this is my wife.

## Grow Old With Me ~Adam Sandler ~

I wanna make you smile whenever you're sad  
Carry you around when your arthritis is bad  
Oh all I wanna do is grow old with you

I'll get your medicine when your tummy aches

Build you a fire if the furnace breaks  
Oh it could be so nice, growing old with you

I'll miss you  
Kiss you  
Give you my coat when you are cold

Need you  
Feed you  
Even let ya hold the remote control

So let me do the dishes in our kitchen sink  
Put you to bed when you've had too much to drink  
I could be the man who grows old with you  
I wanna grow old with you

## **Excerpt from "The Notebook" ~Nicholas Sparks ~**

Marriage is about becoming a team.  
You're going to spend the rest of your life learning about each other, and every now and then, things blow up.  
But the beauty of marriage is that if you picked the right person and you both love each other, you'll always figure out a way to get through it.

## **I Promise ~Dorothy Colgan ~**

I promise to give you the best of myself  
and to ask of you no more than you can give.

I promise to respect you as your own person  
and to realize that your interests, desires and needs  
are no less important than my own.

I promise to share with you my time and my attention  
and to bring joy, strength and imagination to our relationship.

I promise to keep myself open to you,  
to let you see through the window of my world into my innermost fears and feelings, secrets and dreams.

I promise to grow along with you,  
to be willing to face changes in order to keep our relationship alive and exciting.

I promise to love you in good times and bad,  
with all I have to give and all I feel inside in the only way I know how. Completely and forever.

## **An Excerpt from “The Velveteen Rabbit” ~ Margery Williams ~**

“What is REAL?” asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. “Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?”

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but Really loves you, then you become Real.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don’t mind being hurt.”

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get all loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”

## **How Falling in Love is Like Owning a Dog ~ Taylor Mali ~**

First of all, it’s a big responsibility,

especially in a city like Philadelphia.

So think long and hard before deciding on love.

On the other hand, love gives you a sense of security:

when you’re walking down the street late at night

and you have a leash on love

no one's going to mess with you.

On cold winter nights, love is warm.

It lies between you and lives and breathes

and makes funny noises.

Love wakes you up all hours of the night with its needs.

It needs to be fed so it will grow and stay healthy.

Love doesn't like being left alone for long.

But come home and love is always happy to see you.

It may break a few things accidentally in its passion for life,

but you can never be mad at love for long.

Love makes messes.

Love leaves you little surprises here and there.

Love needs lots of cleaning up after.

Sometimes you just want to get love fixed.

Sometimes you want to roll up a piece of newspaper

and swat love on the nose,

not so much to cause pain,

just to let love know Don't you ever do that again!

Sometimes love just wants to go out for a nice long walk.

Because love loves exercise. It will run you around the block

and leave you panting, breathless. Pull you in different directions

at once, or wind itself around and around you

until you're all wound up and you cannot move.

But love makes you meet people wherever you go.

People who have nothing in common but love

stop and talk to each other on the street.

Throw things away and love will bring them back,

again, and again, and again.

But most of all, love needs love, lots of it.

And in return, love loves you and never stops.

## Most Like an Arch This Marriage ~ John Ciardi ~

Most like an arch – an entrance which upholds  
and shores the stone-crush up the air like lace.  
Mass made idea, and idea held in place.  
A lock in time. Inside half-heaven unfolds.

Most like an arch – two weaknesses that lean  
into a strength. Two fallings become firm.  
Two joined abeyances become a term  
naming the fact that teaches fact to mean.

Not quite that? Not much less. World as it is,  
what's strong and separate falters. All I do  
at piling stone on stone apart from you  
is roofless around nothing. Till we kiss

I am no more than upright and unset.  
It is by falling in and in we make  
the all-bearing point, for one another's sake,  
in faultless failing, raised by our own weight.



## A Few Scripture Choices:

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### **Options for the First Reading (Old Testament)**

Male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-28, 31)

The two of them become one body. (Genesis 2:18-24)

In his love for Rebekah, Isaac found solace after the death of his mother. (Genesis 24:48-51, 58-67)

May he grant you mercy and peace. (Tobit 7:9-10, 11-15)

Allow us to live together to a happy old age. (Tobit 8:5-7)

The woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. (Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31)

Stern as death is love. (Song of Songs 2:8-10, 14, 16; 8:6-7)

Like the sun rising in the Lord's heavens,

the beauty of a virtuous wife is the radiance of her home. (Sirach 26:1-4, 13-16)

I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. (Jeremiah 31:31-32a, 33-34a)

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### **Options for the Responsorial Psalm**

The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord (Psalm 33:12, 18, 20-21, 22)

I will bless the Lord at all times (Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9)

The Lord is kind and merciful (Psalm 103:1-2, 8, 13, 17-18)

Happy are those who do what the Lord commands (Psalm 112:1-2, 3-4, 5-7, 7-8, 9)

Happy are those who fear the Lord (Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5)

The Lord is compassionate to all his creatures (Psalm 145:8-9, 10, 15, 17-18)

Let all praise the name of the Lord (Psalm 148:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14)

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### **Options for the Second Reading (New Testament)**

What will separate us from the love of Christ? (Romans 8:31-35, 37-39).

Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. (Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 [long form] or Romans 12:1-2, 9-13 [short form])

Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you. (Romans 15:1b-3a, 5-7, 13)

Your body is a temple of the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20)

If I do not have love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 12:31 - 13:8)

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the Church. (Ephesians 5:2, 21-33 [long form] or Ephesians 5:2, 25-32 [short form])



The God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:4-9)  
And over all these put on love,  
that is, the bond of perfection. (Colossians 3:12-17)  
Let marriage be held in honor by all. (Hebrews 13:1-4a, 5-6b)  
Be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another. (1 Peter 3:1-9)  
Love in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18-24)  
God is love (1 John 4:7-12)  
Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:1, 5-9)

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### **Options for the Gospel Reading**

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Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. (Matthew 5:1-12)  
You are the light of the world. (Matthew 5:13-16)  
A wise man built his house on rock. (Matthew 7:21, 24-29 [long form] or Matthew 7:21, 24-25 [short form])  
What God has united, man must not separate. (Matthew 19:3-6)  
This is the greatest and the first commandment.  
The second is like it. (Matthew 22:35-40)  
They are no longer two, but one flesh. (Mark 10:6-9)  
Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee. (John 2:1-11)  
Remain in my love. (John 15:9-12)  
This is my commandment: love one another. (John 15:12-16)  
That they may be brought to perfection as one. (John 17:20-26 [long form] or 17:20-23 [short form])

## A Sample Ceremony:

### **The Invocation:**

*To the gathered Assembly and the couple the priest says:*

✕ ✕ ✕ In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

*All: Amen!*

### **The Welcome:**

Good *afternoon*. We gather here today to witness and celebrate an act of deep love. *Katherine and Jason*, in their devotion, respect, and love for each other wish to unite in the holy bond of marriage, and to dedicate themselves to each other's happiness and wellbeing as life mates and partners. On behalf of them, I welcome you all.

### **The Foundation:**

*Kate and Jason*, I will remind you both that Marriage is a supreme sharing; perhaps the greatest and most challenging adventure in the most intimate of human relationships. It is the joyful uniting of a man and a woman whose care and affection and understanding have flowered into a deep and abiding love. Those who take its sacred vows have their lives blended together into one, as the waters of two rivers are joined when they come together to form an even greater one.

A true spiritual marriage is an act of metamorphosis, a profound mystery of creation and rebirth, as two become one. It is not a giving up or loss of oneself, but rather a giving over of oneself to something greater, a transformation of self in which each one can say, "*I am no longer only I but also we.*" It is a process in which each can be challenged to discover new possibilities in themselves and each other.

In such a marriage, the wedding ceremony is the gateway into this mystery. For the lives the two of you have lived up until this moment are, in some sense, now truly completed and over. Together you now live within the creation of something wholly new and transcendent, something which has never existed before your miraculous marriage - an expression that is at once public and private, precious, sacred, and truly unique to the two of you. In this act, you open yourselves to a fuller experience and expression of the great, vast miracle of love.

Remember that no ceremony can create your marriage. Only you can do that through love, patience, dedication, perseverance through talking and listening and trying to understand through helping and supporting and believing in each other through learning to forgive, learning to respect and appreciate your differences, and learning to make the important things matter and to let go of the rest. What this ceremony can do is to witness and affirm the choice you have made to begin a new life today as husband and wife.

### **The Honoring and Silent Blessing:**

*Kate and Jason wish* to acknowledge their parents on this occasion. They offer their profound gratitude to their parents for all the love and care they showed in raising them. The unconditional gifts of love and support that you have continually offered have inspired them to become who they are today, and they thank you, from the bottom of their hearts, for guiding them to this celebration of love here today. Without you, this day would not be possible.

*\*\* pause for hug to parents\*\**

*Kate and Jason* also wish to honor those who could not be present here on this day, but are close to us in heart. We are specially mindful of Raymond Manetta, Christine Jorski, Janet Ruyak, (pronounced "roo yak") and Sylvia Gullo Driscoll. Let us now pause and close our eyes to bring to mind these loved ones. Though they are absent physically, we invoke, through our thoughts and prayers, their loving presence.

And now, from our hearts, we ourselves contemplate all the blessings we would bestow upon *Kate and Jason* in their lives as a couple and a family – and in our sincere desire to bless, we in turn, are blessed as well.

*(a silent pause)*

Priest: Blessed Be.

### **The Readings:**

Proverbs 31 (read by the bride's uncle, Michael Ruyak)

I Cor (read by the groom's aunt, Tina Carroll)

### **The Vows & Ring Ceremony:**

*Kate and Jason* will exchange their rings and declare their vows as they begin their life together as one.

**Priest:** *Jason*, do you take Katherine, to be your *wife*? Do you promise to be true 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?

**Groom:** I do.

**Priest:** *Katherine*, do you take Jason, 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.

### **The Ring Ceremony:**

And so we come *Kate and Jason* to the presentation of rings by which you symbolize and bind your love.

*Rings are handed to the priest and he continues,*

Traditionally, the passage to the status of “husband and wife” is marked by the exchange of rings.

These rings are a symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end, no giver and no receiver for each is the giver and each is the receiver. As often as either of you looks at this symbol, I hope that you will be reminded of the commitment to love each other, which you have made today.

*Join me as I ask for God's blessing upon these rings,*

In the Presence of God, your families and friends, seal your promises now with these rings; signs and tokens of the life you are about to enter together. Bless ✕ ✕ ✕ O Lord the giving of these rings that *Kate and Jason* who wear them may do so in abiding Peace, Love, and Good Will forever more. *Amen.*

*Jason, please place the ring on Kate's left hand and repeat after me,*

**Groom:** Kate, I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you.

*By the same token Kate, you may place a ring on Jason's finger and repeat after me,*

**Bride:** Jason, I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you.

May you wear these rings as the enclosing bond of reverence and trust, and fulfill the circle of love that now makes your lives one.

**The Blessing:**

*Katherine and Jason* may God bless and keep you, may the sun of many days and years shine upon you, may the love you have for one another grow and hold you close.

May the good true light within you guide your way together. May your dreams come true and when they don't may new dreams arise.

And long, long years from now, may you look at one another and be able to say, 'Because of you I have become the person I longed to be'.

**The Prayer and Pronouncement:**

*To the assembly and the couple,*

*Let us Pray:* Dear God, thank you for this joyous day. Thank you for Your Light that has entered *Kate and Jason's* life. Thank you for all the miracles and blessings. Please bless this union. Help them find the perfect place in this world for their love to flourish. Let the radiant light of their love shine on all those around them. May all their future creations be blessed. God, bless them with the inner gifts of trust, compassion, forgiveness and truth that they may live and grow together in love and peace. *Amen.*

*Kate and Jason,* in the presence of God, your family and friends today, you have spoken the words and performed the rites which unite your lives. It is my greatest joy and privilege as a priest in Christ's one holy Catholic and Apostolic church and my legal right as a minister authorized to do by this Commonwealth to declare you husband and wife.

*Jason,* you may now kiss your bride.

**The Benediction:**

*To the Assembly and the couple:*

Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing....

May the Peace that passes all understanding be yours now and forevermore.

*The priest says to the assembly,*

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my highest honor and privilege to present to all of you for the very first time, *Mr. and Mrs. Jason Smith!*

## **The Recessional**