

## **The Episcopal Wedding Service in the Book of Common Prayer**

### **Concerning the Service**

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God. In the Episcopal Church it is required that one, at least, of the parties must be a baptized Christian; that the ceremony be attested by at least two witnesses; and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church.

A priest or a bishop normally presides at the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, because such ministers alone have the function of pronouncing the nuptial blessing, and of celebrating the Holy Eucharist.

When both a bishop and a priest are present and officiating, the bishop should pronounce the blessing and preside at the Eucharist.

A deacon, or an assisting priest, may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other assisting functions at the Eucharist.

Where it is permitted by civil law that deacons may perform marriages, and no priest or bishop is available, a deacon may use the service which follows, omitting the nuptial blessing which follows The Prayers.

It is desirable that the Lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles be read by lay persons. In the opening exhortation (at the symbol of N.N. ), the full names of the persons to be married are declared. Subsequently, only their Christian names are used.

### **The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, BCP p.423**

*At the time appointed, the persons to be married, with their witnesses assemble in the church or some other appropriate place.*

*During their entrance, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.*

*Then the Celebrant, facing the people and the persons to be married, with the woman to the right and the man to the left, addresses the congregation and says*

Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God 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 people.

The union of husband and wife 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, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

Into this holy union N.N. and N.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 for ever hold your peace.

*Then the Celebrant 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.

### **The Declaration of Consent**

*The Celebrant says to the woman*

N., will you have this man to be your husband; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

*The Woman answers*

I will.

*The Celebrant says to the man*

N., will you have this woman to be your wife; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

*The Man answers*

I will.

*The Celebrant then addresses the congregation, saying*

Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these two persons in their marriage?

*People* We will.

*A hymn, psalm, or anthem may follow.*

### **The Ministry of the Word**

*The Celebrant then says to the people*

The Lord be with you. *People* And also with you.

Let us pray.

O gracious and everliving God, you have created us male and female in your image: Look mercifully upon this man and this woman who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and

keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

*Amen.*

*Then one or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture is read. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.*

Genesis 1:26-28 (Male and female he created them)

Genesis 2:4-9,15-24 (A man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh) Song of

Solomon 2:10-13;8:6-7 (Many waters cannot quench love)

Tobit 8:5b-8 (New English Bible) (That she and I may grow old together)

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (Love is patient and kind)

Ephesians 3:14-19 (The Father from whom every family is named) Ephesians 5:1-2,21-33

(Walk in love, as Christ loved us)

Colossians 3:12-17 (Love which binds everything together in harmony) 1 John 4:7-16 (Let us love one another for love is of God)

*Between the Readings, a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate Psalms are 67, 127, and 128.*

*When a passage from the Gospel is to be read, all stand, and the Deacon or Minister appointed says*

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to \_\_\_\_\_. *People* Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Matthew 5:1-10 (The Beatitudes)

Matthew 5:13-16 (You are the light ... Let your light so shine)

Matthew 7:21,24-29 (Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock) Mark 10:6-9,13-16 (They are no longer two but one)

John 15:9-12 (Love one another as I have loved you)

*After the Gospel, the Reader says*

The Gospel of the Lord. *People* Praise to you, Lord Christ.

*A homily or other response to the Readings may follow.*

## **The Marriage**

*The Man, facing the woman and taking her right hand in his, says*

In the Name of God, I, N., take you, N., to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

*Then they loose their hands, and the Woman, still facing the man, takes his right hand in hers, and says*

In the Name of God, I, N., take you, N., to be my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

*They loose their hands.*

*The Priest may ask God's blessing on a ring or rings as follows*

Bless, O Lord, this ring to be a sign of the vows by which this man and this woman have bound themselves to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*The giver places the ring on the ring-finger of the other's hand and says*

N., I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (or in the Name of God).

*Then the Celebrant joins the right hands of husband and wife and says*

Now that N. and N. have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the joining of hands and the giving and receiving of a ring, I pronounce that they are husband and wife, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder. *People Amen.*

## **The Prayers**

*All standing, the Celebrant says*

Let us pray together in the words our Savior taught us.

*People and Celebrant*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed 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 and ever. Amen.

*If Communion is to follow, the Lord's Prayer may be omitted here.*

*The Deacon or other person appointed reads the following prayers, to which the People respond, saying, Amen. If there is not to be a Communion, one or more of the prayers may be omitted.*

Let us pray.

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which your Son gave his life, and especially upon this man and this woman whom you make one flesh in Holy Matrimony. *Amen.*

Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy. *Amen.*

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their life. *Amen.*

Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours. *Amen.*

Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair. *Amen.*

Bestow on them, if it is your will, the gift and heritage of children, and the grace to bring them up to know you, to love you, and to serve you. *Amen.*

Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others. *Amen.*

Grant that all married persons who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed. *Amen.*

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all your children are united one to another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by your grace, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where, O Father, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign in perfect unity, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **The Blessing of the Marriage**

*The people remain standing. The husband and wife kneel, and the Priest says one of the following prayers*

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 this man and this woman. 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, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

*or this*

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his Church: Send therefore your blessing upon these your servants, that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*The husband and wife still kneeling, the Priest adds this blessing*

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting. *Amen.*

## **The Peace**

*The Celebrant may say to the people*

The peace of the Lord be always with you. *People* And also with you.

*The newly married couple then greet each other, after which greetings may be exchanged throughout the congregation.*

*When Communion is not to follow, the wedding party leaves the church. A hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.*

## **At the Eucharist**

*The liturgy continues with the Offertory, at which the newly married couple may present the offerings of bread and wine.*

*Preface of Marriage*

*At the Communion, it is appropriate that the newly married couple receive Communion first, after the ministers.*

*In place of the usual post-communion prayer, the following is said*

O God, the giver of all that is true and lovely and gracious: We give you thanks for binding us together in these holy mysteries of the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that by your Holy Spirit, N. and N., now joined in Holy Matrimony, may become one in heart and soul, live in fidelity and peace, and obtain those eternal joys prepared for all who love you; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*As the wedding party leaves the church, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung; or instrumental music may be played.*