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New Liturgy and the Wedding Rite

Brides and grooms may personally pick out a major share of the prayers, readings and ceremonies of their wedding and nuptial Mass from now on as the result of the latest liturgical changes authorized by the Bishops of the U.S.

The former ritual for the wedding ceremony and the accompanying Mass was rigidly the same from parish to parish. From now on the couple to be married may choose from a wide variety of options covering the procession into the church, the marriage rite itself and the Mass and may stipulate their wishes in advance to the priest who will hear their vows.

The revision of this sacrament began in 1968 as authorized by the Bishops of the world at the Vatican Council and after try-outs in various parishes in different parts of the world the new liturgy becomes effective this Spring in the U.S.

Most novel features in the new marriage liturgy are the role which may be played by the parents of the bride and groom, the choosing of any 3 of 27 suggested Scriptural readings and the choice of petition prayers at three points in the Mass.

Also new are variations in the words of consent at the moment of marriage and several new forms for the nuptial blessings traditionally given before communion and at the end of Mass.

The intention behind the new ceremonies, liturgical scholars

say, is to emphasize that marriage is "a covenant between two people, a sign of sacramental grace and a testimonial of the community of love in the family of God."

For the entrance rite, the priest vested for Mass, meets the bride and groom at the church door, showing that the Church shares in their joy and graciously welcomes them. He then leads the procession of the bridal party into the sanctuary. The parents of the bride and groom may be in the procession escorting their son and daughter respectively, if the couple wish.

The three readings from Holy Scripture which the bridal couple have previously chosen for the Liturgy of the Word may be read at the lectern by some one in the bridal party or by a member of the families of the bride and groom.

A homily shall always be preached just before the wedding rite. The priest, personalizing the message for the couple being married, is expected to speak on the dignity of wedded love, the mystery and

grace of the sacrament, and the responsibilities of married people.

The ceremony of the marriage consent and the blessing of the rings is shorter than the old form.

One change is that the couple are asked three questions about their freedom of choice, their intended faithfulness to each other and the acceptance and care of future children.

At the moment of speaking their vows the couples are now urged to face the congregation

or to turn directly toward each other so that the congregation may see their faces in profile.

There shall be an offertory procession at each nuptial Mass and the bride and groom shall bring the wine and water and hosts to the altar. To show their awareness of adult responsibility as a new family in society, the couple may also bring to the altar a gift for the poor.

Just before communion time, the priest will give the "kiss of peace" to the bride and groom. They will then show their peace and love for each other in an appropriate way and pass the greeting on to all present in the church.

The bride and groom may receive Holy Communion under the form of the bread and the wine.

The revised liturgy recommends that there shall be no Nuptial Mass when the bride and groom are not both Catholic. Previous permission to have a Mass for a mixed-marriage often resulted in embarrassment when the non-Catholic members of the wedding party and other non-Catholic guests could not receive the Eucharist.

In the new ritual for a mixed marriage, the reception of the wedding party, the liturgy of the word and the marriage rite would be the same as usual. But there would be no Liturgy of Holy Communion and the ceremony would conclude with the nuptial blessing, the Our Father and the final blessing.



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