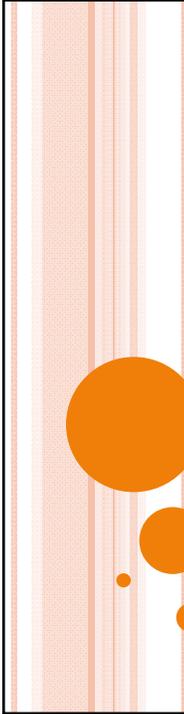


**SOUTHWEST LITURGICAL  
CONFERENCE:  
ENGAGING COUPLES IN  
WEDDING LITURGY  
PREPARATION**

**How can parishes and other ecclesial communities involve engaged couples in the preparations for their wedding liturgy? This workshop will present models for engaging the couple who, according to Church teaching, are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage.**



**Overview**

**1- Background and Context  
for our conversation**

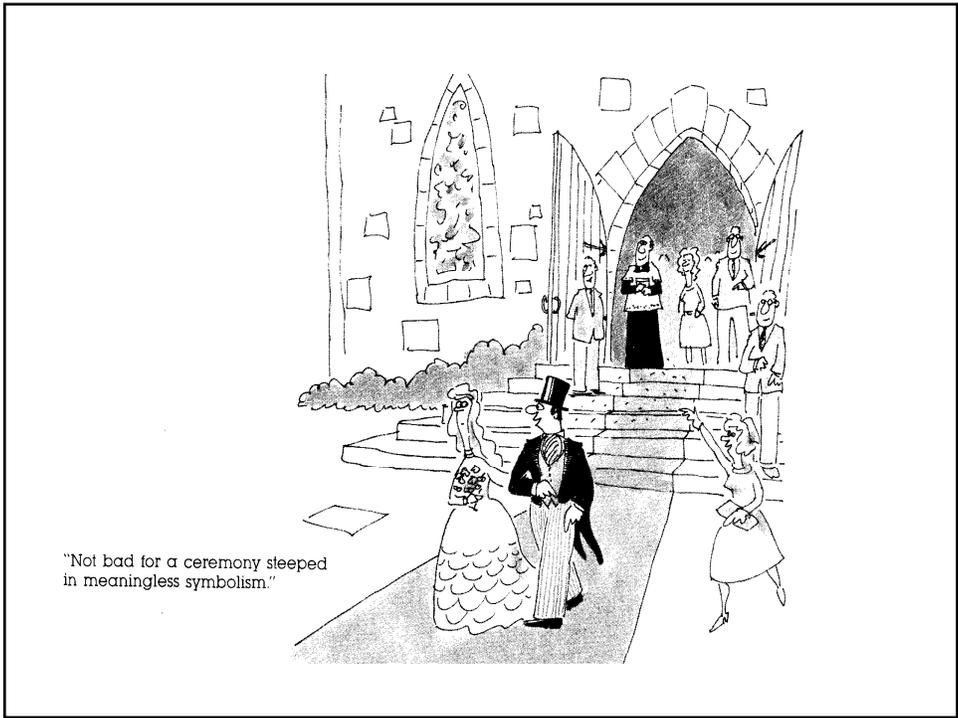
**2 – The couple as the minister  
of the Sacrament of Marriage**

**3 – Models for involving  
couples in the preparations  
for the wedding liturgy**

**4 – Advice and options in our  
current rites to suggest to  
couples**

**1- Background and Context  
for our conversation**





# Scenes From a Marriage

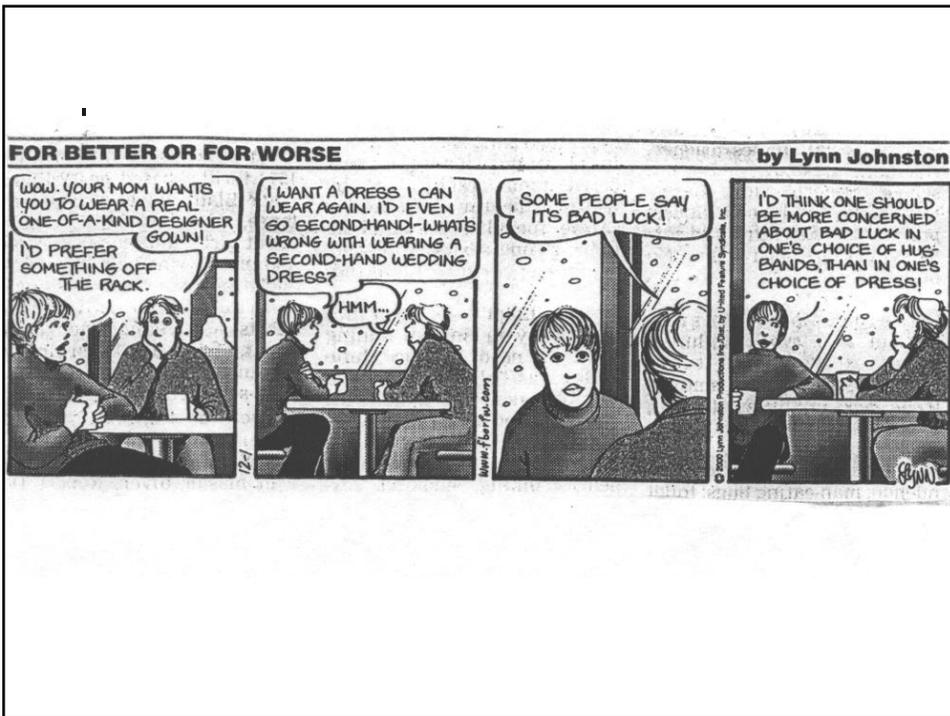
*Checkbooks ready?  
Big weddings are back*

**"M**other," said Amy Wels, "don't do that to me."  
Marguerite Wels tugged at the bodice of her daughter's bridal gown. "Thank God," she said. "It's better than anything else we've looked at. But it will have to come in here."  
Hold the joy for the ceremony. This is just part of a long, tough job. "Amy is such a skinny thing. So flat-chested," Marguerite has explained. "Nothing looked right." So Mother left her Park Avenue apartment in Manhattan and, with daughter in tow, journeyed to Bay Ridge in Brooklyn, where she found Kleinfeld's and, at last, a suitable wedding dress.  
"I've dragged her all over New York," says Marguerite, as Amy wends her way back to the fitting room. "This is hardest for the mother. I can't wait until she goes back to San Francisco tomorrow. Amy is



Indianola, Miss.: the wedding party gathers with Delinda Thompson-Thomas and Kenneth Thomas at Mount Beulah Missionary Baptist Church

TIME, JULY 7, 1986





## ***TRADITION***

---

“Every tradition grows ever more venerable – the more remote is its origin, the more confused that origin is.”

--Friedrich Nietzsche, 1878,  
*Human All Too Human*



## ***TRADITION***

---

- TRADITION...is the living faith of the dead.
- TRADITIONALISM...is the dead faith of the living.

--Jaroslav Pelikan, 1983, *The Vindication of Tradition: Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities*

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## 71 Fewer Catholics getting married in church

By The Associated Press  
 on October 21, 2012 at 2:00 PM, updated October 21, 2012 at 2:06 PM

**"You can't point a finger to any one thing," said Hughes, co-director of Faith and Family Life Formation.**

BERLIN — The dwindling number of marriages at his parish was the subject of a recent homily by the Rev. Jim Dabrowski of St. Simon Stock Catholic Church.

The Berlin pastor — who never fails to cheer on Eagles fans after Sunday

Mass — had sobering news when it came to Catholic unions in his 1,871-family parish.

"We had a pre-Cana meeting last week and only 10 couples showed up," said Dabrowski, referring to the church's premarriage counseling sessions. "We have eight scheduled weddings next year; this year there were 13."

"That's just way off," Dabrowski told the *Courier-Post*, noting that baptism numbers in the parish have remained stable. "It raises the question of why?"

A 2011 study by the Catholic publisher Our Sunday Visitor shows St. Simon Stock is not

Fewer Catholics, including those in New Jersey, are bringing the knot in church. In this 1990 file photo, Priya Tahilani and Andrew Wagner walk down the aisle at the conclusion of their Catholic wedding in Flatham and had a Hindu ceremony afterward.

John O'Day/The Star-Ledger

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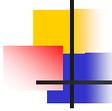
- 766 Gun control finds support in N.J., according to latest poll
- 210 Bamboozled: Wal-Mart sells phony iPad, then refuses refund
- 188 New York passes nation's toughest gun control law
- 156 Wrestling live chat for Top 20 and individual wrestler rankings tonight at 8
- 108 Days before election, interns for Menendez was spared arrest, report says

## Our Current Context

*"Marriages celebrated in the nation's parishes fell from 415,487 in 1972 to 168,400 in 2010, a decrease of more than 50 percent. At the same time, the Catholic population increased by about 17 million. Our Sunday Visitor calculated a change in the 'crude' marriage rate from 8.6 marriages per 1,000 Catholics to 2.6 marriages per in 2010. That compares with 6.8 marriages per 1,000 people overall in the U.S."*

*"At least one person cited popular destination weddings as a sign of what he calls 'our disconnected, secular, consumerist culture.'"*

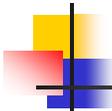
*"The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life — a project of the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C. — released a study this month culled from the U.S. Census that shows numbers of Americans who don't identify with any religion on the rise. One-fifth of the nation — and a third of adults under 30— are described as religiously unaffiliated, the highest percentages ever in its polling, according to Pew. Those numbers include agnostics and atheists."*



## 10 Signs You Should Not Be Getting Married in a Church

---

1. You find yourself asking the clergy to take all the references to Jesus out of the service.
2. You find yourself dreading your next meeting with the minister.
3. You find yourself dreading the service, worried that the minister will say something too religious.
4. You disagree with the core values of the church.
5. You find the core values of the church so uninteresting that you can just tune them out, no problem.
6. You are not a member of any faith community and neither one of you intends to be.
7. This location feels like a choice you both are making for somebody else, rather than for yourselves.
8. You and your partner have never talked about religion, and you have serious doubts that you will ever be able to.
9. This experience feels like just another wedding transaction, one more service provider to check off the list.
10. You can't wait for the reception.



## 10 Signs You Might be in the Right Place After All

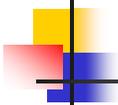
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1. You have drifted from the church, but as you prepare for your wedding you find yourself seeking a community of faith.
2. You enjoy meeting the minister and appreciate the chance to focus on matters of the spirit in the midst of wedding planning stress.
3. You have worshipped here and found yourself moved.
4. You want your marriage to be associated with this place and its core values.
5. You can imagine the members of this church holding you in prayer.
6. You sense that your marriage is about more than the two of you.
7. You find yourself praying.
8. This experience is causing you and your partner to talk about your faith and your aspirations for a faith community as a couple.
9. You don't have it all figured out yet, but this church feels like a blessing to start you on your way.
10. You can't wait for the wedding.

*(Taken from Huffington Post, July 11, 2012)*



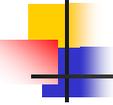
## 2 – The couple as the minister of the Sacrament of Marriage



from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

---

**“In the Latin Church, it is ordinarily understood that the spouses, as ministers of Christ’s grace, mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of Matrimony by expressing their consent before the Church. In the Eastern liturgies the minister of this sacrament (which is called ‘Crowning’) is the priest or bishop who, after receiving the mutual consent of the spouses, successively crowns the bridegroom and the bride as a sign of the marriage covenant.” (#1623)**



from the *Rite of Marriage*

---

**“Marriage arises in the covenant of marriage, or irrevocable consent, which each partner freely bestows on and accepts from the other...Christ the Lord raised this union to the dignity of a sacrament so that it might more clearly recall and more easily reflect his own unbreakable union with his Church.” (#2)**

**“Christian couples, therefore, nourish and develop their marriage by undivided affection, which wells up from the fountain of divine love, while, in a merging of human and divine love, they remain faithful in body and in mind, in good times as in bad.” (#3)**

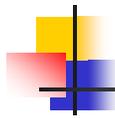


from the *Order of Celebrating Marriage*

---

**“A marriage is established by the marriage covenant, the irrevocable consent that the spouses freely give to and receive from each other.” (#2)**

**“In virtue of the sacrament of marriage, married Christians signify and share in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love that exists between Christ and his Church; they thus help each other to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and rearing children; and they have their own special place and gift among the people of God.” (#8)**



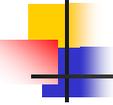
from the *Order of Celebrating Marriage*

**“The preparation and celebration of marriage concerns above all the future spouses themselves and their families.” (#12)**

**“The celebration itself must be prepared with all care and as far as possible with the prospective spouses...With the participation of the prospective spouses, the following should be chosen, as circumstances suggest: the readings that will be explained in the homily; the form for expressing mutual consent; the texts for the blessing of the rings, for the nuptial blessing, for the intentions of the general intercessions, and for singing. Attention should also be given to the use of the suitable options provided in the rite itself and to local customs that may be observed to good purpose.” (#29)**

### **3 – Models for involving couples in the preparations for the wedding liturgy**





## Situating Wedding Preparations in the Context of Marriage Preparation

---

### **Model A: Wedding Preparation as an Integral Part of a Marriage Preparation Program/Process**

- (1) Holy Trinity Parish, Washington DC: parish-based marriage preparation lasting seven weeks (one evening per week), one evening devoted to wedding preparations**
- (2) College of the Holy Cross, Worcester MA: college-based marriage preparation lasting two days (Saturday-Sunday), one session devoted to wedding preparations**
- (3) Diocesan or regional marriage preparation programs could include a session on wedding preparations, noting that specifics will vary from church to church**

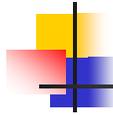


## Situating Wedding Preparations in the Context of Marriage Preparation

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### **Model B: Wedding Preparation that is related to, but not an integral part of, a Marriage Preparation Program/Process**

- St. Camillus Parish, Arlington MA: couples participated in diocesan marriage preparation program which did not include wedding preparations; parish hosted an annual wedding preparation session for couples:**
- **Sunday Mass with blessing of engaged couples**
    - **Brunch after Mass in parish hall**
  - **Wedding preparation session led by parish liturgist and music director – began by inviting couples to recall what they had discussed in marriage preparation: family of origin, communications, marriage as dying and rising, etc.**

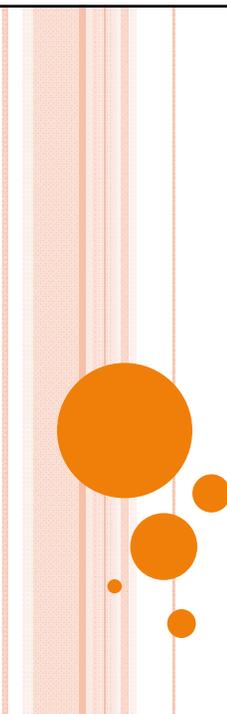


## Situating Wedding Preparations in the Context of Marriage Preparation

**The wedding preparation sessions in Models A and B were designed to give the couples an understanding of their role in preparing the wedding liturgy, to review norms of Catholic liturgy, and to present options from which they could choose, with an emphasis on those options which encouraged the full and active participation of the assembly at the wedding.**

**Couples had follow up meetings with the priest or deacon to finalize the texts and other liturgical options, and with the music director to finalize the musical selections, printed program, etc.**

**Other models?**



**4 – Advice and options in our current rites to suggest to couples**

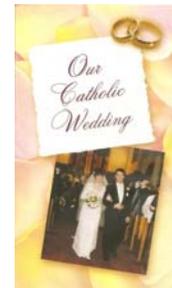
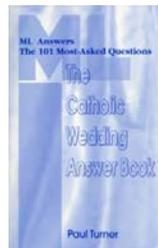
## Resources to Assist Engaged Couples in Preparing The Wedding Liturgy

- *Celebrating Marriage: Preparing the Wedding Liturgy...A Workbook for Engaged Couples* by Paul Covino, Lawrence Madden SJ, Elaine Rendler, John Buscemi (The Pastoral Press, [www.pastoralpress.org](http://www.pastoralpress.org) or [www.ocp.org](http://www.ocp.org), 800-LITURGY)
- *Prayerbook for Engaged Couples* by Austin Fleming (Liturgy Training Publications, [www.ltp.org](http://www.ltp.org), 800-933-1800)



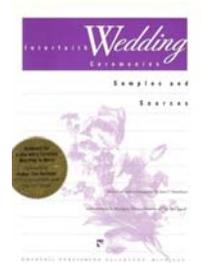
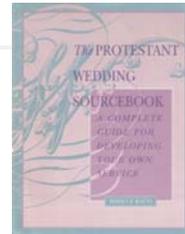
## Resources for Preparing and Celebrating Catholic Weddings

- *Our Catholic Wedding* by Paul Covino and Austin Fleming (videotape, Liturgy Training Publications)
- *Gift and Promise: Customs and Traditions in Hispanic Rites of Marriage* by Instituto de Liturgia Hispana (Oregon Catholic Press, [www.ocp.org](http://www.ocp.org), 800-LITURGY)
- *The Catholic Wedding Answer Book* by Paul Turner (Resource Publications, [www.rpinet.com](http://www.rpinet.com), 888-273-7782)



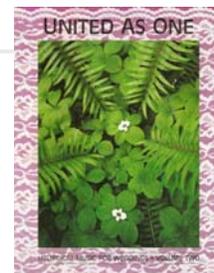
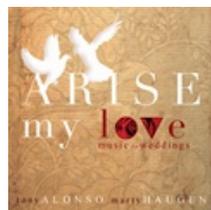
## Resources for Preparing and Celebrating Catholic Weddings (continued)

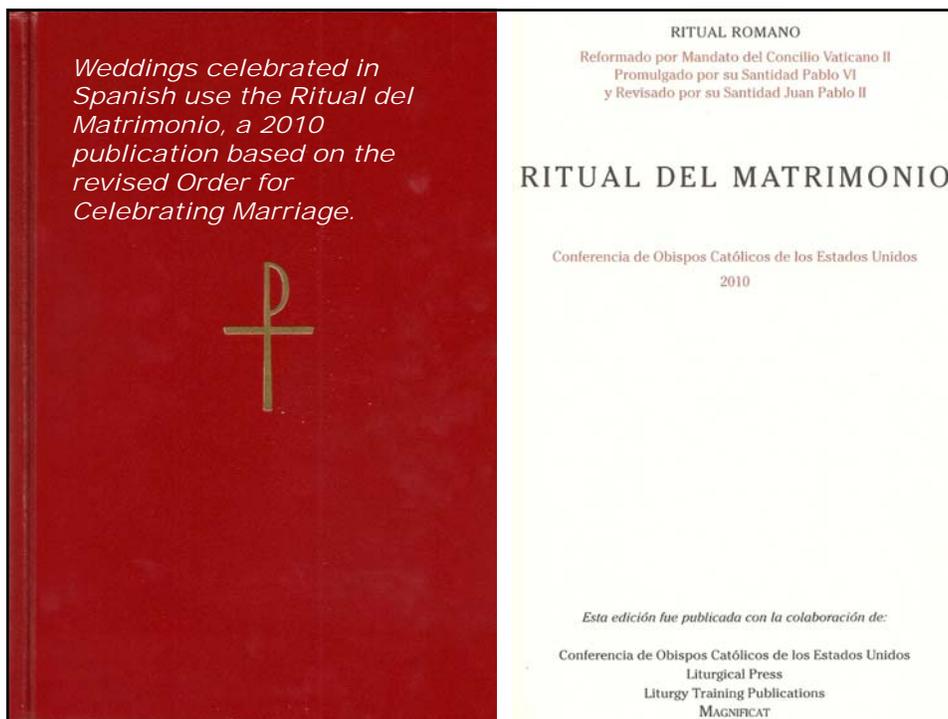
- *The Protestant Wedding Sourcebook* by Sidney F. Batts (Westminster/John Knox Press, [www.wjkacademic.com](http://www.wjkacademic.com), 800-227-2872)
- *Interfaith Wedding Ceremonies: Samples and Sources* by Joan C. Hawxhurst (Dovetail Publishing Co., [dovetail@mich.com](mailto:dovetail@mich.com))



## Resources for Preparing and Celebrating Catholic Weddings (continued)

- *United As One: Liturgical Music for Weddings* (2 volumes, OCP Publications, 800-LITURGY, [ocp.org](http://ocp.org))
- *Arise My Love: Music for Weddings* by Tony Alonso and Marty Haugen (GIA Publications, [giamusic.com](http://giamusic.com))
- *Love One Another: The Wedding Collection Songbook* (World Library Publications, [jspaluch.com](http://jspaluch.com))





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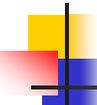
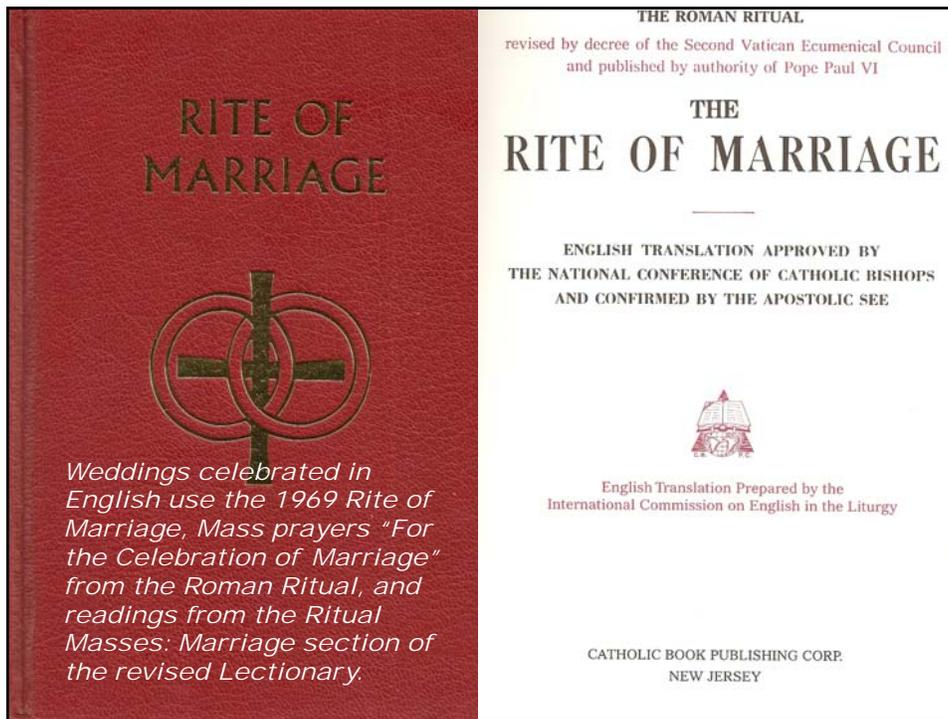
2 additional paragraphs (#36b & 36c) in Spanish translation of General Introduction about the *arras* and the *lazo*.

Holy Communion included as option in Chapter II, but not Chapter III.

2 forms for reception of the couple: (1) priest/deacon welcomes couple at door of church, (2) priest/deacon welcomes couple when they arrive "at their place." Both forms include couple in procession.

*Arras* and *lazo* (optional) included in Chapters I, II and III. Canticle of praise included after *arras* in Chapters I, II and III.

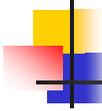
General Intercessions, Blessing of Engaged Couples, and Blessing of Married Couple within Mass on the Anniversary of Marriage included in Appendix.



## Three Forms of the Wedding Liturgy

The *Rite of Marriage* provides three forms for celebrating marriage in the Roman Catholic Church:

- **The Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass** is normally used when two Catholics marry.
- **The Rite for Celebrating Marriage Outside Mass** is used when a Catholic marries a baptized person from another Christian Church.
- **The Rite for Celebrating Marriage Between a Catholic and an Unbaptized Person** is used when a Catholic marries someone who is not Christian.



## When a Catholic Marries a Non-Catholic

❖ TERMS

- Ecumenical weddings are between Christians of different denominations.
- Interfaith weddings are between Christians and non-Christians.

❖ PERMISSIONS AND DISPENSATIONS

- a) **Permission to Enter Into a Mixed Marriage** is required when a Catholic is marrying someone who is baptized but is not a Catholic (ie, celebrating an ecumenical wedding).
- b) **Dispensation from Disparity of Cult** is required when a Catholic is marrying someone who is not baptized (ie, celebrating an interfaith wedding).
  - EITHER A OR B IS REQUIRED WHENEVER A CATHOLIC MARRIES A NON-CATHOLIC, WHETHER THE WEDDING IS GOING TO BE CELEBRATED IN A CATHOLIC CHURCH OR IN ANOTHER PLACE.
- c) **Dispensation from Canonical Form** is required when someone other than a Catholic priest or deacon is going to receive the consent. Usually, this means that the wedding is going to be celebrated in a non-Catholic church, and the minister from the non-Catholic parish will preside.
- d) **Permission to Celebrate the Wedding Outside of a Church** is required, as the title indicates, when the wedding is going to be celebrated in a place other than a church. This permission is often sought when a Catholic marries a Jew, Muslim or other non-Christian.
  - EITHER C OR D IS REQUIRED WHEN THE WEDDING ITSELF IS GOING TO BE CELEBRATED OUTSIDE OF A CATHOLIC CHURCH.



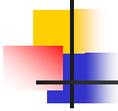
## The Couple's "Job Description" for Preparing the Wedding Liturgy

The goal of your preparation is to encourage  
the full and active participation of all  
who will gather to celebrate your marriage.

This is best accomplished by carefully preparing and  
celebrating the central features of the wedding liturgy.

The primary focus of your attention, then, is the *Rite of  
Marriage*, in which the structure and individual  
elements of the wedding liturgy are presented.

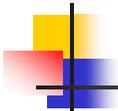
These are basic and essential to the wedding liturgy.



## General Advice to Engaged Couples for Preparing the Wedding Liturgy

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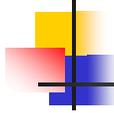
- 1) **Distinguish between what is essential and what is not.**
  - social customs
  - expressions of personal taste
  - religious devotions
- 2) **Give priority in your preparation and in the celebration to the essentials.**
- 3) **Plan the wedding day as a whole, with the liturgy as its centerpiece.**
- 4) **Do not underestimate the power of the non-verbal elements of the wedding liturgy.**
- 5) **Take advantage of the people who will be preparing the wedding liturgy with you.**
- 6) **Don't wait until the last minute to prepare the wedding liturgy!**



## The Opening Rites

---

- **Gathering of the Assembly**
  - **instrumental music**
  - **greeting people as they arrive**
  - **seating people**



## “Bad Luck”

“The custom whereby the groom is not permitted to see the bride before the wedding dates from a time when most marriages were arranged by the groom and the bride’s father. In return for his daughter, the father received money or some other commodity from the groom. Often, the groom did not even meet his bride until the wedding when he made payment to the father. If the groom did not like what he saw, he could call off the wedding, and the father would not receive his payment. To avoid the possibility of such ‘bad luck,’ the father did not permit the groom to see the bride until the time of the transaction.”



--from *Celebrating Marriage*, page 2

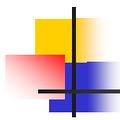


## Seating the Assembly: An example of seating that does not foster participation...

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## Seating the Assembly: An example of seating that does foster participation...

### SANCTUARY

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## The Opening Rites

- Gathering of the Assembly
  - instrumental music
- Greeting of the Couple
- Procession
  - processional music (instrumental or song)

## The Entrance Procession



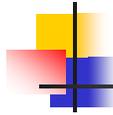
- What does the *Rite of Marriage* say?
  - “If there is a procession to the altar, the ministers go first, followed by the priest, and then the bride and the bridegroom. According to local custom, they may be escorted by at least their parents and the two witnesses.” (#20)
- What does the *Ritual del Matrimonio* say?
  - “Luego se hace la procesión hacia el altar: preceden los ayudantes, sigue el sacerdote, después los novios, a los que, según las costumbres locales, pueden acompañar honoríficamente, por lo menos los padres y dos testigos, hasta el lugar que tienen preparado.” (#46) (“The procession to the altar then takes place: the ministers go first, followed by the priest, and the couple. According to local custom, they may be accompanied by at least their parents and the two witnesses to the place prepared for them.”)

## The Entrance Procession



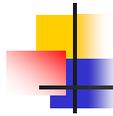
What might this look like?

- One possible order: server with cross, priest or deacon, ushers and bridesmaids, best man and maid of honor, groom with his parents, bride with her parents
- Another possible order: server with cross, priest or deacon, ushers and bridesmaids, best man and maid of honor, groom's parents, bride's parents, groom and bride together
- A simple option: priest or deacon, best man and maid of honor, groom with his parents, bride with her parents



## The Opening Rites

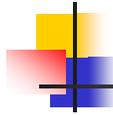
- Gathering of the Assembly
  - instrumental music
- Greeting of the Couple
- Procession
  - processional music (instrumental or song)
- Sign of the Cross and Greeting
  - gathering song after processional or greeting (optional)
- (Penitential Act omitted)
- Gloria
- Collect (6 options)



## Liturgy of the Word



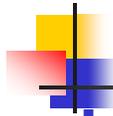
- Old Testament Reading (9 options)
  - readers for OT and NT reading, Universal Prayer
- Responsorial Psalm (7 options)
- New Testament Reading (13 options)
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel (10 options)
- Homily



## Marriage Rite



- Address and Statement of Intentions
  - location of couple, priest/deacon for Marriage Rite
- Consent and Exchange of Vows (4 options)
  - acclamation (optional)
- Blessing and Exchange of Rings (3 options for blessing)
  - acclamation (optional)
- (Blessing and Exchange of *Arras* in Spanish edition)
- (Canticle of Praise in Spanish edition)
- Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)



## Liturgy of the Eucharist



- Preparation of Gifts and Altar
  - instrumental, solo or assembly song
- Eucharistic Prayer (3 options for Preface)
  - acclamations
- The Lord's Prayer
- (Blessing and Imposition of the *Lazo* in Spanish edition)
- Nuptial Blessing (3 options)
- Sign of Peace
- Breaking of Bread
  - Lamb of God litany
- Communion
  - Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
  - Communion song
- Prayer after Communion



## Concluding Rites



- Solemn Blessing (3 options)
  - sung with "Amen" responses by assembly?
- Dismissal
- Recessional
  - instrumental or song
  - postlude music

## Wedded to philanthropy

Some couples choose charities, fewer gifts to make nuptials more meaningful

By Brad Foss  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jen Crane and Tom Frohlich are banking on the generosity of friends and family to collect as much money as possible when they get married—but not for selfish reasons.

In fact, the Seattle couple is quite embarrassed at the thought of receiving a bounty of traditional wedding gifts, be they large checks or fancy dishes. That is why they are instead encouraging guests to make donations in their honor to three charities: the Sierra Club, Girls on the Run and Youth In Focus.

Crane and Frohlich, who will exchange vows next month before 80 guests on Orcas Island off the north coast of Washington state, are part of a tiny-but-growing group of couples turning their weddings into philanthropic opportunities.

It's a trend that is picking up momentum, industry officials said, with help from a handful of Web-based nonprofit groups that serve as virtual intermediaries between couples, charities and guests.

While these decisions are largely a reflection of couples' altruism and other personal values—Crane, for example, who is setting up charitable wedding registries acknowledges more practical motivations. For instance, as the average age of U.S. newlyweds rises and more couples live together before tying the knot, there isn't as much need for cookware and other traditional gifts as in previous generations.

"We're in our 30s, so it's not like we need a lot of stuff," said Crane, whose charitable work



Jen Crane, left, and her fiancé, Tom Frohlich, check out the Web site for the nonprofit organization Girls on the Run.

astounded by how quickly the costs of a wedding can escalate. "The whole wedding industry is a little bit out of control."

Because weddings are increasingly secular "commercialized" events — Americans spend \$26,000, on average — "people are looking for a way to reflect that they are deeper than all that," said Carley Roney, co-founder of the wedding information portal The Knot Inc.

Some couples are making donations in honor of their guests instead of handing out party favors, while others are donating leftover food to nearby homeless shelters. "The wedding was originally a broader community celebration. You fed your entire village," Roney said.

But with more than 2 million couples married in the United States last year and perhaps just a few thousand setting up any variety of charitable gift registries, Roney said the trend is hardly putting a dent in the profitability of the wedding industry.

"A greater trend," she said, "is the desire

The Markarian wedding alone netted \$5,000 for The Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, Save the Children and United Way — all of which were involved in the international relief effort after the tsunami, which inspired the Markarians to contact JustGive.org.

"It felt like people gave more than they would have had it been a regular wedding gift," Markarian said, conceding that she too would feel compelled to dig a little deeper if she knew her gift would benefit such a worthy cause.

JustGive.org executive director Kendall Webb said wedding-related giving accounted for roughly 2 percent of the \$17 million raised in total by the charity-oriented Web site in 2005, though she emphasized that the market has huge growth potential. In 2003, just 120 couples used JustGive's service, compared with 540 last year.

By comparison, the I Do Foundation, which focuses solely on wedding-related charity, has raised \$1.5 million since it was founded in 2002, with more than two-thirds of that coming in the past year.

Carrie Nixon and Dmitri Mehlhorn of Vienna, Va., used their 2003 wedding to raise more than \$4,000 for charities

*"It is desirable that the faithful express their participation by making an offering, bringing forward bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist and perhaps other gifts to relieve the needs of the Church and of the poor."*  
(Roman Missal)

**"We were looking for ways to cut back on the excess. The whole wedding industry is a little bit out of control."**



## Cultural and Ethnic Adaptations in Weddings



### ➤ Hispanic

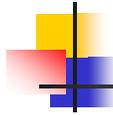
- ❖ Arras: 13 gold or silver coins given to signify that material necessities will not be lacking in the marriage



### ➤ Hispanic (continued)



- ❖ lazo: large rosary over couple's shoulders to signify sacramental bond
- ❖ bouquet or single flower to Marian image: request for Mary's protection during the marriage
- ❖ bolo: scattering of coins and candies around the couple after the wedding to signify blessing on their union
- ❖ book (bible) and rosary: symbolize the need for prayer in marriage
- ❖ blessing by parents: at home or in church
- ❖ sponsors/padrinos (padrino and madrina): represent God's graces as well as blessing, hold a place of honor and respect in the family



## Cultural and Ethnic Adaptations in Weddings

(continued)

- **African and Vietnamese**
  - ❖ comments from the parents or other guests after the post-communion prayer (Mass) or before the blessing (outside Mass)
- **Hmong**
  - ❖ tend not to incorporate ethnic customs into liturgy
- **Cambodian**
  - ❖ tend not to incorporate ethnic customs into liturgy
  - ❖ may have ethnic ritual before going to church
  - ❖ bride and groom do not hold hands or kiss in public
- **Filipino**
  - ❖ principal sponsors (usually older relatives or friends) in addition to two witnesses
  - ❖ secondary sponsors for candle and veil
  - ❖ blessing and giving of coins (arrhae)
- **Laotian**
  - ❖ tend not to incorporate ethnic customs into liturgy
  - ❖ may observe certain rituals at home prior to the liturgy