DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG  
Office for Divine Worship and the Diocesan Liturgical Commission

LITURGICAL NORMS FOR THE  
CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

Effective December 30, 2016

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

INTRODUCTION

1. This document is normative in the Diocese of Harrisburg and is provided to guide clergy and lay ministers as they assist couples in the planning and celebration of the Sacred Liturgy of Matrimony in an authentic and Christian way. These norms seek to channel the natural joy and happiness of the moment into a celebration worthy of our belief that human love is founded in the divine love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit shared with us. At its very core, the worship of the Triune God and the sanctification of the participants in this celebration is the purpose of every liturgical celebration of Matrimony.

2. These norms complement the second typical edition of The Order of Celebrating Matrimony, published in English in 2016 (promulgated in its Latin edition in 1990), the third typical edition of The Roman Missal published in English in 2011, as well as the 2007 USCCB instruction Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Liturgy. In a special way, this revision is made in light of Pope Francis’ Post-Synodal Exhortation Amoris Laetitia.

3. Pastors, in cooperation with parish liturgical musicians and others who assist in the preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, are encouraged to use these norms in the development of policies for their own parishes as they implement the The Order of Celebrating Matrimony.

PLANNING THE CATHOLIC MARRIAGE CEREMONY

4. Carefully planning the wedding Liturgy should be a prayerful and formative experience for those preparing for Matrimony. Guidance provided by parish clergy and lay ministers seeks to engender “a fruitful celebration of Marriage, so that it becomes clear that the spouses signify and participate in the mystery of the unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church (OCM 14 §3).” Encouragement should be given to the bride and groom to assure their full, active and conscious participation as well as that of all those who are gathered in celebration at the wedding ceremony.

Harrisburg Liturgical Norms for Matrimony
5. It is necessary for the couple to speak with the Priest or Deacon coordinating the couple’s marriage preparation and celebration before any liturgical plans are made. In addition, the couple will need to meet with the parish’s music director (or, organist) regarding the selection of music for the wedding. In every circumstance, recognizing the pastoral challenges which are presented to the proper formation for and liturgical celebration of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, clergy and lay ministers alike, “taking into account the prevailing attitudes toward marriage and the family, should endeavor to evangelize the couple’s authentic and mutual love in the light of faith (OCM 20),” particularly as that faith is expressed in the Sacred Liturgy.

MARRIAGE IS A SACRAMENT

6. Matrimony is one of the seven Sacraments of the Church, designated as a Sacrament “at the service of communion.” As a “sacrament of faith”, liturgical celebrations of Matrimony by words and actions “nourish, strengthen, and express” the Church’s faith about this Sacrament (SC 59). Built upon Baptism, the primordial Sacrament of faith, Holy Matrimony reflects the covenant between Christ and the Church “in such a way that their conjugal community is assumed into Christ’s charity and is enriched by the power of his Sacrifice (OCM 7).” Thus, the liturgical celebration of Holy Matrimony is rightly an exercise of the Body of Christ united in communion with her head, Christ Jesus, through whose saving Death and Resurrection this sacrament of the new dispensation is filled with grace beyond measure for the bride and groom, and, indeed, the whole Church.

THE RITE TO BE USED

7. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony provides three forms for celebrating marriage in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States:
   I. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass is normatively used when two Catholics marry.
   II. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass is normatively used when a Catholic marries a baptized person from another Christian church or ecclesial community (cf. OCM 36).
   III. The Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian must be used when a Catholic marries someone who is not a baptized Christian.

8. The decision regarding which form of celebration of The Order of Celebrating Matrimony is made in consultation with the Priest or Deacon who is preparing the couple for marriage. Great care should be given to the proper catechetical instruction of the couple to lead them to a decision in conformity with the mind of the Church. It is expected that the marriage between two Catholics happen within the context of Mass, as the Church believes in the profound spiritual connection between Holy Matrimony and the Holy Eucharist. For Mixed Marriages, please refer to the Guidelines for Mixed Marriage Celebration and Preparation Between Episcopalians,
Lutherans, and Roman Catholics in Central Pennsylvania [Appendix A] and also the 1993 Directory for Ecumenism.

9. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* is a public, sacred, and official liturgical celebration of the Church. It must be celebrated with care and reverence following the approved ritual of the Roman Catholic Church. All ceremonies are to reflect the distinctive quality of Christian faith as manifested through the approved ritual text with due sensitivity to the pastoral needs of each situation. Illicit changes in word or deviation from the rubrics provided in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* are to be avoided, since “no sacramental rite may be modified or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community. Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the Liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the Liturgy (CCC 1125).”

**SPECIAL NEEDS**

10. The needs of persons with disabilities should be taken into consideration, whether the persons are in the wedding party, participants in the Liturgy or in the congregation. In times of uncertainty, the Diocesan Office of Ministry with People with Disabilities may be contacted for resources and assistance.

**ELEMENTS OF THE MARRIAGE RITE**

**INTRODUCTORY RITES: ENTRANCE PROCESSION**

11. *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (OCM 45-50) offers two alternatives for the Entrance Procession, with preference placed on the First Form:

§1. **The First Form** replicates the liturgical procession of Sunday Masses. After the Priest greets the couple at the door of the Church, the procession proceeds to the sanctuary with altar servers carrying cross and candles, other liturgical ministers, the Priest and/or Deacon, followed by the couple who may be accompanied by their parents and at least two canonical witnesses or other members of the bridal party. Or, the other members of the bridal party and parents may precede the couple or be placed prior to the procession. The Entrance Chant is sung during the procession.

§2. **The Second Form** allows for the “traditional wedding procession” as witnessed by long-standing and legitimate custom in most places in the United States. The bridal party enters the church in a form that is dignified and appropriate. Then, “when the couple have arrived at their place, the Priest receives them and warmly greets them, showing that the Church shares in their joy (OCM 49).” Instrumental music may accompany the initial entrance. “Then, during the Entrance Chant, the Priest approaches the altar, reverences it with a profound bow, and venerates it with a kiss. After this, he goes to the chair (OCM 50, 85).” The reverence of the altar may be omitted, according to the circumstances,
when using Chapter III: “The Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian.”

ENTRANCE CHANT

12. Singing the Entrance Chant communicates that this is a liturgical act of worship and orients the minds of the Assembly to nature of the Catholic celebration of Holy Matrimony. The norms of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal guide the options for the Entrance Chant: “This chant is sung alternately by the choir and the people or similarly by a cantor and the people, or entirely by the people, or by the choir alone. In the Dioceses of the United States of America, there are four options for the Entrance Chant: (1) the antiphon from the Missal or the antiphon with its Psalm from the Graduale Romanum, as set to music there or in another setting; (2) the antiphon and Psalm of the Graduale Simplex for the liturgical time; (3) a chant from another collection of Psalms and antiphons, approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop, including Psalms arranged in responsorial or metrical forms; (4) another liturgical chant that is suited to the sacred action, the day, or the time of year, similarly approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop. If there is no singing at the Entrance, the antiphon given in the Missal is recited either by the faithful, or by some of them, or by a reader; otherwise, it is recited by the Priest himself, who may even adapt it as an introductory explanation (GIRM 48).” It is expected that some form of the sung Entrance Chant take place in every celebration of Matrimony within Mass and without Mass, particularly when the bridal party enters into the church with instrumental music, which is permissible.

PLACEMENT OF THE WEDDING PARTY

13. The couple may be given a place of honor in a visible, prominent location that facilitates their full and active participation in the Sacred Liturgy. Chairs should be provided for the couple to be seated during appropriate times. The bride and groom, along with the entire wedding party, should assume the posture of the rest of the Assembly during the Sacred Liturgy. If the celebration of Matrimony takes place within Mass, kneelers should be provided for the bride and groom. All other members of the wedding party may have places in the Assembly in the front pews of the nave.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

14. The Gloria in excelsis (Glory to God) is a hymn sung apart from any other action according to the rubrics of the Roman Missal whenever the Ritual Mass “V. For the Celebration of Marriage” is said, regardless of the liturgical season, or whenever the particular obligatory liturgical celebration on the day of the ceremony requires it, such as Sundays of Easter. Care should be given to sing a setting which will enable the Assembly to participate in this hymn of praise, bearing in mind that the norms of General Instruction of the Roman Missal (53) always follow. In celebrations of Matrimony outside of Mass, the Gloria in excelsis (Glory to God) is not sung.
LITURGY OF THE WORD

15. The Liturgy of the Word is one of the principal parts of the celebration. There may be one or two scripture texts in addition to a sung Responsorial Psalm, a sung Acclamation Before the Gospel and the proclamation Gospel itself. Only selections provided in the four volumes of the Church’s Lectionary for Masses may be used. The Conferral of the Sacrament of Marriage section of the Lectionary for Ritual Masses (Vol. IV) supplies many options. The parish should provide the couple with scripture readings from which they may select. It is expected that the readings will be read directly from the Lectionary during the Order of Celebrating Matrimony. Non-biblical readings and readings from other religious sources are prohibited when using The Order of Celebrating Matrimony.

16. The couple should be included in the selection of the readings whenever possible. The process of selection and the chosen readings can be integrated into the spiritual formation in preparation for the sacrament as indicated by Pope Francis, “The couple can also meditate on the biblical readings and the meaningfulness of the rings they will exchange and the other signs that are part of the rite (AM 215).”

17. When a wedding is celebrated on such days as Easter, Nativity of the Lord, Epiphany, Ascension, Pentecost, Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, or Solemnities of the Liturgical Year, the Mass of the day is to be used with its proper readings. One reading from the Conferral of the Sacrament of Marriage section of the Lectionary for Ritual Masses should be substituted (OCM 34, 55). If the celebration, such as a convalidation, happens during a regularly scheduled parish Mass during the Christmas Season or Ordinary Time, the Mass of Sunday is used (OCM 34). When the Mass is outside the celebration of the parish community on Sundays of Christmas or Ordinary Time, the ritual Mass for Marriage may be used with its complementary readings.

18. The lector should be well prepared and competent with the task of public proclamation of the Word of God. If the Order of Celebrating Matrimony takes place during Mass, the lector should be a practicing Catholic, capable and rehearsed. In certain circumstances, at the discretion of the pastor, the Bishop of Harrisburg permits a practicing member of another Christian church or ecclesial community to take on the task of lector. For more information, see the 1993 Vatican Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism paragraphs 133 and 135.

19. The Gospel is proclaimed only by a Catholic Deacon or Priest. Following the Gospel, the Priest or Deacon gives a homily. A homily may not be given by a lay person or a minister from another Christian church or ecclesial communion except in the most extreme circumstances with the written permission of the Bishop of Harrisburg. The Priest or Deacon “uses the sacred text to expound the mystery of Christian Marriage, the dignity of conjugal love, the grace of the Sacrament, and the responsibilities of married people, keeping in mind, however, the various circumstances of individuals (OCM 57, 91).”
EXCHANGE OF CONSENT

20. Because this is the central element in the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, the couple should move to a prominent place before the Assembly and face each other for an exchange of their consent. The couple exchanges consent in one of the three ways provided in the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*. Therefore, for validity, the couple may not compose their own “vows” and any adaptation of the provided text is completely prohibited. The Catholic Priest or Deacon receiving the consent should stand near the couple. The *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* provides an acclamation for the Assembly to praise of God at the conclusion of the exchange of consent (OCM 65, 99, 130). This text and any other acclamation which may accompany it should be provided for the Assembly in the worship aid or program.

THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER

21. The Universal Prayer follows the consent and the blessing and exchange of rings. In the absence of a Deacon, the person chosen to propose intercessions should be capable and rehearsed (cf. #18). The Appendix to the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* provides examples of the Universal Prayer which are considered normative in pattern and content. With the assistance and at the discretion of the Priest or Deacon, a couple may personalize the proposed petitions in light of their awareness of the needs of others who may be in need of prayer.

PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS

22. When matrimony is celebrated during Mass, the bread and wine to be consecrated are brought in procession to the Priest by either the bride and groom (OCM 70), or members of the Assembly. Those who are to participate in the presentation of the bread and wine should be properly informed of what will be expected of them and capable of receiving Holy Communion once the gifts have been consecrated. Gifts to meet the needs of the poor may also be brought forward in the procession. No other gifts or symbols may be presented in the procession.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

23. The Nuptial Blessing takes place after the Lord's Prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer of the community and should be said or sung by all. After which the couple is invited to either approach the altar or remain in their place. Whenever possible, they are to kneel for the Nuptial Blessing (cf. OCM 73, 104). The Nuptial Blessing may be omitted only in the celebration of Matrimony between a Catholic and catechumen or non-Christian.

SIGN OF PEACE

24. For Matrimony celebrated during Mass, the Sign of Peace may be exchanged by the whole Assembly. It is not included in the other forms of the sacrament.
HOLY COMMUNION

25. Properly mandated Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion may assist with the distribution of Holy Communion when needed. They are to be vested in albs, according to the norms of the Diocese of Harrisburg.

26. When Holy Communion is distributed, the Guidelines for Receiving Communion from the USCCB, (or a simpler but clear and accurate form) should be included in the printed worship aid or program, especially if the invited guests will include members of other faith traditions.

27. At his discretion, the Priest, Deacon, or another liturgical minister may make an announcement either at the beginning of the Mass or at another suitable time before Holy Communion. This announcement should be short and succinct. The following example might be used.

Catholics believe that the Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and that our sharing in the Eucharist is the sign of our oneness and unity in the Catholic Church. We invite Catholics who are prepared and properly disposed to receive Holy Communion today to come forward at this time. Others present not receiving Holy Communion today are invited to join with us in prayer and song.

28. The Order for Celebrating Matrimony provides the opportunity for Holy Communion to be distributed in “Matrimony without Mass” (cf. OCM 108-115). Such a pastoral provision assures the possibility of Catholic couples to receive the grace of Holy Communion outside of Mass when either family or pastoral circumstances prevent the expected celebration of Matrimony within Mass. Such a provision is not license to offer Holy Communion to non-Catholic Christians. This is intended for various pastoral situations which preclude the possibility of celebrating “Matrimony within Mass” for two Catholics.

LITURGICAL MUSIC

29. In selecting music for the celebration of Holy Matrimony, these local norms follow the norms and theological perspective of sacred music in Catholic worship indicated in the documents of the Church. “God has bestowed upon His people the gift of song. God dwells within each human person, in the place where music takes its source. Indeed, God, the giver of song, is present whenever His people sing his praises” (STTL 1). “Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when it is celebrated in song, with the ministers of each degree fulfilling their ministry and the people participating in it” (MS 5). “The role of music is to serve the needs of the Liturgy and not to dominate it, seek to entertain, or draw attention to itself or the musicians. The primary role of music in the Liturgy is to help the members of the gathered assembly to join themselves with the action of Christ and to give voice to the gift of faith” (STTL 125).
30. The couple should meet with the parish music director or organist well in advance of the wedding date and before choosing music for the wedding or making arrangements with other musicians. Keep in mind that some parish musicians have the right to provide music for every ceremony that takes place within the parish church. The parish may have a well-defined policy regarding this. In such cases, it is an exercise of prudence that parish staff communicate these expectations clearly and well in advance of the ceremony. All contracts between the parish and parish musicians are honored by the Diocese of Harrisburg.

31. “Both musicians and pastors should make every effort to assist couples to understand and share in the planning of their marriage Liturgy. Since oftentimes the only music familiar to the couple is not necessarily suitable to the sacrament, the pastoral musician will make an effort to demonstrate a wide range of music appropriate for the Liturgy” (STTL 218).

32. “Particular decisions about choice and placement of wedding music should be based on the three judgments [as explained in Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship:] the liturgical judgment, the pastoral judgment, and the musical judgment. Additionally, music should reflect the truth that all the sacraments celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Secular music, even though it may emphasize the love of the spouses for one another, is not appropriate for the Sacred Liturgy. Songs that are chosen for the Liturgy should be appropriate for the celebration and express the faith of the Church” (STTL 220).

33. The texts (lyrics) intended to be sung must always be in conformity with Catholic doctrine; indeed they should be drawn chiefly from Sacred Scripture and from liturgical sources (cf. SC 121). To be suitable for use in the marriage Liturgy, a sung text must not only be doctrinally correct, but must in itself be an expression of the Catholic faith. Therefore, liturgical music must never be permitted to make statements about faith which are untrue, misleading, or open to a distorted misinterpretation (cf. STTL 83).

34. Music which appeals to the couple personally, and which is of a nonreligious nature such as selections from Broadway musicals, movies, or television shows, may be incorporated into another part of the day (e.g., the wedding reception). To be very specific, nonreligious music does not have a place before, after, or within the Church’s wedding Liturgy since it does not express the Church’s faith – the reason for which the wedding is taking place.

35. The Christian community gathered around the couple should be afforded the opportunity to express themselves to God in song as they do at every other Liturgy of the Church. For this reason, familiar arrangements of liturgical music used regularly at Sunday Mass are ideal. The following are times that the entire assembly should be participating in the music:

*Harrisburg Liturgical Norms for Matrimony*
- During the Entrance Chant
- The antiphon of the Responsorial Psalm (which, as a rule, should be sung)
- The Acclamation Before the Gospel
- When “The Order of Celebrating Matrimony within Mass” is used: the Gloria, the Offertory Chant, the Sanctus, the Mystery of Faith, the Amen, the Agnus Dei, and the Communion Chant

36. At appropriate times, as permitted in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, a vocal, choral, or instrumental solo may be used in place of congregational song.

37. A cantor should be used for the wedding Liturgy, or if possible, even a choir. Cantors employed in the celebration of the sacrament should be instructed on the nature of the Liturgy and trained in the unique aspects of singing in a liturgical context and space. Cantors aid the worshipping community by leading the congregation in sung prayer. Cantors should always be aware that “their talents are offered at the service of the Liturgy” (STTL 221).

38. “Musical instruments can be very useful in sacred celebrations, whether they accompany the singing or whether they are played as solo instruments” (MS 62). There are no specific restrictions on musical instruments within the Diocese of Harrisburg. However, any musical instrument permitted in divine worship should be used in such a way that it seeks to lend to the beauty of the Sacred Liturgy and the spiritual edification of the faithful (cf. MS 63).

39. Recorded music is to be avoided since it “lacks the authenticity provided by a living liturgical assembly gathered for the Sacred Liturgy. While recorded music might be used advantageously outside the Liturgy as an aid in the teaching of new music, it should not, as a general norm, be used within the Liturgy” (STTL 93).

40. The importance of sacred silence in the wedding Liturgy should be remembered. “God is revealed both in the beauty of song and in the power of silence. The Sacred Liturgy has a rhythm of texts, actions, songs, and silence. Silence allows the community to reflect on what it has heard and experienced, and to open its heart to the mystery celebrated” (STTL 118).
COPYRIGHT & REPRINT PERMISSIONS

41. If a wedding worship aid or program is to be printed, all reprint permissions must be secured and the proper copyright information must be included in the program. All copyright fees must be paid. It is a serious legal and moral infringement to reproduce copyrighted material without proper permission.

SPECIFIC REGULATIONS OF THE DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

42. According to the particular law of the Diocese of Harrisburg, marriages are not to be scheduled on Sundays or holy days of obligation. Therefore, marriages are not to take place after 4:00 PM on Saturdays. For a just cause, in individual cases, a dispensation from this norm can be sought from the Diocesan Bishop.

43. Canon 1118 of the Code of Canon Law requires that Catholics be married in a parish church unless some other provisions have been permitted by the Bishop. Generally, two Catholics may not be married outdoors in the Diocese of Harrisburg. Permission may be granted on a case by case basis for a Catholic to marry a non-Catholic in a non-sacred venue or outdoors with written permission of the Bishop. A request must be made in writing by the Priest or Deacon preparing the couple with the rationale for the exception clearly explained. No permission is to be presumed. In these cases, Matrimony within Mass may never occur, in these cases Chapters II & III of The Order of Celebrating Matrimony should be used.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION

PHOTOGRAPHS

44. The Diocese of Harrisburg respects the photo/video policies of individual parishes. If photographs are permitted before, during or after the marriage ceremony, the photographer is requested to keep in mind that the church is a sacred place. The sanctuary should not be made to serve as a photo studio. When photographs are taken after the ceremony, the wedding party is to be reminded that they are in a sacred place. Any type of posing that is contrary to the sacred nature of this place is prohibited.

45. Photographers and videographers are not to obstruct or interfere with the wedding Liturgy. Their work should never intrude upon the sacredness of what is taking place. Photo and video related concerns must be discussed well in advance of the ceremony with the Priest or Deacon who will officiate.
STIPENDS

46. There is normally a fee for the parish organist and there may be fees for other personnel that take part in the wedding Liturgy. Other stipends to be considered are for the Priest or Deacon conducting the ceremony, cantor, servers, use of the church, as well as a gift for the poor.

AFTER THE CEREMONY

47. The Diocese of Harrisburg respects the policy of the parish regarding rice, birdseed, balloons, etc.

PROPER DECORUM

48. Please be mindful that this is a sacred event and there is a proper manner of acting that is expected of the couple and wedding party at the rehearsal and on the day of the wedding. All members of the wedding party, including the bride and groom, must be dressed appropriately and modestly for the wedding Liturgy. Any consumption of alcoholic beverages is strictly prohibited on church property. Such consumption prior to the celebration of Matrimony could provide grounds for the cancellation of the ceremony due to the incapacity of the bride and/or groom to give full and free consent necessary for a valid marriage.

OTHER PRACTICES

49. There are elements that have been added to the marriage ceremony, some of which are not formally part of the official Order of Celebrating Matrimony as presented by the Church. While these practices have become popular during ceremonies of Matrimony, the noble simplicity offered in the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church should always be respected. Please note that the Catholic Order of Celebrating Matrimony does not require these additional elements. If these additions are used, the following norms should be observed.

FLOWERS PRESENTED AT AN IMAGE OF THE BLESSED MOTHER

50. Praying for the intercession of the Virgin Mary and honoring our Blessed Mother are important traditions in the Church. While prayer and placing flowers before an image or shrine of a church is a time-honored practice, it is not specifically part of the elements included in the Order of Celebrating Matrimony. Flowers may be presented to the Blessed Virgin Mary following the Prayer after Communion or the blessing of the bride and groom at the conclusion of the celebration. The couple should be instructed to offer a prayer at the shrine or image asking for the Blessed Mother's intercession. A hymn in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary may be sung at this time.
UNITY CANDLE

51. The unity candle is not part of the official Order of Celebrating Matrimony and is not permitted to be used at the church. If the couple wishes to incorporate the unity candle into the wedding day, they might consider incorporating it as part of the “Grace Before Meals” at the reception. A suggested format is attached [Appendix B].

ARRAS, LAZO, AND VELACION

52. The 2016 edition of The Order of Celebrating Matrimony contains additional rites for the arras, the lasso and a velación as approved and confirmed for use in the United States. These optional rites are offered rightly to those from whose culture they flow organically and authentically. They are to follow the blessing and exchange of rings.

§1. The Arras
The exchange of arras, or coins, in the Spanish-speaking community expresses mutual sharing and the couple's pledge to be good stewards in the new household.

§2. The Lazo
A lazo is generally a double looped rosary that rests on the shoulders of the couple as a sign of the unity in the vows they have professed. In the Mexican ritual book, the lazo may be placed on the couple either during the Universal Prayer or during the Nuptial Blessing.

§3. The Velación
The velación is a large veil or shawl placed completely over the bride and over the shoulders of the groom to symbolize that the bride is the center of the new home the couple is about to establish.

ENGAGEMENT/ANNIVERSARIES

53. The Appendix to the 2016 edition of The Order of Celebrating Matrimony contains “The Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple” and “The Order of Blessing a Married Couple within Mass on the Anniversary of Marriage”. These celebrations of the engagement or of significant anniversaries can strengthen the couple in their commitment to each other and provide occasions to proclaim the Christian values of marriage within the parish community. Additional prayers can be found in the Book of Blessings and The Roman Missal.

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION

54. The Catholic bride and/or groom should be invited to receive the Sacrament of Penance in preparation for the wedding so that the grace of the Sacrament of Marriage may be most
fruitfully received. Properly preparing the couple to make an integral confession falls to the Priest or Deacon. An examination of conscience for engaged couples [Appendix C] may be useful as couples approach this sacrament with a new perspective.

THE USE OF NON-CATHOLIC MINISTERS IN THE CEREMONY

55. The Priest or Deacon are the proper ministers of the Church designated to receive the consent of the bride and groom and to preside over the celebration of Matrimony. Since “the entire Christian community should cooperate to bear witness to the faith and to be a sign to the world of Christ’s love,” other laypersons “can play a part in various ways in the spiritual preparation of the engaged couple and in the celebration of the rite itself (OCM 26).”

56. When the pastoral situation arises that a non-Catholic minister of another Christian church or ecclesial community seeks to participate in the ceremony, care should be taken that those parts proper to the Presider and to the presbyteral or diaconal offices are safeguarded for the Catholic Priest or Deacon. The pattern for integration of other Christian ministers may be patterned after the norms noted in #57 below and, as a reference, according to the suggestions made in the document found in Appendix A.

57. At the discretion of the pastor, non-Catholic Christian ministers:

§1 may be seated in the sanctuary, however, never in the presidential chair;

§2 may proclaim the First or Second Reading (as allowed in these norms #18), but may never proclaim the Gospel or preach the homily;

§3 may be situated near the presiding Priest or Deacon during the exchange of consent, but may not receive the consent in the Catholic ceremony.

58. The universal law for the reception of Holy Communion applies to those ministers of Christian churches and ecclesial communions (canon 844).

59. In “The Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian,” the incorporation of non-Christian ministers into the celebration must be undertaken with great care as not to undermine the integrity of the rites or to falsely incorporate synchrotistic elements into the celebration. While great pastoral discretion is given in this form, the Priest or Deacon should avoid the indiscriminate comingling of Christian and non-Christian elements at all costs.

CONVALIDATIONS

60. Convalidation is a “new act of marrying” for couples who have attempted marriage contrary to the laws of the Church. While some couples will seek to celebrate this new act of matrimony

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in its fullness, some circumstances suggest a simpler approach to the liturgical celebration. In such circumstances the liturgical form provided in Chapter II of the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* may be used.

§1 The second form of the Entrance may be used and the entire celebration carried out in front of the altar with the couple and witnesses standing before the Presider.

§2 Care should be given to include the proclamation of the Word of God. One reading, read by the Presider from the ritual book, may be used. A brief homily or exhortation may follow.

§3 The address before the questions may be modified, as already provided in the rubrics, and the last question may be omitted (as circumstances suggest.)

§4 Except in those cases when Chapter III should be employed, the Nuptial Blessing is never omitted.

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Given in Harrisburg on December 14, 2016

+Bishop Ronald W. Gainer

Carol L. Houghton, Chancellor

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

- CCC – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- GIRM – *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*
- MS – *Musicam Sacram*
- OCM – *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*
- USCCB – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- STTL – *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*