
FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS



Is it permissible to use readings other than those in *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*?

Whether celebrated within or outside Mass, the Readings must always be taken from Scripture. On those days when the Ritual Mass is celebrated, the Scripture readings are to be selected from the OCM. Likewise, when Marriage is celebrated without Mass, the readings are to be selected from the OCM.

The instruction for the readings notes that at least one reading that “explicitly speaks of marriage” must be selected. What does that mean?

In the rite itself (no. 56), one set of readings is given. In Chapter 4 of OCM, all assigned readings are listed and those which explicitly speak of marriage are indicated with an asterisk.

What prayers and readings are to be used for a wedding on a Solemnity?

It is required on days like these that the Scripture readings and prayers are those of the solemnity, not of the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* because these are days of special and universal celebration in the life of the whole Church. “Nevertheless...when the Mass “For the Celebration of Marriage” is not said, one of the readings may be taken from the texts provided for the celebration of Marriage [nos. 144-187]” (OCM 34).

May a non-Catholic proclaim the Readings?

Normally, “during a Eucharistic celebration in the Catholic Church” the readings are to be proclaimed by a Catholic (*Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, June 8, 1993, para. 133). There is an allowance in this document that says that “on exceptional occasions and for a just cause, the Bishop of the diocese may permit a member of another church or ecclesial community to take on the task of reader.” But note that only the diocesan Bishop may allow this exception. If the Marriage takes place outside of without Mass (Rite II or III), a non-Catholic is permitted to serve as reader.

May couples write their own vows?

The OCM offers two forms of Consent (vows) and two methods for saying them. No other forms for the Consent are permitted.

Does a wedding on a Saturday night fulfill Catholics’ Sunday obligation?

Canon 1248.1 of the *Code of Canon Law* states: “The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day.” Therefore, if a wedding Mass is celebrated after the time allowed in a diocese for anticipated Masses of Sunday, one’s Sunday obligation is fulfilled.

Must the Celebration of Matrimony take place in the church building?

Canon 1118.1: “A marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic party and a non-Catholic baptized party is to be celebrated in a parish church. It can be celebrated in another church or oratory with the permission of the local Ordinary or pastor.” The permission of the local Bishop is required for the wedding liturgy to take place in a suitable place outside of a Catholic church.

May the father of the bride accompany her down the aisle?

The OCM says, "The procession to the altar then takes place in the customary manner" (46). Among the rich variety of customary forms experienced at wedding in this country, the option of a procession with a cross, servers, presider, bridesmaids and groomsmen, and groom and bride [perhaps accompanied by their parents], would be commendable and should be encouraged.

When the bride and groom are accompanied by their parents, it provides a visual presentation of the Biblical view of both the bride and the groom "leaving father and mother and clinging to one another" (Gen 2:24; Mt 19:5; Eph 5:31) as the two become one in the covenantal relationship of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Although there may be pastoral circumstances that prevent one or both parents from accompanying their son or daughter down the aisle, this model offers a new perspective from the father accompanying his daughter as the one who "gives the bride away to her intended spouse." But yes, a father of the bride may accompany his daughter down the aisle.

Can a Deacon officiate (serve as the official Church witness) at the celebration of Matrimony when the Marriage is celebrated within Mass?

The role of the Deacon at Mass is to *assist* the Priest, who is the presider at the liturgy. The Deacon, at Mass, does have specific responsibilities: to announce the invocations of the Penitential Act (though this is omitted at a Nuptial Mass), to proclaim the Gospel and the intentions of the Universal Prayer, to invite all to share the Sign of Peace and to send forth the assembly in the dismissal. Therefore, it is not appropriate that a Deacon would act as the official witness for the Church at the celebration of Matrimony within Mass.

If his Bishop has given him faculties to preside at weddings, a Deacon may preside at the entire "Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass" and at the "Order for Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or Non-Christian," acting as the official witness for the Church.

May recorded music be used at the wedding liturgy?

The role of liturgical musicians is ministerial in nature and cannot be replaced by electronic music. Likewise, "recorded music lacks the authenticity provided by a living liturgical assembly gathered for the Sacred Liturgy" (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, 93).

Is a cantor required for the Wedding Liturgy?

The cantor serves an extremely important role in enabling all in the assembly to unite mind and heart in sung prayer and praise on this most special day. Many musical elements in the Wedding liturgy are dialogical, between the cantor and the rest of the assembly. *Sing to the Lord* states that if a singer is not trained to be a psalmist or cantor, "another singer should be secured for this liturgically important role" (SL, 221).