

LITURGICAL CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

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According to Vatican II Council “Christian marriage is a road to sanctity” (LG 41). Thus, its celebration requires preparation. Before the liturgical celebration of marriage, those to be married must well be taught. They should be people of faith. Priests and those who prepare them for marriage should nourish and strengthen their faith. For the sacrament of matrimony presupposes and demands faith (Rite of Marriage, Introduction, 1969, p. 1). “Sufficient time is required for a suitable preparation for Marriage. Engaged couples should be made aware of this necessity in advance.” In some dioceses in Nigeria, this lasts for six months. Engaged couples are not to pick date of their wedding before registering for marriage class.

Those preparing for marriage should be given catechesis about the Church's teaching on Marriage and the family and also about the Sacrament and its rites, prayers, and readings, so that they may be able to celebrate the sacrament thoughtfully and fruitfully. Catholics who have not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation should receive it to complete their Christian initiation before they wed in the Church if this can be done without grave inconvenience. The law of the Church recommends that the engaged couple in their preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony should receive the Sacrament of Penance, if necessary. They are exhorted to approach the Most Holy Eucharist, especially within the celebration of Marriage itself (Can. 1065 §1, §2). "Before a Marriage is celebrated, it must be established that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration Can. 1066.

For fruitful liturgical celebration of Marriage, the following must be done:

1. The liturgy is well prepared: Mass readings are well proclaimed, the priest prepares his homily
2. The hymns are well chosen and beautifully rendered
3. The couples are to have liturgical rehearsals before the wedding day
4. They must have prepared themselves prayerfully before Mass and must have had retreat for at least a full day before the wedding day
5. No indecent dressing. Both the couples and the bridal train must dress well without exposing the sensitive part of their bodies.
6. The marriage ceremony after Mass should not be given the priority.
7. Lateness to Mass must be avoided

RITE OF MARRIAGE

- The rite of marriage refers to the liturgical formality that is followed in the marriage celebration. In a marriage between a Catholic and a baptised person who is not Catholic, the rite of marriage outside Mass is observed. For a just cause, the local Ordinary can give permission for the use of the rite for celebrating marriage within Mass. In this case, according to the general law, communion is not given to the non-Catholic.
- The four important elements in the rite of marriage that should be stressed are: liturgy of the word, the consent of the contracting parties which the priest asks and receives, the special nuptial blessing on the bride by which the priest implores God's blessing on the wedding covenant, finally, the reception of Holy Communion.

WEDDING RING: A SYMBOL OF MARITAL FIDELITY AND LOVE

- In Catholic wedding rite, before the exchange of the ring, the spouse says: "Take this ring as a sign of MY love and fidelity." Thus, "the ring that is given is a sign of the love and fidelity of the one who gives it", Says Father Stephen Wang. The wedding ring that the spouse wears does not represent his or her own love, commitment and faithfulness to the spouse. Rather, it represents his or her spouse's love, fidelity and commitment to him or her.
- The ring has a shape of a circle. This circular shape of a ring points to the unending love of the spouses. Thus, the love that married couples share for each other should be unending. They cannot tired of loving each other. They are married till death do them part. They are to look at their ring everyday and remind themselves this truth.
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I must state here that many married people have forgotten that the ring is a symbol while the marriage is the reality. Some are often distracted on their wedding day because of the ring. This distraction begins even before the wedding day. Some spent hundreds of thousand in purchasing ring. On their wedding day, they are busy searching for their rings and because of this they lose focus of the wedding liturgy.

A message to married couples

Dear married people, do not let anything distract you from your marriage. Your marriage needs maximum attention and focus. Wear your wedding ring everyday, it is a symbol of your spouse's love and fidelity to you. Encourage your spouse to do the same. It is the symbol of your love and fidelity to him or her.