

# Concerning the Service

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God. In the Episcopal Church it is required that one, at least, of the parties must be a baptized Christian; that the ceremony be attested by at least two witnesses; and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church.

A priest or a bishop normally presides at the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, because such ministers alone have the function of pronouncing the nuptial blessing, and of celebrating the Holy Eucharist.

When both a bishop and a priest are present and officiating, the bishop should pronounce the blessing and preside at the Eucharist.

A deacon, or an assisting priest, may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other assisting functions at the Eucharist.

Where it is permitted by civil law that deacons may perform marriages, and no priest or bishop is available, a deacon may use the service which follows, omitting the nuptial blessing which follows The Prayers.

It is desirable that the Lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles be read by lay persons.

In the opening exhortation (at the symbol of *N.N.*), the full names of the persons to be married are declared. Subsequently, only their Christian names are used.

# An Order for Marriage

*If it is desired to celebrate a marriage otherwise than as provided on page 423 of this Book, this Order is used.*

*Normally, the celebrant is a priest or bishop. Where permitted by civil law, and when no priest or bishop is available, a deacon may function as celebrant, but does not pronounce a nuptial blessing.*

*The laws of the State and the canons of this Church having been complied with, the man and the woman, together with their witnesses, families, and friends assemble in the church or in some other convenient place.*

1. The teaching of the Church concerning Holy Matrimony, as it is declared in the formularies and canons of this Church, is briefly stated.
2. The intention of the man and the woman to enter the state of matrimony, and their free consent, is publicly ascertained.
3. One or more Readings, one of which is always from Holy Scripture, may precede the exchange of vows. If there is to be a Communion, a Reading from the Gospel is always included.
4. The vows of the man and woman are exchanged, using the following form

**In the Name of God, I, N.,** take you, N., to be my (wife) (husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

*or this*

**I, N., take thee N.,** to my wedded (wife) (husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to

cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I (plight) (give) thee my troth.

5. The Celebrant declares the union of the man and woman as husband and wife, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

6. Prayers are offered for the husband and wife, for their life together, for the Christian community, and for the world.

7. A priest or bishop pronounces a solemn blessing upon the couple.

8. If there is no Communion, the service concludes with the Peace, the husband and wife first greeting each other. The Peace may be exchanged throughout the assembly.

9. If there is to be a Communion, the service continues with the Peace and the Offertory. The Holy Eucharist may be celebrated either according to Rite One or Rite Two in this Book, or according to the Order on page 401.