

CHRISTIAN LIFE EVENTS MINISTRIES

WEDDING CEREMONY

PLANNING WORKBOOK

Compiled by Rev. Bob Tousey

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Greetings,

Thank you for allowing Christian Life Events Ministry be part of your special day. We take pride in helping you create a memorable and meaningful Christian wedding ceremony. It is our intention that this workbook provide you with a road map to creating your ceremony.

Typically a Christian wedding follows the pattern below:

1. Introduction
2. Prayer
3. Optional lighting of the Memorial Candle
4. Readings (typically an Old Testament, New Testament and Gospel reading. However some couples choose to do less or more. Secular readings which are not contrary to Christian beliefs are also appropriate).
5. Homily or Sermon
6. Rite of Marriage
 - 1) Introduction
 - 2) Declaration of Intent
 - 3) Exchange of Vows
 - 4) Exchange of Rings
 - 5) Optional Prayer of the Faithful
 - 6) Unity Candle, Sand Ceremony, Rose Ceremony, Exchange of Roses, Ethnic Traditions, etc.
 - 7) Nuptial Blessing
 - 8) Kiss
 - 9) Introduction of Couple
 - 10) Recessional

TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN PROCESSIONAL LINE UP

COMING DOWN THE AISLE

OFFICIANT GROOM BEST MAN GROOM'S MEN

BRIDE'S MAID'S

(RING BEARER)

(FLOWER GIRL)

MAID OR MATRON OF HONOR

FATHER OF THE BRIDE AND BRIDE

ONCE UP FRONT

BRIDE'S MAIDS MOH OFFICIANT BEST MAN GROOM'S MEN

BRIDE / GROOM

Please note the position of Ring Bearer and Flower Girl can change depending on their age and their relationship to other's who may be in the procession.

If the Groom's men are going to accompany the Bride's Maid during the procession, each Groom's man will be assigned a Bride's Maid to accompany down the aisle and will be to the right of the Bride's Maid as they walk up the aisle.

The Father of the Bride walks to the Bride's right as going up the aisle. This tradition developed when Men protected women and carried their swords on their right and need the right arm (traditionally the dominant arm) would be free to use the sword if necessary to provide protection.

The following are sample ceremonies and are intended to give you an idea of what your ceremony could look like. Rev. Bob will work with you to create a ceremony that is personal to you. There are three things that Rev. Bob looks for when working with you to create your ceremony. First, that the Lord be present, second, that the ceremony is dignified and finally, that the ceremony be what you want.

SAMPLE CATHOLIC CEREMONY

Rev. Bob: Who presents this woman to this man?

Father: Her mother and I.

Rev. Bob: In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen

Rev. Bob: A wedding is a celebration of love, the union of two individuals who until now have been separate and independent from each other, they will soon become one. _____ and _____ your lives are about to become woven together. Sorrow for one will be sorrow for the other. Happiness for one will be happiness for the other. Today you offer yourselves to each other before God and your family and friends. Your family and friends will offer their prayers for you. You will hear the word of God and then you will exchange vows that will make you one for as long as you both shall live.

Rev. Bob: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

People: And also with you.

Rev. Bob: The love and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always.

People: And also with you.

Rev. Bob: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Rev. Bob: Let us pray.

Rev. Bob: Father, hear our prayers for _____ and _____, who today are united in marriage before this community. Give them your blessings, and strengthen their love for each other. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

People: Amen.

Reader: Prayer for the Family
One

Lord God, from You every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. Father, you are Love and Life. Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity, grant that every family on earth may become for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.

Grant that Your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives for the good of their families and of all families in the world.

Grant that the young may find in the family solid support for their human dignity and for their growth in truth and love.

Grant that love, strengthened by the Sacrament of Marriage, may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials through which our families sometimes pass.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her world wide mission in and through the family.

Through Christ our Lord, Who is the Way, the Truth, the Life for ever and ever. Amen.

Reader: Read Old Testament Reading
Two

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord
Two

People: Thanks be to God.

Reader: Reads New Testament Reading
Three

Reader: This is the Word of the Lord
Three

People: Thanks be to God

Rev. Bob: The Lord be with you

People: And also with you

Rev. Bob: + A reading from the holy gospel according to _____.

People: Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Rev. Bob: Reads Gospel

Rev. Bob: This is the gospel of the Lord

People: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Bob: Homily

Rev. Bob: _____ & _____, you have come together before this community so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community. Christ abundantly blesses this love. He has already consecrated you in baptism and now he enriches and strengthens you by a special sacrament so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of this community, I ask you to state your intentions.

Rev. Bob: _____ and _____ have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Couple: We have.

Rev. Bob: Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

Couple: We will.

Rev. Bob: Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the laws of Christ and his Church?

Couple: We will.

Rev. Bob: Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, join your right hands and declare your consent before God and this community.

Bride: I, _____ take you _____, to be my husband/wife, I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

Groom: I, _____ take you _____, to be my husband/wife, I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

Rev. Bob: You have declared your consent before this community. May the Lord in his goodness strengthen your consent and fill you both with his blessings. What God has joined, man must not divide.

People: Amen

Rev. Bob: May the Lord + bless these rings which you give to each other as a sign of your love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Groom: _____, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Bride: _____, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Optional Prayer of the Faithful can be inserted here

This is where it is highly recommended that you add a closing tradition.

Rev. Bob: + May God bless this union of _____ and _____, may God guide them as they raise their family in accordance with the Will of Christ our Lord.

Rev. Bob: You may kiss the bride.

Rev. Bob: For the first time as husband and wife, I present, Mr. and Mrs. _____.

Recessional

SAMPLE LITURGICAL CHRISTIAN CEREMONY

Rev. Bob: Who presents this woman to this man?

Father: Her mother and I.

Rev. Bob: We have come together in the presence of God to celebrate the marriage of _____ and _____. In a short while _____ and _____ will be united in marriage. They will leave their individual lives behind and become one. Sorrow for one will be sorrow for the other. Joy for one will be joy for the other. Love for one will be love for the other. _____ and _____ your lives have about to become joined forever. You will not only be responsible for yourselves but for each other and your family. As your parents raised you and cared for you. You may be called upon to do the same for your children. So as we begin, let us pray to our heavenly Father, the one whose plan it was to bring _____ and _____ together.

Rev. Bob: Father we thank you for the gift of marriage, for the beauty of intimate companionship, a companionship in which we can know and be known, in which we can share freely and be accepted completely. Thank you for this taste of Your great unconditional love for us. May this commitment be voiced by _____ and _____ today in this ceremony reflect uniquely to the world this great love and bring glory to Your name. And may it remind each of us of the purpose of our marriages and encourage us to fulfill the vows that we have made to one another. In Jesus name, Amen.

Reader: Read Old Testament Reading

Reader: Reads New Testament Reading

Rev. Bob: A reading from the holy gospel according to _____.

Rev. Bob: Reads Gospel

Rev. Bob: Homily

Rev. Bob: _____ & _____, you have come together before your family and friends so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community. Christ abundantly blesses this love. May this blessing strengthen you so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of this community, I ask you to state your intentions.

Rev. Bob: _____ and _____ have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Couple: We have.

Rev. Bob: Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

Couple: We will.

Rev. Bob: Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the laws of Christ and his Church?

Couple: We will.

Rev. Bob: Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, join your right hands and declare your consent before God and this community.

Bride: Insert Vows

Groom: Insert Vows.

Rev. Bob: May I have the rings please?

Rev. Bob: Every covenant has a sign or symbol to remind each party of the responsibilities he or she brings to the relationship. These rings are a symbol of your love. They are a visible reminder to you and all others that what you have promised you will do. Wear them as a constant reminder that you are pledged together and committed to one another for life.

Rev. Bob: May the Lord + bless these rings which you give to each other as a sign of your love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Groom: This ring I give to you as a reminder of my love. I pledge to you my loyalty and devotion, until we are separated by death. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Bride: This ring I give to you as a reminder of my love. I pledge to you my loyalty and devotion, until we are separated by death. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

This is where it is highly recommended that you add a closing tradition.

Rev. Bob: + May God bless this union of _____ and _____, may God guide them as they raise their family in accordance with the Will of Christ our Lord.

Rev. Bob: You may kiss the bride.

Rev. Bob: For the first time as husband and wife, I present, Mr. and Mrs. _____

Recessional

NON DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIAN CEREMONY **SAMPLE # 1**

Rev. Bob: Who presents this woman to this man?

Father: Her Mother and I

Rev. Bob: We have come together in the presence of God to celebrate the marriage of _____ and _____. In a short while _____ and _____ will be united in marriage. They will leave their individual lives behind and become one. Sorrow for one will be sorrow for the other. Joy for one will be joy for the other. Love for one will be love for the other. _____ and _____ your lives have about to become joined forever. You will not only be responsible for yourselves but for each other and your family. As your parents raised you and cared for you. You may be called upon to do the same for your children. So as we begin, let us pray to our heavenly Father, the one whose plan it was to bring _____ and _____ together.

Rev. Bob: Father we thank you for the gift of marriage, for the beauty of intimate companionship, a companionship in which we can know and be known, in which we can share freely and be accepted completely. Thank you for this taste of Your great unconditional love for us. May this commitment be voiced by _____ and _____ today in this ceremony reflect uniquely to the world this great love and bring glory to Your name. And may it remind each of us of the purpose of our marriages and encourage us to fulfill the vows that we have made to one another. In Jesus name, we all say Amen.

Rev. Bob: Sermon

Rev. Bob: _____ & _____, you have come together before your family and friends so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community. Christ abundantly blesses this love. May this blessing strengthen you so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of this community, I ask you to state your intentions.

Rev. Bob: _____ and _____ have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Couple: We have.

Rev. Bob: Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

Couple: We will.

Rev. Bob: Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the values of Christ?

Couple: We will.

Officiant: Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, join your hands and declare your consent before God and this community.

Bride: Insert Vows

Groom: Insert Vows.

Rev. Bob: May I see the rings please?

Rev. Bob: Every covenant has a sign or symbol to remind each party of the responsibilities he or she brings to the relationship. These rings are a symbol of your love. They are a visible reminder to you and all others that what you have promised you will do. Wear them as a constant reminder that you are pledged together and committed to one another for life.

Groom: This ring I give to you as a reminder of my love. I pledge to you my loyalty and devotion, until we are separated by death. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Bride: This ring I give to you as a reminder of my love. I pledge to you my loyalty and devotion, until we are separated by death. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

This would be where you would insert a closing tradition. It is highly recommended that you have a closing tradition as it adds a nice touch to the ceremony

Rev. Bob: + May God bless this union of _____ and _____, may God guide them as they raise their family in accordance with the Will of Christ our Lord.

Rev. Bob: You may kiss the bride.

Rev. Bob: For the first time as husband and wife, I present, Mr. and Mrs. _____

Recessional

NON DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIAN **SAMPLE** # 2

Rev. Bob: Welcome to this great occasion. On behalf of _____ and _____ allow me to express my thanks for you being here today. We've all looked forward to this moment. Some of you have a shared history with _____ and _____. You marvel at the uniqueness of these two friends and how God has brought them together. Some of you, quite frankly, have waited a long time for this day to come. But God is the master of timing.

_____ and _____, God brought the two of you together. He planned the circumstances, He molded your lives and He's been in control of the timing so that both of you would be exactly what He wants you to be --- suitable for one another. He didn't want you to be married two years ago or a year ago because it wasn't His time. You weren't ready then, but I believe that you're ready now. I believe that you have the necessary spiritual sensitivity to make your marriage pleasing to God. Because of what is at stake, this ceremony carries tremendous importance and significance. Would you bow your heads and turn your thoughts to the Lord as we commit this ceremony to God.

Rev. Bob: Father we thank you for the gift of marriage, for the beauty of intimate companionship, a companionship in which we can know and be known, in which we can share freely and be accepted completely. Thank you for this taste of Your great unconditional love for us. May this commitment be voiced by _____ and _____ today in this ceremony reflect uniquely to the world this great love and bring glory to Your name. And may it remind each of us of the purpose of our marriages and encourage us to fulfill the vows that we have made to one another. In Jesus name, we all say Amen.

Rev. Bob: Sermon on Marriage and Family

Rev. Bob: _____ and _____, you have come together before your family and friends so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community. Christ abundantly blesses this love. May this blessing strengthen you so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of this community, I ask you to state your intentions.

Rev. Bob: _____ and _____ have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

COUPLE: We have.

Rev. Bob: Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

COUPLE: We will.

Rev. Bob: Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up with Christian values?

COUPLE: We will.

VOWS OF SUPPORT

Rev. Bob: Will the parents please stand?

Rev. Bob: Do you as parents promise to pray for and support your children in the new relationship that they enter as husband and wife? If so, say "WE DO".

PARENTS: We Do

Rev. Bob: All of you who will witness these vows, will you do everything in your power to support and uphold these two people in their marriage? If so, then say "We Will".

FAMILY & FRIENDS: We Will

BRIDE: INSERT VOWS

GROOM: INSERT VOWS

Rev. Bob: Every covenant has a sign or symbol to remind each party of the responsibilities he or she brings to the relationship. These rings are a symbol of your love. They are a visible reminder to you and all others that what you have promised you will do. Wear them as a constant reminder that you are pledged together and committed to one another for life.

GROOM: _____, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity for as long as we both shall live. In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

BRIDE: _____, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity for as long as we both shall live. In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Rev. Bob: _____ and _____, today you joined your separate lives together. The two separate bottles of sand symbolize your separate lives, separate families and separate set of friends. They represent all that you are as individuals. As these two containers of sand are poured into the third container, they are joined together as one. Just as you have been joined today.

Rev. Bob: The Lord God who created our first parents and established them in marriage, establish and sustain you, that you may find delight in each other and grow in holy life's end. Amen.

Rev. Bob: You may kiss the bride

Rev. Bob: I am proud to present as husband and wife Mr. and Mrs.

Recessional

OPENING COMMENTS

Comment # 1

A wedding is a celebration of love, the union of two individuals who until now have been separate and independent from each other, will soon become one. _____ and _____ your lives are about to become woven together. Sorrow for one will be sorrow for the other. Happiness for one will be happiness for the other. Today you offer yourselves to each other before God and this community. This community will offer their prayers for you. You will hear the word of God and then you will exchange vows that will make you one for as long as you both shall live.

Comment # 2

We have come together in the presence of God to celebrate the marriage of _____ and _____. In a short while _____ and _____ will be united in marriage. They will leave their individual lives behind and become one. Sorrow for one will be sorrow for the other. Joy for one will be joy for the other. Love for one will be love for the other. _____ and _____ your lives have about to become joined forever. You will not only be responsible for yourselves but for each other and your family. As your parents raised you and cared for you. You may be called upon to do the same for your children. So as we begin, let us pray to our heavenly Father, the one whose plan it was to bring _____ and _____ together.

Comment # 3

Welcome to this great occasion. On behalf of _____ and _____ allow me to express my thanks for you being here today. We've all looked forward to this moment. Some of you have a shared history with _____ and _____. You marvel at the uniqueness of these two friends and how God has brought them together. Some of you, quite frankly, have waited a long time for this day to come. But God is the master of timing.

_____ and _____, God brought the two of you together. He planned the circumstances, He molded your lives and He's been in control of the timing so that both of you would be exactly what He wants you to be --- suitable for one another. He didn't want you to be married two years ago or a year ago because it wasn't His time. You weren't ready then, but I believe that you're ready now. I

believe that you have the necessary spiritual sensitivity to make your marriage pleasing to God. Because of what is at stake, this ceremony carries tremendous importance and significance. Would you join me as we commit this ceremony to God. (Prayer follows).

PRAYERS

Prayers can be offered throughout the ceremony and not just in the prayer section shown in the sample ceremonies and in the Order of Service. Please feel free to choose as many prayers as you feel comfortable with.

Prayer #1 Typically an Opening Prayer

Father, hear our prayers for _____ and _____, who today are united in marriage before your community. Give them your blessings, and strengthen their love for each other. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Prayer #2 Typically an Opening Prayer

Father we thank you for the gift of marriage, for the beauty of intimate companionship, a companionship in which we can know and be known, in which we can share freely and be accepted completely. Thank you for this taste of Your great unconditional love for us. May this commitment be voiced by _____ and _____ today in this ceremony reflect uniquely to the world this great love and bring glory to Your name. And may it remind each of us of the purpose of our marriages and encourage us to fulfill the vows that we have made to one another. In Jesus name, Amen.

Prayer # 3 The Prayer for the Family
Written by the Late Pope John Paul II

Lord God, from You every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. Father, you are Love and Life. Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity, grant that every family on earth may become for each successive generation a true shrine of life and love.

Grant that Your grace may guide the thoughts and actions of husbands and wives for the good of their families and of all families in the world.

Grant that the young may find in the family solid support for their human dignity and for their growth in truth and love.

Grant that love, strengthened by the Sacrament of Marriage, may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials through which our families sometimes pass.

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out her world wide mission in and through the family.

Through Christ our Lord, Who is the Way, the Truth, the Life for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer # 4 The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer # 5 The Lord's Prayer Catholic Version

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
Amen

Prayer # 6 Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer #7 Prayer of Thanksgiving (typically a closing prayer)

O God, Creator and Father of us all, we thank You for the gift of life --- and, in life, for the gift of marriage. We praise and thank You for all the joys that can come to men and women through marriage and for the blessings of home and family.

Today, especially, we think of _____ and _____ as they begin their life together as husband and wife. With them we thank You for the joy they find in each other. Give them strength, Father, to keep the vows they have made and to cherish the love they share, that they may be faithful and devoted. Help them to support each other with patience, understanding and honesty. Teach them to be wise and loving parents of any children they may have. We pray for their parents, that at this moment of parting, they may rejoice in their children's happiness.

Look with favor, God on all of our homes. Defend them from every evil that may threaten them, from outside or within. Let Your Spirit so direct all of us that we may look to the good of others in word and deed and grow in grace as we advance in years, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

LIGHTING OF THE MEMORIAL CANDLE

We all have those who have been important in our lives, these people helped shape us into the people we are today. Today by lighting this candle _____ and _____ are remember those people who are here with us in spirit most especially _____. _____ and _____ may you feel all the goodness and love that they have for you both.

SECULAR READINGS

A Good Marriage by Wilfred Arlan Peterson

Happiness in a marriage is not something that just happens.
A good marriage must be created.
In marriage the little things are the big things.
It is never being too old to hold hands.
It is remembering to say "I love you" at least once a day.
It is never going to sleep angry.
It is at no time taking the other for granted; the courtship should not end
with the honeymoon, it should continue through all the years.
It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives.
It is standing together facing the world.
It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.
It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the spirit of joy.
It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.
It is not looking for perfection in each other.
It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humor.
It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.
It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.
It is common search for the good and the beautiful.
It is establishing a relationship in which the independence is equal, dependence is mutual and the obligation is reciprocal.
It is not only marrying the right partner, it is being the right partner

"The Hands of the Bride and Groom" (unknown author)

These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and full of
love
for you, that are holding yours on your wedding day as you promise to
love
each other today, tomorrow and forever.

These are the hands that will work alongside yours as together you
build
your future.

These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you
through

the years, and with the slightest touch will comfort you like no other.
These are the hands that will hold you when fear or grief wracks your
mind.

These are the hands that will countless times wipe the tears from your
eyes,

tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

These are the hands that will tenderly hold your children.

These are the hands that will help you to hold your family as one.

These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it.

And lastly, these are the hands that even when wrinkled and aged will
still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken
tenderness with just a touch.

Thoughts in a Garden By R. Gerhardt

This is a special place, a place where people have brought beautiful living plants, here to establish them, to nurture and care for them, that they may forever surround us with the beauty we now see. And into this place where we stand, you have brought something beautiful - - the relationship that is becoming your marriage. Here you are declaring it and pledging it, promising to establish and nurture it. We are aware of the special beauty between the two of you, just as we are aware of the special beauty of this place. We are with you now in this appropriate place to celebrate your relationship as it is and as it is yet to be, and in doing so, we ask only that you remember how your life together will have the same seasons and needs as this garden. There will be growth like spring and loss like fall; there will be giving as the blossoming flower, and rest as the seed beneath the snow. All the seasons will be yours, but remember, too, that gardens are not must happenings. The more wonderful the garden, the more skilled the gardener. So you will have to care deeply for the life that is yours together, and nurture it. You will have to appreciate your differences and cultivate them. You will have to take care of yourself, if for no other reason than out of love for the other. And you will need the support of family and friends to reach full growth. As you caringly chose this place to declare your marriage, so remember its lessons for your life together through the seasons that are yours to share. And may those seasons bring you and yours joy and happiness.

Sonnet XIV Elizabeth Barrett Browning

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say,
"I love her for her smile — her look — her way
Of speaking gently, — for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day." ---
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee, — and love, so wrought
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may best love on, through love's eternity.

THE COUPLE'S TAO TE CHING

"SEE CLEARLY" Lau Tzu

Interpereted by: William Martin

Your love is a great mystery.
It is like an eternal lake
whose waters are always still and clear like glass.
Looking into it you can see the truth about your life.
It is like a deep well whose waters are cool and pure.
Drinking from it you can be reborn.
You do not have to stir the waters
or dig the well.
Merely see yourself clearly
and drink deeply.

Shared Love in Marriage by Victor Hugo

You can give without loving, but you can never love without giving. The great acts of love are done by those who are habitually performing small acts of kindness. We pardon to the extent that we love. Love is knowing that even when you are alone, you will never be lonely again. And great happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved. Loved for ourselves. And even loved in spite of ourselves

From "Marriage Lines", Ogden Nash

To keep your marriage brimming
With love from the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong admit it,
Whenever you're right, shut up.

"Pathways, Rainer Maria Rilke

Understand, I'll slip quietly
Away from the noisy crowd
When I see the pale
Stars rising, blooming, over the oaks.

I'll pursue solitary pathways
Through the pale, twilight meadows,
With only this one dream:
You come too.

To Love is Not to Possess, James Kavanaugh

To love is not to possess, to own or imprison, Nor to lose one's self in another. Love is to join and separate, To walk alone and together, To find a laughing freedom That lonely isolation does not permit. It is finally to be able To be who we really are No longer clinging in childish dependency Nor docilely living separate lives in silence, It is to be perfectly one's self And perfectly joined in permanent commitment To another—and to one's inner self. Love only endures when it moves like waves, Receding and returning gently or passionately, Or moving lovingly like the tide In the moon's own predictable harmony, Because finally, despite a child's scars Or an adult's deepest wounds, They are openly free to be Who they really are—and always secretly were,

In the very core of their being Where true and lasting love can alone
abi

EXCERPT FROM THE VELVETEEN RABBIT By Margery Williams

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room.

"Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but Really loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get all loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

USING A COLLECTION OF READINGS

A couple recently came across this which I think is a nice idea. The reader will read a biblical verse and then the officiant provides an explanation. This can be used instead of readings in their traditional form.

Reader: Genesis.2: 24. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."

Rev. Bob: Marriage is the beginning of a new family. The old life is forsaken and a new state is entered. Therefore it is important to lay the right foundations for the new family. It is a new opportunity to start a home and a family and it must be entered into with commitment and wisdom.

NEW BOND:

Reader: Matthew.19:6. "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

Rev. Bob: Marriage is a new bond, quite different from the bond between parents and children, brothers and sisters. Life is full of relationships . We have relationships with family, friends, neighbors, staff etc. But marriage is a new bond and a unique bond . It is a bond and a relationship which endures all the vagaries of life sharing and caring for one another and encouraging one another.

NEW BURDEN:

Reader: I Timothy 5:8. "People who don't take care of their relatives, and especially their own families, have given up their faith. They are worse than someone who doesn't have faith in the Lord."

Rev. Bob: Marriage is a new burden and responsibility to provide and care for the family. Marriage involves a commitment to provide and protect. The persons involved must realize this responsibility before entering into the state of matrimony. The word warns those who fail to take care of their family.

NEW BRIGHTNESS:

Reader: Ecclesiastes.4:9.

"You are better off to have a friend than to be all alone, because then you will get more enjoyment out of what you earn."

Rev. Bob: Two candles can give more light than one. Marriage can produce a new brightness in serving the Lord. The family is called to be a living witness for the Lord. In this world of sin and iniquity. The Lord wants the families of His children to be shining examples of His grace and glory.

NEW BOLDNESS:

Reader: Ecclesiastes.4:12. "And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart"

Rev. Bob: Marriage gives security and courage to face life. Mutual encouragement and motivation can give a fresh courage to face the battles of life. A lonely warrior can get easily disheartened and discouraged. Therefore marriage can provide a new courage and boldness in facing life together.

OLD TESTAMENT READINGS

GENESIS CHAPTER 1 VERSES 26 - 31

Then God said, "Let us make a man ---- someone like ourselves, to be the master of all life upon the earth and in the skies and in the seas." So God made man like his Maker. Like God did God make man; Man and maid did he make them. And God blessed them and told them "Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; you are the masters of the fish and birds and all the animals. And look ! I have given you the seed bearing plants throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for their food. Then God looked over all he had made, and it was excellent in every way. This ended the sixth day.

GENESIS CHAPTER 2 VERSES 18 - 24

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper right for him."

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; what man named each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the farm animals, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam no proper helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife.

RUTH CHAPTER 1 VERSES 16 AND 17

Don't make me leave you, for I want to go wherever you go, and to live wherever you live; your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God; I want to die where you die, and be buried there. May the Lord do terrible things to me if I allow anything but death to separate us.

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:10-13

My love said to me, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers are springing up and the time of the singing of birds has come. Yes, spring is here. The leaves are coming out and the grape vines are in blossom. How delicious they smell ! Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:14-15

O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
In the secret place of the steep pathway,
Let me see your form,
Let me hear your voice,
For your form is lovely.
Catch the foxes for us,
The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards,
While our vineyards are in blossom.

PSALM 37 3-6

Trust in the Lord, and do good;
So you will live in the land and enjoy security.
Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desire of your heart.
Commit your ways to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act.
He will make your vindication shine like the light, and the justice of your cause like the noon day.

PSALM 127

Unless the Lord builds a house, the builders' work is useless. Unless the Lord protects a city, sentries do no good. It is senseless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, fearing you will starve to death; for God wants his loved ones to get their proper rest.

Children are a gift from God; they are his reward. Children born to a young man are like sharp arrows to defend him. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. The man shall have the help he needs when arguing with his enemies

PSALM 128

Blessings on all who reverence and trust the Lord ---- on all who obey him!

Their rewards shall be prosperity and happiness. Your wife shall be contented in your home. And look at all those children! There they sit around the dinner table as vigorous and healthy as young olive trees. That is God's reward to those who reverence and trust him.

May the Lord continually bless you with heaven's blessings as well as with human joys. May you live to enjoy your grandchildren! And may God bless Israel!

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 4 VERSES 9 –12

Two are better than one: they get a good reward for their labor. If the one falls, the other will lift up his companion. Woe to the solitary man! For if he should fall, he has no one to lift him up. So also, if two sleep together, they keep each other warm. How can one alone keep warm? Where a lone man may be overcome, two together can resist. A three-ply cord is not easily broken. (Excellent reading to be used with closing tradition Cord of three strings)

THE BOOK OF SIRACH 26: 1-4, 13-16

Happy the husband of a good wife, twice-lengthened are his days; A worthy wife brings joy to her husband, peaceful and full is his life. A good wife is a generous gift bestowed upon him who fears the Lord; Be he rich or poor, his heart is content, and a smile is ever on his face. A gracious wife delights her husband, her thoughtfulness puts flesh on his bones; A gift from the Lord is her governed speech, and her firm virtue is of surpassing worth. Choicest of blessings is a modest wife, priceless her chaste person. Like the sun rising in the Lord's heavens, the beauty of a virtuous wife is the radiance of her holiness.

NEW TESTAMENT

PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS 13

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, and always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him. In the end there are but three things that remain faith, hope and love — and the greatest of these is love.

PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS 13 (LONG VERSION)

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated. It is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love does not come to an end.

We know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully. Faith, hope and love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

ROMANS CHAPTER 12 VERSES 1-2/9-18

I recommend you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship.

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may recognize what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Let love be honest; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good;

Love one another with shared affection; anticipate one another in showing honor.

Do not grow slack in zeal, be eager in spirit, serve the Lord.

Rejoice in hope, endure in hardship, carry on in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise kindness.

Bless those who bully (you), bless and do not curse them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Have the same regard for one another; do not be stuck-up but unite with the deprived; do not be wise in your own judgment.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all.

If possible, on your part, live at peace with all.

Beloved, do not look for revenge but leave room for the anger; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

COLOSSIANS 3 VERSES 12-14

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.

And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection.

COLOSSIANS CHAPTER 3 VERSES 18 – 21

You wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, for that is what the Lord has planned for you. And you husbands must be loving and kind to your wives and not bitter against them, nor harsh.

Your children must always obey your fathers and mothers, for that pleases the Lord. Fathers, don't scold your children so much that they become discouraged and quit trying.

PETER CHAPTER 3 VERSES 1 – 9

Wives, fit in with your husbands' plans; for then if they refuse to listen when you talk to them about the Lord, they will be won by your respectful, pure behavior. Your godly lives will speak to them better than any words.

Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on jewelry, or beautiful clothes, or hair arrangement. Be beautiful inside, in your hearts, with the lasting charm of a gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God. That kind of deep beauty was seen in saintly women of old, who trusted God and fitted in with their husbands' plans.

Sarah, for instance, obeyed her husband Abraham, honoring him as head of the house. And if you do the same, you will be following in her steps like good daughters and doing what is right; then you will not need to fear offending your husbands.

Your husbands must be careful of your wives, being thoughtful of their needs and honoring them as the weaker sex. Remember that you and your wife are partners in receiving God's blessings, and if you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not get ready answers.

And now this word to all of you: You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy towards each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds. Don't repay evil for evil. Don't snap back at those who say unkind things about you. Instead, pray for God's help for them, for we are to be kind to others, and God will bless us for it.

PETER CHAPTER 3 VERSES 8 & 9

And now this word to all of you: You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy towards each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds. Don't repay evil for evil. Don't snap back at those who say unkind things about you. Instead, pray for God's help for them, for we are to be kind to others, and God will bless us for it.

GOSPELS

MATTHEW CHAPTER 5 VERSES 6 - 12

"Happy are those who long to be just and good, for they shall be completely satisfied. Happy are the kind and merciful for the shall be shown mercy. Happy are those whose hearts are pure, for they shall see God. Happy are those who strive for peace -- they shall be called the sons of God. Happy are those who are persecuted because they are good, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs."

"When you are reviled and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers --- Wonderful ! Be happy about it! Be very glad! for a tremendous reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted too."

MATTHEW CHAPTER 5 VERSES 13 - 16

You are the world's seasoning, to make it tolerable. If you lose your flavor, what will happen to the world? And you yourself will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the world's light --- a city on a hill, glowing in the night for all to see. Don't hide your light! Let it shine for all; let it shine for all; let your good deeds glow for all to see, so that they will praise your heavenly Father.

JOHN CHAPTER 2 VERSES 1 -11

Jesus' mother was a guest at a wedding in the village of Cana in Galilee, and Jesus and his disciples were invited too. The wine supply ran out during the festivities, and Jesus' mother came to him with the problem. "I can't help you now" he said "it isn't my time for miracles." But his mother told the servants "Do whatever he tells you" Six stone water jars were standing there, they were used for Jewish ceremonial purposes and held perhaps twenty to thirty gallons each. Then Jesus told the servants to fill them to the brim with water. When this was done he said "Dip some out and take it to the master of ceremonies." When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from, he called the bridegroom over. "This is wonderful !" he said "You're different from most usually a host serves the best wine first, and afterward, when everyone is full and

doesn't care, then he brings out the less expensive brands. But you have kept the best for last!"

This miracle at Cana in Galilee was Jesus' first public demonstration of his heaven sent power. And his disciples believed that he really was the Messiah.

JOHN CHAPTER 10 VERSES 11 – 18

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again This commandment I received from My Father.

JOHN CHAPTER 15 VERSES 9 – 12

As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

**RITE OF MARRIAGE
OPENING COMMENTS**

Marriage Comments # 1

_____ & _____, you have come together before this community so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community. Christ abundantly blesses this love. May this blessing strengthen you so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of this community, I ask you to state your intentions.

DECLARATION OF INTENT

1 STANDARD FORM

Officiant: _____ and _____ have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Couple: We have.

Officiant: Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

Couple: We will.

Officiant: Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the laws of Christ and his Church? (The last portion can be replaced with "with Christian values" or "in the example of Christ".)

Couple: We will.

#2 STANDARD FORM FOR COUPLE LATER IN LIFE (This form is ONLY for couples who are not of child bearing age and do not intend to adopt. Rev. Bob is a Christian Deacon and does not officiate weddings for couples who do not intend to raise their children according to Christian beliefs)

Officiant: _____ and _____ have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Couple: We have.

Officiant: Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

Couple: We will.

#3 STANDARD FORM FOR COUPLE LATER IN LIFE EACH BRINING CHILDREN INTO THE MARRIAGE

Officiant: _____ and _____ have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Couple: We have.

Officiant: Will you love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

Couple: We will.

Officiant: Will you accept the children of your spouse and promise to support and encourage them as individuals and in their Christian faith?

VOWS OF SUPPORT

For Parents:

(Invites parents to stand)

Do you as parents promise to pray for and support your children in the new relationship that they enter as husband and wife? If so, say "I DO".

For Family & Friends

All of you who will witness these vows, will you do everything in your power to support and uphold these two people in their marriage? If so, then say "We Will".

VOWS

The vows you say on your wedding day are your personal promise of commitment and love to your new spouse. You can use these vows, vows from another source or write your own. The important thing is that you are true to your vows, that you convey your love to your spouse and respect the dignity of the day.

TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC VOW I

I, _____ take you _____, for my husband/wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC VOW II

I, _____ take you _____, to be my husband/wife, I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

VOWS FOR MARRIAGE LATER IN LIFE I

I offer you not the "summer of my life" but the autumn, brisk and vibrant. I promise to be a companion worthy of your precious friendship. I pledge you compassion in good times and bad, encouragement in sickness and in health.

It is my intention that our lives together include our large circle of friends and loving families. We'll cherish the memories of our individual pasts and create our new life as we go now together.

VOWS FOR MARRIAGE LATER IN LIFE II

In the presence of God, our children and grandchildren, I take you _____, to be my wedded husband/wife. I promise to love you, honor you and cherish you, in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad, so long as we both shall live. May the Lord bless us with many happy years together and may the peace of Christ live always in our hearts and in our home as we become one.

FAMILY VOWS WITH CHILDREN I

I _____, choose you _____ and _____ to be my family. I promise, in the presence of God, to honor you and respect you, and to provide for you to the best of my ability. I promise to make our home a haven, where trust, love and laughter are abundant. I make these promises lovingly and freely, and vow to honor them all the days of my life.

FAMILY VOWS WITH CHILDREN II

I have promise in the presence of God, to love you and be a faithful husband/wife to you as long as we both shall live, but I would like to add another promise, to love _____ as my own child/children, to provide for him/her/them and to be a faithful parent always concerned for his/her/their welfare and every need for as long as we shall live.

VOWS FOR A SECOND MARRIAGE I

_____, when God brought you into my life, everything changed. Because of you, I laugh, I smile, I dare to dream again. All the heartaches and sorrows are behind me now, and by God's grace and because of you, I look forward with great joy to spending the rest of my life with you, caring for you, nurturing you, being there for you in all life has to offer for us, and I vow to be a true and faithful husband/wife, for as long as we both shall live, so help me God.

VOWS FOR A SECOND MARRIAGE II

_____, God has given me a second chance at happiness and I praise Him for that. I come today to give you my love, to give you my heart and my hope for our future together. I promise to bring you joy, to be at home with your spirit and to learn to love you more each day, through all the days of our lives. I promise to be your faithful husband/wife; my love for you is seamless, endless and eternal.

SPECIAL VOW I

Today is the most important day of our lives, today we put our individual pasts behind us and go forward into the future as one. We have thousand of memories of our past, our childhoods; our growing's up; the day we met; the day we knew we were meant to be. But today is the first day of the rest of our lives and we will build new memories together. There will be no more me, no more you; but only us from this moment on. I promise to try, with God's help, to be the best husband/wife I can be, so that our memories will be treasures for all the years to come.

SPECIAL VOW II

I, _____ take you _____, to be my husband/wife, from this day forward. I vow to be faithful and loving, to give and to receive, to speak and to listen, to inspire and to respond, to respect and to cherish and to work with you to achieve the goals and dreams of our lives for as long as we both shall live.

SPECIAL VOW III

I take you _____, to be my husband/wife and I promise to be faithful to you, to be honest with you, I will respect, trust, help and care for you. I will give and receive, speak and listen, inspire and respond. I will forgive as we have been forgiven. I will work with you to better understand ourselves, our families and our children. I will remain with you through the best and the worst so that together we may raise a family and serve God as long as we both shall live.

WRITING YOUR OWN VOWS

Writing your own vows can be a very meaningful and loving experience. It is not a task that you want to leave until the last minute as the pressure of the event will usually interfere with vows and it is likely you will abandon the effort or "just throw something together".

I normally suggest to couples that ceremony planning take place about 60 to 90 days before the wedding. At this point any theme for the wedding will have been decided and hopefully the bridal party and wedding professionals will have been selected. How to get started? Well here are some suggestions.

1. In order to get in the right frame of mind I suggest you set aside some time when you will not be interrupted.
2. Take a moment to mediate or pray together asking for inspirations as you begin this task together.
3. It is normally a good idea to review the [vows on this site](#) and some books which contain vows. This will give you some ideas as to what you might want to include in your vows.
4. Talk about what marriage means to you. What do you expect from the relationship? What do the words respect, love, commitment and promise mean to you?
5. Think about when you met. When did you say I love you for the first time. What prompted you to say a love you that first time? What did you feel the first time you said or heard those three words?
6. Why did you decide to get married? What does marriage mean to you?
7. What do you have together that you do not have apart?
8. How have you gotten through the difficult times in your relationship so far?

9. Each of you take some separate time and write down what you admire the most in your future spouse.
10. Do you want to write vows separately or do you want mutual vows that you will both say to each other?
11. Once you have completed the discussion, reading and thinking it is time to sit down and write the first draft.
12. The vows should consider the seriousness of the commitment you are about to make to each other but may be clever. You should include a reference to the permanency of your love, commitment and honesty to one another.
13. Vows should be no longer than 90 seconds. Otherwise, they may be hard to recite on your wedding day when you are nervous.
14. HAVE A GREAT TIME AND WRITE SOME VOWS THAT ARE MEANINGFUL TO YOU. REMEMBER THE KEY IS LOVE.

EXCHANGE OF RINGS

Optional Comments Before The Exchange of Rings

#1

Every covenant has a sign or symbol to remind each party of the responsibilities he or she brings to the relationship. These rings are a symbol of your love. They are a visible reminder to you and all others that what you have promised you will do. Wear them as a constant reminder that you are pledged together and committed to one another for life.

#2

_____ and _____,

These wedding rings symbolize the holiness, perfection and peace that is available to you in your marriage. They are symbols of the love, friendship, and faithfulness that you share.

As circles, they have no beginning or end. They are round like the sun, moon, earth and universe.

Just as these rings have no points of weakness, may your union be strong, and may you be blessed with joy as you journey through life together surrounded by the circle of your love.

Exchange of Rings # 1

This ring I give to you as a reminder of my love. I pledge to you my loyalty and devotion, until we are separated by death. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Exchange of Rings # 2

_____, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity for as long as we both shall live. In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Exchange of Rings # 3

"A forever circle, fed by its own path, and growing forever. May God bless this ring, and bless our covenant, into which we enter freely, of our own choice and will. With this ring, I thee wed."

OPTIONAL PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Reader: The response is Lord, hear our prayer

Reader: For _____ and _____, that whether they are experiencing times of happiness or heartache their love, commitment, and dedication towards each other remains resolute and is used as a foundation to help others. We pray to the Lord.

Congregation: Lord, hear our prayer

Reader: For the married couples among us who have been a source of inspiration and encouragement in _____ and _____ own journey towards marriage. May you continue to give; be able to forgive; and find the love you hold for each other deepen with the dawn of each new day. We pray to the Lord.

Congregation: Lord, hear our prayer

Reader: For all those gathered here today, that you may continue to support _____ and _____ with your friendship and love throughout their marriage and that you all have safe journeys home this evening and always. We pray to the Lord.

Congregation: Lord, hear our prayer

Reader: For all those who are sick in mind, body, or spirit, that they are strengthened by God and aided by their fellow man. We pray to the Lord.

Congregation: Lord, hear our prayer

Reader: For the loved ones of _____ and _____ who have gone before them, that they, and all the deceased, find peace and the fulfillment of all their unfulfilled desires. We pray to the Lord.

Congregation: Lord, hear our prayer

CLOSING TRADITIONS

UNITY CANDLE

Now that you have given yourselves in marriage it is time to symbolize that Union by lighting the unity candle. Before this ceremony began your mother's lit individual candles to symbolize your individual lives. You will now take these individual candles and light the unity candle to symbolize your new union. May your life be bright and may your life together be light, may this candle be a symbol of your love.

SAND CEREMONY

_____ and _____, today you joined your separate lives together. The two separate bottles of sand symbolize your separate lives, separate families and separate set of friends. They represent all that you are as individuals. As these two containers of sand are poured into the third container, they are joined together as one. Just as you have been joined today.

CORD OF THREE STRINGS

Visit <http://www.godsknot.com>
To order the cords for this closing tradition

The braiding of the three strands demonstrates how _____ and _____ are joined by God in marriage. Each strand holds special meaning. The Gold Strand symbolizes that the Lord Jesus has been invited by _____ and _____ to the position of authority in this marriage relationship.

The Purple Strand represents the groom. It illustrates the majesty of God as head over the husband. As _____ submits himself to the Lord, the Lord in turn will hold the marriage together through him.

The White Strand represents the bride. It illustrates the purity of the bride of Christ. As each has received Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord, they are cleansed through Christ.

Ecclesiastes 4: 12 reads, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Today, _____ and _____ have been woven together by God as ONE in marriage!

ROSE CEREMONY

Your gift to each other for your wedding today has been your wedding rings - which shall always be an outward demonstration of your vows of love and respect; and a public showing of your commitment to each other.

You now have what remains the most honorable title which may exist between a man and a woman - the title of "husband" and "wife." For your first gift as husband and wife, that gift will be a single rose.

In the past, the rose was considered a symbol of love and a single rose always meant only one thing - it meant the words "I love you." So it is appropriate that for your first gift - as husband and wife - that gift would be a single rose.

Please exchange your first gift as husband and wife. In some ways it seems like you have not done anything at all. Just a moment ago you were holding one small rose - and now you are holding one small rose. In some ways, a marriage ceremony is like this. In some ways, tomorrow is going to seem no different than yesterday. But in fact today, just now, you both have given and received one of the most valuable and precious gifts of life - one I hope you always remember - the gift of true and abiding love within the devotion of marriage.

_____ and _____, I would ask that where ever you make your home in the future - whether it be a large and elegant home - or a small and graceful one - that you both pick one very special location for roses; so that on each anniversary of this truly wonderful occasion you both may take a rose to that spot both as a recommitment to your marriage - and a recommitment that this will be a marriage based upon love.

In every marriage there are times where it is difficult to find the right words. That rose says the words: "I still love you." The other should accept this rose for the words which cannot be found, and remember the love and hope that you both share today.

_____ and _____, if there is anything you remember of this marriage ceremony, it is that it was love that brought you here today, it is only love which can make it a glorious union, and it is by love which your marriage shall endure."

JUMPING THE BROOM

The tradition of "Jumping the Broom" has both European and African roots. Early Celts and West Africans practiced this tradition. It is still practiced in some parts of West Africa today.

Enslaved Africans, as an affirmation of their cultural heritage practiced it during slavery in United States. This "leap" into a new life (marriage life) as husband and wife is performed in the presence of families and friends. The broom has both symbolic and spiritual importance in the African culture.

A special ceremonial broom is used. More information on the ceremonial broom can be found at the link on the www.religiousweddings.org website.

The couple holds the broom together and sweeps in a circle as the officiant or family member talks about the significance of the ritual. Then the broom is placed on the floor, the couple joins hands, everyone counts to three and the couple jumps.

HAND CEREMONY

_____, please face _____ and hold his hands palms up, so that you may see the gift that they are. These are the hands of your best on your wedding day as he promises his love and commitment to you for all the days of his life. These are the hands that will work along side yours, as together you build your future, as you laugh and cry, as you share your innermost secrets and dreams. These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, for a

lifetime of happiness. These are the hands that will countless times wipe tears from your eyes; tears of sorrow and tears of joy. These are the hands that will comfort you in illness and lift your chin to look into his eyes that are filled completely with his overwhelming love and respect for you.

_____, please hold _____ hands, palms up, so that you may see the gift that they are to you. These are the hands of your best friend, young and carefree, that are holding yours on your wedding day, as she pledges her love and commitment to you, all the days of her life. These are the hands that will give you strength and encouragement to help fulfill your dreams. Together as a team, everything you wish for can be realized. These are the hands that will hold you tight and support you as you struggle through difficult times. These are the hands that will comfort you when you are sick, and console you when you are grieving. They are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness.

God blesses these hands that you see before you this day. May they always be held by one another. Give them the strength to hold on during the storms of stress and the dark of disillusionment. Keep them tender and gentle as they nurture each other in wondrous love. Help these hands to continue building a relationship founded in your grace, rich in caring and devoted to reach for your perfections. May _____ and _____ see their four hands together as a healer, protector, shelter and guide.

Release of Doves

For many centuries, the White Dove has been an emblem of the Spirit, Peace, Love and New Beginnings. The releasing of doves raises our eyes up, and fills our hearts with joy, peace and remembrance.

_____ and _____, our wish for you is that your life together will be everlasting, rich and rewarding. May your marriage carry with it all the wonderful qualities that the White Doves represent.

Watering A Unity Plant

"Gardenia flowers mean secret love, purity and joy. Beauty and lovely too are words associated with this flower. Prized for its sweet smell, gardenia flowers are also used in wedding celebrations as wedding symbols, because marriage symbolizes love and purity."

And just like the gardenia they are watering, marriage requires constant nurturing and nourishment. As they provide the sun, soil, and water for this gardenia, they will provide the encouragement, trust, and love needed on a daily basis to consciously nurture and nourish their connection to each other.

ETHNIC AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS

Filipino Wedding Traditions

Coin Ceremony

The Priest/Minister then drops 13 pieces of coins (silver or gold) called arras into the Groom's waiting hands, who in turn drops it into the Bride's hands. The Bride then puts her hand above the Groom's then drops the arras into his hands again. The Groom allows the coins to then be dropped into a plate held by an acolyte.

The metal tinkling of the coins being passed from one pair of hands to the other, is a distinctive reminder of the groom's promise to take care of his wife materially. The bride in return, by giving back the coins to his hands, convey that what they both earn become part of each other's. The trickling sound also signifies abundance and success in the couple's joint efforts. The husband gives his material earnings to his wife who manages, saves and invests the money wisely, as basic Filipino tradition dictates.

Veil Ceremony

In the Catholic ceremony, the Priest continues with the nuptial mass until the "Sanctus". When the bell for the Sanctus rings, it is also a signal for the veil sponsors to come up to the altar. In Protestant ceremonies, the Minister explains the veil ceremony to the congregation and this constitutes as the cue for the veil sponsors.

Together, they pin a veil from the groom's shoulders, extending it to cover the bride's head and shoulders. This is symbolic of the groom pledging his strength and protection to his bride - the wife who he promises to take care of, from this day forward.

Cord Ceremony

The Cord Ceremony follows immediately after. The Cord Sponsors come up to where the Bride and Groom are kneeling, and put a *figure of eight* cord over the veils that are on the heads and shoulders of the Bride and Groom. This cord symbolizes unity and infinity - a love together, forever!

Orthodox Traditions

The Crowning

The bride and groom are crowned with thin crowns, or "stefana", which are joined by a white ribbon and have been blessed by the priest. The crowns symbolise the glory and honour that is being bestowed on them by God, and the the ribbon symbolises their unity. The "Koumbaro" then exchanges the crowns between the heads of the couple, three times.

The Common Cup

The crowning is followed by a reading of the Gospel, which tells of the marriage of Cana at Galilee. It was at this wedding that Jesus performed his first miracle, changing water into wine, which was then given to the married couple. Wine is given to the couple and they each drink from it three times.

The Ceremonial Walk

The priest the leads the couple, who are still wearing their "stefana", three times around the altar on their first steps as a married couple. The "Koumbaro" follows close behind the couple holding the "stefana" place.

The Removal of the Crowns

When the Ceremonial Walk has ended, the priest blesses the couple, the crowns are removed and he then separates their previously joined hands with the bible, reminding them that only God can break the union which they have just entered into.

BLESSINGS

#1 TRADITIONAL IRISH BLESSING

May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon the fields.
May the light of friendship guide your paths together.
May the laughter of children grace the halls of your home.
May the joy of living for one another trip a smile from your lips,
A twinkle from your eye.
And when eternity beckons,
at the end of a life heaped high with love,
May the good Lord embrace you
with the arms that have nurtured you
the whole length of your joy-filled days.
May the gracious God hold you both in the palm of His hands.
And, today, may the Spirit of Love find a dwelling place in your hearts

#2 ALTERNATIVE IRISH BLESSING

May the blessing of light,
Be with you always,
Light without and light within,
And may the sun shine
Upon you and warm your heart
Until it glows
Like a great fire
So that others may feel
The warmth of your love
For one another.

#3 TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC BLESSING

Look down from heaven, Lord, on this union,
and enrich it with your blessings
(+ at this point the priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the couple).
Once you sent Raphael, your angel of peace, to Tobias and Sara,

the daughter of Raguel.

Now, Lord, send your blessings upon this husband and this wife,
so that they may continue
in your grace, be faithful to your will, and live in your love.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#4 STANDARD BLESSING

+ May God bless this union of _____ and _____ , may God
guide them as they raise their family in accordance with the Will of
Christ our Lord.

5 ALTERNATIVE BLESSING

The Lord God who created our first parents and established them in
marriage, establish and sustain you, that you may find delight in each
other and grow in holy life's end. Amen.