

Order for Blessing a Married Couple Outside of Mass

The *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* provides an order for blessing a married couple within Mass on the anniversary of marriage.

Outside of Mass

Unlike the previous ritual book, the new ritual book does not provide an option for blessing married couples outside of Mass. What follows is an order for blessing married couples outside of Mass based on the order for this celebration from *The Book of Blessings* adapted to reflect the theology and texts of the new ritual book.

Although the readings for the celebration may be chosen from the *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, it should be remembered that the celebration is a blessing and not a re-enactment of the wedding. The structure of a blessing liturgy includes a reading of the Word of God and may include a psalm but it should not reflect a lengthier liturgy of the Word as we have for Sunday and feast day Masses or for other Sacraments.

Blessing Rather than Renewal of Vows

It is important to note that unlike the previous ritual, the new ritual does not allow for an explicit reiteration of promises or vows. Since the consent is permanent by design and does not bear repeating, the renewal of commitment takes place in silence or employs a prayer of thanksgiving for blessings and a prayer for God's help in remaining faithful to the promises already made.

Rings

The couple may have their rings blessed but the rings are not bestowed again. There is also an option for blessing new rings but again, there is no text for bestowing these rings). Rather than blessing the rings with holy water, the rings may be honoured with incense.

Occasions other than Anniversaries

In our diocese, many pastors find it pastorally fruitful to bless married couples on occasions other than anniversaries, especially as part of gatherings of numerous couples for retreat and reflection. Where the ritual speaks explicitly about anniversary, the presider can adapt the text to suit the occasion.

BLESSING OF MARRIED COUPLES OUTSIDE OF MASS

This order may be used by a priest or deacon. It could be adapted for use by a layperson, who follows the rites and prayers designated for a lay minister in the *Book of Blessings*. The reading and psalm may be taken from those listed in no. 273 of *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*. The reading may be found in the *Ritual Lectionary*, *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, or in the Sunday or weekday lectionary.

GATHERING HYMN

SIGN OF THE CROSS & GREETING

Presider: In the name of the Father, ✠ and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Presider: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your Spirit.

The minister prepares the couple and all present for the blessing in words adapted to the occasion.

Presider: We have come together to bless these couples as they renew before God their commitment to live their Marriage in holiness. Christian spouses strive to nurture and foster their union in equal dignity, mutual giving, and the undivided love that flows from the font of charity. In this way, uniting divine and human realities, they help one another to become holy and have their own place and particular gift among the People of God. Today they publicly offer thanks for God's work in their Marriage and beg the Lord's continued blessing and support in their unions.

OPENING PRAYER (OPTIONAL)

Presider: Let us pray,

**God, our Father,
you have made the bond of marriage a holy
mystery, a blessed sacrament of grace, and a symbol
of Christ's love for his Church.**

**Hear our prayers for the married couples
assembled here today. May their lives always bear
witness to the reality of that love and become a sign
of your presence for us today.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (OPTIONAL)

HOMILY

RENEWAL OF COMMITMENTⁱ

**Presider: My dear friends,
through the Sacrament of Matrimony,
you joined your lives in an unbreakable bond
that you now intend to renew before the Lord.
Turn to the Lord in prayer
that these vows may be strengthened by divine grace.**

Couples may renew their commitment quietly or publicly using the form below:

**Husbands: Blessed are you Lord,
for by your goodness I took **N.** as my wife.**

**Wives: Blessed are you Lord,
for by your goodness I took **N.** as my husband.**

**Both: Blessed are you, Lord,
for in the good and the bad times of our life
you have stood lovingly by our side.
Help us, we pray,
to remain faithful in our love for one another,
so that we may be true witnesses
to the covenant you have made with humankind.**

**Presider: May the Lord keep you safe all the days of your life.
May he be your comfort in adversity
and your support in prosperity.
May he fill your home with his blessings.
Through Christ our Lord.**

All: Amen.

BLESSING OF RINGSⁱⁱ

Couples may be invited to remove their rings or hold the hand with the ring out for blessing:

**Presider: Increase and sanctify, Lord,
the love of your servants,
who once gave each other these rings
as a sign of faithfulness,
that they may always grow
in the grace of the Sacrament.**

Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The rings may be honoured with an incensation. If new rings are presented, see no. 279 in The Order of Celebrating Matrimony.

The couples may also be invited to kiss.

**Presider: Husbands and wives, you may further express your
commitment and love with a kiss.**

INTERCESSIONSⁱⁱⁱ

The intercessions may be adapted to the occasion.

**Presider: Let us call upon the mercy of God the almighty
Father,
who in his most provident plan
willed that the history of salvation
be signified in marital love and fidelity.
We pray: Renew the fidelity of your servants, Lord.**

All: Renew the fidelity of your servants, Lord.

Reader: Holy Father, who are called faithful, requiring and rewarding the observance of your covenant, be pleased to fill with your blessings these your servants, who celebrate the blessing of their commitment to Marriage. We pray to the Lord:

All: Renew the fidelity of your servants, Lord.

Reader: Holy Father, who with the Son and the Holy Spirit enjoy from eternity perfect oneness of life and communion of love, grant that these your servants may always remember and faithfully keep the covenant of love they made in the Sacrament. We pray to the Lord:

All: Renew the fidelity of your servants, Lord.

Reader: Holy Father, who in your providence order all the experiences of human life so as to lead the faithful to share in the mystery of Christ, grant that these your servants, serenely accepting both good times and bad, may strive to cling to Christ and live for him alone. We pray to the Lord:

All: Renew the fidelity of your servants, Lord.

Reader: Holy Father, who willed that the partnership of Marriage should be an example of Christian living, grant that all married couples may be witnesses in the world to the mystery of your Son's love. We pray to the Lord:

All: Renew the fidelity of your servants, Lord.

**Presider: O God, in whose plan
family life has its firm foundation,
hear with compassion the prayers of your servants
and grant that,
following the example of the Holy Family,
they may praise you without end
in the joy of your house.**

Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (OPTIONAL)

**Presider: At the Saviour's command and formed by divine
teaching we dare to say:**

All: Our Father . . .

PRAYER OF BLESSING OVER THE COUPLES^{iv}

The priest, facing the couples, with hands extended, says:

**Presider: We praise you, O God,
we bless you, Creator of all things,
who in the beginning made man and woman
that they might form a communion of life and love.
We also give you thanks
for graciously blessing the family life
of your servants,
so that it might present an image of Christ's union
with the Church.**

**Therefore look with kindness upon them today,
and as you have sustained their communion
amid joys and struggles,
renew their Marriage covenant each day,
increase their charity,
and strengthen in them the bond of peace,
so that they may for ever enjoy your blessing.**

Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE^v

Deacon: Bow down for the blessing.

With hands outstretched over the couples, the celebrant says:

Presider: May God the all-powerful Father grant you his joy.

All: Amen.

Presider: May the Only-Begotten Son of God stand by you with compassion in good times and in bad.

All: Amen.

Presider: May the Holy Spirit always pour forth his love into your hearts.

All: Amen.

Finally, he blesses all present, adding:

Presider: And may almighty God bless all of you who are gathered here, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit

All: Amen.

Deacon: Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

All: Thanks be to God.

RECESSIONAL HYMN

ⁱ Nos. 275 - 277, The Order of Celebrating Matrimony ©2017, CCCB Publications, Ottawa.

ⁱⁱ No. 278, The Order of Celebrating Matrimony ©2017, CCCB Publications, Ottawa.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nos. 280 and 281, The Order of Celebrating Matrimony ©2017, CCCB Publications, Ottawa.

^{iv} No. 283, The Order of Celebrating Matrimony ©2017, CCCB Publications, Ottawa.

^v No. 286, The Order of Celebrating Matrimony ©2017, CCCB Publications, Ottawa.