CONCERNING PREPARATION FOR HOLY MATRIMONY

Marriage is a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman, binding both to self-giving love and exclusive fidelity. The rite of Holy Matrimony is a worship service of the Church, in which the couple exchanges vows to uphold this covenant. They do this before God and in the presence of witnesses, who pray that God will bless their life together.

The covenantal union of man and woman in marriage signifies the communion between Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, and the Church, his holy bride (EPHESIANS 5:32). While all do not marry, Holy Matrimony symbolizes the union all Christians share with their Lord.

In Holy Matrimony, God establishes and blesses the covenant between husband and wife, and joins them to live together in a communion of love, faithfulness, and peace within the fellowship of Christ and his Church. God enables all married people to grow in love, wisdom, and godliness through a common life patterned on the sacrificial love of Christ.

Great care should be taken to prepare all candidates for Holy Matrimony.

In preparing couples for Holy Matrimony, the clergy should comply with their Provincial and Diocesan Canons, and any Diocesan Customaries. The canons expect that both candidates are baptized. It is also the responsibility of the clergy to understand local law and to consult with the Bishop should they believe themselves compelled by law to act in a manner contrary to the teaching or canons of this Church.

BANNS OF MARRIAGE

The ancient custom of announcing the wedding publicly at least three times, also known as the "Banns of Marriage," bids the prayers and support of the community. This speaks to the great necessity for the whole body of Christ to support those joined in Holy Matrimony and their witness in Church and in society.

If the Banns are published, it shall be in the following form:

"I publish the Banns of Marriage between *N.N.*, and *N.N.,* and I bid your prayers on their behalf. If any of you know cause, or just impediment, why these two persons should not be joined together in Holy Matrimony, ye are to declare it. This is the first [second *or* third] time of asking."

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

The text of the Declaration of Intention, to be signed and dated by both parties prior to the marriage, reads as follows:

> "We, *N.N.* and *N.N.*, desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. We believe it is established by God for the procreation of children, and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord; for mutual joy, and for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; to maintain purity, so that husbands and wives, with all the household of God, might serve as holy and undefiled members of the Body of Christ; and for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom in family, church, and society, to the praise of his holy Name. We do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto."

It may also be appropriate to conduct the signing of the Declaration of Intention during a public liturgy, to signify that the betrothal has taken place and that both parties have agreed to be prepared by the Church for Holy Matrimony, and to bid the prayers of the Congregation.

A brief liturgy for the signing of the Declaration of Intention appears on page 213.

HOLY MATRIMONY

At the time appointed, the persons to be married, with their witnesses and guests, assemble in the church or some other authorized place.

During their entrance, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

Then the Officiant, facing the people and the persons to be married, with the woman to the right and the man to the left, addresses the Congregation saying

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, to witness and bless the joining together of this Man and this Woman in holy Matrimony;

Which is an honorable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church. This holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee; and is commended in holy Scripture to be honorable among all men.

The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind was ordained by God: for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the knowledge and love of the Lord; for mutual joy, and for the help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity; to maintain purity, that

husbands and wives, with all the household of God, might serve as holy and undefiled members of Christ's body; and for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom in family, church, and society, to the praise of his holy Name.

And therefore it is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God; duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained.

Into this holy estate *N.N.* and *N.N.* come now to be joined. Therefore if any man can show any just cause, why they may not be joined together in accordance with God's Word, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace.

The Officiant then continues, saying to the persons to be married

I require and charge you both, as ye shall answer at the dreadful day of judgement, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined together in Matrimony, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured, that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's Word doth allow are not joined together by God.

The Officiant says to the Man

N., wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor, and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?

The Man answers

I will.

The Officiant says to the Woman

N., wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honor, and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?

The Woman answers

I will.

The Officiant then addresses the Congregation, saying

Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold this man and this woman in their marriage?

People **We will.**

If there is to be a Presentation, the Officiant asks the following, or some other suitable question.

Who presents *N.* [and *N.*] for Holy Matrimony?

Response We do.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

The Celebrant says to the People

The Lord be with you.
People **And with thy spirit.**
Officiant Let us pray.

O gracious and everliving God, who hast created us male and female in thine image: Look mercifully upon this man and this woman who come unto thee seeking thy blessing; and so assist them with thy grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. **Amen.**

THE LESSONS

One or more of the following passages is read.

GENESIS 1:26-28 *(Male and female he created them)*
GENESIS 2:4-9, 15-24 *(A man holds fast to his wife and they become one flesh)*
SONG OF SOLOMON 2:10-13; 8:6-7 *(Many waters cannot quench love)*
TOBIT 8:5B-8 *(That she and I may grow old together)*

Between the Lessons, a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate Psalms are 45, 67, 127, or 128.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13 *(Love is patient and kind)*
EPHESIANS 3:14-19 *(The Father from whom every family is named)*
EPHESIANS 5:1-2, 21-33 *(Walk in love, as Christ loved us)*
COLOSSIANS 3:12-17 *(Love which binds everything together in harmony)*
1 JOHN 4:7-16 *(Let us love one another, for love is of God)*

MATTHEW 5:1-10 *(The Beatitudes)*
MATTHEW 5:13-16 *(You are the light . . . Let your light shine)*
MATTHEW 7:24-29 *(Like a wise man who built his house on the rock)*
MARK 10:6-16 *(They are no longer two but one)*
JOHN 2:1-11 *(The wedding at Cana)*
JOHN 15:9-12 *(Love one another as I have loved you)*

If Communion is to follow, a passage from the Gospels always concludes the Lessons. At a Eucharist, all stand, and the Deacon or Minister appointed says

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to _____.

People **Glory be to thee, O Lord.**

After the Gospel, the Reader says

The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise be to thee, O Christ.**

THE SERMON

THE MARRIAGE

The Man, facing the Woman and taking her right hand in his, says

In the Name of God, I, *N.*, take thee, *N.*, to be my wedded wife, 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 thee my troth.

Then they loose their hands, and the Woman, still facing the Man, takes his right hand in hers, and says

In the Name of God, I, *N.*, take thee, *N.*, to be my wedded 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 give thee my troth.

They loose their hands. If there is to be an exchange of rings, the Bishop or Priest may ask God's blessing on a ring or rings as follows

Bless, O Lord, *this ring* to be *a sign* of the vows by which this man and this woman have bound themselves to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The giver places the ring on the ring-finger of the other's left hand and says

With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods with thee I share: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Officiant then joins the right hands of the husband and wife, and says

Forasmuch as *N.* and *N.* have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the joining of hands [and the giving and receiving of *a ring*], I pronounce that they are husband and wife, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

People **Amen.**

THE PRAYERS

If Communion is to follow, the Lord's Prayer may be omitted here.

All standing, the Officiant says

Let us pray together in the words our Savior taught us.

People and Officiant

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.

The Deacon or other person appointed reads the following or other suitable prayers.

Let us pray, saying, "Hear our prayer."

Eternal God, who art the creator and preserver of all life, the author of salvation, and the giver of all grace: Look with favor upon this man and this woman whom thou dost make one flesh in Holy Matrimony, and enable them to fulfill the vows they have made.

Reader Lord, in thy mercy:
People **Hear our prayer.**

Grant them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be unto the other a partner in prayer, a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy.

Reader Lord, in thy mercy:
People **Hear our prayer.**

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in thy will, and their spirits in thy Spirit, that they may grow in love and devotion to thee and with one another all the days of their lives.

Reader Lord, in thy mercy:
People **Hear our prayer.**

Encourage them, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their faults, to seek thy forgiveness, and to forgive and be reconciled one to another.

Reader Lord, in thy mercy:
People **Hear our prayer.**

May their union in Holy Matrimony be a sign of the love betwixt Christ and his Church, and a joyful witness to the world.

Reader Lord, in thy mercy:
People **Hear our prayer.**

Bestow upon them, if it be thy will, the gift and heritage of children, and the grace to bring them up to know thee, to love thee, and to serve thee.

Reader Lord, in thy mercy:
People **Hear our prayer.**

Grant that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace.

Reader Lord, in thy mercy:
People **Hear our prayer.**

Give them such grace that together they may reach out in love and concern for others; and grant that all married persons who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed.

Reader Lord, in thy mercy:
People **Hear our prayer.**

Grant these our prayers, O Father, who with thy Son and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth in perfect unity, world without end. **Amen.**

THE BLESSING OF THE MARRIAGE

The Husband and Wife kneel, and the Officiant says

Most gracious God, we give thee thanks for thy tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to make the way of the Cross to be the way of life. We thank thee, also, for consecrating the union of man and woman in his Name. By the power of thy Holy Ghost, pour out the dew of thy blessing upon this man and this woman. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death. In thy mercy, bring them to thy heavenly banquet where thy saints feast for ever at the great marriage supper of the Lamb; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. **Amen.**

The Husband and Wife still kneeling, the Bishop or Priest adds this nuptial blessing.

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you; and so fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that ye may faithfully live together in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting. **Amen.**

THE PEACE

The Officiant may say to the People

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.
People **And with thy spirit.**

The newly married couple may then exchange the Kiss of Peace, after which greetings may be exchanged throughout the Congregation.

When Communion is not to follow, the wedding party leaves the church. A hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

When there is Communion, the liturgy continues with the Offertory, at which the newly married couple, or members of their family, may present the offerings of bread and wine.

The Proper Preface of Holy Matrimony is used (page 156).

At the Communion, it is appropriate that the newly married couple receive Communion first, after the Ministers, and then be seated in a place suitable to allow others to receive Communion.

The following Post Communion Prayer is used.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

O God, the giver of all that is true and lovely and gracious: we thank thee for binding us together in these holy mysteries of the Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, uniting us with him, and giving us a foretaste of the great marriage supper of the Lamb. Grant that by thy Holy Ghost, *N.* and *N.*, now joined in Holy Matrimony, may become one in heart and soul, live in fidelity and peace, and obtain those eternal joys prepared for all who love thee; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS

The entrance of the principals at Holy Matrimony may consist of two processions, one of the groom and one of the bride, or of a single procession or gathering. The father of the bride, or another appointed family member, may serve as the representative of both families in presenting the couple for Holy Matrimony.

In place of the examination of the man and the woman given in this liturgy (on pages 202-203), the following questions based on the 2019 *Book of Common Prayer* may be substituted:

The Officiant says to the Man

N. wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife; to live together out of reverence for Christ in the covenant of Holy Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, honor her, comfort and keep her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as ye both shall live?

The Man answers

I will.

The Officiant says to the Woman

N. wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband; to live together out of reverence for Christ in the covenant of Holy Matrimony? Wilt thou honor him, love him, comfort and keep him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as ye both shall live?

The Woman answers

I will.

In place of the sentence given for the exchange of rings (on page 206), the following sentence based on the 2019 *Book of Common Prayer* may be substituted:

> *N.*, I give thee this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor thee, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The signing of the congregational register, if done publicly, occurs immediately after the Marriage and prior to the Prayers, or, if done outside the liturgy, immediately after the rite.

At the conclusion of the liturgy, the newly married couple may be introduced with these, or similar words:

"Dearly beloved, please greet _____."

The liturgy may end with a procession of the bridal party and their families or according to local custom.

Should a Deacon, by lawful authority, be permitted by the Bishop to officiate at Holy Matrimony, there can be no blessing of rings, nor the nuptial blessing which begins, "God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost." Such blessings should be received at a later time from a Priest or Bishop.

A BRIEF LITURGY FOR THE SIGNING OF THE DECLARATION OF INTENTION

This liturgy is intended for public use in the context of a normal Sunday Eucharist after the Peace, or at any other public gathering.

The Officiant says

Dearly beloved, two members of the Church have announced their desire to be married to one another in the sight of God and this Congregation. The pursuit of Holy Matrimony is a good and holy ambition, which requires thorough preparation and our prayerful support.

Therefore, *N.* and *N.* have come before us to declare their intention to be married and to profess and subscribe to the Church's Declaration of Intention, which reads:

The Officiant reads the Declaration

"We, N.N. and N.N., desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. We believe it is established by God for the procreation of children, and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord; for mutual joy, and for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; to maintain purity, so that husbands and wives, with all the household of God, might serve as holy and undefiled members of the Body of Christ; and for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom in family, church, and society, to the praise of his holy Name. We do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship

and to seek God's help thereto."

The Officiant then asks

Is this your intention?

The couple responds

It is.

The betrothed then sign the Declaration.

The Officiant says

Forasmuch as *N.* and *N.* have declared their intention for a Holy Marriage, and have begun the process of pre-marital preparation, let us pray for their relationship [and for their families].

Almighty God, we give thee thanks for the love of *N.* and *N.*, and we ask thy blessing upon them [and their families] during this time of preparation. Open their minds and hearts to one another, enable them faithfully to receive thy Word and Sacrament, and help us to support them, that they may rightly prepare for their marriage. And, we pray also, that thou wouldest give us wisdom to uphold and encourage all who have been united in Holy Matrimony; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**