

Appendix II

The Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple

Introduction

253. Among the responsibilities of Christian spouses and the ways in which their apostolate is exercised, in addition to the upbringing of children, the assistance offered to engaged couples, so that they may better prepare themselves for Marriage, is clearly of considerable importance.

The honourable betrothal of Christians, therefore, is a special occasion for two families, appropriately celebrated with some ceremony and with common prayer, so that, upon receiving the divine blessing, what is joyfully begun may in its own time be joyfully completed.

This celebration must be adapted to suit particular circumstances.

254. When the engagement is celebrated within the confines of the two families, one of the parents may appropriately preside at the rite of blessing. If a Priest or a Deacon is present, however, then the office of presiding more appropriately belongs to him, provided that it is clear to those present that the rite is not a celebration of Marriage itself.

255. The order supplied here, therefore, may be used either by the parents, or by a Priest, a Deacon, or another layperson, who, while maintaining the chief elements and structure of the rite, should adapt the individual parts to the circumstances.

256. If the engagement has already taken place, this order of celebration may also be used when couples are brought together for catechetical preparation for Marriage. A betrothal or a special blessing of an engaged couple, however, is never to be combined with the celebration of Mass.

Introductory Rites

257. When the families are gathered, if a Priest or a Deacon presides, after the Sign of the Cross has been made, he greets those present, saying:

Grace to you and peace
from our Lord Jesus Christ,
who loved us and gave himself up for us.

Or some other suitable greeting, taken from The Roman Missal.

All reply:

And with your spirit.

258. If the minister is a layperson, after the Sign of the Cross has been made, he or she greets those present, saying:

Brothers and sisters,
let us praise our Lord Jesus Christ,
who loved us and gave himself up for us.

All reply:

Amen.

259. Then, in these or similar words, the minister disposes those present for reception of the blessing:

We know that God's grace is a constant need
for everyone, at all times.
Yet no one can doubt
that members of Christ's faithful have special need of that grace
when they are preparing to form a new family.
And so, let us ask God's blessing
upon our brother and sister (N. and N.),
that they may grow in mutual respect,
love each other more truly,
and approach the celebration of holy Matrimony chastely
through appropriate companionship and prayer together.

Reading of the Word of God

260. Then, one of those present or the minister reads a text of Sacred Scripture.

John 15:9-12:

Listen, brothers and sisters, to the words of the holy Gospel according to John.

Jesus said to his disciples:

‘As the Father has loved me,
so I have loved 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 own joy may be in you
and your joy be complete.

This is my commandment:

love one another,
as I loved you.’

261. Or:

1 Corinthians 13:4-13

Listen, brothers and sisters, to the words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people’s sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.

Love does not come to an end. But if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or the gift of languages, it will not continue for ever; and knowledge — for this, too, the time will come when it must fail. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will disappear. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and think like a child, and argue like a child, but now I am a man, all childish ways are put behind me. Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known. In short, there are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

262. Or:

Hosea 2:21-26
Philippians 2:1-5

263. If appropriate, there may be said or sung the following Responsorial Psalm or another suitable liturgical song.

Psalm 144 (145): 8-9, 10 and 15, 17-18 (R. 9a)

R: How good is the Lord to all.

The Lord is kind and full of compassion,
slow to anger, abounding in love.

How good is the Lord to all,
compassionate to all his creatures.

All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord,
and your friends shall repeat their blessing.

The eyes of all creatures look to you
and you give them their food in due time.

The Lord is just in all his ways
and loving in all his deeds.

He is close to all who call him,
who call on him from their hearts.

264. The one who presides may briefly address those present, shedding light on the biblical reading, so that they may understand with faith the meaning of the celebration and may be able to distinguish it correctly from the celebration of Marriage.

Prayers

265. The common prayer follows. From the intercessions provided below, the one who presides may select those that seem more suitable or may add others that apply to particular circumstances:

With confidence, let us call on God the Father,
who so loved all people
that he made them his children in Christ
and revealed them to the world as witnesses of his love.

R: Keep us in your love for ever, Lord.

Or another suitable response of the people.

You willed that mutual love
should make the brothers and sisters of Christ
known as your true children: **R:**

You place upon men and women
the gentle demands of your love,
so that they may find happiness in accepting them: **R:**

You bring a man and a woman together in mutual delight,
that the family thus formed
may joyfully be crowned with children: **R:**

Through Christ's paschal sacrifice,
by which he loved the Church

and presented her to you washed clean in his Blood,
you mystically foreshadowed the fullness of wedded love
in the Sacrament of Matrimony: **R̄.**

You call **N.** and **N.** to a full communion of love,
so that they may become one in mind and heart
as members of the Christian family: **R̄.**

266. **In accord with local custom, before the prayer of blessing, the engaged couple may express some sign of their promise to each other, for example, by signing a document or by the giving of rings or other gifts.**

267. **The engagement rings or gifts may be blessed with the following formula:**

Safeguard the gifts you have exchanged,
so that you may fulfill in due time
the pledge you have offered each other.

R̄. Amen.

Prayer of Blessing

268. **Then the one who presides says the prayer with hands joined; if, however, he is a Priest or Deacon, he says the prayer with hands extended:**

We give you praise, O Lord,
who in your gentle wisdom call and prepare
your son and daughter **N.** and **N.**
to love each other.

Graciously strengthen their hearts, we pray,
so that, by keeping faith and pleasing you in all things,
they may come happily to the Sacrament of Marriage.
Through Christ our Lord.

R̄. Amen.

269. **Or, when a Priest or Deacon presides:**

Lord God, wellspring of all love,
N. and **N.** have met each other
through your providential plan.
Mercifully grant as they seek your grace
in preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage,
that, sustained by heavenly **✠** blessing,
they may grow in mutual respect
and may love each other with true charity.
Through Christ our Lord.

R̄. Amen.

Conclusion of the Rite

270. Then, the one who presides concludes the rite, saying:

May the God of love and peace
dwell within you,
direct your steps,
and strengthen your hearts in his love.

All:

Amen.

271. It is a praiseworthy practice to end the celebration with a suitable chant.