

The Covenant of Marriage

Introduction

Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here together in the presence of God's Spirit to witness and celebrate the joining together of _____ and _____ in holy matrimony.

The covenant of marriage was established by God in creation. We read in Genesis that "God created people in God's own image; male and female God created them . . . and God blessed them." (Gen. 1: 27 – 28a) "The man said, this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; . . . therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh."

Then with his presence and power Jesus Christ graced a wedding at Cana of Galilee, and his sacrificial love gave us the example of the love of husband and wife. The Apostle Paul said, "this mystery is a profound one . . . let each man love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

And in first John we read, “Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and the one who loves is born of God and knows God. If god so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

And so it is that the union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity and when is it God’s will, procreation of family. We rejoice that marriage is given by God, blessed by Jesus Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let marriage be hold in honor and esteem among all peoples. For marriage is not be to entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

_____ and _____ are here today with their family and friends, to declare publicly and personally their love for one another, and to be joined in marriage. This is more than a social and civil occasion, because it is the declaration of their hearts, built upon their experiences, and enriched by their love. This is a human

symbol of devotion by two people who promise to give themselves to one another through all of life's challenges, but more than this it is a sacred symbol, for-ordained by God and given to God's people.

_____ and _____ you now stand before God, family and friends, to pledge your never ending trust to one another. Be well assured that through your love in each other and your faith in God, your marriage will be blessed. How we understand God's relationship with us is how we should all strive to be with one another. As God's covenant with us is to be our God and we to be God's people, so to shall you _____ be _____ husband and you _____ be _____ wife.

Presentation

It is this covenant that is realized from generation to generation. In this tradition, I would not like to ask those who have especially gone before _____ and _____, their parents/grandparents and have given them your love, care and understanding in the past, will you continue to give them your love and now blessing all for the future of their marriage?

("We will.")

I also ask everyone here assembled; friends, relatives and associates, will you also lend your support and blessing to this couple soon to be joined in holy matrimony. If so, please all answer, we will?

("We will.")

Invocation

Gracious God, author of life and love, look kindly upon _____ and _____, who come before you seeking your blessing and guidance. Let your spirit so rest upon them that with calmness of heart and steadfastness of love, they may honor the promises they make this day. May your light of peace, O Lord, be with them all the days of their lives. Amen.

Introduction to Reading

_____ and _____, I thank you for the privilege of standing before you on this special and sacred moment of your lives. In asking hundreds of couples what they thought to be the most essential ingredient for a good marriage, most people simply replied, "It is being one another's closest and best friend." In this regard, let me recite for you this contemporary reading simply entitled *I Love You*.

I Love You by Roy Croft

I love you, not only for what you are,
But for what I am when I am with you.
I love you, not only for what you have
made of yourself, but for what you are
making of me. I love you for the part
of me that you bring out; I love you for
putting your hand into my heaped-up
heart and passing over all the foolish,
weak things that you can't help dimly
see there. And for drawing out into

the light all the beautiful belongings
that no one else had looked quite far
enough to find. I love you, because you
are helping me to make of the lumber of
my life not a tavern but a temple; Out the
works of my ever day not a reproach, but
a song. I love you because you have
done more than any creed could have
done to make me good, and more than
any fate could have done to make me
happy. You have done it without a touch,
without a word, without a sign. You have
done it by being yourself. Perhaps that is
what being a friend means after all.

Introduction to Reading

This is what I have heard from so many other couples. Let
me now say to you what is most significant from my
perspective and in my words.

Consideration

As God considers us each free and unique, so too shall you respect each other. Your real task is not to be alike, but to be together, not to mold, but to receive, and not to change the other, but to abide with one another. It is through this accent of acceptance that you will truly fulfill love's purpose. It is through your giving that you will gain. The more you let each one be – the closer you shall become. As God loves us for who we are – so too, then, shall you.

Love is the Balance

This then is the longing goal of love. It is an ideal to which we all strive to attain. Yet, we must also keep in balance with life the reality of just who we are. For sometimes love is gaining and sometimes love is losing. Sometimes love is happy and sometimes it is sad. Sometimes love is creating and sometimes love is forgiving. But always love is accepting and enduring. You do know the attributes of one another as well as the faults. May patience always be a virtue for you. Through all of

life, you have decided to commit yourselves to each other.

Love is actually the one resource that is never expelled with use, but, in fact, grows stronger. For when you are together – this is what love does. So we wish for you a deep and real respect as you remember the past, live the present and hope for the future.

Preparation of Vows

As you are about to make your vows of marriage each to the other – know that love and loyalty alone will avail as the foundation of a happy and enduring home. No other ties more tender, no other vows more sacred than these you now make. So you are called upon to live together with love and deep friendship; each one being for the well being of the other, so that your lives together will be full of joy and the home which you will establish may abide in God's grace, now and forever more.

Traditional Question to Vows

_____ will you have _____,
to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate
of matrimony? Will you love her, and comfort her, in
sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep you
only unto her so long as you both shall live?

_____ will you have _____, to be
your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of
matrimony? Will you love him, and comfort him, in
sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep you
only unto him so long as you both shall live?

Vows of Marriage

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my
wife; and I promise to stand beside you and with you
always; in times of celebration and in times of sadness; in
times of pleasure and in times of pain; in times of health
and in times of illness; I will live with you and love you
always.

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my husband; and I promise to stand beside you and with you always; in times of celebration and in times of sadness; in times of pleasure and in times of pain; in times of health and in times of illness; I will live with you and love you always.

Meaning of the Rings

These wedding rings serve as the symbol of the vows you have just spoken. They are the outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible love which binds your hearts together in that great mystery. As the rings are of the finest of earth's materials, so too, is your love of the richest of spiritual values.

Blessing of the Rings

O Lord, we ask your blessing upon these rings; may the rings be a reminder of promises, promises evermore living and growing in the spirit of your eternal love. And may those who give them and wear them abide in your peace and continue in your favor all the days of their lives.
Amen.

Ring Vows

_____, I give you this ring as a sign of my
vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I marry you;
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
Spirit.

_____, I give you this ring as a sign of my
vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I marry you;
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy
Spirit.

Prayer

Most merciful and gracious God, of whom the
whole family in heaven and earth is named: Bestowed
upon these your children, _____ and
_____, the seal of your approval, and your
paternal benediction. Grant unto them grace to fulfill, with
pure and steadfast affection, the vow and covenant between
them made. Guide them together, we pray, in the way of
righteousness and peace, that loving you and serving others

with one heart and mind, all the days of their life, they may be abundantly enriched with the token of your everlasting favor, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

As we say together with _____ and _____ the Lord's prayer in which have been taught, as well as in their tradition:

“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 forever.” Amen.

Declaration

And so now you will feel no rain for each of you will be shelter to the other. Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other. Now there is no more loneliness, for each of you will be a companion to the other. You are two bodies, but there is only one life before you. Go now to your dwelling place, to enter into the days

of your life together. And may your days be good and long upon the earth and in the heavens.

Pronouncement

Forasmuch as _____ and _____ have consented together in Holy Wedlock and have witnessed the same before God and God's company, and thereto have pledged their faith each to the other, and have declared the same by joining hands and by giving and receiving rings, by the authority vested in my, but most of all, by the power of their own love; be it thereby acknowledged that they are husband and wife together.

Benediction

And now may the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his entire countenance upon you and give you peace.

Exchange of Affection

Announcement

It gives me great pleasure to be the first to announce _____ and _____ as husband and wife.