

Service for the Blessing of a Sacred Union

Approved for use in the Diocese of San Joaquin

This service may be used to bless the covenant of a man and woman, two women or two men.

Introduction

The priest may greet the people.

The priest says to the congregation.

We have gathered to celebrate the joining of N. and N. in a Sacred Union. This covenant is the promise of hope between two people who love each other, who understand their love as a gift of God, who trust that love, and who wish to share the future together.

Sacred Union binds the couple in their desires, longings, dreams and memories, and sustains them in the face of uncertainty. In this covenant, these two people are joined together, to provide mutual support and stability, and if it be God's will, a place in which their children may grow.

Here in the presence of God we recognize and bless their relationship as they *begin/continue* their life together in the community.

Declaration of Intent

The Celebrant asks each partner

N., will you have this *man/woman* to be your *spouse*; to live together in this covenant of love? Will you love *him/her*, comfort *him/her*, honor and keep *him/her*, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to *him/her* as long as you both shall live?
Answer. I will.

Collect of the Day

Celebrant: Let us pray

O gracious and everliving God, look joyfully upon N. and N., who come before this assembled community to make a covenant of love, fidelity and life-long commitment. Grant them your blessing and assist them with your grace, that, with true fidelity and steadfast love, they may honor and keep the covenant they make, through Jesus Christ our savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

People: Amen

Liturgy of the Word

Appropriate lessons from Scripture and a Psalm are read. One reading is always from the Gospels if there is a Eucharist.

The Homily

A Homily may follow the readings

Affirmation of the Community

The Celebrant asks the Couple:

What do you seek?

The Couple responds in unison:

We ask a blessing from this community on our covenant.

The Celebrant asks the Couple:

Who supports you in this commitment?

The People stand and respond in unison:

We do in the belief that God has blessed N. and N. by calling them into their covenant with each other.

The Celebrant then addresses the People, saying:

Will you, brothers and sisters in Christ, give your pledge to honor and uphold N. and N.; to recognize them as a family in this community, to guide and pray for them in times of trouble; to celebrate with them in times of joy, to respect the bonds of their covenant, and to seek to discern the continuing presence of Christ within them?

The People respond

We will.

Each partner of the Couple vows:

In the name of God, I, N., take you, N., to be my friend, my lover, my *spouse*, 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, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

Blessing and Giving of Rings

The men/women face each other and join hands.

N. I take you to be my *spouse*. All that I have I offer you; what you have to give I gladly receive; wherever you go I will go. You are my love. God keep me true to you always and you to me.

The Priest may ask God's blessing on rings as follows

Bless, O Lord, these rings to be a signs of the vows by which these two women/men 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 hand and says

N., I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (or in the Name of God).

Then the Celebrant joins the right hands of the couple and says

Now that N. and N. have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the joining of hands and the giving and receiving of rings, I pronounce that they are one (or joined in Sacred Union), in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

The Prayers of the People

The Deacon or other person appointed reads the following prayers, to which the People respond, saying, Amen. If there is not to be a Communion, one or more of the prayers may be omitted.

Let us pray.

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which your Son gave his life, and especially upon these persons whom you make one flesh in Sacred Union. *Amen.*

Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy. *Amen.*

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their life. *Amen.*

Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours. *Amen.*

Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair. *Amen.*

Bestow on them, if it is your will, the gift and heritage of children, and the grace to bring them up to know you, to love you, and to serve you. *Amen.*

Bless the children in this family, and give this couple the grace to bring them up to know you, to love you, and to serve you. *Amen.*

Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others. *Amen.*

Grant that all who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed. *Amen.*

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all your children are united one to another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by your grace, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where, O Father, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign in perfect unity, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Or other prayers as appropriate to the community may be offered

The Peace

The Celebrant may say to the people

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: And also with you.

The newly joined couple then greet each other, after which greetings may be exchanged throughout the congregation.

If there is no Eucharist, the Lord's Prayer precedes the Prayers of the People. The Blessing of the Covenant and the dismissal follows.

The Holy Eucharist

If the Eucharist follows, the prayers are followed by the peace. The service continues according to the norms of the local congregation. If a proper preface specific to the occasion is desired, the following may be used.

Because in the love of two persons joined in Sacred Union, you have given us an image of the heavenly Jerusalem, adorned as a bride for her bridegroom, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who loves her and gave himself for her, that he might make the whole creation new.

Or the Preface for Baptism may be used.

Post Communion Prayer

Celebrant

O God, the giver of all that is true and lovely and gracious: We give you thanks for binding us together in these holy mysteries of the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that by your Holy Spirit, *N.* and *N.*, now joined in this holy covenant, may become one in heart and soul, live in fidelity and peace, and obtain those eternal joys prepared for all who love you; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

The Blessing of the Union

The people remain standing. The couple may kneel, and the Priest says one of the following prayers

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your 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 you, also, for consecrating the union of two persons in his Name. By the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing upon these two men/women. 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. Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

or this

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of Sacred Union that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his [*or the*] Church: Send therefore your blessing upon these your servants [*or children*], 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; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Priest adds this blessing

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

The couple leaves the church, followed by their attendants, sponsors, and family.