

The Rite of Betrothal

When a Christian man and woman intend to pledge themselves to marriage, it is praiseworthy and in accord with ancient ecclesiastical custom to have the engagement solemnized and blessed by the Church. For detailed discussion of a valid betrothal and its consequences it will be necessary to refer to Canon Law (canon 1017) and the added information of a commentary. May it suffice to state here that no action is admissible to compel the celebration of marriage, even after a formal engagement has taken place.



1. *The priest (vested in surplice and white stole) with his assistants (vested in surplice) awaits the couple at the communion table. At hand are the stoup with holy water and the altar missal. As the man and woman come forward with the two witnesses they have chosen, the following antiphon and psalm are sung on the eighth psalm tone:*

Antiphon: To the Lord I will tender my promise: in the presence of all His people.

Psalm 126

Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it.

It is vain for you to rise before light, rise ye after you have sitten, you that eat the bread of sorrow.

When he shall give sleep to his beloved: behold the inheritance of the Lord are children: the reward, the fruit of the womb.

As arrows in the hand of the mighty, so the children of them that have been shaken.

Blessed is the man that hath filled the desire with them; he shall not be confounded when he shall speak to his enemies in the gate.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

Antiphon: To the Lord I will tender my promise: in the presence of all His people.

2. *The priest now addresses them in an allocution:*

Beloved of Christ: It is in the dispensation of Divine Providence that you are called to the holy vocation of marriage. For this reason you present yourselves today before Christ and His Church, before His sacred minister and the devout people of God, to ratify in solemn manner the engagement bespoken between you. At the same time you entreat the blessing of the Church upon your proposal, as well as the earnest supplications

of the faithful here present, since you fully realize that what has been inspired and guided by the will of your heavenly Father requires equally His grace to be brought to a happy fulfillment. We are confident that you have given serious and prayerful deliberation to your pledge of wedlock; moreover, that you have sought counsel from the superiors whom God has placed over you. In the time that intervenes, you will prepare for the sacrament of matrimony by a period of virtuous courtship, so that when the happy and blessed day arrives for you to give yourselves irrevocably to each other, you will have laid a sound spiritual foundation for long years of godly prosperity on earth and eventual blessedness together in the life to come. May the union you propose on this day to consummate as man and wife be found worthy to be in all truth a sacramental image and reality of the union of Christ and His beloved Bride, the Church. This grant, Thou Who livest and reignest, God, forever and evermore. *R.* Amen.

3. *The priest now bids the couple to join their right hands, the while they repeat after him the following:*

The man:

In the name of the Lord, I, N. N., promise that I will one day take thee, N. N., as my wife, according to the ordinances of God and holy Church. I will love thee even as myself. I will keep faith and loyalty to thee, and so in thy necessities aid and comfort thee; which things and all that a man ought to do unto his espoused I promise to do unto thee and to keep by the faith that is in me.

The woman:

In the name of our Lord, I, N. N., promise that I will one day take thee, N. N., as my husband, according to the ordinances of God and holy Church. I will love thee even as myself. I will keep faith and loyalty to thee, and so in thy necessities aid and comfort thee; which things and all that a woman ought to do unto her espoused I promise to do unto thee and to keep by the faith that is in me.

4. *Then the priest takes the two ends of his stole and in the form of a cross places them over the clasped hands of the couple. Holding the stole in place with his left hand, he says:*

I bear witness of your solemn proposal and I declare you betrothed. In the name of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Ghost. **R.** Amen.

As he pronounces the last words, he sprinkles them with holy water in the form of a cross.

5. *Thereupon he blesses the engagement ring:*

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R. Who made heaven and earth.

V. O Lord, hear my prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto thee.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray. O God Almighty, Creator and preserver of the human race, and the Giver of everlasting salvation, deign to allow the Holy Ghost, the Consoler to come with His blessing upon this ring. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, for endless ages. **R.** Amen.

The ring is sprinkled with holy water.

6. *The man takes the ring and touches it first to the thumb of the left hand of the woman, saying: "In the name of the Father," then to the index finger, adding: "and of the Son," Then to the middle finger saying: "and of the Holy Ghost." Finally placing it on the ring finger saying, "Amen."*
7. *The priest opens the missal at the beginning of the Canon, and presents the page imprinted with the crucifixion to be kissed first by the man and then by the woman.*

8. *If Mass does not follow (or even if Mass is to follow, if he deems it opportune), the priest may read the following passages from Sacred Scripture:*

Tobias 7:8

Tobias said: I will not eat nor drink here this day, unless thou first grant me my petition, and promise to give me Sara thy daughter....The angel said to Raguel: Be not afraid to give her to this man, for to him who feareth God is thy daughter due to be his wife; therefore another could not have her....And Raguel taking the right hand of his daughter, he gave it into the right hand of Tobias, saying: The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and may He join you together, and fulfill His blessing in you. And taking paper they made a writing of the marriage. And afterwards they made merry, blessing God....Then Tobias exhorted the virgin, and said to her: Sara, arise, and let us pray to God today, and tomorrow, and the next day; because for these three nights we are joined to God; and when the third night is over, we will be in our own wedlock. For we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God. So they both arose, and prayed earnestly both together that health might be given them.

℟. Thanks be to God.

John 15: 4-12

At that time, Jesus said to His disciples: Abide in me, and I abide in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing. If any one abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you. In this is my Father glorified; that you bring

forth very much fruit, and become my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; as I also have kept my Father's commandments, and do abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled. This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.

R. Praise be to thee, O Christ!

9. *Lastly, the priest extends his hands over the heads of the couple, and says:*

May God bless your bodies and your souls. May He shed His blessing upon you as He blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. May the hand of the Lord be upon you, may He send His holy Angel to guard you all the days of your life. Amen. Go in Peace!

10. *Before leaving the church, the betrothed couple as well as the witnesses will affix their signatures to the document previously prepared for this purpose. A form for the document is herewith given.*





In the Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ:

Before Almighty God, before Holy Church and her faithful here assembled, we, the undersigned, have this day promised the eventual consecration of one to the other in the sacrament of matrimony, which is none other than the mystery of that great Sacrament — Christ and His beloved Spouse, the Church. May the Divine Spirit with His grace and manifold gifts enlighten our minds and move our wills to spend the days of our engagement soberly, piously, and justly, awaiting the blessed consummation of that union to which we have been called and to which we are solemnly pledged. In thee, O Lord, do we put our trust. Let us nevermore be confounded.

_____ & _____

Date: _____

Church of _____

Priest: _____

Witness: _____ & _____