



Concerning the Service of Sacred Union and Blessing

The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin

Christian marriage or union is a solemn and public covenant between a two people in the presence of God. In the Episcopal Church it is required of those to be married that one, at least, of the parties must be a baptized Christian. The same requirements shall exist for same gender couples seeking the celebration and blessing of their union.

As with couples seeking marriage, same gender couples seeking the blessing of their union must meet the meet the following criteria:

- a) Each must be free to enter into such a covenant. That is, they must not be in an existing covenantal relationship, including marriage;
- b) Both understand that a Sacred Union is a physical and spiritual union of two persons, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with the intent that it be lifelong;
- c) Both shall receive instruction as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Sacred Union by the Member of the Clergy, or that they have both received such instruction from persons known by the Member of the Clergy to be competent and responsible;
- d) At least one of the parties has received Holy Baptism;
- e) The Member of the Clergy shall be satisfied by appropriate evidence that any prior marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a final judgment or decree of a civil court of competent jurisdiction;
- f) If either person was party to a prior marriage, the Member of the Clergy shall consult with and obtain the consent of the Bishop of the diocese in which the Member of the Clergy is canonically resident; and,
- g) The Member of the Clergy shall have instructed the parties that continuing concern must be shown for the well-being of the former spouse, and of any children of the prior marriage.

It is expected that the use of liturgies for blessing of Sacred Unions occur in the context of Christian community and with the community's understanding of its role in fostering godly relationships. Every effort should be made, therefore, to fulfill the hopes that the ongoing relationship of the couple would (a) be supported by the community both before and after the service, and in turn (b) enrich the life of the community. It is

particularly appropriate that the blessing take place in the context of a Eucharist in which the members of the community participate,

A priest or a bishop will preside at the Celebration and Blessing of a Sacred Union.

When both a bishop and a priest are present and officiating, the bishop should pronounce the blessing and preside at the Eucharist.

A deacon, or an assisting priest, may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other assisting functions at the Eucharist.

It is desirable that the language of the rite conform to the custom of the congregation in which the service takes place, and such adaptations may be made throughout this rite.

It is desirable that the Lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles be read by lay persons.

In the opening exhortation (at the symbol of N.N.), the full names of the persons are declared. Subsequently, only their given names are used.

If Banns are to be published, the following form is used

I publish the Banns of Sacred Union between N.N. of _____ and N.N. of _____. If any of you know just cause why they may not be joined together in Sacred Union, you are bidden to declare it. This is the first (*or second, or third*) time of asking.

The Celebration and Blessing of a Sacred Union may be used with any authorized liturgy for the Holy Eucharist. This service then replaces the Ministry of the Word, and the Eucharist begins with the Offertory.

After the Declaration of Consent, if the couple is to be presented by sponsors, the Celebrant asks,

Who presents these two *women/men* to be joined in Sacred Union?

The appropriate answer is, "I do." If more than one person responds, they do so together.

For the Ministry of the Word it is fitting that the couple to be joined in Sacred Union remain where they may conveniently hear the reading of Scripture. They may approach the Altar, either for the exchange of vows, or for the Blessing of the Union.

It is appropriate that all remain standing until the conclusion of the Collect. Seating may be provided for the couple, their sponsors, and attendants, so that all may be seated for the Lessons and the homily.

The Apostles' Creed may be recited after the Lessons, or after the homily, if there is one.

When desired, some other suitable symbol of the vows may be used in place of the ring.

At the Offertory, it is desirable that the bread and wine be presented to the ministers by the newly joined persons. They may then remain before the Table and receive Holy Communion before other members of the congregation.

Lectionary for Use in the Blessing of Sacred Unions

One or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture is read. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings. The length of any Reading may be adapted at the discretion of the Celebrant.

Genesis 12:1-3a,c (I will bless you so that you will be a blessing)

1 Samuel 18:1-5 (David and Jonathan)

Ruth 1:16-17 (Where you go I will go)

Song of Solomon 2:1-13 (My beloved is like...)

Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6-7 (My beloved speaks; many waters cannot quench love)

Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 (Two are better than one)

Romans 12:9-21 (Love one another with mutual affection)

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (Love is patient and kind)

2 Corinthians 5:16-20 (In Christ there is a new creation)

Galatians 5:13-14, 22-26 (Called to freedom; fruit of the Spirit)

Ephesians 3:14-19 (The Father from whom every family is named; rooted and grounded in love)

Ephesians 4:25-27; 29-32 (Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving)

Ephesians 5:1-2 (Walk in love, as Christ loved us)

Philippians 2:1-4 (Be of the same mind, having the same love)

Colossians 3:12-17 (Love which binds everything together in harmony)

1 John 3:18-24 (Love in truth and action)

1 John 4:7-16 (17-21) (Let us love one another for love is of God)

Revelation 19:6-9 (The Lamb's marriage supper)

Between the Readings, a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate Psalms are 23; 67; 100:1-5; 107:1-9; 108:1-5; 111; 112; 121; 126:1-3; 128; 133; 139:1-18, 23-24; 145, and 146 .

Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes)
Matthew 5:13-16 (You are the light . . . Let your light so shine)
Matthew 7:24-29 (Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock)
Luke 6:35-38 (Love and do good)
John 2:1-11 (The wedding in Cana of Galilee)
John 15:9-12 (Love one another as I have loved you)
John 17:1, 18-26 (That they may all be one)