

Service for the Sacramental Blessing of a Life-Long Covenant

Approved for use in the Diocese of Los Angeles

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 covenant of love. 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.

It enables two separate people to share their desires, longings, dreams and memories, and to help each other through their uncertainties. It provides the encouragement to risk more and thus to gain more. In this covenant, these two people belong together, providing 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 their married 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 man/woman 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 receives the ring(s) and prays
Christ our light, encircle these rings with your blessing to show the love of *N.* and *N.*
Blend them together and keep them in your love eternally.

The giver places the ring on the other's finger and says
N., this ring I give to you, with my body I honor you. God make me your true servant in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

The priest joins their right hands together and says
God so join you together that nothing shall ever part you.

The Prayers of the People

- Celebrant* Loving Spirit, grant to *N.* and *N.* that in giving and forgiving they may receive from each other lasting joy.
- People* Bind them together with cords that cannot be broken. Bind them together with love.
- Celebrant* Grant that they may always take delight in each other, and each remain the other's heart's desire.
- People* Bind them together with cords that cannot be broken. Bind them together with love.
- Celebrant* May they reach such trust and confidence in each other as shall keep them from unnecessary distress. May they find courage to meet the heartaches, disappointments and agonies life can bring.
- People* Be their rock, their fortress, for they put their trust in you.
- Celebrant* Help them to look beyond their own family and their own concerns to see the world, suffering and struggling, the world you have given us to share with one another.
- People* Open their eyes and their hearts.
- Celebrant* Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others.
- People* Open their hands with your love.
- Celebrant* Give them grace to accept that they are mortal, to face the possibility of death and the separation it must bring.
- People* Jesus, you are resurrection, you are life.
- Celebrant* Grant that all persons who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed.
- People* Fill our heart with your steadfast love.

Or other prayers as appropriate to the community may be offered

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.

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

Before receiving the Church's Blessing, the couple kneels and prays the following God of tenderness and strength, you have brought our paths together and led us to this day; go with us now as we travel through good times, through trouble, or through change. Bless our home, our partings and our meetings. Make us worthy of each other's best, and tender with each other's dreams, trusting in your love in Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Blessing follows using the form below or one of the forms from the BCP pp 430-431 with appropriate gender language changed. The blessing always concludes with the ending on page 431 of the BCP

Celebrant

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. By the power of the Holy Spirit, pour out your abundant blessing upon *NN* and *NN*. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle upon 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 forever in your banquet; through Jesus Christ our Lord who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns one God, now and forever.

People Amen

Celebrant

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve and keep you; may God mercifully look with favor 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.

People Amen

