



July 7, 2009

Teleturgical Encyclical 22

The Priests and Deacons of
the Holy Diocese of Denver

Beloved in the Lord,

“This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Ephesians 5:33

God established marriage in the Garden of Eden as an exclusive intimate relationship between one man and one woman. The purpose of marriage is for companionship, for God said, “It is not good that man should be alone” (*Genesis 2:18*). The purpose of marriage is also for procreation, for God additionally said, “Be fruitful and multiply” (*Genesis 1:22*).

In regard to Christian marriage, its purpose is to emulate Christ and the Church, as Saint Paul writes saying “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord,” and “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church” (*Ephesians 5:22, 25*).

The most significant decision made by any person in this day is their choice of a spouse. Thus the Church must prepare men and women to make this choice and, once made, it must assist and guide them in preparation for Marriage, at the Sacrament of Matrimony, and throughout their married life. The faithful gather to participate in the Sacrament of Matrimony with the bridal couple, and it is also anticipated that the Church will also assist and guide them to better understand this great sacramental Mystery.

Likewise, the Sacrament of Matrimony must be celebrated with sanctity and dignity. This includes doing things in good order, for our rubrics and our actions proclaim our theology, just as do icons and architecture.

Thus, I direct that whenever the Sacrament of Matrimony is celebrated in this Holy Metropolis, the following rubrics be followed by all Priests and Deacons in every parish:

- a. In preparation for the Sacrament, a table (the Antialtar) is placed on the solea. Two candles and the Gospel are placed on the table. If the table is big enough the cup with wine is placed on it; otherwise the cup may be placed on the Holy Altar if the table is too small.
- b. The Priest is vested in exorasson, epitrachelion, and felonion. If a Deacon serves, he is vested only in sticharion and orarion; epimanika are customarily not worn.
- c. When all is ready for the bridal procession to begin, the Priest opens the Beautiful Gate and exits through it.

d. If the rings and/or crowns are being brought in procession (by a child), the Priest goes and stands before the table to receive these. After placing rings and crowns on the table, he returns and stands in the Beautiful Gate, facing west

e. The groom takes his place to the left of the table, meets the bride when she is escorted in, and the couple stand before the table facing the Priest.

(1) Alternatively, if the couple choose to enter the church together, they are met in the narthex and the Priest leads them in. Leaving the couple standing before the table facing east, the Priest goes and stands in the Beautiful Gate.

f. Standing in the Beautiful Gate, facing the people, the Priest intones, “Blessed is our God ...,” then the petitions.

g. During the “Amen” at the end of the petitions, the Priest leaves the Beautiful Gate, and goes down, and stands before the couple facing them to read the prayer, “O God the eternal One ...”

h. After saying “Peace be with all,” the Priest turns and faces east to say the prayer, “Lord our God Who espoused the Church from the nations ...” He then takes the rings, and blesses them over the Gospel, making the Sign of the Cross three times saying, “In the name of the Father ...”

i. The Priest turns and faces the couple. He blesses the groom with the rings as follows: touches the head of the groom, touches the head of the bride, and makes the Sign of the Cross over the groom (not over the space between the couple). He then blesses the bride in the same manner.

j. The Priest places the rings on the right ring finger of the groom first and then the bride. The Sponsor then exchanges the rings as the Priest returns to stand in the Beautiful Gate facing the people, and reads the prayer, “Lord our God Who accompanied the servant of the Patriarch Abraham ...”

k. The Priest stands in the Beautiful Gate to chant the stanzas from Psalm 127.

l. The candles are given to the couple at this time, since they would be in the way if given before the blessing and exchange of rings.

m. After the stanzas, the Priest goes, stands before the table facing east, raises up the Gospel, and intones, “Blessed is the Kingdom ...”

n. The Priest returns to the Beautiful Gate, faces the people, and intones the petitions. He then reads the prayers, “O God most pure ...,” and “Blessed are You O our God ...”.

o. After reading these prayers, the Priest goes and stands before the table facing the couple, and the candles are given to the attendants.

p. The priest joins the right hands of the couple, and reads the prayer, “O God, the holy One, Who created ...”

(1) The couple continue to hold their right hands together from this time until the end of the service.

q. The Priest then turns and takes the crowns. He blesses them over the Gospel, making the Sign of the Cross three times saying, “In the name of the Father ...”

r. The Priest turns and faces the couple. He blesses the groom with the crowns as follows: touches the head of the groom, touches the head of the bride, and makes the Sign of the Cross over the groom (not over the space between the couple). He then blesses the bride in the same manner.

s. The Priest places the crowns on the head of the groom first and then the bride, intoning, “O Lord our God, crown them with glory and honor.”

t. The Sponsor then exchanges the crowns as the Priest returns to stand in the Beautiful Gate facing the people.

u. After the Sponsor completes exchanging the crowns, the Reader reads the Epistle.

v. The Priest prepares to read the Gospel:

(1) If there is only one Gospel, the Priest goes to the table, takes the Gospel and returns to the Beautiful Gate.

(2) If a second Gospel is on the Holy Altar, it will be the one used.

w. After the Epistle, the Priest reads the Holy Gospel from the Beautiful Gate, facing the people.

x. After the Gospel, the Priest remains in the Beautiful Gate, facing the people, and intones the two petitions, and their ekphonesis. He likewise reads the prayer, “O Lord our God, Who in Your saving economy ...”

y. The Priest then introduces the Lord’s Prayer, which is recited by all those present.

z. After the Lord’s Prayer, the Priest blesses the Common Cup.

(1) If the cup is on the table, the Priest goes and stands before it facing east, and reads the prayer of blessing, “O God Who made all things by Your power ...”

(2) If the cup was placed on the Holy Altar (in the case that the table was too small), the Priest turns around in the Beautiful Gate, faces the Altar, and reads the prayer of blessing.

aa. The Priest then stands before the couple, and offers it to the groom to drink from three times. He then offers the cup to the bride to do the same.

bb. After intoning the verse, “I will take the cup of salvation ...,” the Priest takes the Holy Gospel, holding it in his right hand, and takes the couple, holding their joined hands with his left hand, and leads them three times around the table singing “O Isaiah dance ...,” “O holy martyrs ..,” and “Glory to You, Christ God ...”

(1) After the third time around the table, the couple typically returns to stand before the table in their usual place. The Priest places the Gospel back on the table, and turns to face the couple. The Priest remains in this position until the conclusion of the service.

(2) It is customary in some larger churches for the couple to stand behind the table (between the table and the Beautiful Gate), facing the Holy Altar, and for the Priest to stand in the Beautiful Gate. The Priest would likewise remain standing in the Beautiful Gate until the conclusion of the service.

cc. Standing before the couple, the Priest reads the prayers, “Be magnified, O bridegroom ...,” and “And you, O bride ...”

dd. The Priest reads the prayer “O God, our God, Who went to Cana ...,” and at the words “... take up their crowns ..” he removes the crowns and places them on the table.

ee. The Priest faces the couple and reads the final blessing, “May the Father, the Son ...”

ff. The Priest concludes by reading the Dismissal.

g. After offering a few words to the couple, the Priest may return to the Beautiful Gate, and offer a brief homily to the couple and their invited guests.

With Paternal Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠ Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver