

# The Order of Celebrating Matrimony: What's New?

BY DAN MERZ

Lately, there's been a lot of news centering on the meaning and practice of marriage: the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, the second part of the Synod on the Family in Rome, revised canonical norms for granting declarations of nullity in the Latin (Roman) Catholic Church, the Supreme Court's decision regarding same-sex marriages and the opposition it has entailed, not to mention the day-to-day struggles of Catholics and others to live out what is probably the oldest human institution on the planet. Despite all the worry, gloom, and dire predictions on several sides of the issue, however, marriage, also known as "matrimony,"<sup>1</sup> continues strong and resilient. It survived both the fall and the flood (cf. Nuptial Blessing, Form A); and it will survive whatever challenges may come from secularism or other challenges of the day.

It is precisely this confidence that inspires the present article to look with faith and joy at the newly approved English translation of the second typical edition of the *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium: The Order of Celebrating Matrimony* (OCM). My purpose is to highlight and elaborate on the changes from the familiar 1969 *editio typica* and its 1970 English translation.

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The revised Latin edition was published in 1991, but completion of its English translation was delayed due to work on the English translation of *The Roman Missal*. There are a number of substantial changes from 1969 to 1991, as can be seen simply by looking at the table of contents. (see the chart on the next page). Here's just one example: In the 1969 edition, Chapter IV contained a complete "Order for the Celebration of the Wedding Mass." This is no longer present in the revised rite, presumably in order to avoid turning the OCM into a missal unto itself. The biggest novelty, perhaps, is a new chapter which is primarily intended for mission territories where priests and deacons are lacking: the "Order of Celebrating Matrimony before an Assisting Layperson." It remains to be seen whether this chapter will be included in the final edition published for the United States. Also new to the revised edition are three appendices:

- I. Examples of the Universal Prayer,
- II. The Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple,
- III. The Order of Blessing a Married Couple within Mass on the Anniversary of Marriage.

The third appendix is an expanded version of what is currently found in the *Book of Blessings*.

## Theological and Pastoral Vision

The expanded *praenotanda* (introduction) in the second edition provides both a theological and a pastoral vision of the vocation of marriage. Two examples may serve as illustrations. First, paragraph seven emphasizes the primary importance of Baptism as the foundation for life in Christ, upon which marriage is grounded:

Through Baptism, which is the Sacrament of faith, a man and a woman are once and for all incorporated into the covenant of Christ with the Church in such a way that their conjugal community is assumed into Christ's charity and is enriched by the power of his Sacrifice.

This succinct sentence emphasizes the necessity of faith for the sacrament of marriage and also paints a beautiful image of the married couple's union being "assumed into Christ's charity" and, importantly, being "enriched by the power of his Sacrifice." Two essential components of marriage,

then, are charity and sacrifice, but specifically the charity and sacrifice modeled by Christ.

The second example is from paragraph eleven, which quotes the early Church teacher Tertullian in demonstrating the dimensions of a truly *ecclesial* marriage:

A Marriage that is desired, prepared for, celebrated, and lived daily in the light of faith is that which is "joined by the Church, strengthened by a sacrificial offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by Angels, and ratified by the Father. . . . How wonderful the bond of the two believers: one in hope, one in vow, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one Father and servants of the same Master, with no separation of spirit and flesh. Indeed, they are two in one flesh; where there is one flesh, there is also one spirit" (Tertullian, *Ad uxorem*, II, VIII: CCL I, 393).

If a couple strives to live marriage from beginning to end within the vision of the Church, then they will be strengthened by both sacred and supernatural means. The quote from Tertullian describes a panoply of such means:

- "joined by the Church": the Sacrament of Matrimony;
- "strengthened by a sacrificial offering": the Eucharistic oblation;
- "sealed by a blessing": the Nuptial Blessing;
- "announced by Angels": the Incarnation was thus announced, which is the marriage of God with the flesh;
- "ratified by the Father": in the resurrection, the Father ratified the sacrificial love of Christ for the Church, which is the love between bridegroom and bride.

## Begin Singing

There is a great expansion and clarification of rubrics in the new edition, intended to enrich the celebration and clarify the nature of the rite. One great change from current practice at most weddings—if it will be put into practice—is that an Entrance Chant is now expected. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (47) states that the function of the Entrance Chant is "to open the celebration, foster the unity of those who have been gathered, introduce their thoughts to the mystery of the liturgical time or festivity, and accompany the procession of the priest and ministers." One can wonder whether the difference in atmosphere and attitude from the beginning between a normal Sunday Mass and a

## Six Areas of Change from 1969 to 1991

The following outline compares the two editions, highlighting six areas of change:

### 1. Greatly expanded *prae-notanda*

#### 1969 *editio*

18 paragraphs, expanded in the 1991 edition into . . .  
7 on the “Importance and Dignity of the Sacrament of Matrimony”  
  
4 on the “Choice of Rite”  
5 on the “Preparation of Local Rituals”  
2 on the “Right to Prepare a Completely New Rite”

#### 1991 *editio*

44 paragraphs  
11 on the “Importance and Dignity of the Sacrament of Matrimony”  
16 on the “Duties and Ministries”  
5 on “The Celebration of Marriage”  
6 on “The Rite to Be Used”  
6 on “Adaptation to Be Prepared by the Conferences of Bishops”

### 2. Expanded Set of Scripture Readings

The number of readings from the Old Testament has been expanded from eight to nine.

The number of readings from the New Testament (epistles) has been expanded from ten to fourteen.

There are still seven psalms, four *Alleluia* verses, and ten Gospel pericopes.

### 3. Introductory Rites

The English translation of the *Rite of Marriage* (1970) included a Penitential Act and called for a *Gloria* only “when it is prescribed.”

The 1991 *editio typica* clarifies that the Penitential Act is omitted and that the *Gloria* is always used (even during Advent and Lent).

In the new edition, a sample introductory address is provided to help the transition to the *Gloria*.

### 4. Euchological Prayers

There are now six collects instead of four.

There are still three options for the Prayer over the Offerings, three Prefaces, three Nuptial Blessings, three Prayers after Communion, and three forms of the Solemn Blessing.

Eucharistic Prayer interpolations formerly provided only for Eucharistic Prayer I (the Roman Canon) are now also provided for Eucharistic Prayers II and III.

### 5. Marriage Rite

There is now a second formula for the reception of consent.

A response/acclamation by the whole assembly follows the statement of consent.

When they are blessed, the rings may be sprinkled with holy water.

A hymn or canticle of praise may be sung by all after the exchange of rings.

Samples of the Universal Prayer (Prayers of the Faithful) are provided in an appendix.

### 6. Great Expansion and Clarification of Rubrics

There are two forms for the entrance, and an Entrance Chant should be sung.

The posture and place of the couple for the Nuptial Blessing is clarified.

There are rubrics included regarding the signing of the marriage record.



normal Saturday Wedding Mass may be attributed, in part at least, to the fact that most often there has not been an Entrance Chant at weddings to set the tone, unite hearts, and introduce the sacred mystery about to unfold.

In the Introductory Rites, the 1991 edition states that the Penitential Act is omitted (a change from the 1969 edition); This is presumably because the procession of the wedding party takes its place. The third edition of *The Roman Missal* has further clarified that the *Gloria* is sung (or said), in effect raising the ritual Mass to the rank of a feast.<sup>2</sup> There are two sample introductory formularies provided to help with the transition from the entrance procession to the *Gloria*.

The expanded set of Scripture readings is introduced by a rubric stating that when the Marriage Rite is celebrated within or without Mass, “at least one reading that explicitly speaks of Marriage must always be chosen. These readings are designated by an asterisk.” Seven of the nine Old Testament readings are so designated, but only two of the New Testament readings, only one psalm, and only three Gospel pericopes. If marriage is to be celebrated on a solemnity in the liturgical year, the Mass prayers and readings of the solemnity must be used, but one of the designated marriage readings can still be substituted for one of the proper readings. The new Old Testament reading that has been added is Proverbs 31:10–13, 19–20, 30–31 (from the meditation on a “woman of worth”); and the four new New Testament

readings are Romans 15:1b–3a, 5–7, 13 (thinking and living in harmony); Ephesians 4:1–6 (live in a manner worthy of your calling); Philippians 4:4–9 (rejoice in the Lord); and Hebrews 13:1–4a, 5–6b (honoring marriage).

Within the Marriage Rite itself, there are several additions. The minister now has a choice between two formulas for the “Reception of the Consent.” The new formula invokes salvation history by calling upon the patriarchs and Adam and Eve:

May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God who joined together our first parents in paradise, strengthen and bless in Christ the consent you have declared before the Church, so that what God joins together, no one may put asunder.

These four couples of the Old Testament all stand out by the intervention of divine grace in their relationships. This formula is also included as an option when a Catholic marries a catechumen or a non-Christian, even though the formula specifically asks that they be blessed “in Christ.” Perhaps this invocation is intended to call to mind 1 Corinthians 7:14, where St. Paul says that “the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through the husband.”

Following the reception of consent, the minister says to the assembly: “Let us bless the Lord,” to which all reply:

**“One can wonder whether the difference in atmosphere and attitude from the beginning between a normal Sunday Mass and a normal Saturday Wedding Mass may be attributed, in part at least, to the fact that most often there has not been an Entrance Chant at weddings to set the tone, unite hearts, and introduce the sacred mystery about to unfold.”**

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“Thanks be to God.” There is an option for an alternative acclamation to be sung or said, though no examples are provided. After the blessing and exchange of rings (which may now be sprinkled with holy water), there is a new rubric: “Then a hymn or canticle of praise may be sung by the whole community.” It may be hoped that this addition will help to discourage the use of the so-called “unity candle,” which often takes place at this time. It might also help in overcoming that practice if the couple were further engaged in some manner, for example, in making a visit to the image of the Blessed Virgin or that of the Holy Family at this point. The reference to a “canticle of praise” hints at the genre of music that is intended here, but there are no examples provided. Among the psalmody provided in the ritual, only Psalm 128 is marked as “explicitly” speaking of marriage. If this psalm were not used during the Liturgy of the Word, it could fittingly be sung at this point.

The rubrics for bestowing the Nuptial Blessing now specify that the couple kneel for this blessing, while everyone else stands. A set of chant tones composed by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy for the three Nuptial Blessings is to be included in the published edition of the Marriage Ritual. These are not intended to prevent other musical settings being composed for these texts, but at least some music will be published with the ritual text itself.

### **Adaptations for the United States**

Beyond the changes from the 1969 to the 1991 edition, the U.S. bishops have also received permission from Rome for a number of particular adaptations. First is an alternate form of the vows taken from the “Sarum Rite” (a form of the Roman Rite that was used at the Cathedral of Salisbury in England from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries). Permission to use this form of the vows was already given for the 1970 English edition, but the form now approved includes an expanded phrase (“to love and to cherish”). This additional phrase will make the U.S. form identical to that which will be used in England.

The other U.S. adaptation is simply an English translation

of the adaptations already approved for use in the United States in Spanish, namely, the blessing and giving of the *arras* (“coins”) and the blessing and placing of the *Lazo* (“Lasso”) or the Veil. While these are not intended for general use but only for those with a cultural attachment to them (e.g., Hispanics and Filipinos), who would like to celebrate in English rather than Spanish or another language, they are included as options within the rite itself.

### **Help in Living and Celebrating**

Marriage, it seems, is a sacrament that has been more susceptible than most to the influence of our secularized culture. The new text for the Catholic marriage rite makes a number of changes that attempt to deepen our theological understanding and pastoral care for marriage, to enrich the scriptural and liturgical texts used for marriage, and to enhance the sacred character of the celebration by the addition of ritual music (Entrance Chant, hymn or canticle of praise after the exchange of rings, and music provided for the Nuptial Blessings). While we need all the help we can get (human and ecclesial) in promoting and living the Sacrament of Marriage, we do well to remember the words of Jesus regarding the importance of allowing the Holy Spirit to overcome the hardness of our hearts in order to live the full truth of marriage (cf. Matthew 19:7 and Mark 10:5). Both living the sacrament and celebrating it worthily require the mercy of God the Father.

### **Notes**

1. Both English words derive, through medieval French, from the classical Latin word *matrimonium*—the state of being married—and the later Latin *maritare* and *martiari*—to provide a marriage partner or to become married.
2. However, neither the ritual nor the missal is clear whether the *Kyrie, eleison* should be said or omitted. The Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship has an article discussing this topic—“Exploring the Relationship between the Penitential Act and *Kyrie* at Mass”—in its February-March 2014 *Newsletter*.



# Some Things Old, Some Things New: Music in the Revised Rite of Marriage

ALAN J. HOMMERDING

**F**or the NPM Annual Convention in the summer of 2014, I was invited to present a workshop about music for the new English translation of the 1991 *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium (editio typica altera)*, which we expected would receive its *recognitio* from the Vatican soon and would be implemented shortly thereafter. A year later, I was invited to present the same workshop, for the no-*recognitio*-yet rite. As of the writing of this article, the *recognitio* for the second edition of the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* has been received, but no official/final text has been published. A tentative implementation date of Pentecost 2016 has been set. Refer-

ences to the ritual in this article come from the 2013 “gray book” draft edition of the rite (which, incidentally, makes only one reference to music—more about this later).



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Photo courtesy of Hijabrian

I don't recount this timeline as a gripe about the delay but as a framework for the time we've had to revisit the larger issue of music in the ritual celebration of marriage. Even with some of the changes made in the rite, there is not much different that has a direct or substantive impact on music.

I firmly believe that this provides an opportunity to take a step back and review the role of music in the marriage rite and how we are most effective as its ministers. As with the revisions of the *General Instruction* and the *Roman Missal*, the continuity far exceeds the novelty.

In the workshop, I identified four foundations on which to build.

### Foundation 1: Hospitality

A number of years back, at a music planning meeting with a wedding couple, I shook hands with them and said, "Congratulations!" The groom-to-be looked a little surprised and said, "You're the first person we've met with who congratulated us." I realize that in the marriage preparation process there are many tasks to be accomplished, but our

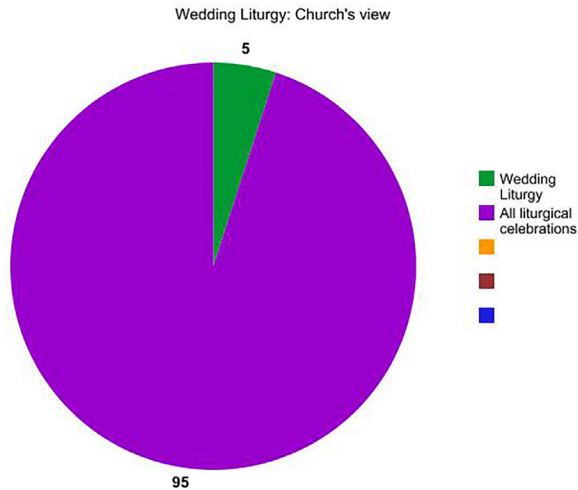
first accomplishment should be to share in the couple's joy. Much has been written and spoken about the place of evangelization in wedding (and funeral) preparation and the possibilities in those two situations to bring back the baptized-but-not-believers or the believers-but-not-belongers. A genuine hospitality is central to any success that this effort may have.

By "genuine" I mean something along the lines of how we might welcome people into our homes for a celebration: We welcome them before we lay out the drink or dinner options. For a wedding meeting, then, we don't say that there aren't guidelines or expectations, but we do everything we can to make others comfortable and able to celebrate. Guidelines (we'll look at these in a moment) are important because, as an evangelization tool, "you can do whatever you want because it's your day" is likely to be effective only in the very short term; it is, at the very least, false advertising.

### Foundation 2: Big Picture and Small Picture

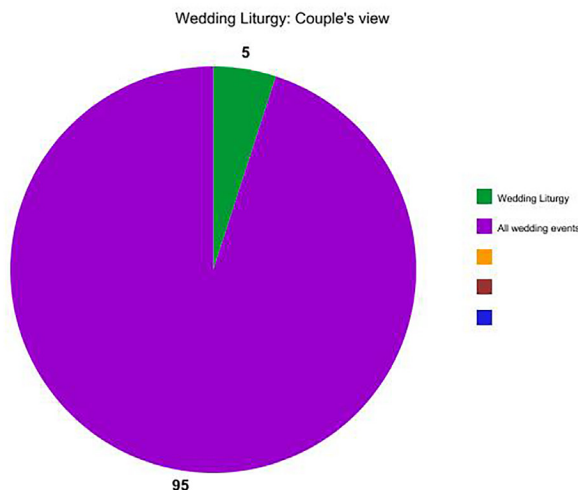
For the Church and the couple, the Wedding Liturgy is a small slice of a larger pie. For the Church, the Wedding

Liturgy (whether or not it includes Eucharist) belongs to the larger framework of the Church's *whole* liturgical life, with the Word and the Eucharist at its center, and the other



sacraments and rites sharing in the same basic principles that shape these key aspects of worship. As mentioned earlier, the 2013 gray book edition of the rite only mentions music once; this is not because music isn't thought to be important in the marriage rite but because it is presumed that the musical principles that inform and govern all of the Church's Liturgy likewise apply here.

For the couple, the Wedding Liturgy is often viewed as one among several sequential spectacles, each of which has its own details to get just right. The "spec" of "spectacle" helps us understand the primacy that the visual has assumed in our surrounding culture. The place of photographers,



videographers, and nearly every member of the assembly busy smartphone-recording the events in a wedding celebration affirms this. So musicians, who work in the sonic realm, need to be extra mindful that the activity at hand is preparing prayer, not mounting a show, and assist the couple in that same understanding.

To this end, every encounter between the parish through its representatives and the couple needs to be framed that way. I've made it a custom, when meeting with wedding couples, to begin with a brief prayer to set the tone. If they've not heard it before, they need to know that *they* are the ministers of the sacrament; the priest, deacon, or other officiant is present on behalf of the gathered community. The spirit and language of prayer needs to saturate the entire preparation experience.

*Pastoral Note:* For some time, to make it clear to the couple that we were meeting in order to prepare a prayer event, I had been prefacing nearly every sentence with the phrase "just like we do at Sunday Mass . . ." Over the course of time, this came to feel to me like a cudgel, or a guilt trip, or a passive-aggressive recruitment tool. So my vocabulary choices changed: "We understand that God is speaking to us directly in the Scripture" or "This song may contain the word 'God' but let's look at some music that is addressed to God," and so on.

### Foundation 3: Guidelines/Policies

One of the most concrete ways to promote the vision or values of the Church in regard to music at the wedding is to provide a template for the worship aid to be used at the ceremony. Leave large spaces for musical items that will be sung, or place "Hymnal Name #" throughout, illustrating the need to provide actual notated music or hymnal references for the gathered assembly. If your parish is able to provide these templates for the couple to work from (you should have one available for the marriage rite within Mass and one for a wedding that occurs outside Mass), present them early on.

Perhaps nothing is as helpful both to the couple and to the pastoral musician as a set of clear guidelines from which to work. If your diocese has prepared wedding guidelines that include a section on music, make those your reference point or at least a starting point for a set of parish guidelines. The



implementation of this most recent revision of the *Order for Celebrating Matrimony* might be a time to revise or employ (for the first time) a set of wedding music guidelines. If your diocese has a Liturgy office, check there to see if existing guidelines will be revised in light of the new rite. If there is no diocesan office, this may be a task that an NPM chapter might wish to undertake. If you are preparing guidelines for the first time, locate a couple of representative samples from other parishes to begin your work. Avoid handing the couple *two* sets of policies—diocesan and parish. That might seem overly restrictive and definitely unhospitable. Clarity and efficient presentation are key.

Again, the language of prayer preparation and formation can be present throughout the preparation meeting. Introduce the music guidelines with a celebratory, hospitable, prayerful tone. “We at St. XYZ Parish are filled with joy that you will be celebrating God’s love present in your marriage.” Later on: “Since the music sung by the congregation is the most important music at the wedding rite, a parish cantor is present for every marriage at St. XYZ.”

Above all, limit the “don’t” or “can’t” language. When you have a “don’t” policy, find a way to express the positive value underneath. “As with all of the church’s ministries, music is offered by ministers present at the celebration; pre-recorded music is not used.”

## Foundation 4: Approaches to Preparation

Most parishes and music ministers use one of three modes of preparing music with the wedding couple. Each has some positive aspects but also some downsides.

**Group (Annual, Semi-annual, or Seasonal) Preparation.** This is an occasion (usually an evening, sometimes a Saturday) at which all couples planning to be married in coming months gather for some basics about the marriage rite and planning the Liturgy for it. Sometimes musical selections are offered. This mode of preparation helps create an awareness that it is a sacrament/rite of the Church that is being prepared, not merely an event focused on one couple. While efficient, it does not allow for the personal contact that individual meetings might.

**Passive Preparation (Recordings, Website).** Some parishes offer a wedding music planning form, along with recorded selections, perhaps on the parish website. While



accommodating the busy schedules and sometimes long-distance preparation that occurs for today’s weddings, it sterilizes the process and makes it more akin to selecting menu items from the caterer for the wedding dinner. Also, some couples, once they realize that there’s a wealth of wedding music on the internet, will begin to visit other sites. I once had a couple think that it would be great for me to play Mozart’s overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* as a prelude!

**Active, Individual Preparation.** This is the face-to-face, wedding-by-wedding approach. For part-time parish musicians with other jobs, who are trying to connect with busy brides and grooms who may not even reside locally, this can be a difficult one to arrange. But no other preparation mode really communicates as effectively the care of the parish and its ministers for the couple and the Church’s understanding about marriage as a sacrament. Perhaps this approach might be combined with some foundational liturgical information in a group session, but this is still the most effective way for a music minister to be the presence of Christ for the wedding couple during marriage preparation.

## Something New: The Gloria

With the 2010 promulgation of *The Roman Missal*, the *Gloria* became an official part of the Wedding Liturgy. To be honest, a number of pastoral musicians rolled their eyes at

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the suggestion of the typical wedding assembly—even one containing a fair number of Roman Catholics—participating in the singing of the *Gloria*. The positive value that we can communicate to the wedding couple and to the assembly through the singing of the *Gloria* is a focus on God’s presence and God’s praise. Its placement during the entrance rites helps set the tone that this is not a spectacle to be viewed but an action in which all should participate. The Wedding Liturgy, in this way, is designed to express from its beginning the “full, conscious, and active” principle of Vatican II.

Even though there has been something of a turning away from refrain-based *Gloria* settings following the revision of the *Missal*, the assembly gathered for this particular Liturgy will probably fare better with a refrain-style setting, with verses sung by the cantor (the Sunday Eucharist cantor, not friend-of-the-couple karaoke kind). Put the music for the refrain in the program. One music reader in the pews can strengthen the singing of others. As a bonus, it helps the wedding program look like a worship aid rather than a movie’s cast of characters.

### Something Else New: Acclamations of Praise

A week or two after the 2015 NPM Convention in Grand Rapids and the wedding music workshop that I offered there, I was a last-minute wedding keyboard substitute for an ailing friend. Throughout the Wedding Mass, the presider chanted the presidential prayers and dialogues on a single tone, with the assembly chanting “Amen” at the end. I learned that this was his practice at Sunday Eucharist as well, so the handful of wedding congregants who were also parishioners knew what to do and became leaders for the rest. It was fascinating to listen to and observe the increase in the assembly’s response—without a single syllable of joking or cajoling from the presider—grow throughout the Liturgy. Some even sang the refrain of the Communion song while processing to receive!

This priest’s simple invitation to sung responses could serve as the model for introducing other sung responses and acclamations by the assembly during a wedding. That is important because, in addition to the emphasis on a sung *Gloria*, the revised rite provides a place for the assembly to affirm the exchange of consent (vows) with an acclamation.

Needless to say, this lone occurrence of an acclamation is not going to be very successful nor really communicate the reality of the community’s witnessing of the marriage if it does not occur within a larger framework of consistently expecting acclamation and affirmation from the assembly in song throughout the Wedding Rite. When the final published version of the rite is made available, I propose that a first thing for pastoral musicians to do is to search out those opportunities for acclamation in the rite and get to work on a practical plan to introduce and support them.

### Something New? Litany of the Saints

One adaptation requested for the U.S. version of the rite that was declined by the Vatican was the inclusion of a sung Litany of the Saints. The very solid rationale behind this was the observation that the rites of initiation and ordination—the Church’s two other sacramental vocation rites—include the litany, and its use would place every particular marriage in that larger vocational context as well as in the larger mystery of the communion of saints. Though the adaptation was declined, some people are proposing places at which the litany could be sung—prior to the entrance procession and entrance chant, for example. This may be an instance of growing *praxis* determining somewhere down the road, with some future ritual revision, whether the litany becomes part of the Marriage Rite.

### Revision and Re-visitation

It would seem that the “already but not yet” aspect of the revised Rite of Celebrating Matrimony provides for those of us who prepare couples to celebrate and be ministers of their Wedding Liturgy our own timeframe to prepare ourselves to renew and revisit the ways that our ministry as musicians can assist and empower the couples we serve. We need to consider whether some things old should be retained when they no longer serve, and we need to discover some things new to be initiated and promoted as we strive to be better servants of the faithful in Christ—who alone makes all things new!

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