

The Blessing of a Civil Marriage

*This service is provided for a couple whose wedding was a civil service
and who wish to have their marriage blessed in the name of God the holy Trinity.*

WELCOME

- 1 *The minister welcomes the couple and the other members of the congregation, concluding with*

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

And also with you.

- 2 *The minister says*

N and N were married on ... [at ...]

Today we have come together in the presence of God
to celebrate their marriage,

and to ask God's blessing on them

as we share their joy.

Marriage is a gift of God our creator.

It is a symbol of God's unending love for his people,

and of the union between Christ and his Church.

Christ loved his bride the Church,

and gave himself for her.

As he has called N and N to marriage,

so he draws their differing gifts and hopes

into a unity of love and service.

Scripture teaches that marriage is a lifelong partnership
uniting a woman and a man in heart, mind and body.

In the joy of their union, husband and wife

enrich and respond to each other,

growing in tenderness and understanding.

Through marriage a new family is formed

where children may be born

and grow in secure and loving care.

Marriage is therefore to be honoured by all.

No one should enter it lightly or selfishly,

but responsibly and joyfully,

with mutual respect and the promise to be faithful.

So let us pray with N and N:

- 3 *One of the following prayers is used.*

Blessed are you, loving God,

your Spirit binds us together.

Crown our lives with your goodness;

sustain us all our days with your love.

Bless N and N with wisdom and pleasure.

Be their friend and companion in joy,

their comfort in need and in sorrow.

And when this life is ended
welcome them into your presence,
there with all your people
to praise your holy name:

**Blessed be God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
as in the beginning, so now and forever. Amen.**

or

God of tenderness and strength,
you have brought their paths together
and led them to this day;
go with them now as they travel through good times,
through trouble, and through change.
Bless their home, their partings and their meetings.
Make them worthy of each another's best,
and tender with each another's dreams. **Amen.**

or

God our Father,
you have taught us through your Son
that love is the fulfilling of the law;
grant to your servants N and N
that, loving one another,
they may continue in your love
until their lives' end:
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

- 4 *One or more Readings from the Scriptures. When the Holy Communion is to follow, there are at least two readings of which the final one is the Gospel.*

After each reading the reader may say

Hear the word of the Lord,
thanks be to God.

A psalm, canticle, hymn, anthem or period of silence may follow the readings.

- 5 *When the Gospel is read, the congregation stands and the reading is preceded by these words*

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to ...

and there may be said

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

After the Gospel the reader may say

This is the Gospel of the Lord,
or [For] the word of the Lord,
praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

- 6 *An address appropriate to the occasion is delivered.*

A hymn or song and other readings consistent with Christian teaching and the theme of the service may also be used.

AFFIRMATIONS

7a The minister asks the husband:

N, you have taken N as your wife,
to live together in the covenant of marriage.
You come in faith before God and this congregation:
do you now acknowledge your pledge of love and loyalty
and ask for God's blessing?

I do.

I therefore ask you:
Will you love her, comfort her,
honour and protect her,
and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her,
as long as you both shall live?

I will.

7b The minister asks the wife:

N, you have taken N as your husband,
to live together in the covenant of marriage.
You come in faith before God and this congregation:
Do you now acknowledge your pledge of love and loyalty
and ask for God's blessing?

I do.

I therefore ask you:
Will you love him, comfort him,
honour and protect him,
and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him,
as long as you both shall live?

I will.

Or

8 The minister addresses the couple,

N and N, you have taken each other as husband and wife,
to live together in the covenant of marriage.
You come in faith before God and this congregation:
Do you now acknowledge your pledge of love and loyalty
and for God's blessing?

We do.

I therefore ask you:

to the husband

N, will you love N, comfort her,
honour and protect her,
and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her,
as long as you both shall live?

I will.

to the wife

N, will you love N, comfort him,
honour and protect him,
and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him,
as long as you both shall live?

I will.

- 10 *If rings were given at the time of marriage, the couple may join the hands on which rings are worn, and the minister may say,*

God of steadfast love,
by your blessing,
let *these rings* be for N and N
a symbol of their love and faithfulness
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

- 11 *If rings were not given at the marriage then they may be given here, as follows.*

The giver places the ring on the ring-finger of the other's hand and says

I give you this ring
as a symbol of our marriage.
With all that I am and all that I have
I honour you; in the name of God. **Amen.**

After rings have been exchanged, the man and woman may say together

I receive this ring
as a symbol of your love and faithfulness
to the end of our days.

and / or

May God enable us to grow in love together.

THE BLESSING OF THE MARRIAGE

- 12 *The minister adds a blessing for the couple.*

God the Father lovingly enfold you,
God the Son grace your home and table,
God the Holy Spirit crown you with joy and peace.
The Lord bless you and keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

or

Most gracious God,
we give you thanks for your tender love
in sending Jesus Christ to come among us,
born of a human mother,
to make the way of the cross to be the way of life.
Pour out the abundance of your blessing
on this man and this woman.
Defend them from every enemy.
Lead them into all peace.
Let their love for each other
be a seal upon their hearts,
a mantle about their shoulders,
and a crown upon their heads.

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 us all to that table
where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home. **Amen.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

13 *A selection of the following or other prayers is said.*

When the Holy Communion follows, A Prayer for all People (j below) should be used here.

The prayers may be led by a friend or member of the families of the couple.

a For faithfulness

God of all grace,
friend and companion,
look in favour on N and N,
and all who are made one in marriage.
In your love deepen their love,
strengthen their wills
to keep the promises they have made,
that they may continue
in life-long faithfulness to each other;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

b For the joy of loving

God our Creator,
we thank you for your gift of sexual love
by which husband and wife
may delight in each other,
and share with you the joy of creating new life.
By your grace may N and N remain lovers,
rejoicing in your goodness all their days. **Amen.**

c For children

Lord of life,
you shape us in your image,
and by your gracious gift
the human family is increased.
To N and N grant the blessing of children.
Fill them with wisdom and love
as they care for their family,
so that they and their children
may know and love you,
through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

d For an existing family

God of all grace and goodness,
we thank you for this family,

and for everything parents and children have to share;
by your Spirit of peace draw them together
and help them to be true friends to one another.
Let your love surround them
and your care protect them,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

e For grace to live well

Faithful God,
giver of all good things,
give N and N wisdom and devotion
in the ordering of their life together.
May they dwell together in love and peace
all the days of their life,
 seeking one another's welfare,
 bearing one another's burdens,
 and sharing one another's joys;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

f For discipleship

Eternal God,
without your grace nothing is strong, nothing is sure.
Strengthen N and N with your Holy Spirit
 in patience, kindness and gentleness,
so that they may fulfil the vows they have made.
Keep them faithful to each other and to you.
Fill them with such love and joy
that they may build a home of peace and welcome.
Make their life together a sign of Christ's love in this broken world,
that unity may overcome estrangement,
forgiveness heal guilt,
and joy conquer despair;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

g For the families of the couple

Gracious Lord,
bless the parents and families of N and N
that they may grow in friendship and love.
Grant that they may find their lives enriched and strengthened
and their loyalties confirmed. **Amen.**

h For the healing of memory

Loving God,
you are merciful and forgiving.
Grant that those who are suffering the hurts of the past
 may experience your generous love.
Heal their memories, comfort them,
and send them all from here
renewed and hopeful. **Amen.**

i For the joy of companionship

All praise and blessing to you, God of love,
creator of the universe,
maker of man and woman in your likeness,
source of blessing for married life.

All praise to you, for you have created
courtship and marriage,
joy and gladness,
feasting and laughter,
pleasure and delight.

May your blessing come in full upon N and N.
May they know your presence
in their joys and in their sorrows.
May they reach old age in the company of friends
and come at last to your eternal kingdom. **Amen.**

or

j A prayer for all people

Almighty God, look graciously on the world which you have made, and for which your Son gave his life. Bless all whom you make one flesh in marriage. May their life together be a sign of your love to this broken world, so that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy overcome despair.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

May N and N so live together that the strength of their love may reflect your love and enrich our common life.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

May they be gentle and patient, ready to trust each other, and, when they fail, willing to recognise and acknowledge their fault and to ask each other's forgiveness.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

[May N and N be blessed with the gift of children. Fill them with wisdom and love as they care for their family.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.]

May the lonely, the bereaved, and all who suffer want or anxiety, be defended by you, O Lord.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

May those whose lives you have brought together be given wisdom, patience and courage to serve one another in Christ's name.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

May friends and family gathered here, and those separated by distance, be strengthened and blessed this day.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

We praise you, merciful God, for those who have died in the faith of Christ. May we be strengthened by their example.

14 *The prayers conclude with either*

Almighty God, you have promised to hear our prayers.
**Grant that what we have asked in faith
we may by your grace receive,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

or, unless the Lord's Prayer is said after the Great Thanksgiving

Accept our prayers, loving God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

Our Father in heaven,
**hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

THE GREETING OF PEACE

15 *The minister says,*

We are the body of Christ.
His Spirit is with us.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

A greeting of peace may be shared by all.

If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the table is prepared and the Great Thanksgiving said by the priest (see APBA pp 669 ff)

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

16 *Unless the Holy Communion follows, the service concludes here with the blessing and dismissal.*

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement
grant you to live in such harmony with one another,
in accord with Christ Jesus,
that together you may with one voice
glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

concluding with either

and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

or

and the blessing of God,
creator and redeemer,
giver of life and love,
be with you all, now and for ever. **Amen.**

or

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face to shine on you
and be gracious to you.
The Lord lift up his countenance on you,
and give you peace. **Amen.**

17 The minister may say

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.