

Liturgical Planning Guides: Marriage



Readings for Marriages

Below you will find a *summary* of readings provided by the *Rite of Marriage*, the book that guides worship for Catholic weddings. You may choose your wedding readings from this list, or – if you want a particular Bible text not listed here – from any of the readings that appear in the *Lectionary for Mass* (ask your celebrant for advice about this).

The sample excerpts have been provided to give you a foretaste of the reading, but note that they are from the [New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition](#). Sometime in the future this will probably become the official Bible for Catholic services in the UK, but until then the readings for your wedding should be taken from the current Lectionary, which uses the Jerusalem Bible. You can find the current text of all the readings, in full, at <http://tinyurl.com/Marriage-JB>

You may choose a two-reading or a three-reading wedding. Readings for a three-reading wedding are structured like this:

Old Testament Reading

Responsorial Psalm (ideally sung, if a soloist is available)

Reading from a Letter of St Paul or of St John

Alleluia Verse (always sung)

Gospel

If you only want two readings, you can choose to have either an Old Testament reading or an Epistle; in either case this reading is followed by a Responsorial Psalm. An Alleluia and Gospel always follow.

Old Testament Reading OR Reading from a Letter of St Paul or of St John

Responsorial Psalm (ideally sung, if a soloist is available)

Alleluia Verse (always sung)

Gospel

Options for the First Reading (Old Testament)

1. **The first creation story** (Genesis 1:26-28, 31): "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (verse 27).
2. **The second creation story** (Genesis 2:18-24): "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.... Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh'".

3. **With God's help, Isaac finds a suitable wife in Rebekah** (Genesis 24:48-51, 58-67): "Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her" (verse 67).
 4. **Tobias asks Raguel for Sarah's hand in marriage** (Tobit 7:9-10, 11-15): "May the Lord of heaven, my child, guide and prosper you both this night, and grant you mercy and peace" (verse 11). [*Tobit* may not be present in Protestant Bibles.]
 5. **Tobias prays for God's mercy for himself and Sarah on their wedding night** (Tobit 8:5-7): "Grant that she and I may find mercy and that we may grow old together" (verse 7). [*Tobit* may not be present in Protestant Bibles.]
 6. **A biblical love song** (Song of Songs 2:8-10, 14, 16; 8:6-7): "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned" (Song of Songs 8:6-7).
 7. **The qualities of a good spouse** (Sirach 26:1-4, 13-16): "A wife's charm delights her husband, and her skill puts flesh on his bones" (verse 13). [*Sirach* is called *Ecclesiasticus* in some Bibles, and may not be present in Protestant Bibles.]
 8. **God's covenant with his people as a model for the marriage covenant** (Jeremiah 31:31-32a, 33-34a): "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (verse 33).
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Options for the Responsorial Psalm

The psalms were written as songs, so although the responsorial psalm can be read if no cantor (song leader) is available, it is better for it to be sung by a cantor. The responsorial psalm is the assembly's response to the Word of God; accordingly, the cantor sings the verses, and then leads the whole assembly in singing the response. In the following list of responsorial psalms for weddings, the title is the assembly's response. Advice with music online: www.garethleyshon.info/WeddingPsalms.pdf

1. **The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord** (Psalm 33:12, 18, 20-21, 22).
2. **I will bless the Lord at all times** (Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9).
3. **The Lord is kind and merciful** (Psalm 103:1-2, 8, 13, 17-18).
4. **Happy are those who do what the Lord commands** (Psalm 112:1-2, 3-4, 5-7, 7-8, 9).
5. **Happy are those who fear the Lord** (Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5).
6. **The Lord is compassionate to all his creatures** (Psalm 145:8-9, 10, 15, 17-18).
7. **Let all praise the name of the Lord** (Psalm 148:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14).

Options for the Epistle (New Testament reading not from the Gospel)

1. **The depth of God's love** (Romans 8:31-35, 37-39): "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (verses 38-39).
 2. **A summary of Christian life.** (Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 [long form] or Romans 12:1-2, 9-13 [short form]): "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour".
 3. **The sanctity of the body** (1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20): "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (verses 19 and 20).
 4. **The qualities of love** (1 Corinthians 12:31 - 13:8). "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth" (verses 4 - 6).
 5. **Marriage compared to the relationship between Christ and the Church** (Ephesians 5:2, 21-33 [long form] or Ephesians 5:2, 25-32 [short form]): "Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (verses 24-25).
 6. **Love perfects all virtues** (Colossians 3:12-17): "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (verse 14).
 7. **The conduct of Christian wives and husbands** (1 Peter 3:1-9): "Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind" (verse 8).
 8. **Love of God requires love of one another** (1 John 3:18-24): "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us."
 9. **God is love** (1 John 4:7-12): "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love" (verses 7-8).
 10. **The wedding feast of the lamb** (Revelation 19:1, 5-9): "Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready..." (verse 7).
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Options for the Gospel Reading

1. **The Beatitudes** (Matthew 5:1-12): "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (verse 3).
2. **Be salt and light for the world** (Matthew 5:13-16): "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (verse 16).
3. **Build your house on rock** (Matthew 7:21, 24-29 [long form] or Matthew 7:21, 24-25 [short form]): "'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock" (verses 24-25).
4. **The indissolubility of marriage** (Matthew 19:3-6): "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (verse 6).
5. **The Greatest Commandment** (Matthew 22:35-40): "He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (verses 37-39).
6. **The indissolubility of marriage** (Mark 10:6-9): "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (verse 9).
7. **The wedding at Cana** (John 2:1-11): "Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine" (verses 2-3).
8. **Jesus' commandment** (John 15:9-12): "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (verse 12).
9. **No greater love** (John 15:12-16): "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (verse 13).
10. **That they may be one** (John 17:20-26): "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one..." (verses 21-22).

Choosing readers for a Catholic wedding

Who will proclaim the scripture readings during your wedding ceremony? The priest or deacon who witnesses your marriage will proclaim the Gospel reading (unless another Catholic cleric is also present). The responsorial psalm is usually led by a cantor (song leader), or simply recited by a reader if a cantor is unavailable. That leaves you to find readers for the first and second readings. Here are some tips for choosing your readers:

- Keep in mind that whoever you choose will be doing more than just "reading"; that person will be proclaiming the Word of God. James M. Schellman summarizes the implications of this sacred task perfectly: "Above all, the readers must understand and believe that they are performing a real ministry of presence and communion. They must accept that the Lord is active and present to the assembly through their proclamation, that the Lord longs to speak and be heard in the biblical word they enunciate. It is a word for this assembly, here and now, and each of its members is called to hear and respond to that word...."
- Because the role of reader is a sacred task, you will probably want to choose a person of faith as your reader. Ideally, that person will also be a good public speaker. The Church has this to say about readers at weddings: "The proclamation of the Word of God is to be made by suitable and prepared lectors. They can be chosen from among those present, especially witnesses, family members, friends, but it does not seem appropriate for the bride and groom to be lectors. In fact, they are the primary receivers of the proclaimed Word of God".
- The readers should be willing to prepare for their role by practicing the readings, even before the wedding rehearsal.
- If you can't find suitable readers among your friends and family, ask the clergyman conducting your wedding to recommend good, trained readers.
- Finally, the readers should read from the lectionary, not a sheet of paper or notes. The priest or deacon witnessing your marriage can help you locate your readings in the lectionary.

The text on this handout was adapted from www.Catholic-Wedding.info