

Wedding of XXXX and XXXX

Welcome

“God is love, and those who abide in love, abide in God, and God abides in them.”

Friends, family, loved ones near and far, welcome to XXXX on this joyous day of celebration. My name is Rev. Evans McGowan, and it is my honor and pleasure to officiate today’s ceremony of matrimony between XXXX XXXX XXXX and XXXX XXXX XXXX. Today they will affirm their vows before you, their family and friends, and before God, who holds and cherishes all of us this day and evermore. So again I say, welcome.

As we begin our worship together, I request your cooperation in two matters in reverence of this worship service. Please refrain from the use of flash photography, and please turn off or silence your cell phone.

The Gift of Marriage

We gather in the presence of God
to give thanks for the gift of marriage,
to witness the joining together of XXXX and XXXX,
to surround them with our prayers,
and to ask God's blessing upon them,
so that they may be strengthened for their life together
and nurtured in their love for God.

God gave us marriage
for the full expression of intimate love.
*In First Corinthians we read that love is patient,
Love is kind. It does not envy or boast,
Nor is it rude or self-seeking.
Love always protects, always trusts,
Always hopes perseveres. Love never fails.*
We are here today because we believe
In this unfailing love.

In marriage XXXX and XXXX will belong to each other,
and with affection and tenderness
freely give of themselves,
living faithfully together in plenty and in want,
in joy and in sorrow,
in sickness and in health,
throughout all of their days.
God gave us marriage
for the well-being of human society,
for the ordering of family life,
and, if God wills it, for the birth and nurture of children.

God gave us marriage as a holy mystery
That XXXX and XXXX would join as one,
just as Christ is one with the church.
In marriage, each is called to a new way of life,
created, ordered, and blessed by God.
This way of life must not be entered into carelessly,
or from selfish motives,
but responsibly, and prayerfully.

We rejoice that marriage is given by God,
blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ,
and sustained by the Holy Spirit.
Therefore, let marriage be held in honor by all.

Let us pray:

Gracious God,
you are always faithful in your love for us.
Look mercifully upon XXXX and XXXX,
who have come seeking your blessing,
before this crowd of witnesses, of family and friends.
Let your Holy Spirit rest upon them
so that with steadfast, abounding love
they may honor the promises they make this day and evermore,
through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Declarations of Intent

XXXX, understanding that God has created, ordered, and blessed the covenant of marriage, do you affirm your desire and intention to enter this covenant with **XXXX**? *If so, please say "I do."*

XXXX, understanding that God has created, ordered, and blessed the covenant of marriage, do you affirm your desire and intention to enter this covenant with **XXXX**? *If so, please say "I do."*

Lighting of the Remembrance Candles

The parents of the bride and groom will now light candles of remembrance to honor those who are no longer with us, yet remain in our hearts forever and especially on this day.

Affirmations and Blessing [Ensure bride and groom face the congregation]

As a sign of their affirmation and blessing, will the parents of the bride and groom, **TONY & SANDI XXXX**, and **PHILIP & ANA LUCIA XXXX**, *please stand*. Do you give your blessing to **XXXX** and **XXXX**, and promise to do everything in your power to uphold them in their marriage? *If so, please say "We do."* [We do.] Thank you.

Will everyone here please stand as you are able. Will all of you witnessing these vows do everything in your power to uphold **XXXX** and **XXXX** in their marriage? *If so, please say "We do."* [We Do.] Thank you.

Affirmation and Blessing

Each of you here today has affirmed your commitment to this union. **XXXX** and **XXXX** are here today because of the part you have played in their lives. They cannot do this alone. They need your help, nurture, and friendship to fortify the bond they are making this day. You have given your support and your blessing to both **XXXX** and **XXXX**. You have pledged to be a companion in time of need, a listener who shows support, an advocate when times are tough, a friend who is eager to rejoice. **XXXX** and **XXXX**, know that we affirm your decision to join together as one, and we bless your union with the Love of God, the Peace of Christ, and the Hope of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(Please be seated.)

Readings

I now invite Carolina Rodriguez forward for our first reading.

“SONG OF SONGS 8:6-7” . . . CAROLINA RODRIGUEZ

Place me **as** a seal **upon** your heart,
 as a seal on your arm,
for love is as strong as death,
 its **passion** unyielding as the grave. (*alternative to unyielding: fierce*)
It burns **as** blazing fire,
 as a mighty flame.
Many waters cannot quench love,
 rivers cannot wash it away. (*alternative: neither can floods drown it*).
If one offered all the wealth
 of **one's** house for love,
 it would be utterly scorned.

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12: . . . REV. EVANS MCGOWAN

Two are better than one, because they have a good **reward** for their labor. For if either of them falls, **one will lift up the other**; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another **to help**. Furthermore, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one **keep** warm alone? **And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one.** A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

MEDITATION

XXXX and XXXX Homily

Wow, it's really happening! XXXX and XXXX, your friends and family have been looking forward to this day – perhaps the greatest day of your lives (so far) – since at least a year ago in June, when a certain ring was found after being thoughtfully placed next to a toothbrush in a medicine cabinet, two nights before the big bash – the annual XXXX Barbeque Bonanza. There was much to celebrate that day – a graduation, an engagement, a time of family, friends and fun – and there is much to celebrate **today**. There is not a pig to roast but there are many to toast, for this day is almost a decade in the making.

A boy from XXXX meets a gal from XXXX in no less a classy place than Scorekeepers Sports Grill and Pub. It has probably happened a thousand times, but on this particular occasion these two teens – yes, they were both 19 – caught each other's eye, or at least she caught his eye. To celebrate another win over Michigan State, he took her to that special place, Scorekeepers, for their first date – at least, in his mind. That next Wednesday they went to another classy place, that Thai restaurant on Washtenaw and 23, where, romantically, they were the only ones in the restaurant. The next Sunday he asked her to be his girlfriend. Yes, "that happened" (quoting XXXX), and the rest, they say, is history.

There were many library dates where they became special study buddies. There were many Michigan football and basketball games, full of tears, cheers and perhaps a few jeers. They shared a life path of going to college and then graduate school at the same time, although with one key difference: XXXX would venture south to that red state to go to law school. He had XXXX's permission to brave buckeye country, but with one caveat: "Buy a shirt, and it's over!" If they can survive being apart in rival schools if not states, then they have a good chance to survive what lies ahead.

And who knows what lies ahead? Beyond Bali and Bangkok, there are dreams to visit South Africa on safari, Dubai and the Maldives, Costa Rica, Rio, Ireland and Scotland, Greece and other parts of... Europe. (I may have just made a political statement there!) They would like to get outdoors more and

go camping, which may be difficult living in Chi-town. There they hope to grow their careers, she in dentistry and he in his family's real estate business, and perhaps one day start a family.

For a couple that claims they never talked about marriage before getting engaged, they certainly have been a delightful, committed couple. Today gathering of family and friends is really a consummation of years of dating and bringing people together because of your love for one another. There is great admiration and mutual respect between you two.

XXXX, you love XXXX's work ethic, his calming presence, his support of whatever you do, his unwavering love for you, his respect for family. You think he'd make a great father, and I know many others would agree. You appreciate the way he makes you laugh – and he can be funny, sometimes – **and** how he balances out your emotions. For those of us who know XXXX, we know she can cry whether she's mad, sad or glad. Because you asked, I looked it up: Botox CAN block your tear ducts and it is highly NOT RECOMMENDED. Tears are healthy – may you have many joyful tears today and the rest of your days.

XXXX, you love how caring and compassionate XXXX is, always concerned about others. You could hang out all day with her, and have come to love her surprises, her early career success, her independence, her strength, her beauty, her smarts. You know she loves you deeply, and you certainly don't mind that she, too, is funny and cute. And to top it all off, she loves sports, even arranging fantasy lineups. Perhaps owning a sports franchise is in the works should the opportunity arise.

As you establish your roots in Chi-town, as you form traditions of your own, may the commitment you make today continue to strengthen and grow in the years ahead. We heard Carolina read Song of Songs, placing a seal on your lover's heart and arm. Today's equivalent might be a tattoo, but no one is telling you to get one. But you are making a seal today, a sign that you belong to each other, and this commitment is as strong as death, and even stronger. For the same love that brought Jesus back from the grave will also resurrect your relationship again and again. These candles represent the enduring love from each of your families.

Though flames may flicker,
may your love-fire burn bright,
and be to others a light,
in a darkened world
that needs a hopeful sight.

And in Ecclesiastes we receive this wisdom: Two are better than one. There will times when one of you will fall. Humbly allow the other to pick you up. Keep each other warm, especially in the Windy City. Stand together strong when life's waves threaten to overcome you. For love is priceless, and for everything else, there's Mastercard. There will be tough decisions – never sell out on your dreams or the other's. You may need to take turns – where there's a will there's a way! – so never give up, just as you never give up on your sports teams.

Muhammed Ali said he was the greatest, but he was wrong. Love is the greatest.

I've heard it from many – You were meant for each other. You two were made for each other. Now you get to make the meaning. You are now committing to craft a life together, to foster a family, to grow in grace toward one another.

You may still plan your time together around Michigan football and basketball games, (thankfully no more studying!) but always remember: love is what lasts. Love is what comes first. For love is the greatest.

The Giving of Vows

XXXX and XXXX,
since it is your intention to marry,
join hands and with your promises
bind yourselves to each other as husband and wife.
XXXX opens his hands to receive both hands of XXXX.

XXXX says:

**I, XXXX ?, take you, XXXX ?, to be my wife;
and I promise,
before God and these witnesses,
to be your loving and faithful husband;
in plenty and in want;
in joy and in sorrow;
in sickness and in health;
as long as we both shall live.**

Releasing hands, XXXX now receives XXXX's hands, saying:

**I, XXXX XXXX, take you, XXXX XXXX, to be my husband;
and I promise,
before God and these witnesses,
to be your loving and faithful wife;
in plenty and in want;
in joy and in sorrow;
in sickness and in health;
as long as we both shall live.**

The Giving of Rings

What do you bring as the sign of your promise?

[RECEIVE RINGS FROM BEST MAN ON NEXT PAGE]

Let us pray.

By your blessing, O God,
may these rings be to XXXX and XXXX,
symbols of unending love and faithfulness,
reminding them of the covenant they have made this day,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Have XXXX take XXXX's ring and put on her left ring finger, saying:

**This ring I give you,
as a sign of our constant faith
and abiding love,
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Have XXXX take XXXX's ring and put on his left ring finger, saying:

**This ring I give you,
as a sign of our constant faith
and abiding love,
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Let us pray.

Eternal God,
Creator and preserver of all life,
author of salvation, and giver of all grace:
look with favor upon the world you have made and redeemed,
and especially upon XXXX and XXXX.
Give them wisdom and devotion
in their common life,
that each may be to the other
a strength in need,
a counselor in perplexity,

a comfort in sorrow,
and a companion in joy.
Give them the grace,
when they hurt each other,
to recognize and confess their fault,
and to seek each other's forgiveness
and yours.
Make their life together
a sign of Christ's love
to this sinful and broken world,
that unity may overcome estrangement,
forgiveness heal guilt,
and joy conquer anger,
and hope outlast despair.
Give them such fulfillment of their mutual love
that they may reach out to help others.
Grant that **all** who have witnessed these vows today
may find their lives strengthened,
discover their love for life deepened,
and depart with their own promises renewed.
Grant that the bonds by which all your children
are united to one another
may be so transformed by your Spirit
that your peace and justice may fill the earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Who taught us to pray,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,**

**but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.**

Lighting of the Unity Candle

As a symbol of their united love, XXXX and XXXX will now light a unity candle.

Reading of “Love”

Announcement of Marriage

Before God
and in the presence of this congregation,
XXXX and XXXX have made their solemn and joyful vows to each other.
They have confirmed their promises by the joining of hands,
by the giving and receiving of rings,
and by lighting a candle of unity.
Therefore, I now proclaim that they are husband and wife.
Blessed be the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit now and forever.
You may now kiss. (the bride)

As this ceremony draws to a close, your new covenant is just beginning.
XXXX and XXXX, hear this blessing:
As God's own, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, and patience,
forgiving and strengthening one another as God forgives and strengthens all of us.
May your friendship deepen with each act of intimacy and each display of care.
May your love for one another continue to grow more and more, *[Phil 1:9]*
That you will have knowledge and understanding with your love,
That you will have wisdom to know what is important and what is not,
That your lives will be filled with the truly good qualities of life.
Surround all of these things with God's love,
which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Amen.

Benediction

As we close, please stay seated as the bride and groom will be returning to greet you as you exit row by row. As you exit the church, please go right and join us on the terrace for a light reception.

Now everyone receive this benediction:

May the love of of God surround you,
The grace of Christ attend you,
the Holy Spirit keep you,
that you may live in faith,
abound in hope,
and grow in love,
both now and forevermore. Amen.

Presentation of Bride and Groom

I now present to you, husband and wife, Mr. and Dr. XXXX!

Recessional