



# **BLESSING OF CIVIL MARRIAGE**

*Adapted from the Book of Occasional Celebrations  
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Permission pending*

**The Anglican Church of Canada  
Diocese of Montreal**

## PROTOCOL FOR USE

- The couple shall provide legal documentation as proof that the civil marriage has taken place;
- The couple shall commit to meeting with the priest to discern their reason for seeking a blessing upon their marriage;
- There shall be a minimum of sixty (60) days between the initial request and the blessing;
- At least one of the spouses must be baptised;
- A request for the blessing shall be made to the Bishop;
- The blessing shall be entered in the vestry book and noted as a blessing in the parish marriage register;
- Only priests holding a valid authorisation to solemnise marriages shall be permitted to preside;
- No priest shall be obliged to bless a civil marriage.

This process will be monitored and adapted as necessary.

This liturgy was commissioned by the Bishop in response to a motion passed at the 2007 Synod of the Diocese of Montreal and affirmed by the 2008 Synod.

### **2007 Motion**

*Be it resolved that this Synod request that the Bishop grant permission for clergy, whose conscience permits, to bless duly solemnized and registered civil marriages, including marriages between same-sex couples, where at least one party is baptized; and that the Bishop authorize an appropriate rite and make regulations for its use in supportive parishes and ministries.*

Note: For convenience, the masculine gender used in this document also includes the feminine gender.

## Dismissal

*The celebrant may bless the people. The deacon, or other leader, dismisses the people saying,*

Leader      Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

People      **Thanks be to God.**

*From Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost, **Alleluia** may be added to the dismissal and the people's response.*

## PREFACE

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According to Western Christian thought, the ministers of marriage are the two individuals who marry each other. From the point of view of the church, the role of an ordained minister in a marriage service is to pray for God's blessing on the marriage which the couple ministers to each other. (From the point of view of the state the minister may have other civil functions to perform.) An ordained minister offers the prayer of blessing because he/she is the appointed leader of the congregation assembled for this particular act of worship.

The church recognizes the validity of marriages which have been solemnised in accordance with its understanding of marriage, whether or not the exchange of vows took place in the context of an act of worship at which one of its ordained ministers presided. A civil ceremony at which two people took each other as spouses with the intention of lifelong commitment is a complete and valid wedding. People enter marriage through the forms of civil ceremonies for a variety of reasons: because of cultural differences, to appease families, because they were not practising Christians at the time. Sometimes they later wish to affirm the Christian nature of their marriage by a ceremony which culminates in a solemn prayer for God's blessing on the marriage.

There is an intimate relationship between the vows of marriage and prayers of blessing which may follow them, even when there is a considerable interval of time between the two events. Nothing that is done in the blessing of a civil marriage should reflect negatively on the original exchange of vows. The blessing of a civil marriage is not a second marriage. The marriage vows should not be repeated.

This service should not be used in contravention of diocesan regulations relating to remarriage after divorce.

# Blessing of a Civil Marriage

## THE GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

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*The people stand. The celebrant greets the community.*

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

**People And also with you.**

*The celebrant may address the congregation in these or similar words.*

Friends in Christ, we are gathered together with N and N who have come today to ask God to bless them and their marriage.

Let us pray.

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

**People Amen.**

## THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

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### The Readings

*Two or more readings (one or more readings if the Eucharist is not to be celebrated), including a Gospel reading, shall normally be read. Members of the family and friends of the couple may read the lections. A psalm, canticle, hymn, anthem, or period of silence may follow the readings. Suggested readings may be found on pp. 549–550 in The Book of Alternative Services. The readings and the response shall be selected in consultation with the couple.*

*At the conclusion of readings from the Old Testament, and New Testament lections other than the Gospels, the reader says,*

The word of the Lord.

**People Thanks be to God.**

*Silence maybe kept. A psalm, hymn, or anthem may follow.*

*All stand for the Gospel.*

Reader The Lord be with you.

## The Communion

*The celebrant invites the people to share in communion and may say,*

Celebrant The gifts of God for the People of God.

**People Thanks be to God.**

*The celebrant receives the sacrament first and then delivers it to the couple, and to such of the congregation as wish to receive communion.*

*The sacrament is given with the following words.*

The body of Christ (given for you).

The blood of Christ (shed for you).

*Or*

The body of Christ, the bread of heaven.

The blood of Christ, the cup of salvation.

*The communicant responds each time, Amen.*

## Prayer after Communion

Celebrant Let us pray.

*Standing, the congregation prays in silence. The celebrant then says,*

Gracious God, may N and N, who are bound together in these holy mysteries, continue in one heart and soul. May they live in fidelity and peace and obtain those eternal joys prepared for all who love you; through your Son, Jesus Christ the Lord.

**People Amen.**

*Then the following doxology may be said.*

Celebrant Glory to God,

**People whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.**

## The Great Thanksgiving

*The celebrant continues with the Great Thanksgiving. Either Eucharistic Prayer 1 on pp. 193–195 in The Book of Alternative Services or the eucharistic prayer on pp. 536–538 in The Book of Alternative Services is appropriate. At the conclusion of the Great Thanksgiving the Lord's Prayer is said.*

## The Lord's Prayer

Celebrant As our Saviour taught us, let us pray.

**All 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.**

Or

Celebrant And now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

**All 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

*Silence*

## The Breaking of the Bread

*The celebrant breaks the consecrated bread for distribution, and may say,*

We break the bread of life, and that life is the light of the world.

**All God here among us, light in the midst of us, bring us to light and life.**

**People And also with you.**

Reader The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to ...  
**People Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*At the conclusion of the Gospel, the reader says,*

The Gospel of Christ.

**People Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*A sermon may follow.*

*The couple, facing each other, present themselves before the presiding minister, who asks them in turn the following question, to which each individually makes response.*

*N* do you here, in the presence of God and of this congregation, affirm and renew the commitment you made when you bound yourself to *N* in holy marriage?

Response I do, and I ask God to bless our marriage.

*Other suitable words of commitment may be made by the couple here.*

## The Prayers of the People

*The Prayers of the People may be led by a friend or member of a family of the couple, or by the celebrant or another minister.*

Leader Let us pray.

Almighty God, in whom we live and move and have our being, look graciously upon the world which you have made and for which your Son gave his life, and especially on all whom you unite in holy marriage. May their lives together be a sacrament of your love to this broken world, so that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy overcome despair.

Lord, in your mercy,

**People Hear our prayer.**

Leader May *N* and *N* so continue in marriage that the strength of their love may enrich our common life and be a sign of your faithfulness.

Lord, in your mercy,

**People Hear our prayer.**

**Leader** May those who have come to join N and N in prayer for God's blessing find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed.

Lord, in your mercy,

**People** **Hear our prayer.**

*Other suitable prayers may be offered.*

### **The Blessing of the Marriage**

*The people remain standing. The couple kneel, and the celebrant says one of the following prayers.*

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to make the way of the cross to be the way of life. We thank you, also, for consecrating the union of two people in his name. By the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing upon this couple. 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 foreheads. 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 them to that table where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.

**People** **Amen.**

*Or*

**Celebrant** O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his Church. Send therefore your blessing upon these your servants, that they may so love, honour, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

*The couple still kneeling, the celebrant adds this blessing.*

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord look upon you with favour and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting.

**People** **Amen.**

*If the Eucharist is not to be celebrated, the Lord's Prayer (p. 211 in The Book of Alternative Services) is said at this time.*

*The congregation stands.*

### **The Peace**

**Celebrant** The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**People** **And also with you.**

*Members of the congregation, the couple, ministers and people, may greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

## **THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST**

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### **The Preparation of the Gifts**

*If the eucharist is to be celebrated, the service continues with the preparation of the gifts. The bread and wine may be presented to the celebrant by the couple.*

### **The Prayer over the Gifts**

*When the gifts have been prepared, the celebrant may say the Prayer over the Gifts, as follows.*

God of the covenant, hear our prayer, and accept all we offer you this day. You have made N and N one in marriage. May the mystery of Christ's unselfish love, which we celebrate in this eucharist, increase their love for you and for each other; through Christ our Lord.

**People** **Amen.**