

**GUIDELINES  
FOR  
MARRIAGES  
OF  
ROMAN CATHOLICS  
AND  
EPISCOPALIANS  
FOR THE  
DIOCESES IN LOUISIANA**

**1993**

## FOREWORD

In September of 1980, some of the Episcopal and Roman Catholic clergy requested a joint clergy conference for the clergy of the new Roman Catholic Diocese of Lake Charles and the Lake Charles Convocation of the then Episcopal Church in the Western Diocese of Louisiana (now the Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana). This clergy conference was held on January 22, 1981 to inform the clergy of each communion of the other communion's regulations and policies concerning marriage. The conference was attended by both bishops, and was very well received.

One of the recommendations of the conference was to continue the dialog on the subject of marriages between Roman Catholics and Episcopalians. After considerable discussion, a second joint clergy conference for the clergy of both dioceses was held in September of 1982. This conference recommended that a committee be appointed to draw up common guidelines for these mixed marriages in the two dioceses.

The committee was appointed in November, 1982. Bishop Jude Speyrer of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lake Charles appointed Monsignor A. J. Vincent as the Roman Catholic co-chairman with Fathers Oris Broussard and Henry Durand, M.S., as the other two Roman Catholic members. Bishop Willis Henton of the Diocese of Western Louisiana appointed Father Ralph Masters as the Episcopal co-chairman with Fathers James Biegler and Roy Black as the other two Episcopal members. (Father Biegler was later transferred to another diocese and replaced on the committee by Father Dana Krutz.) The committee met and considered similar agreements already in use in several other dioceses, and decided to use the document from the Episcopal and Roman Catholic dioceses of Los Angeles as a model. Permission was requested and received to use the Los Angeles document. Fathers Masters and Vincent were delegated by the other committee members to serve as the writing subcommittee.

After several meetings and consultations with the whole committee, some modifications of the Los Angeles text were agreed on.

Bishop James Brown of the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana and Archbishop Philip M. Hannan of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans, along with Bishop Stanley Ott of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge, then expressed interest in the project and asked to send observers to participate in it. Father Earl Niehaus, S.M. was appointed as the Roman Catholic observer and Father Edwin Webster as the Episcopal observer. With the active participation of these two, further modifications were made and the final text agreed on at a meeting in April, 1983. There followed a period of consultation between the Roman Catholic and Episcopal Ordinaries, with a view to adopting the proposed document throughout the State. The text was then submitted to the Ordinaries of both communions for final corrections.

The joint guidelines were agreed on, and adopted by all the Bishops, and jointly signed at Baton Rouge on February 22, 1984.

In January 1993, these guidelines were reviewed and in unanimous agreement the Bishops in Louisiana endorsed the clarification contained in Section IV, B, on page 9 relative to marriage in the context of a Eucharistic celebration. Such celebration is not allowed without the express permission of either bishop in every individual case.

*Signed in Monroe, Louisiana on January 19, 1993 by:*

Bishop James R. Brown  
Bishop Robert Hargrove  
Bishop William B. Friend  
Bishop Sam G. Jacobs

Archbishop Francis B. Schulte  
Bishop Jude Speyrer  
Bishop Harry J. Flynn  
Bishop Michael C. Jarrell

To our Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In recent decades the Roman Catholic Church and the Churches of the Anglican Communion, including the Episcopal Church in the United States, have enjoyed an intensified search for means of furthering unity. This is particularly evident in the statements of the Second Vatican Council, the “Common Declaration” of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael of Canterbury on March 24, 1966, the creation and work of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) at the international level, the work of the Anglican Roman Catholic Commission (ARC) at the national level, and most recently the visit of Pope John Paul to Canterbury, and the subsequent appointment by the Pope and Archbishop Robert of Canterbury of the Commission to implement the work of ARCIC.

At the state level, increasing dialogue between our churches, as well as the prayers and activities of clergy and laity working together in ordinary ways, have evidenced the same movement of the Holy Spirit. There is no area of church life where the need for this collaboration is more evident than in preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage, and in living out this commitment between persons of our respective churches.

Accordingly, we are pleased to present jointly these guidelines for marriages between Episcopalians and Roman Catholics, with the hope that they will be another step in our common effort to nurture family life as well as fostering deeper unity between our churches.

At the same time, it is our fond hope that by agreeing on these guidelines, and implementing them, we can demonstrate to the Christian community at large, in the various churches, the possibilities of cooperation in this area. We hope that this will inspire us to work along similar lines with other Christian churches, both to help all our people to a renewed appreciation of the values involved in Christian marriage, and to move us all towards closer unity.

With trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we commend these guidelines to Episcopalians and Roman Catholics alike.

*Signed at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, February 22, 1984.  
Reaffirmed at Monroe, Louisiana, January 19, 1993.*

## **MARRIAGE BETWEEN EPISCOPALIANS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS**

Until our churches achieve full sacramental sharing, these guidelines are meant to assist in helping both Episcopalians and Roman Catholics to move together towards a renewed appreciation of the holiness of marriage, and to move towards that day when full sacramental sharing is achieved.

These guidelines concern marriages in which both parties are well catechized, committed, and actively practicing members of their respective faith communities.

## **ANGLICAN AND ROMAN CATHOLIC STATEMENTS ON HOLY MATRIMONY**

On marriage itself the Commission on the Theology of Marriage and its Application to Mixed Marriages finds no fundamental difference of doctrine between the two Churches, as regards what marriage of its nature is or the ends which it is ordained to serve. The language of Vatican II in Gaudium et Spes (47-52), grounding marriage in the natural order, in the mutual pact or covenant (pactum, foedus) of the spouses, is entirely at one with the covenantal interpretation of marriage written into the Anglican liturgies. The sacramental nature of marriage is also affirmed, partly in the moral sense of enduring obligation (sacramentum) expressed in the marriage vow, partly in the sense of sign (signum): a sign to the world of what marriage in the natural order by God's ordinance is and ought to be; a sign to the world and to the Church of Christ's irrevocable covenant with the Church and of the mutual love which finds expression between Him and the Church, and which ought to exist between the Church's members; and a sign to married people, to the world and the Church, that continuance within the covenant is dependent upon the continued forgiving and renewing grace of God; and finally in its being made by Christ into an effective sign of grace when it is celebrated between the baptized. It is from all this, with continuance in the sacramental life of the Church, that Christian marriage takes its specific character and achieves its fullness. Natural marriage, had, in the beginning, the full potentiality of being made sacramental in the order of redemption: the sacramental significance was declared as part of the "mystery" (sacramentum) dispensed and revealed in the fullness of time by God through his Son and recognized as such by the Apostles; so the language of Ephesians, Chap. 5, interpreting conjugal love in terms of Christ's love for the Church and vice versa, aptly expresses our common theology of marriage, and is as aptly entrenched in our respective marriage liturgies. This substantial convergence in doctrine, despite differences in the language used to express it, is a welcome fact of our time, too precious to permit us to rest on the polarities suggested by the time-conditioned formulations of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation . . . .

Final Report of the Commission  
on the Theology of Marriage  
and its Application to Mixed Marriages, #21

Episcopal

Christian marriage is “the creation of a new family within the larger family of mankind, of which the Christian community is part. It is the highest expression of love between man and woman, and the Church has always recognized in all legitimate expressions of love a sacramental sign of the love of God for man, and more specifically, of Christ’s love for the Church. Marriage is a solemn commitment by two persons to follow a new way of life and therefore, a marriage between two Christians is a renewed commitment by them to ground their new life together in the life of Christ.”

Prayer Book Studies, #24, p.4.

"Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman entered into within the community of faith,

Constitution and Canons (I, 17, 2b).

“Considered as a formal bond between two persons, marriage is their life-long undertaking to love one another in all the circumstances and vicissitudes of human life and to remain faithful to one another; as the creation of a new family, marriage is a commitment to show forth the meaning of love to the larger community in which the new family makes its home, and to bring up a new generation of Christians in the knowledge and love of God.”

Prayer Book Studies, #24, p.4.

“An undertaking of such far-reaching consequences needs for its fulfillment all the strength and support the Church can give it. It needs grace, the power of the love of Christ, not only at the beginning, but throughout the life of marriage.”

Ibid. p. 4.

Roman Catholic

“As God of old made himself present to His people through a covenant of love and fidelity, so now the Savior of men and the Spouse of the Church comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of matrimony. He abides with them thereafter so that, just as He loved the Church and handed Himself over on her behalf, the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-bestowal.”

Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Par. 48.

“The God Himself who said, ‘It is not good for man to be alone’ (Gen. 2:18) and ‘who made man from the beginning male and female’ (Mt. 19:4), wished to share with man a certain special participation in His own creative work. Thus He blessed male and female, saying: ‘increase and multiply’ (Gen. 1:28).”

Ibid. Par. 50.

“...the Christian family, which springs from marriage as a perfection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church, and as a participant in that covenant, will manifest to all men the Savior’s living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church.”

Ibid. Par. 4.

“Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is governed and enriched by Christ’s redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church. Thus this love can lead the spouses to God with powerful effect.”

Ibid. Par. 48.

“This mutual inward molding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense, as the Roman Catechism teaches, be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony.”

Casti Connubii, Par. 24.

### **JOINT EPISCOPAL-ROMAN CATHOLIC STATEMENT**

Both the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church agree that Christian marriage is a sacrament of God's love and a sign of the spiritual unity between Christ and His Church. Both also agree that sacramental marriage is freely and mutually entered into by the couple as a lifelong union. They are its ministers. The priest or deacon is present to preside at the Church's celebration of their marriage and to pronounce God's blessing upon it.

When God blesses a couple with mutual love and inspires them to marry, both churches desire the lifelong union of the marriage. In an Episcopal-Roman Catholic marriage both churches hold the sacramental nature of marriage in even higher esteem than their differences in traditions and discipline. Therefore, both the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church are willing to make adjustments and grant dispensations in matters not contrary to their respective doctrines. The aim of both churches is to ensure that both parties of an Episcopal-Roman Catholic marriage:

1. Continue to live devoutly within the tradition and discipline of their respective churches.
2. Live and teach the apostolic faith within their marriage and their family.
3. Work for closer relations between their churches.
4. Be living witnesses to a sinful and broken world, and active instruments in that world, of Christ's redemptive power.

### **PROCEDURE FOR A MARRIAGE OF A PRACTICING EPISCOPALIAN AND A PRACTICING ROMAN CATHOLIC**

- I. The priest of the church in which the marriage is to take place should contact the priest of the other parish. They will arrange for the instruction of the couple, the nature of the service and the degree of participation therein by each.
- II.
  - A. Both the Episcopal and the Roman Catholic priests should ascertain the baptism of each party.
  - B. Both priests should verify the freedom of each party to marry, according to the laws of the State, and of their respective churches.
  - C. Both priests should determine that both parties are well catechized, committed, and actively practicing members of their respective faith communities.
- III. Premarital conferences should be arranged by both parties.
  - A. Roman Catholic and Episcopal usage both call for adequate instruction. This may be within the structured format of one of the marriage preparation programs offered by either of the churches, or through individual counseling over a sufficient period of time with one or the other or both priests, in a manner agreed on by both.
  - B. Until our churches achieve full sacramental sharing, Roman Catholic discipline requires the Roman Catholic party to promise sincerely "that everything possible will be done to see that the children of this marriage will be baptized and educated in the (Roman) Catholic Faith" (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 1125, 1<sup>o</sup>). This in no way contradicts or diminishes the right and responsibility of the Episcopal party concerning the "physical and

spiritual nurture” of the children (Constitution and Canons, I, 17, 3d), including preparation for baptism and confirmation.

- C. The marriage preparation, including individual conferences with the two pastors, should be directed towards helping the couple understand that Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman and is entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind and will, and with the intent that it be lifelong.
- D. In the conferences, the two priests should ascertain that both parties freely and knowingly consent to such marriage without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of partner, or mental reservation.

(These intentions are formalized by the couple completing the "Prenuptial Investigation" with the Roman Catholic priest, and signing the "Declaration of Intention" with the Episcopal priest. Both should be completed and signed.)

- E. Appreciation for each party's own tradition should be encouraged, while each party deepens his or her understanding of the other's tradition.
- F. Serious instruction should be given in areas of Christian faith and life, such as:
  - 1. Observance of the Lord's Day.
  - 2. Baptism and the instruction of the children in the Christian faith as found in Scripture and the teaching of the church, and expressed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.
  - 3. The shared expression of their faith in daily living and continuing spiritual growth.

- IV. In the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Dioceses, members of either church may obtain permission to celebrate their marriage in either church. The presiding priest will normally be the priest of the church in which the ceremony takes place. The other priest should assist according to the following guidelines and outline.

- A. The presiding priest receives the marriage vows and pronounces the nuptial blessing according to the ritual of his church. The assisting priest may offer additional prayers and blessings, read the scriptures, or preach, within the framework of the particular rite.
- B. Since progress in the relationship between our churches has not yet reached the point of full sacramental sharing, **without the express permission of either bishop in every individual case, it is not allowed in these circumstances** to have these marriages in the context of a Eucharistic celebration.
- C. Under the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (III, 24), permission from the (Episcopal) Ordinary is required for a Roman Catholic priest to assist in the service in the Episcopal Church. Likewise, the Statement on the Implementation of the Apostolic Letter on Mixed Marriages (#15) requires permission from the (Roman Catholic) Ordinary for the Episcopal priest to assist in the service of the Roman Catholic Church. By mutual agreement of the Bishops of both Churches, these permissions are hereby granted for marriages conducted in accord with these guidelines.
- D. Such Episcopal-Roman Catholic marriages are recorded in the records of both churches, according to the instruction from the Diocesan Offices of each church.

- V. Both priests should be especially sensitive to and supportive of the unique situation of parishioners living in an Episcopal-Roman Catholic marriage.

**SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR PARTICIPATING  
(NON-EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION)**

**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC RITE**

Greeting  
  
Collect  
Lessons\*  
Homily\*  
Rite of Marriage  
General Intercessions\*  
Nuptial Blessing

**THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER**

Exhortation  
Charge to the Couple  
Betrothal  
Collect  
Lessons\*  
Homily\*  
Marriage  
Prayers\*  
Nuptial Blessing

The presidential portions of the ceremonies are reserved for the presiding priest. The non-presidential portions (marked with an asterisk[\*]) may be offered by the assisting priest. The presiding priest is normally the one in whose church the ceremony takes place.



These guidelines are based on the document entitled "When Episcopalians and Roman Catholics Marry," of which they are an adaptation and modification.

"When Episcopalians and Roman Catholics Marry" was developed by ARC/LA, September, 1980, and adopted jointly by the Diocese of Los Angeles (Episcopal) and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (Roman Catholic).

Permission to use the Los Angeles document is gratefully acknowledged.