

Call to Worship

Formally, the “Dearly Beloved” is termed an “introduction.” But in reality it is a call to worship God. It does introduce, with a degree of seriousness, what follows. These are the first words spoken. What follows are examples for you to choose from, or use as guides in creating your own with the pastor.

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- A. Dearly beloved, we are assembled here in the presence of God, to join this man and this woman in holy marriage, which is instituted of God, regulated by his commandments, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be held in honor among all men. Let us therefore reverently remember that God has established and sanctified marriage, for the welfare and happiness of mankind. Our Savior has declared that a man shall forsake his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. By his apostles, he has instructed those who enter into this relation to cherish a mutual esteem and love, to bear with each other’s infirmities and weaknesses; to comfort each other in sickness, trouble, and sorrow; in honesty and industry to provide for each other and for their household in temporal things; to pray for and encourage each other in the things which pertain to God; and to live together as heirs of the grace of life.
- B. Dearly beloved, we are assembled in this sanctuary in the presence of God, to unite this man and this woman in holy marriage. From the earliest beginnings, marriage was instituted by God for the well being and happiness of his people, as a sacred and a diving partnership. Marriage was sanctified and blessed by Jesus of Nazareth, and adorned by his presence at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. He solemnly declared that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. The New Testament exalts marriage as the symbol of the mystical union of Christ and his church. Among all human relationships, marriage is the most sacred, satisfying, and permanent. Wherefore it should be entered into reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God. In this sacred relationship, these two persons come now to be joined.
- C. Good people, we have come together in the presence of God to witness and proclaim the joining together of this man and this woman in marriage. About this way of life, hear what our God says: “From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’
 “‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.’ So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”
 It is ordained: That husband and wife may give to each other lifelong companionship, help, and comfort, both in prosperity and in adversity; That God may hallow and direct the natural instinct and affections which were pronounced “good” at creation, and which are guided by the teachings of Christ;
 That children may be born and brought up in families in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of God;
 That marriage being thus held in honor, human society may stand upon firm foundations.

(Adapted from “Book of Common Worship” Church of South India)

- D. Dearly beloved friends, we are gathered here in the sight of God and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony; which is an honorable estate, instituted of God in Paradise, in the time of man's innocence, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his church: which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of St. Paul to be honorable among all men: and therefore is not by any to be enterprised nor taken in hand unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly and in the fear of God, duly considering the causes for which matrimony was ordained:
- One was the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord and praise of God. It was also ordained for the mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have for the other, both in prosperity and adversity: into which holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined. Therefore, if any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him speak now, or else hereafter hold his peace.
- (from a 16th Century Book of Common Prayer)*
- E. Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God, and in the presence of these witnesses, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony; which is an honorable estate, instituted of God. It is therefore not to be entered into unadvisedly, but reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons come now to be joined.
- F. Dear friends, out of affection for _____ and _____ we have gathered together to witness and bless their mutual vows which will unite them in marriage. To this moment they bring the fullness of their hearts as a treasure to share with one another. They bring the dreams which bind them together. They bring that particular personality and spirit which is uniquely their own, and out of which will grow the reality of their life together. We rejoice with them as the outward symbol of an inward union of hearts, a union created by friendship, respect and love.
- (from "Writing Your Own Wedding")*
- G. No person should attend a wedding without giving thanks to God for the institution of marriage, and renewing in this heart the vows that are being taken for the first time by others. No person should leave without doing that for which he came.... praying that God's blessing may truly rest upon this man and this woman all the days of their life together. As you pray, so may you also receive a blessing.
- H. Friends, we are gathered here in God's presence, but in the midst of a divided and broken world, to witness the marriage of these two people who stand before you in love, in trust and in hope. They ask God to bless their coming together and to sustain them through the years to come. And they ask us to be present with them, to rejoice in their oneness and to share in their joy. They hope that we will sustain them and participate with them in daily celebrations of the healing and renewing power of love to which God calls all of his children.

I. Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the presence of God and these witnesses to join this man and this woman in the bonds of holy matrimony, instituted by God in the Garden of Eden when he saw that it was not good for man to live alone. Marriage was also given a crown of glory by the Apostle Paul, who likened it unto that holy union which exists between Christ and his Church in which our Lord is called the Bridegroom, and his Church, the Bride. Surely it is a blessed union and it is a holy one in so far as the promises are kept.

You are about to assume mutual relationships and responsibilities, and to pledge to each other your undying love and devotion. Henceforth you will no longer be twain, but one flesh. Your paths will be paralleled, your responsibilities will increase, but your joys will be multiplied if you are sincere and earnest in your relations one with another and God in whose presence you make this covenant.

By coming into his presence you hereby recognize that this covenant is not only a legal contract but a bond of union made in heaven, and is therefore to be entered into reverently and discreetly, knowing that God in his heaven will richly bless those who seek his favor. Therefore, let us look to him in prayer, knowing, that “he is faithful who hath promised.”

J. Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the presence of God to join this man and this woman in marriage. This is a way of life instituted by God, and Holy Scripture commands all men to hold it in honor. Our Lord Jesus Christ blessed it by his presence at Cana in Galilee.

About this way of life, hear what our Lord says: “From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.’ So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Marriage is therefore not by any to be undertaken lightly or illadvisedly but seriously and prayerfully, duly considering and purposes for which it is ordained.

It is ordained: That husband and wife may give to each other lifelong companionship, help, and comfort, both in prosperity and in adversity; That God may hallow and direct the natural instincts and affections created by himself and redeemed in Christ; That children may be born and brought up in families in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of God; That marriage being thus held in honor human society may stand upon firm foundations.

K. **Pastor:** Beloved: Marriage is established by God. In marriage a man and a woman willingly bind themselves together in love and become one even as Christ is one with his Church, his body.

People: There was a marriage at Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus was also invited to the marriage with his disciples. Let Marriage be held in honor among all.

Pastor: Hear the word of our Lord Jesus Christ: From the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female.” “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife.” So they are no longer two, but one.

L. Dearly beloved, we are gathered together to witness the coming of these to, _____ and _____, who present themselves before God, seeking the sacrament of Holy Marriage.

M. Beloved members of the church and friends, we have gathered to bless and consummate the fruit of God's loving activity in _____ and _____, and to be present as they are joined together by God.

The Church of the Living God is the community of love. Where love is, God is. Love comes from God, and everyone who truly loves is a child of God. We love because he first loved us.

Marriage is ordained by God for his glory and for the welfare and the happiness of his children. Of all the institutions which have within them the possibilities for good, none surpasses it.

We may all be instruments for the fulfillment of God's holy purposes. By accepting _____ and _____ into the fellowship of the church, strengthening them in faith, nurturing the children reared by them in Christlike ways, and sharing their joys and burdens, it is within our power to strengthen and enrich their union.

(optional paragraph)

If it is your desire to obedient to their vision of the shared life, and to help this marriage become what God meant it to be, will you commit yourself to this end by saying. "We will"?

N. Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the presence of God and in the fellowship of this Christian community to join together this man and this woman in Christian marriage. Christian marriage is a covenant of faith and trust between a man and a woman, established within their shared commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. Therefore, it requires of both man and woman openness of life and thought, freedom from doubt and suspicion, and commitment to speak the truth in love as they grow up into Christ who is the head of the Church. Christian marriage, furthermore is a covenant of hope that endures all things in which both husband and wife pledge to interpret each other's behavior with understanding and compassion, and never give up trying to communicate with each other. Christian marriage is a covenant of love in which both husband and wife empty themselves of their own concerns and take upon themselves the concerns of each other in loving each other as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it. Therefore, this covenant is not entered into lightly or unadvisedly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly and soberly in the fear of God. Into this holy relationship these two persons now come to be joined.

O. My friends, we have come together from many places on this day to join _____ and _____ in the celebration of their marriage. We witness, by our joy, that the happiness which these two find in one another is unique. And yet, it is no more than the happiness which all men might, if they but tried, find in one another. For life is a dance, and marriage is the choosing of eternal partners for that dance. And we are here, above all to worship God - Creator of both dancers and dance - and to rejoice that he brings his people together as one in his spirit.

P. Dear friends and loved ones of _____ and _____: Throughout religious history, people have felt a need to celebrate the great moments of life. At those times we call upon our friends to help commemorate this high moment. We felt we could not do justice to this moment alone. But even more so we have felt the need to hold these mountaintop experiences up before God. Thus in this sanctuary, before these loved ones and friends and in the presence of the Almighty _____ and _____ come to speak their eternal vows of marriage.