

THE NEW MARRIAGE RITE OF THE PHILIPPINES

● H. GRAEF, S.V.D.

Shortly after the Constitution on the Liturgy had been approved by the Council some Philippine bishops expressed the desire that the Philippine marriage rite be revised. One reason for this wish was the explicit concession of the Council that the Bishops' Conferences were now free to devise their own rites, suited to places and peoples. In these revised or entirely new rites of marriage only one condition had to be fulfilled: the priest assisting at the ceremony must ask for and obtain the consent of the contracting parties (Cons. on the lit., art 77).

The national liturgical commission started its work of revision in 1965. The following observations had been made: the texts of some prayers and blessings were seemingly patch-work: the parts of these sometimes rather lengthy texts had no logical coherence with one another. A number of texts were literally defective and did not express the originally intended ideas. It could not be understood why a text, like the following had been chosen for the wedding rite: "Increpa feras arundinis, confragatio taurorum in vaccis populorum: ut excludant eos, qui probati sunt argento" (Marriage Ritual for the Philippines, Catholic Trade School, Manila p. 10). Repetitions had to be avoided; the duplicated prayers had to be reduced to one according to a principle that had already been employed in the revision of the Roman Ritual in 1960 and had been re-emphasized by the Constitution on the Liturgy (art. 34). But the substance of the rite which is that of the *Manuale Tolerantum* had to be preserved.

During their annual meeting in January-February 1966 the bishops were given copies of the second draft of the rite. Their observations and comments were inserted into a third draft. The fourth schema of the rite was made public in the May issue of the "Liturgical Information Bulletin of the Philippines". This was to encourage criticism and suggestions. In the August issue of the same magazine the fifth draft was published, representing a further revision, caused by the observations made by bishops, diocesan liturgical commissions and individual priests from the field. They insisted particularly on brevity and simplicity. These realistic observations eliminated a number of otherwise beautiful and useful elements of active participation of the couple. Other, divergent desires, voiced by different quarters, could only be adopted by allowing some elements as optional in the rite, especially in that for the marriage rite outside Mass. This, however, entails the danger that a discrimination could once again be introduced into the liturgy. This had been strictly forbidden by the Council when it stated that "no special honors are to be paid in the liturgy to any private persons or classes of persons (e.g., the rich), whether in the ceremonies or by external display" (art. 32).

During their meeting in February 1967 the bishops approved the seventh draft and sent it to Rome for confirmation which was obtained by the Roman Consilium on July 29, 1967. The Hierarchy of the Philippines, in its plenary session of February 1968 now approved this rite for general use. Bishop William Brasseur as chairman of the national liturgical commission states in his decree of promulgation: "Henceforth, the new Philippine Marriage Ritual must be used in all wedding celebrations unless they are to be performed in the various dialects. Once the translations into the dialects will be promulgated, the old Teletan ritual may not be used any longer" (Lit. Information Bulletin, March 1968, p. 2). It is now the first task of the liturgical commissions of the different language groups to produce soon good translations of the rite, so that the new rite may be soon adopted in the whole country.

I. The Marriage Rite within Mass

The sequence of the ceremonies, compared with that of the old Toletan ritual, is as follows:

Toletan Ritual	New Philippine Marriage Rite
Entrance	Entrance (optional)
-----	Mass: Liturgy of the Word until Gospel
-----	Homily
Exhortation	Allocution
-----	Scrutiny
Marriage Consent	Exchange of Consent
Confirmation of Marriage Bond	Confirmation of Marriage Bond
Blessing of arrhae (2 prayers)	Blessing of arrhae (one prayer)
Blessing of rings (2 prayers)	Blessing of rings (one prayer)
Giving of the Rings and Arrhae	Giving of the Rings and Arrhae
Blessing of the couple and introductory versicles	-----
-----	Prayer of the Faithful
-----	Continuation of the Mass:
Beginning of the Mass	Offertory
Nuptial Blessing (Rom. Missal)	Nuptial Blessing (Rom. Ritual)
Conclusion and handing-over of the Bride	Sevenfold Blessing
	Conclusion

I. Solemn Entrance

This rite remains optional. The priest vested for Mass (or also in cope) may, with the crossbearer, two acolytes and a server carrying holy water, await the couple at the entrance of the church, where he greets them with a few kind words, sprinkles them with holy water and leads them in procession to the sanctuary, directly to their kneelers. A suitable entrance hymn is to be sung which may also be the Introit of the Mass. Bridal music of profane character is prohibited. No rites are to be performed at the Communion rails. Therefore, the couple is to be led directly to the kneelers.

Then the Mass begins in which all present actively participate. After the Gospel the priest preaches a homily which is never to be omitted. This homily may be replaced by all or part of the exhortation found in the Ritual. Several formulas are to be provided.

1. Allocation

This ceremony is intended to foster involvement of all present in the sacred rite. Therefore, the priest does not only address the couple but also the community. The sacrament is not only a private affair; its communitarian dimension had therefore to be brought to the fore. This short instruction has been prompted by art. 35,3 of the Constitution on the Liturgy which states that "if necessary short directives to be spoken by the priest or competent minister should be provided within the rites themselves".

The priest addresses first the couple: "*Dearly beloved N. and N., you are here today to seal your love with an eternal bond before the Church. I assure you of the prayers of our community that God may pour His abundant blessings on you, and help you to carry out the duties of the married state*".

Then he turns to the community and says: "*And you, dear brethren, may I ask you to help them with your prayers, and accept them as a new couple into our Christian community*".

Again addressing the couple, the priest prepares them for the subsequent scrutiny: "*May I now ask you, to answer truthfully the following questions*".

3. Scrutiny

Also the sacrament of holy Orders in each of its sacramental steps is preceded by a scrutiny. The schema prepared by the Roman Consilium for the future Roman Ritual contains also a scrutiny. Therefore the national liturgical commission had proposed that the following question be contained in the scrutiny; "*Dear friends, is there any one of you here present who knows of any impediment on account of which this marriage cannot or should not be contracted?*" A witness

or a sponsor should then have answered — after a short while of silence: "As far as I know, there is no such impediment!" Both question and answer were omitted in order "to avoid possible embarrassment" (Lit. Inf. Bulletin, Aug. 1966, p. 78). Thus, in its present form the scrutiny has lost much of its importance and is somewhat colorless and over-cautious. The priest asks first the bride, then the groom: "*N., did you come here of your own free will to bind yourself forever in the love and service of your husband (wife)?*" Each one answers then: "*Yes, Father!*" Then the celebrant addresses both together: "*Are you both ready to raise as good Christians the children God will give you?*" and both answer: "*Yes, Father!*" This question is to be omitted if both are advanced in age.

4. Exchange of Consent

The consent is given in the most simple form possible, because this vital element of active participation of the couple had to be adapted in such a way as to be performed also by simple and very shy people. With a simple "*Yes, I do*" they give their consent to accept one another and give themselves one to the other. Then they say after the priest: "*Grant us, O Lord, / to be one heart and one soul, / from this day forward, / for better for worse, / for richer, for poorer, / in sickness and in health / until death do us part.*"

5. Confirmation of the Marriage Bond

This short rite combines two elements found in many recent marriage rituals (e.g., that of Germany and the United States): on the one side the priest as the representative of the Church confirms and blesses the marriage covenant just contracted by the couple; on the other side he acts as the official witness and calls on those present, to be with him witnesses of this holy union: "*And I, by the authority of the Church, calling on all those present here as witnesses, confirm and bless the bond of marriage which you have contracted. In the name of the Father, and of the Son ÷ and of the Holy Spirit*". R. Amen...

6. Blessing of the Arrhae and Rings

The marriage rite of the *Manuale Toletanum*, so far used in this country, is basically that of the ancient Spanish (i.e. Visigothic) rite. In the latter the handing-over of the arrhae was part of the engagement rite. The ring was there a part of the arrhae: it was a gift and a sign of the betrothal: "anulus arrarum nomine datus" (K. Ritzer, *Formen, Riten und religioeses Brauchtum der Eheschließung*. Muenster 1962, pp. 222. 234). This is the historic reason why even today the arrhae and the rings are first blessed together and then also handed over together.

Later the blessing and the giving of the arrhae and rings became part of the wedding ceremonies; so it has remained to this very day. The former Marriage Ritual of the Philippines contained two prayers for the blessing of the arrhae which can be traced back to the first half of the 11th century in Spain (A. Olivar (ed.), *El Sacramentario de Vich* [Monumenta Hispaniae Sacra. Serie litúrgica. Vol. IV] Barcelona 1953, nn. 1405 and 1403. The manuscript was written about A.D. 1030/40). The new ritual reduced the prayers to one. It retained only the main ideas of the former first blessing (Benedic Domine). This had asked for the "gratia salutis", "abundantia rerum" and "constantia operum". The new formula sees in the arrhae a symbol of the sufficiency of material possessions, thus reducing the "abundantia rerum" to sufficiency, obviously influenced by Prov 30,8 f: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full, and deny thee... or lest I be poor, and steal". The "constantia operum" was interpreted as the rightful use of the material things that should lead the couple to the "gratia salutis", namely eternal life: "*Bless + O Lord, your servants (N. and N.) with sufficiency of material possessions which these arrhae symbolize so that they may use them to attain eternal life. Through Christ our Lord*". Also the rings are now blessed with one single prayer. Of the original formula "Benedic, Domine, hos anulos" which is found for the first time in English or Norman sources of the 11th century (H. A. Wilson (ed.), *The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert, Henry Bradshaw Society XXIV*[1904] p. 151) only a few elements entered the new

blessing. It considers the ring as a symbol of love and faithfulness: "*Bless + O Lord, these rings so that your servants who wear them may ever live in mutual love and in unbroken loyalty. Through Christ our Lord*".

7. Giving of the Rings and the Arrhae

According to the former rite the priest puts the first ring on the groom's finger. Now it is the groom himself who takes the bride's ring from the priest, who addresses the couple: "*Now give these rings to one another, and say after me.*" Then the groom says: "*N., wear this ring / as a sign of my love and loyalty. / In the name of the Father / and of the Son / and of the Holy Spirit*". The bride then gives the ring to the groom with the same words. A rubric observes that it is an ancient Philippine custom to have the wedding rings on the ring finger of the right hand.

The former text used for handing over the arrhae was rather colorless: "This ring and these pledges I give you as a sign of our marriage". Nowadays no rings are given or arrhae. In ancient Spanish times however, several rings were given as arrhae (According to St. Isidore of Sevilla, quoted by K. Ritzer, l.c., p. 229 f). The new formula proclaims once again that love is the motivation of the giving of the arrhae. It states that the groom takes now upon him the obligation to support the bride and the family: "*give you these arrhae / as a pledge of my dedication / to your welfare. / In the name of the Father / and of the Son / and of the Holy Spirit*". The bride accepting the arrhae in her cupped hands says: "*And I accept them*".

8. The Prayer of the Faithful

The official report on the Mass of the future, given to the members of the Bishops' Synod in October 1967 stated that the Prayer of the Faithful will be a "structural element" of the Mass and will become obligatory for every Mass. Therefore, the new marriage rite contains a special Prayer of the Faithful for this occasion:

Priest: *Dearly beloved, let us now pray for the Church and our newly wedded couple whose marriage reflects her union with Christ.*

Leader: *For the holy Church spread over the world, for its leaders and for the rulers of our nation, let us pray to the Lord.*

All: *Lord, graciously hear us (or any other approved answer).*

Leader: *For the poor and the sick and all those in trial and affliction, let us pray to the Lord.*

For N. and N., that He may keep their hearts united forever, let us pray to the Lord (If there are several couples: For our newly wedded couples that...)

That He may protect them from evil, lighten their burdens and fortify them in their trials, let us pray to the Lord.

That He may stir up the grace of the sacrament in all the married couples here present, let us pray to the Lord.

Priest: *Almighty, eternal God, look down with favor upon your servants. Grant them to remain faithful to You and to one another. At the end of a long and well-spent life, reward them with eternal happiness together with their children and with all those who love them, through Christ our Lord. R) Amen.*

9. Veil and Yugal

Then the Mass is resumed. The newlyweds may offer their altar-bread, preferably a large host, and the wine. After the Sanctus the two candles near the kneelers are lit. Friends of the couple lay a white veil on the shoulders of the groom and the head of the bride. This rite goes as far back in Spain as the time of St. Isidore of Sevilla who wrote: "The women are veiled during the marriage rites. Thus they should learn that they are to be subject to their husbands and humble... Because the head of the woman is the husband (cf. 1 Cor 11,3) they are to be veiled when they marry..." (De ecclesiasticis officiis II. De coniugatis 6). St. Isidore does not say that this rite took place in church. It could have been part of a domestic celebration. We do not know for sure. But another celebration was to be performed during rites in the Church. He says (l. c., n. 7) that after the blessing of the Mass the bride and the bridegroom were joined together by the deacon "uno vinculo", namely with a certain ribbon or band (vitta)

of red and white color. The white color was to symbolize the purity of life while the red color pointed to the blood of their future offspring. This ribbon was obviously the equivalent of our present-day yugal.

The Spanish *Liber Ordinum* of the eleventh century uses the term "iugale" for the first time (M. Férotin, *Le liber Ordinum en usage dans l'église wisigothique et mozarabe d'Espagne: Monumenta Ecclesiae Liturgica V* [Paris 1904] p. 435). After the Mass, before the dismissal of the congregation the couple came to the railing (cancelli). The parents or some other relatives handed the bride over to the priest who veiled the couple with a "palleus" or "sipa". Upon this veil the priest then placed the "iugale" which was to be, as at the time of St. Isidore, of red and white color.

10. The Nuptial Blessing

After the Pax and before the Agnus Dei the priest imparts the nuptial blessing. Both within and outside Mass the blessing of the Roman Ritual is to be used (Tit. VIII Caput III). This is obviously a temporary solution. The Council Fathers wanted that the present prayer over the bride, found in the Roman Missal, should be shortened and adapted to the needs of our times. The draft presented to the Fathers said that this prayer should be changed in such a way that it could also be said over the bridegroom. But this proposal was not accepted. And there are good reasons why this formula should pay special attention to the bride. The bride appears from biblical times as the representation of the Church. Thus the prayer enhances the dignity of the Christian wife. The fundamental idea of the prayer should consequently be retained. Only that part of the formula which speaks of the obligations of the bride should be so adapted that it expresses also the groom's duties. Both partners are strictly bound to remain faithful to one another.

11. Communion

The large host offered by the couple is divided by the priest during the Agnus Dei. Bride and bridegroom receive, therefore, this one

host. This signifies in the wedding Mass, that now, on the basis of a new title, that of the sacrament of matrimony, it has become true for the couple what Paul had said in 1 Cor 10, 17: "Because there is one bread, we... are one body, for we all partake of the one bread". We have here a sign of the couple's union in Christ, because as husband and wife "they become one flesh" (Gen 2,24; Mt 19,5).

In his relatio to the king of Spain, Loarca wrote also of the marriage customs of the timaguas of the Philippines who were freemen: "Their marriage is accomplished when the pair unite in drinking pitarilla from the same cup. Then they give a shout, and all the guests depart; and they are considered as married, for they are not allowed to drink together unless late at night. The same ceremony is observed by rich and respectable slaves" (Blair-Robertson V, 159. — Written 1582/3). In view of this ancient custom the rubric of the new marriage rite giving permission to Communion under both kinds is a very appropriate one, rooted in an ancient pre-Spanish custom of the Philippines. Communion under both kinds finds its full expressive significance if the couple drink the precious blood directly from the chalice.

12. The Sevenfold Blessing

The essence of this blessing was already part of the former Philippine marriage rite. But the knowledge that it was a blessing had been lost. It took the form of two prayers, each introduced by "Oramus", which were spoken over the couple when they had arrived at their kneelers in the sanctuary. Because the blessing is so beautiful and deep in meaning it has been inserted after World War II into a number of modern marriage rituals (Germany, Holland, United States and others).

This blessing is to replace the otherwise stereotype formula "May almighty God bless you..." at the end of the Mass, as also foreseen by the "Missa normativa" prepared by the Roman Consilium. Therefore, after the Postcommunion the priest, with his hands elevated and extended over the spouses, blesses them, and answer after each invocation:

May God bless you by the word of His mouth. -- All: Amen
May He unite your hearts in an enduring bond of pure love. — All: Amen.

May you be blessed in your children, and may the love that you lavish on them be returned a hundredfold. — All: Amen.
May the peace of Christ dwell always in your hearts and in your home; may you have true friends to stand by you, both in joy and in sorrow. All: Amen.

May you be ready with help and consolation for all those who come to you in need; and may the blessing promised to the compassionate descend in abundance on your house. — All: Amen.

May you be blessed in your works and enjoy its fruits. May cares never cause you distress, nor the desire for earthly possessions lead you astray; but may your hearts' concern be always for the treasures laid up for you in the life of heaven. -- All: Amen.

May the Lord grant you fullness of years, so that you may reap the harvest of a good life and after you have served him with loyalty in His kingdom on earth, may He take you up into His eternal dominions in heaven. Through Jesus Christ. — All: Amen.

13. Conclusion

After the removal of the veil and the yugal the priest addresses now the newlyweds with a simplified version of the former admonition: "Now that you have received the blessings..."

At the end of the Mass according to the former rite the priest handed over the bride to her husband with the words: "I give you a companion, and not a servant; love her, as Christ loves His Church". These words have been omitted in the new ritual. They represented the mentality of a patriarchal society. In this country the position of the wife and mother in the family was always so high that she was practically the one who made the decisions which is perhaps a vestige of a former matriarchal society. Thus the words were frequently criticized as meaningless in our situation which led to their final abolition.

II. Marriage outside Mass

The new ritual contains two rites: one for the wedding celebration within Mass and another for the celebration without Mass.

No provision has been made for the celebration of marriage before Mass, when a Mass is to follow. Because it is no longer lawful to celebrate marriage before Mass (Motu proprio "Sacram liturgiam, January 25, 1964, n.V) a prescription reiterated in the Instruction of September 26, 1964 (art. 70).

The sequence of the ceremonies and prayers is the same as in the marriage celebration within Mass. After the solemn entrance (optional) there follows immediately the allocution. Then a liturgy of the word is to be held. It contains an Old Testament reading (optional) for which three different passages are offered: Gen 1,26-28; Gen 2,21-24; Is 61, 10-11.62,3. An intermediary chant (Ps 20,2-5; 44,1-4 and 11-14; 22; 127 or a suitable hymn in the vernacular) may follow. The second reading is from the New Testament for which also several passages are provided (Eph 5,33-23; 1 Cor 6,15-20; 1 Cor 7,2-10; 1 Pt 3,1-9). The subsequent intermediary chant (one of those indicated after the Old Testament reading) is ad libitum. As Gospel reading three passages have been indicated: Mt 19,3-6; Mt 22,1-14; and Jo 2,1-11. Then the priest preaches a homily and the Prayer of the Faithful is said. Now the candles are lit at the kneelers, the veil and yugal are placed on the couple and the priest pronounces the nuptial blessing from the Roman Ritual which is to be followed immediately by the Sevenfold Blessing and the usual conclusion of the rite.