

Father Dyer UMC Contemporary Ceremony

<Welcome>

To our assembled guests, on behalf of _____ I welcome you. _____ on behalf of those assembled here, I welcome you as well.

<Presentation of the Bride>

Who presents _____ to be married to _____ ?

<Homily>

We welcome you to this moment in your lives and to the place you have come to in each other's hearts. We join with you on this day, as you commit before God and humanity that from this point forward you shall live as one.

I remind all of our guests that you have been invited here for a holy purpose; not just to witness, but to fully participate with your thoughts and prayers, asking God to bless this couple and their married life. You are here because this couple feels close to you and asks that you join with them in this dedication of sacred purpose.

We represent symbolically all the people in the world who will be touched in any way by the life of this couple. You represent their friends and family, now and forever. They have chosen this act of marriage and this public, holy ceremony in which to proclaim it. Together we all thank God who brought them together and ask God always to guide their way.

<Reading-Optional>

<Homily, continued>

_____, we live at a time when very little in life is considered sacred. One thing must remain so, however, or all the world disintegrates. That is an agreement between two people. This day we celebrate a sacred agreement between the two of you.

I congratulate you on the journey of your lives, on the strength and the courage it has taken for each of you to make your way to this place. Both of you have found a way to put away childish things and embrace a very serious love. You receive on this day the blessings thereof, for yourselves and all the world.

We live in times that are beset with problems. This marriage is not to be an escape from the world, but indeed it is to be a commitment to greater service to the world. You shall not exclude the world but include it in your love. Together, in this marriage, you shall contribute more fully, for you shall be more full.

<Reading-Optional>

<Homily, continued>

_____, _____ is God's gift to you, but he is not a gift for you alone. It is God's will that in your love, this man might find within himself a greater sense of who he is meant to be. You are asked by God to see the good in this man, to accept him for who he is and who he shall be, that thus he might be healed and made strong. In this way, God's purpose shall be accomplished in this relationship. May this man find, literally, the kingdom of heaven through the love you share.

And so it is with you also, _____, that although _____ is God's gift to you, she is not a gift intended for you alone. You are asked by God to so love this woman, that in your love she might find herself as God has created her, so beautiful and strong and brave and true, that the entire world might be blessed by the presence of a woman who shines so. May she relax in your arms as she has never relaxed before. May she know, from now on, that there is one on whose love she can depend forever.

Our prayer for both of you is that you might find in each other's love such profound acceptance and total release, that together you might experience the forgiveness that can free the world. May you create, with God, a piece of heaven on earth. Into a darkened world God has sent your love for one another, and God accomplishes between you the miracle that can heal us all.

From this point forward, _____, _____'s needs will carry the same priority as your own. Likewise, _____, from this point forward, _____'s needs will be seen to be as important as your own. You shall not be seen as two conflicting or competing forces, but rather the energies in your lives shall blend into harmony and oneness through the grace of God. The angels will dance between you, and they will rejoice in the dance of life you do together.

To both of you, I enjoin you to release at this time all impediments to your joy. In this moment may you forgive each other any past transgressions, that you might enter this marriage reborn. Allow the waters of forgiveness to wash you clean. You are given the chance to begin your lives again this day, as God grants you radical renewal through the power of this commitment. You commit to a compelling future for yourselves, for any children you might one day have, and to any part you might play in the healing of the world. Receive fully God's gifts on this day, as God so fully receives the gift of your love for each other. May you rejoice in God, as God rejoices in you.

In this respect, it is important to remember that you are unconsciously drawn to precisely that person who possesses the attributes you need to be affected by in order to change. These are the very qualities which, as you acquire them,

will represent an enlargement of your soul. This signifies that you will be drawn into a process of personal evolution. Your character will gradually be developed, and what is remarkable about this transformation is that in the end you will see the acquisition of these attributes as exquisite refinement of your spirit.

This is a spiritual process because it deals not with the superficial aspects of your personality-how you dress and what you eat-but with the deepest essence of your being and ultimately with your capacity to love. You will learn to be kinder, to be more empathetic, and more trustworthy. We will be met in the character of our beloved with an invitation to transcend our own limitations-our judgments, our aggressions, our lack of trust, our fear of intimacy, our pride, our self-focus, our self-righteousness-and strive for their beautiful opposites, to reach for our capacity to love.

For it is love, unconditional love, the love for the earth, the love for the birds of the air, the love of God for creation, that shatters all limitations, that dissolves all fears. The unconditional love is the true gift of marriage, its greatest, most spirit-embracing work.

To know that marriage has a high spiritual purpose is to be willing to bear the sufferings that lie along its path. But it is also to rejoice and be glad, to be exuberant, and playful, to bask in the companionship of the person who delights you, to participate in the joys of creatures of habit, passion and comfort.

Marriage as a spiritual enterprise is also in essence, about joy. It is joy that brings us to marriage and that inhabits its happiest moments, and joy with which we shall contemplate it when our lives draw to a close. For it is the infinite joy which in its finite form a marriage symbolizes. Joy, unlike happiness, is merely an emotion, and a state of being-that state of ultimate bliss and intimate union in which nothing and no one is separate from anyone. In joy we are born and we shall return. It is the ultimate spiritual condition.

To suffer the challenge of marriage is also to deliver yourselves to its joys. And it is in the spirit of joy that we welcome _____ and _____ to the spiritual undertaking that is marriage. Long may it stand as the cathedral of their love.

<Consecration/Opening Prayer>

Dear God, look mercifully upon your children, _____ and _____, and be generous with them, so that in the unfolding veils of time, they may truly stand for one another as emblems of the incarnation of your love. Give them a sense of joy, excitement, possibility, and challenge about what they are undertaking, the ever-unfolding and beautiful work of refining their spirits in the presence of each other's witness, of becoming the bearers of your love.

And knowing that this is a high and challenging work ahead-invisible-often in day-to-day life, we pray for them the benediction of company, the encouragement of family and friends, the boundless joy of living always in the midst of love.

Give them peace of heart and strength of spirit so they may honor the vows they make today. And may the promises they make inspire and instruct each one of us who celebrates with them. Amen.

<Expression of Intent>

_____ and _____, in presenting yourselves before God, family and friends today, you are announcing your commitment to each other totally and permanently in the union of marriage. Do you _____ choose _____, to be your honored and cherished (husband/wife), to live with (him/her) and love (him/her) for evermore?

Answer: I do.

<Exchange of Vows>

Note: At this point you may write your own vows or speak with your officiant to have vows given to you.

<Blessing of Rings>

As God is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere, so let the seamless circle of these rings become the symbol of true faith in each other and always remind them of their endless love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

<Exchange of Rings>

_____, I give you this ring as a symbol of my joy in loving you and as a pledge of our constant faith.

_____, I give you this ring as symbol of my joy in loving you and as a pledge of our constant faith.

<Pronouncement of Marriage>

Now that you, _____ and you, _____, have promised to give yourselves to one another and to love each other through your sacred vows and through the giving and receiving of these rings, I now pronounce you husband and wife.

Those whom God has joined together, may God generously bless forever.

<Unity Candle — Optional>

<The Lord's Prayer>

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, they 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, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

(Bride gets bouquet back from maid of honor, they face each other)

<Benediction>

Go in peace, dear ones, for God has given you the greatest of all gifts, true love, love embodied, love promised and sworn, love twined to itself for always. May every word you speak and every breath you take in each other's presence be twice blessed, truth and joy, and may you walk together in strength each holy day of your lives. Accept life, and be most patient and tolerant with one another, always ready to forgive as freely as the Lord as forgiven you. Be merciful in action, kindly in heart, and humble in mind. Go in peace. Amen.

<The Kiss>

<Introduce Couple>

I know present to you _____ and _____.

<Recessional>