

**Guidelines for Liturgical Services  
according to the  
1962 *Missale Romanum***

**Music for Nuptial High Mass**



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*Question:*

What is a Nuptial High Mass according to the Extraordinary Form (1962 *Missale Romanum*)?

*Answer:*

The Nuptial High Mass is the Mass sung for the bride and bride-groom.

*Question:*

What parts of the Nuptial High Mass is the choir obliged to sing?

*Answer:*

The choir is obliged to sing all of the prescribed Ordinary and Proper parts.

*Question:*

Is there a Mass formulary (i.e. a particular set of liturgical propers) for the celebration of the Nuptial Mass?

*Answer:*

The *Missa pro sponsis* is a votive Mass specified for use at Nuptial Masses on lesser feast days (feast of the 3<sup>rd</sup> class) or ferial days (days of the 4<sup>th</sup> class).

*Question:*

When the Nuptial Votive Mass, *Missa pro sponsis*, is offered on liturgical days of the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> class, is either the *Gloria* or the *Credo* to be sung?

*Answer:*

With the exception of certain votive Masses (i.e. *Missa de Sancta Maria in Sabbato*, or the *Missa Votiva de Angelis*), the *Gloria* is not said or sung. Only in rare circumstances would the *Credo* ever be said or sung at a votive Mass.

*Question:*

Would there ever be an occasion at which the *Gloria* or the *Credo* might be sung at a Nuptial High Mass?

*Answer:*

If the Mass celebrated for the Bride and Groom occurs on a Feast day of the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> class, thereby prescribing a *Gloria* and *Credo*, then the Nuptial Votive Mass (i.e. *Missa pro sponsis*) is restricted by the celebration of the feast of the higher solemnity,

which calls for the singing of the *Gloria* and *Credo*. If an engaged couple scheduled their wedding, for example, to occur on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the Solemn Feast of the Assumption of Mary, a feast of the 1<sup>st</sup> class, then the Mass formulary of the Assumption is used, which includes the singing of the *Gloria* and *Credo*.

*Question:*

What kind of organ music should be played at the Nuptial Mass?

*Answer:*

Wedding music for the organ should be of a proper liturgical character, avoiding any musical elements of secular, operatic or profane music. (M.P. VI. 18; T.A.C. VIII.) The mind of the Church is plain in the words of the Apostolic Constitution: *Let our churches resound with organ music that gives expression to the majesty of the edifice and breathes the sacredness of the religious rites; in this way will the art both of those who build organs and of those who play them flourish afresh, and render effective service to the sacred liturgy.*

*Question:*

Is it proper to provide organ processional music as the bride and her attendants enter the church?

*Answer:*

A majestic or stately organ composition can provide a fitting musical accompaniment to the entrance of the bridal party.

*Question:*

How could we describe the celebration of the Mass for the Bride and Groom?

*Answer:*

It is worth noting that the Rite of Marriage detailed in the *Rituale Romanum* occurs prior to the celebration of the Mass for the Bride and Groom. Some processional music may be played by the organ as the clergy approach the altar. This is not, however the place to chant the Introit, as some might wonder.

Once the priest, clergy and altar servers have reached the altar, the members of the wedding party, namely the bride, the groom and their attendants, approach the altar, as local custom dictates, during which time the organ may play appropriate music.

Having reached the altar the Rite of Marriage is carried out, after which the priest begins the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar, during which time the *schola cantorum* begins to chant the Introit.

The *Missa pro sponsis*, a votive Mass without *Gloria* or *Credo*, is celebrated with white Mass vestments. If the Nuptial High Mass is celebrated on a liturgical day of higher solemnity (i.e. a feast of the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> class, then the vestments will be the color of the day).

In many countries, the bride and the groom assist at Holy Mass just inside the sanctuary, kneeling at a *prie dieu*, with the bride on the left and the Groom on the right. But if either the bride or groom is a non-Catholic, it is a well-established custom that they assist at the Marriage outside of the communion rail at a *prie dieu*. According to the directives of the local ordinary, in some cases it will be judged preferable to celebrate the Rite of Marriage, but not to celebrate the Nuptial Mass.

Following the chanting of the *Pater noster* by the priest, the priest genuflects before the Blessed Sacrament present on the altar and goes to the epistle side of the altar. The bride and groom, leaving their *prie dieu* come to the epistle side of the altar and kneel on the first step. Reciting the *Propitiare Domine* and the *Deus qui potestate* (located in the *Missale Romanum* or in the *Rituale Romanum*), the priest returns to the center of the altar, genuflects and continues Mass with the *Libera nos quaesumus*, as the bride and groom return to their *prie dieu*. The bride and groom, well-disposed and having observed the Eucharistic fast, receive Holy Communion at their *prie dieu*. After the dismissal of the Mass, the priest turns to the bride and groom and recites the *Deus Abraham*. After sprinkling them with holy water he turns to say the *Placeat tibi*, concluding with the Final Blessing and Last Gospel.

*Question:*

Is it possible to celebrate the Nuptial Mass as a 'Low Mass'?

*Answer:*

When the Nuptial Mass is celebrated as a 'Low Mass,' the same rules of liturgical music apply as have been already established. As it pertains to the 'Low Mass,' church musicians can prepare an organ processional to accompany the movement of the bridal party to the altar. Since the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar immediately follow the Nuptial Mass, it would not be advisable to sing a hymn or play organ music at this juncture. But suitable music could be sung in either Latin or the vernacular during the Offertory, Communion, or the organ could play. At the conclusion of the Mass, as the wedding party leaves the altar it would be customary to have the organ play a grand composition, but a choral composition in Latin or the vernacular could be substituted.

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