

Circle of Love Civil Ceremony

Greeting

On behalf of Stephanie, Mark and their families I would like to welcome all of you, who have come to share in this important moment in their lives. I ask you to join together in celebrating, acknowledging, and honoring this day and the vows that they will be making. By your presence, you witness and affirm the truth of their love and commitment to each other.

In marriage, a new perspective is created with the joining of two individual views on life. Through this partnership, each becomes stronger, each becomes wiser and each becomes more loving. But marriage is like a garden, which needs to be tended every day: the benefits we receive through marriage are not free. If we don't make time to tell our partner how much we value what we have together, we will begin to take each other for granted and lose the very special quality that we originally united to enjoy. Stephanie and Mark, I am sure that with over 60 years of married experience between them; your parents' marriages are certainly a testimony to this principle.

Family and friends, today the two families are about to become one. The Bride's family will take Mark into their hearts and the Groom's family will take Stephanie into theirs. Through the joining of the couple, so are their families joined. This is a wonderful thing for you, since you may never have a better opportunity to develop connections with so many good people. You'll be sharing the day with some of the best people around, hand picked by the happy couple.

The importance of marriage to humans is so great, that it is the oldest rite or ritual of any kind recorded in history; it's scope so great that it is virtually the only custom recognized by every human government and religion. It is into this dynamic and wonderful state of partnership that you two come, today, to be joined.

Opening Blessing

In acknowledgment of our purpose, and of the power of this occasion, let us pray:

Creator, One who gives us the longing for love and the capability of loving, we give thanks to You for Mark and Stephanie, for their open hearts and willing spirits, and for the love that they embody here in our presence. Be with them on this joyous occasion as two become one, and be with us, their witnesses, as we rejoice in what is said and witnessed here.

Please be seated.

Giving away of the Bride

Who is giving this woman to be married to this man?

Bride's father stands and answers: "I am."

Words on Love and Marriage

At this time, I would like to share some words on love and Marriage:

"Marriage Joins Two People in the Circle of Its Love", by Edmund O'Neill

Marriage is a commitment to life, to the best that two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other human relationship can equal; a joining that is promised for a lifetime. Within the circle of its love, marriage encompasses all of life's most important relationships. A wife and a husband are each other's best friend, confidant, lover, teacher, listener, and critic. There may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing, and the love of the other may resemble the tender caring of a parent for a child. Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life. Happiness is fuller; memories are fresher; commitment is stronger; even anger is felt more strongly, and passes away more quickly. Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life, new experiences, and new ways of expressing love through the seasons of life. When two people pledge to love and care for each other in marriage, they create a spirit unique to themselves, which binds them closer than any spoken or written words. Marriage is a promise, a potential, made in the hearts of two people who love, which takes a lifetime to fulfill."

Stephanie and Mark, as you exchange the vows, which will start you on your journey together, know that our love and support go with you. As you make your promises to each other, we will remember promises we too have made and take this opportunity to make new our own.

Vows

Please join hands and, to each other, express your vows of love and devotion.

To the Groom: Mark, repeat this vow after me: I, Mark, take you, Stephanie, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do us part; I give you my promise.

To the Bride: Likewise, Stephanie, repeat this vow after me: I, Stephanie, take you, Mark, to be my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do us part; I give you my promise.

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Rings

Mark and Stephanie have chosen to exchange rings as the sign and seal of the vows they are making today. May I have the rings.

Though small in size, these rings are very large in significance. Made of precious metal, they remind us that love is not cheap nor common; indeed, love may cost us dearly. Made in a circle, their design tells us that love must never come to an end; we must keep it continuous. As you wear these rings, whether together or apart for a moment, may they be constant reminders of these glad promises you are making today. This ring I hold has special significance. May this always remind you of the continuity you have to generations of the past and generations of the future.

Mark, you will take your ring and place it upon the third finger of Stephanie's left hand, and repeat after me this promise, saying:

"Stephanie, I give you this ring, wear it with love and joy. I choose you to be my wife. I pledge my love and commitment, to be your faithful and loving husband."

Stephanie, you will take your ring and place it upon the third finger of Mark's left hand and repeat after me this promise saying:

Mark, I give you this ring, wear it with love and joy. I choose you to be my husband. I pledge my love and commitment, to be your faithful and loving wife."

Concluding Blessing

Let us pray.

Creator, we come today as family, friends, those who are physically present and those whom we love who are now with you, asking your blessing upon these two lives and this home being established. You have made us so that we are incomplete without the other so that we yearn for someone whom we can love and whose love we can receive.

We pray that your love will be the shield and stay for Stephanie and Mark. When joy comes, may they share it together. When sorrow threatens, may they bear it together. In gladness or in tears, in sunshine or shadow.

Grant them patience, gentleness, forbearance, and understanding. Protect their home from those forces that would break it apart.

We ask for health, for long life, for the fulfillment of every good dream. May their love continue through life and, finally, blend into the life eternal.

We pray these things in confidence. Amen.

(continued)

Marriage Pronouncement

Mark & Stephanie, you have each chosen to be joined in marriage today. In my presence and in the presence of your family and friends, you have exchanged vows and made promises. You have opened your hearts to one another, declared your love and friendship, and have united yourself with the exchanging of rings.

Therefore, it is my pleasure to now pronounce you husband and wife!

You may now kiss the bride!

Presentation

Ladies and gentlemen, family and friends: I have the pleasure to present to you, Mr. and Mrs. Mark xxxxx !