

Filipino Wedding Ceremony Traditions

Filipino Weddings reflect the strong traditions of family (& extended family) and symbolism. Thus, Filipino wedding ceremonies typically involve many people, and the wedding rituals typically "speak" to the couple personally.

Beyond the usual bridal party, the Filipino wedding involves people who are also significant in the couple's life: the Principal Sponsors and the Secondary Sponsors.

The Principal Sponsors (aka Ninang and Ninong)

These are women and men whom the bride and groom respect & admire. They are, as in the early days of the Church, sponsors of the couple attesting to their readiness for marriage and freedom to marry. These are often aunts and uncles or close friends of the family. In the Philippines, they are the official witnesses of the state and they sign the marriage license. Worldwide, their participation is symbolic of the wisdom & support they shall offer the new couple. The number of sponsors can vary from a single couple to many couples. The Principal sponsors are part of the bridal procession. At the nuptial blessing, they may also be invited to come up with the celebrant and to extend their right hands to join in the prayer of blessing. In doing so, they are fulfilling their roles as sponsors.

The Secondary Sponsors:

These are women and men whom the couple chooses to involve in their ceremony because of their affinity or friendship with them. They are typically relatives or close friends.

There are four sets of Secondary Sponsors:

The Coin Sponsors - those who will present the Unity Coins / Arras. Often, they will also provide the [Unity Coins](#).

Alternately, the coins may be brought to the altar by a coin bearer who is a child (relative or friend).

The Wedding Coins (also known as: Arras [ah-rahhs] or Arrhae [ar-rah-heh]) have traditionally symbolized the prosperity that would be shared by the new couple, and the groom's promise to provide for the welfare of the new family.

*However, **today's couples** embrace life & face the world together in a more mutually supportive way than ever before. So, the [Wedding Coins](#) have come to symbolize the couple's commitment to mutually contributing to their relationship, their children, and their community.

The Veil Sponsors - those who will place a white veil over the shoulders of the couple.

The Couple's Veil (white) has come to be a symbol of purity. Its original meaning was the symbol of the presence of the Lord, as the cloud was a symbol of His presence. It is placed over the shoulders of the couple to symbolize their union and being "clothed as one" in unity.

The Cord Sponsors - those who will place a knotted cord over the heads of the couple, to lay on their shoulders.

The Cord is a symbol of the couple's bond; that indeed they are no longer two but one in their new life as a couple.

The Candle Sponsors - those who will light the candles on the altar.

The candles symbolize the Light of Christ, the same light they received at Baptism and now receive again to lead them in their new life as a couple. Some couples choose to have their mothers or fathers light the candles in this ritual.

In order for the congregation to understand the meaning of the actions and the various symbols:

- a. the celebrant may preface the action before calling on the secondary sponsors.
- b. have another person read a commentary explaining the actions
- c. the couple may print a short explanation in their program.

Sequence of symbols in the Wedding Ceremony

Lighting of the candles usually takes place before the readings. The candles may also be lit at the beginning of the ceremony.

The sharing/exchange of the Wedding Coins / Arrhae takes place immediately after the exchange of rings. The Wedding Coins are blessed, and then the celebrant gives it to the couple to share or pass from one to the other.

The Couple's Veil is placed over the shoulders of the couple as they kneel side-by-side. This is usually done immediately after the exchange of arrhae and before the General Intercession.

The placing of the Cord follows after the veil is in place.

*If the bride and groom want to be part of the Offertory, either as gift bearers or as those receiving the gifts from the bearers and handing them to the celebrant, then the veil and cord are placed after that. Once the veil and cord are in place, they are to remain kneeling until after Communion. IF the bride and groom would like to participate in the Sign of Peace the veil and cord can be removed after the nuptial blessing.

Blessing of the Wedding Coins / Arras / Arrhae:

Blessing of the Wedding Coins / Arras / Arrhae #1

(name of Coin Bearer) will present the pillow with the coins.

(celebrant):

Originally, there was an understanding of husband as "bread winner" and wife as "home maker" so the coins were given and received not in a spirit of reciprocity but in a give/take relationship.

Nowadays the coins are a reminder of good stewardship for **all** couples; that they will mutually support each other, their children and the world around them.

(As the couple exchange the coins):

One says: (name of spouse), take these coins as a pledge of our commitment to share God's gifts.

The other says: (name of spouse), I accept and treasure your gift. Let us together always share God's blessings.

Blessing of the Wedding Coins / Arras / Arrhae #2

(name of Coin Bearer) will present the pillow with the coins.

(celebrant):

Lord, bless these coins. Grant (names of couple) not only material possessions, but abundant spiritual strength, which these coins symbolize, so that they use them to bless others and to attain eternal life. Hold the coins in your hands as a sign that your blessings will no longer be held separately, but together. And may you always show that whatever gift you may have in this life is not ultimately yours but the Lords.

(One of the couple) lets the coins fall into the hands of the other)

One says:

(name of spouse), accept these coins as a pledge of my total dedication and constant concern for your welfare. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Blessing of the Wedding Coins / Arras / Arrhae #3

(name of Coin Bearer) will present the pillow with the coins.

(celebrant):

May God bless these coins / arras as a sign of mutual support and responsibility.

(One of the couple): I give you these coins as a pledge of my dedication to you, the care of our home, and the welfare of our children.

(The other): I accept them and in the same way pledge my dedication to you, the care of our home, and the welfare of our children.

Wedding Ceremony Prayers for Couple's Veil & Cord:

Prayer for Couple's Veil & Cord #1

(reader / celebrant reads as Veil Sponsors place veil over couple's shoulders):
(couple's names), at Baptism you were clothed with the white garments symbolizing the new life of purity and joy in the Lord, to which the Risen Christ has called you. We clothe you again with this precocious garment as you enter into the new phase of your life with God. Wear it unstained and let the joy of the spirit shine forth to you and your children whom the Lord's loving design will bring into your life.

(reader / celebrant reads as Cord Sponsors place cord over couple's shoulders):
This cord symbolizes the love of God which brings your hearts and souls together. May your love grow stronger and bind you closer together through years, from here to eternity. We ask this from the Father, through Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

Prayer for Couple's Veil & Cord #2

(reader / celebrant reads as Veil Sponsors place veil over couple's shoulders):
Let this veil be a symbol of the faithful love you have for each other.

(reader / celebrant reads as Cord Sponsors place cord over couple's shoulders):
May this cord remind you to face your life together courageously and to be mutual in support of each other in carrying out your duties and responsibilities as a couple.

ALL: Amen.

Prayer for Couple's Veil & Cord #3

(reader / celebrant reads as Veil Sponsors place veil over couple's shoulders):
The Veil covers this couple today reminding them and us that Christ covers us in his love. Their new home will be a place where God dwells because this couple chooses to be under the mantel of his love.

(reader / celebrant reads as Cord Sponsors place cord over couple's shoulders):
The Cord, looped and crossed in the middle is wrapped around the bride and groom to symbolize the Blessed Trinity; The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are one and the same. The cord symbolizes this same union and the infinite nature of marriage.

ALL: Amen.

Prayer for Couple's Veil & Cord #4

(reader / celebrant reads as Veil Sponsors place veil over couple's shoulders):
Lord, with this veil, which represents this couple's union and mutual surrender to each other, may you always protect (names of couple) from any harm and strengthen them to provide continuous moral and spiritual support to each other and their children. May they remain loyal helpmates to each other as they carry lifes burden with joy.

(reader / celebrant reads as Cord Sponsors place cord over couple's shoulders):
Lord, with this cord, may the bond of love and friendship uniting (names of couple) grow stronger over the years. May they remain united to you all their lives knowing, loving and serving in each other and the community.

ALL: Amen.

Prayer for Couple's Veil & Cord #5

(reader / celebrant reads as Veil Sponsors place veil over couple's shoulders):
(names of couple), (names of Veil Sponsors) will now place a veil over you. Let this be a symbol of the faithful love you have for each other. Through the passing of the years, let the veil remind you that you belong to each other and to no one else, and that the love you have for each other becomes more beautiful in self-surrender that is total and pure.

(reader / celebrant reads as Cord Sponsors place cord over couple's shoulders):
(names of couple), (names of Veil Sponsors) will lay the cord on you to remind you of your responsibility to hold each other with the tenderness that Christ has for His Church. Keep the bond of your love steadfast so that you can support one another throughout your lives.

Wedding Ceremony Prayers for Candles / Unity Candle:

Prayer for candle lighting #1

(couple's names), will now light center Unity Candle. You will take the flame from the candles which your (names of candle lighters) have lighted. You will see that this center candle is larger than the other two because it is the new family that has been formed today as you repeated your vows and will be a blending of all the love, traditions and experiences you have both shared with your individual families. It is also larger because the middle candle represents Christ, who has brought you both together for this moment and to remind you that He is with you always as a partner in your marriage, to guard and to guide you in all that you do.

Prayer for candle lighting #2

(reader / celebrant): The ceremonies (refers to candle, coins, veil & cord) you are about to witness are uniquely and traditionally a part of the Filipino wedding.

Lighting of the Candles

(candle lighters come forward to light the candles)

(reader / celebrant) continues: (couple's names), (names of candle lighters) now light the candles for you. The candles represent the light from God that you will need to guide you throughout the rest of your married life. The candles also express the silent promise that the couple will continue to be light and warmth to each other for life.

Lighting of the Unity Candle by the couple

The couple comes forward to light the center Unity Candle.

(reader / celebrant) continues:

Take the flame from the candles which your mothers have lit. This center candle is a sign that a new family has been formed today blending all the love, traditions and experiences you have both shared with your individual families. It also represents Christ, who has brought you both together for this moment and to remind you that He is with you always as a partner in your marriage, to guard and guide you in all that you do.

Prayer for candle lighting #3

(reader / celebrant) reads as the candle lighters light the candles:
(couple's names), (names of candle lighters) now light the candles that represent the light from God.

(reader / celebrant) continues as the couple lights the center candle:
As you light the Christ candle let it remind you that Christ is with you always as a partner in your marriage, to guard and guide you in all that you do.

Prayer for candle lighting #4

(reader / celebrant): Today, as candles are lit at the altar, remember the light of Christ that burns in all Christian hearts and our responsibility to share that light with the world, especially in this celebration of Eucharist.

Prayer for candle lighting #5

(reader / celebrant reads as the candle lighters light the candles):
Today, as candles are lit at the altar, remember the light of Christ that burns in all Christian hearts and our responsibility to share that light with the world, especially in this celebration of Eucharist.

(reader / celebrant continues to read as couple lights the unity candle):
Take the flame from the candles which your mothers have lit. This center candle is a sign that a new family has been formed today blending all the love, traditions and experiences you have both shared with your individual families. It also represents Christ, who has brought you both together for this moment and to remind you that He is with you always as a partner in your marriage, to guard and guide you in all that you do.

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