

# Catholic wedding music and reading ideas

## A helpful guide to selecting appropriate scripture readings and music for a Catholic wedding ceremony.

Weddings are wonderful celebrations, full of beauty and happiness, and as such they deserve to be filled with beautiful music. Over history, talented composers have produced enough beautiful music to fill many libraries. Of course, the tough part is finding just the right music for your wedding. It has to be suitable for a religious service, appropriate for the occasion of marriage, and something that suits the bride and groom. As a couple develops their wedding plans, the music coordinator at the church can give many good recommendations from his or her knowledge and experience.

For the prelude, a couple could choose Bach's "Arioso", "Ave Maria", or Mozart's "Laudate Dominum", to name just a few. The processional hymn is often either Wagner's Bridal March or a trumpet voluntary. Other choices are available, however. A couple could choose Handel's "Allegro Moderato", or Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring." For a gathering hymn, there are many choices in any Catholic hymnal, but one good choice might be "Here I am, Lord." Later in the Mass, during the presentation of gifts, a few possible choices might be Warner's "Set Your Heart on the Higher Gifts", "The Wedding Song", or Haas' "Where There Is Love." Later in the Mass, a Communion song can be chosen from many options. Every hymnal has a wide variety of songs referring to bread and wheat which are appropriate for Communion, including "Gift of Finest Wheat", "Taste and See", and "One Bread, One Body". As two individual people become a married couple, one body, in a marriage, "One Bread, One Body" might be appealing. As the Mass comes to an end, a recessional hymn can close out the wedding with a joyful note. Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" is a popular choice, but a couple who want something different could choose Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" or "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee".

Of course, there's a lot more to a Catholic wedding than the music and the vows. A Catholic mass includes readings taken from the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Gospels. While the entire Bible is a story of God's love, and therefore could be seen as appropriate for a celebration of love such as a wedding, some sections are more suitable than others. A bride and groom who chose to hear from the Book of Lamentations might cause a few guests to wonder what led them to that choice, and the trials and tribulations of the Book of Job probably aren't the best for a wedding, either. There are, however, many selections in the Bible that deal specifically with love, either presented in terms of God's love, love for one's neighbor, or specifically married love. A few of these selections are described here, though others can be found through personal reading or consultation with a priest, deacon, or liturgical planner.

Within the Old Testament, the first reference to love between men and women appears with the appearance of the first people, indicating the fundamental nature of this love. In Genesis 2:18, God said that “It is not right that the man should be alone”, and He created a woman, of whom Adam said “This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!” As the Bible progresses through the patriarchs, there are many passages that refer to specific married couples. One of these is the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, from Genesis 24: 61-64. While Rebekah never met Isaac before agreeing to marry him, the passage shows the faith that she brought to the marriage. After all, while brides and grooms may have met each other, who can truly say that they know someone else?

One of the more well-known quotes regarding love appears a little farther into the Old Testament. In Ruth 1:16, Ruth is quoted as saying “wherever you go, I shall go, wherever you live, I shall live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.” This passage, while it would entirely appropriate for a married couple, is actually spoken by Ruth to her mother-in-law. Later in the Book of Ruth, her love and companionship for her mother-in-law does lead to her marriage with a kinsman of Ruth’s deceased husband.

For those who are fond of poetry, the Song of Songs might be a suitable choice of reading. The entire text of the Song of Songs is full of descriptions of romantic love, including a beautiful passage in the Epilogue (8:6-7) – “Set me like a seal on your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is strong as Death, passion as relentless as Sheol. The flash of it is a flash of fire, a flame of Yahweh himself. Love no flood can quench, no torrents drown.” The Psalms also include a great deal of poetry, though in a less overtly romantic sense than the Song of Songs. Psalm 128 may be suitable for a wedding, with its reference to a blessed future with a family. In this Psalm, “Blessing on the Faithful”, domestic happiness is celebrated as a blessing given by God to the righteous.

References to God’s love, and analogies to married love, can be found in several places. One of these is in the Book of Isaiah. While the primary focus of the Book of Isaiah is the prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, in Isaiah (61:10-62:3), the prophet describes his exultation and joy in God as being “like a bridegroom wearing his garland, like a bride adorned in her jewels.”

The New Testament includes many suitable passages as well. For a general statement of love, a couple could choose Mark 12:28-34, in which Jesus commands his followers to love God and to love their neighbor. A similar passage is available in Matthew 22:37-40. More directly related to marriage, in Matthew 19: 4, Jesus is quoted as saying, “Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female, and that he said: This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh? They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide.” Another Gospel passage relevant to weddings is John 2:1-10, in which Jesus changes water into wine. The importance of weddings can be inferred from the fact that the wedding is the site of the first of Jesus’ miracles described in the book of John.

The Epistles, or letters, of the New Testament are filled with references to love, some of which specifically reference marriage. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul refers to the gift of self in marriage, with each person belonging to the other. He refers to God's love, and specifically to Christ's love for us, in many letters – 2 Corinthians 5, Ephesians, and Philippians 2 all carry on the theme of Christ's love. Paul refers to morality, including morality regarding spouses, in Ephesians 4 & 5, and talks of forgiveness in Colossians 3. One of his most beautiful descriptions of love, however, appears in 1 Corinthians 13, in which he writes "Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. Love never comes to an end."

Catholic music is full of beautiful, joyous songs, and the Bible is filled with passages referring to the glory of love. The hardest part in selecting music and readings for your wedding is not finding songs and readings that are relevant to love, but narrowing the choice down to a manageable number!

Ref: [http://www.essortment.com/lifestyle/weddingceremony\\_tqay.htm](http://www.essortment.com/lifestyle/weddingceremony_tqay.htm)