



## *The Wedding*

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# *Arrangements before the wedding*

## **Who officiates, that is, performs the wedding ceremony?**

- A church wedding:
  - A pastor of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church
  - A priest of the Orthodox Church (bride and/or groom member of the Orthodox Church)
  - A person duly authorised by another religious community (when at least one of the bridal couple is a member of that community)
- A civil wedding:
  - A District Court judge
  - A Notary Public

## **Official documents:**

- A prerequisite for the wedding ceremony is that an examination of impediments to marriage is completed.
- The examination of impediments is performed by the parish office of either bride or groom and the request for an examination is submitted by both bride and groom together. At the same time, the bridal couple may discuss other details of the wedding ceremony.
- The couple can discuss the date of reading the banns in church with the parish representative.
- If either of the bridal couple is a foreign national, the procedure is more complicated. In such a case, the Finnish bride or groom should get in touch with his or her parish office well before the wedding date in order to get information on the required documentation.
- A wedding ceremony may take place no earlier than 7 days after the application for an examination of impediments to marriage has been submitted.
- A certificate of examination of impediments to marriage remains valid for 4 months. If the wedding ceremony is performed by the parish priest of the bride or groom, he will obtain the certificate of examination from the parish office. If the ceremony is performed by another (duly authorised) person, the bride and groom have to submit a request for the certificate and then forward it to whoever performs the ceremony.
- NB. It is a condition of a church wedding that both bride and groom have been confirmed in the church and that they belong to the church. Where a church wedding is not possible, the wedding ceremony will be performed by the appropriate civil office. A civil wedding can be blessed in church (Blessing a marriage on page 6).

## **A parish wedding is performed:**

- In an Evangelical-Lutheran Church
- In an Orthodox Church (bride and/or groom member of the Orthodox Church)
- In another religious community which has been authorised to perform wedding ceremonies (bride and/or groom member of such religious community).
- A place other than church as agreed by the bridal couple and the pastor/priest.
- At a date and time agreed by the bridal couple and the pastor/priest.

### **Booking the church:**

- The church is booked in the parish office of the church you choose.
- The more popular churches are very much in demand and it may be difficult to book a church on the date of your choice. If you want to be certain of booking a summer wedding date, the church should be booked the previous autumn. Saturdays in summer are particularly popular.
- If you reserve several different churches for a wedding, we hope you cancel the other reservations as soon as possible when you've made your final choice.

### **Booking a place for the wedding reception:**

- The wedding reception can be arranged at home or in any kind of club or reception facility. These facilities are run by municipalities, parishes, various organisations, hotels and restaurants. You should reserve the wedding reception place well in advance, since they can be heavily booked.

### **Booking the pastor / priest and cantor (organist):**

- The pastor or priest as well as the cantor should also be booked well in advance. They can be booked when you apply for the certificate of examination of impediments to marriage at the parish office.
- Usually the cantor is supplied by the local church where the wedding takes place and the pastor comes from your own parish, but you may arrange to have another cantor and/or pastor.
- The bridal couple should meet with the officiating pastor before the wedding ceremony in order to discuss the alternative wedding ceremonies, to announce the future surname of the couple (the surname must be announced to the person performing the ceremony beforehand), to discuss the nature of the ceremony, the choice of music and whether the pastor will participate in the wedding reception.
- The choice of music, for instance the wedding march alternatives, should be discussed with the cantor.

### **Other practical arrangements:**

- There are a number of things to remember for a wedding ceremony and the reception. Flowers, dresses, programme, transport, invitations, service etc. There is literature on the subject and your friends and relatives will also be of great help with advice.
- Additional information on the wedding ceremony and the arrangements is available on the websites of the parishes of Espoo, Helsinki and Vantaa and the website of the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church (see back page of this brochure).

*We pray God will bless the road  
you have chosen to walk together!*

# The wedding liturgy

- \* You can discuss the details of the wedding ceremony with the pastor and the organist. Don't hesitate to tell them what you have in mind!
- \* In this leaflet we present the basic liturgy for a church wedding, which is always in the nature of divine service. The liturgy can be complemented with a musical performance if you wish. You may include the Holy Communion in the ceremony, a so-called bridal mass.
- \* Under the Marriage Act, the set questions and the announcement of the couple as husband and wife are required.
- \* There must be at least two witnesses present.
- \* The bridal couple stand in front of altar (the officiator), the bride to the left of the groom.
- \* NB. If the service is to be conducted in English, you have to make special arrangements with the officiator.

## Introductory music

- Instrumental music and / or a hymn.
- You should consult your cantor about the music.

## Invocation, greeting and introductory words

### Psalm (optional, may be left out)

- Can be read or sung.
- A Scripture text that someone close to the couple may read (parent, brother, sister, godparent, friend, child).

## Prayer

### Scripture reading

- A Scripture text that someone close to the couple may read.
- At this point you may also read a psalm, sing a hymn, a song, have some instrumental music or a moment of quiet reflection.

## Wedding speech by the pastor

- The couple should meet the pastor in order to get acquainted. As a rule, the pastor meets with the bridal couple beforehand, in order to agree on the practical details and arrangements.

The congregation may stand while the ceremony proceeds with questions, the ring prayer, promises of love, proclamation as husband and wife, and the blessing of the couple.

## Questions

- There are two alternative ways of presenting the set marriage vows. You can discuss the choice with the pastor.

The pastor first asks the groom and then the bride:

*Before the eyes of the almighty God and in the presence of this assembly / these witnesses I ask you NN, will you take NN to be your wedded wife / husband and to show her / him faithfulness and love in need and in plenty, in sorrow and in joy?*

or

*Before the eyes of the almighty God and in the presence of this assembly / these witnesses I ask you NN, will you take NN to be your wedded wife / husband, and will you be faithful to her / him and to love her / him in days of joy and of adversity, as long as you both shall live?*

The groom answers: *I will.*

The bride answers: *I will.*

### **Ring prayer**

- The groom gives a ring to the pastor / the bride and groom each give a ring to the pastor.
- The bridal couple may kneel.
- The pastor holds the ring / rings up and says a prayer.
- The pastor then gives the ring to the groom, who puts it on the left hand ring finger of the bride / The pastor gives the rings to the couple who put them on the left hand ring finger on each other.

### **Promises of love, two alternatives** (optional, may be left out)

- If the bride and groom wish to say these promises aloud (before the ring / rings are put on), they hold the ring / rings together and the groom says:  
*I, NN, now take you, NN, as my wedded wife, and whatever comes, I want to love you every day (as long as we live). As a sign of this I give you this ring.*

The bride says:

*I, NN, now take you, NN, as my wedded husband, and whatever comes, I want to love you every day (as long as we live).  
As a sign of this I receive this ring from you / I give you this ring.*

Or the groom and then the bride says:

*I love you, NN. I want to share joys and sorrows with you and to be faithful to you until death parts us.*

### **Proclamation as husband and wife**

- As the pastor declares the couple husband and wife, they are in effect married, and thus the groom kissing the bride is appropriate at this point.

### **Blessing the married couple**

- The newlyweds may kneel.

### **Hymn** (optional, may be left out)

- The hymn may be replaced by another musical performance of an appropriate nature.
- If the cantor (organist) is needed to accompany the musical performance, you must book him and deliver the sheet music to him well in advance.

### **Prayer of intercession**

- The newlyweds may kneel.
- The prayer may also be prepared and read together with those participating in the ceremony (e.g. parents, brothers, sisters, godparents, friends, children).

### **Lord's Prayer (Our Father)**

- The Lord's Prayer is said in unison.

### **Benediction**

- The benediction may also be sung.
- After the benediction the pastor gives a Bible to the newlyweds.

### **Dismissal** (optional, may be left out)

- The pastor sends off the couple with the words:  
*Go in peace and serve the Lord with gladness.*

### **Concluding music**

- A hymn, a song and/or instrumental music. The hymn and song may alternatively come before the benediction.
- The newlyweds depart as the final music plays.

# Bridal mass

\* The bridal mass is a wedding service that includes the Holy Communion. The bridal mass can also be celebrated as the Sunday main mass of the congregation.

The main parts of the bridal mass are:

Introductory music, invocation, greeting and introductory words, confession of sins and declaration of forgiveness

Psalm (optional, may be left out)

Lord, have mercy (optional, may be left out)

Gloria in Excelsis and a hymn of thanksgiving (optional, may be left out)

Prayer, scripture reading and a hymn

Sermon and creed

Wedding:

Questions, ring prayer, (promises of love), proclamation as husband and wife, and blessing the married couple

Hymn or another suitable piece of music (optional, may be left out)

Prayer of intercession

Offertory hymn

Eucharistic prayer and Lord's Prayer (Our Father)

Greeting of peace (optional, may be left out)

Lamb of God (optional, may be left out)

Communion and prayer of thanksgiving

Praise (optional, may be left out)

Benediction

Dismissal (optional, may be left out)

Concluding music

# Blessing a marriage

\* Where a church wedding is not possible, the wedding ceremony will be performed by the appropriate civil office. A civil wedding can be blessed in church.

The blessing proceeds until the Questions part in the same way as a marriage ceremony proceeds.

## Questions

- Before proceeding with the questions, the pastor says:

*You have come to ask for God's blessing on your marriage.*

- The pastor asks first the husband and then the wife:

*Will you NN, in the marriage into which you have entered with NN, show her / him faithfulness and love, in need and in plenty, in sorrow and in joy?*

- Reply: *I will.*

The ring prayer, promises of love and proclamation as husband and wife are excluded.

## Blessing the spouses

- The couple may kneel.

From here on, the ceremony proceeds in the same way as a church wedding ceremony.

# Prayers on the wedding anniversary

- \* This prayer is appropriate on the anniversary of the wedding or on another date chosen by the married couple, if, for instance, the couple have met with a crisis.
- \* The prayers can be said at home, in church or elsewhere.
- \* The prayers are led by a pastor, another parish worker or parishioner.
- \* After the prayer, a family event may be arranged.

## **Prelude, hymn or other music**

- Example: hymn 241, 470 or 471 or a wedding song.

## **Introduction**

- The pastor says:  
*Dearly beloved. We are gathered to thank the Lord for the kindness he has shown NN and NN. (They were married at X, xx years ago.) We ask God to continue his blessing and presence in their lives and the lives of their loved ones. The Bible says: »The Lord will fulfil the desire of those who fear him. He also will hear their cry, and will save them« (Ps. 145:19).*

## **Psalm**

- Example: Ps. 23, Ps. 71:15-21, 23, Ps. 91:1-2, 4, 9, Ps. 92:2-6, Ps. 103:1-5, 17-18, Ps. 108:2-7 or Ps.12-15

## **Scripture text**

- Example: I Mos. 1:27-28, I Mos. 2:18, Songs.1. 8:6-7, Lament. 3:22-23, I Cor. 13:1, 4-8, 12-13, Phil. 4:4-7, Col. 3:12-14, Mark 10:6-9, John 15:9-12

## **Speech**

## **Hymn or other music**

- For instance hymn 338 or 465

## **Prayer**

- The pastor says:  
*God, in his mercy, has guided this couple for xx years. NN and NN may you be blessed by the holy trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.*
- A prayer that may be freely composed.

## **Our Father**

## **A hymn of gratitude**

- For instance hymn 332 or 341

## **Blessing and concluding music**

- A hymn, song or instrumental music
- For instance hymn 382:5-6 or 397

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## Websites

The parishes of Espoo, Helsinki and Vantaa have the following websites, which include the e-mail addresses of the parish offices:

**Espoo:**        [www.espoonseurakunnat.fi](http://www.espoonseurakunnat.fi)

**Helsinki:**    [www.helsinginseurakunnat.fi](http://www.helsinginseurakunnat.fi)

**Kauniainen:** [www.evl.fi/srk/kauniainen/](http://www.evl.fi/srk/kauniainen/)

**Vantaa:**       [www.vantaanseurakunnat.fi](http://www.vantaanseurakunnat.fi)

The Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church website **evl.fi** (in English) gives you more information on weddings. Look up “Ceremonies - Marriage - Marriage abroad under local law / Marriage abroad under Finnish law” for information on marriage ceremonies abroad.