



## Unity Candles in the Sacrament of Matrimony

Following the November 2011 revision to the Catholic Church's Roman Missal, the Holy See (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments) and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) have spent much time in focusing efforts in revisions of the remaining rituals for the sacraments (i.e., Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony, etc.), which naturally flow from and to the Sacrament of the Eucharist—the source and summit of our Christian faith.

In June 2016, I had the pleasure of attending a clergy workshop, hosted by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC) in Denver, on the revised rite for the Celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony (which was implemented on December 30, 2016 within the U.S.).

Of note, the need for and use of secular “unity candles” in marriages began several decades ago in weddings outside the Catholic Church. Over the years however, the use of a myriad of available “unity candles” on the market today, crept into the Catholic Church liturgies, without any official sanction or approval in the Church's rituals.

Some years ago in fact, the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) announced, that the use and reference of the candle was faulty symbolism within the liturgy. Historically, it has often become more of a symbol of divisiveness or dis-unity, than promoting the theology that, in the Sacrament of Matrimony, the Two Become One in the exchange of matrimonial consents (vows) and the enduring bond of the sacrament.

As the practice was and remains not part of the prescribed Roman Catholic liturgy or Rite for the Celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony in the U.S. Catholic Church, the use of the unity (or memory) candle will continue to be discouraged in our parish church; it is best left for use at the wedding reception, not within the Mass or Service of the Word.

Therefore, in consultation with the current liturgical norms of the universal Church, the St. Michael Parish does not permit the use of “unity candles” in matrimonial liturgical celebrations. Please direct any further questions or comments to the Presider or Pastor.

In the Peace of Christ,  
Fr. Bob