



Rev. Ann Fuller

Rituals of Giving

The commitment made in the context of a wedding ceremony is the greatest gift we can give another person. When we marry, we are telling our partner he or she is the most important person in the world and has become our highest priority. This is a great responsibility not to be taken lightly. Rituals of Giving demonstrate acceptance of such a commitment.

- Rose and Vessel
- Thirteen Coins
- First Gift

Rose and Vessel

This ritual conveys the idea two are stronger than one because we have qualities complementing one another. It is a beautiful ritual and because it is less well known can seem all the more meaningful.

(Bride) and (Groom) have chosen to present one another with two symbolic gifts, The Marriage Vessel and the Rose, to symbolize their life-long commitment to one another. The spiritual roots of this ceremony grow out of an understanding of creation, one gift (presenting the vessel) crafted lovingly by human hands, the other (holding up the rose) brought forth by the glories of nature. This vessel is a symbol of love's strength and endurance. The miracle of the vessel is it not only protects, but becomes something new by that which it holds. Likewise, the rose born of the tiniest of seeds, symbolizes both the beauty and the potential of love that blooms and grows through time. Both the vessel and the rose are individually unique, yet when combined, they create an object of even greater beauty.

(Bride) please present (Groom) with the vase as you repeat after me.

*“(Groom), this vessel represents
the strength I see in you.
I thank you for the person you are
and the person I am becoming
because of your love for me.”*

(Groom) please present (Bride) with the rose as you repeat after me.

*“(Bride), this rose represents
the beauty I see in you.
I thank you for the love and care
you have given me
and for all we will share
together in this life.”*



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(Bride) and (Groom), please place the rose in the vessel, holding it together repeating after me.

*“As our gifts bring beauty
and purpose to each other
may our lives continue
to enrich and strengthen one another.”*

(Bride) and (Groom), as you share each passing day and as your days become years remember this tradition you have created. On each wedding anniversary, place an additional rose in your marriage vessel to demonstrate your ever growing love for one another. May this gift always be a visual symbol of the beauty and strength you bring to union.

Thirteen Coins (Trece Monedas Arras de Oro)

This ritual originated in Spain, is quite popular in Mexico, but is also used throughout Latin America. The box and coins used in this ceremony are traditionally given to the bride and groom as a gift. Whoever purchased the set is typically the madrina de arras. At the conclusion of the opening words, the officiant calls for the box of coins and the madrina de arras presents it to the officiant who then blesses the coins and hands them to the bride. The bride then places them in the grooms hands and he places them on a tray where the officiant has already placed the box. Someone, perhaps a groomsman, holds the tray until it is needed later in the wedding.

Just prior to the blessing of the marriage near the conclusion of the wedding, the officiant calls for the tray and puts the coins back into the box. The officiant hands it to the groom who pours the coins into the bride's hands and places the box on top. While this is happening, the officiant explains the symbolism of the ritual. The officiant then takes the box, the bride pours the coins back and the box returns to the tray for safe keeping as a family heirloom.

The thirteen coins have two meanings, primarily they represent Christ and his Twelve Disciples. They have also been explained to represent the twelve months and the honeymoon.

The original symbolism of the ritual may be considered a bit dated. It represents the groom accepting responsibility as the provider in the relationship. He is therefore pledging his ability to support and care for the bride and their family's material needs. The bride's acceptance of the coins means she trusts him unconditionally with total dedication. In some versions, the ritual explains that while the groom is expected to provide for the family, the bride will be the one responsible for the stewardship of the money he earns.



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If this symbolism is unrealistic for your circumstances, it can easily be altered. One couple had me explain the ritual represented their pledge to one another to be diligent and responsible householders who recognized a marriage is not just a uniting of two hearts and souls as one, but the creation of a new family with financial obligations and material responsibilities to one another, any future children and their community. Rituals and their meaning evolve over time, so there is no loss in integrity by reinterpreting the ritual to mean something more relevant to contemporary circumstances. This is a lovely way to honor Hispanic heritage during a wedding ceremony while recognizing a realistic aspect of the marriage relationship.

First Gift

Some couples choose to exchange a symbolic and meaningful gift in the context of their ceremony. It can be anything really. I have had couples exchange goofy reminders of their courtship, letters to the future, something to include with their other wedding keepsakes, family heirlooms, something demonstrating their hopes for children, etc. I cannot provide an example of what would be said to introduce the gift exchange because it depends entirely upon what is being given and why. These rituals are always custom-written for the specific occasion.