



*Rev. Ann Fuller*

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## Rituals of Sharing

Rituals of sharing do not have the same symbolism as rituals of unity so they can both be smoothly integrated into a wedding ceremony. Rather than the focus being on the coming together of two people into one relationship, rituals of sharing focus on what this commitment means in practical terms. Marriage isn't for better or for worse, it's for better *and* for worse. These rituals are visible metaphors for the commitment the couple is making to be with one another in both good times and in bad and remind us life is better when shared with someone we love.

- Native American Wedding Vase
- Sharing of the Cup
- Wine Ceremony
- Tasting of the Four Elements

### Native American Wedding Vase

Although this ritual has Native American roots, the symbolism has powerful appeal to today's modern couple. Neither becomes subservient to the other and respect for individuality is as important as commonality. The vases are readily available on the internet and come in a great range of sizes.

*(Bride and Groom) have just sealed their relationship with the giving and receiving of rings. Today their union is further symbolized by partaking from the Native American wedding vase. The wedding vase has two spouts coming from the same vessel. As individuals, you have had different experiences and bring together different strengths. The two spouts of the wedding vase represent each of you as individuals. As husband and wife, you will continue to be individuals, yet you will always drink from the same vessel of life.*

*(Bride and Groom), as you share this one water from two spouts, so may each of you share contentment, comfort and happiness from the common cup of your marriage. May you find life's joys great, its bitterness sweetened and all things enriched by your companionship and love. May your different paths meet in the middle and become one path.*

*<Bride and Groom each drink from the wedding vase.>*



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## **Sharing of the Cup**

This ritual is similar to the Native American wedding vase without the symbolism of the dual spouts. Any cup may do, but most couples select a special goblet to remind them of their wedding day. Any favorite beverage is suitable as there is no reference to the specific contents of the goblet.

*(Bride) and (Groom) this goblet symbolizes the cup of life. As you each drink from the same cup we are reminded you have committed to share all your future may hold. Your union multiplies the sweetness life brings you and any bitterness in life is diminished because your sharing divides it. You have accepted the other as your first priority and the decisions you make as individuals have consequences for you both. Drink deeply, for life is made out of what you have, not what is lacking. May your love always make you realize what you have is more than enough.*

*<bride and groom each take a sip from the goblet>*

## **Wine Ceremony**

A wine ceremony symbolizes the marriage bond persisting in both times of joy and sorrow. It emphasizes the idea that in a strong and healthy partnership, joys are multiplied and sorrows divided when you share them. Although the ritual refers to sweet and bitter wine, I recommend choosing one red and one white wine you enjoy as you will be drinking it after all. The wine is symbolic so needn't be a burden to swallow and the two different colors emphasize the contrast between joys and sorrows. Non-drinkers can do something very similar with white and purple grape juice.

*It is the goal of marriage to achieve a blending of hearts and lives—but let there be spaces in your new life together, so each may encourage and nurture the individual growth of the other. Even so, your separate lives will become one life; your separate homes, one home, your separate fortunes, one fortune. Over the horizon of the future, there come toward you even now hours of brightness and hours of shadow, for such is the nature of life.*

*(Pick up the goblet of sweet wine.)*

*Life has, indeed, many bright and happy experiences, of which this sweet wine is a token. As you drink of it together, may it serve as a symbol of the joy that comes with loving and sharing, and may your happiness be tempered with gratitude and modesty and a bountiful sympathy for those who are less fortunate than you.*

*(Pass goblet to partner #1, who drinks and passes it to partner #2, who drinks and passes it back to you. Return goblet to table and pick up goblet of bitter wine.)*



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*But when hardship and sorrow and disappointment come, of which this bitter wine is a token, may you care enough to help one another with courage and compassion, neither one blaming the other for folly or failure, or regretting the obligation of marriage to share and bear together the chances and changes of a life deeply lived.*

*(Goblet is passed as above.)*

*May you ever live in harmony as your joys become more intense and your burdens lighter because you experience them together.*

### **Tasting of the Four Elements**

This particular ritual can be quite amusing while its symbolism is incredibly powerful. The expressions on the bride and groom's faces are priceless and make for fantastic wedding photos. It demonstrates a commitment to remaining together through both good times and in bad. The ritual is very easy to set up as all you need are four small containers with the following:

1. salty water
2. lemon juice
2. tonic water
3. honey, agave nectar or simple syrup

The bride and groom dip their fingers into the bowls and very gently place a small amount on the tip of the other's tongue as instructed. I highly discourage picking up the dish and taking a swig. Ew! I also recommend not using the same finger in each successive dish. By the time you get to the honey, it's not going to taste very good either.

*(Bride and Groom) have pledged themselves to a union founded on love, but with and understanding the success of their union is dependent upon the daily commitments they make to one another.*

*We know not what the future brings, but now they face that future together, hand in hand, heart to heart. Their joys will be multiplied because they share them and sorrows diminished because they stand fast in their mutual support.*

*(Bride and Groom), as your future will have times of sadness and dismay, I ask you to share the taste of salt in anticipation of the comfort you will be to one another as you wipe away the tears.*

*<salt water>*

*As your future will have times of disillusionment and regret, I ask you to share the taste of sour in anticipation of the guidance and support you must be to one another.*



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<lemon juice>

*As your future will have times of frustration and conflict, I ask you to share the taste of bitter in anticipation of the compassion and tenderness you must freely give to one another.*

<tonic water>

*The sweetness of your regard for one another and your marriage endures through all of these three flavors. I ask you to share the taste of this honey to remind you our union is blessed with the sweetness of your love for one another, and this possesses a strength no sadness, regret or frustration has the power to take away.*

<honey >

*Our prayer for you this day is the difficult times you face are few and far between and you have the strength, grace and integrity to endure as friends and lovers, companions and guides.*

Brevard Minister