

# The Quinceañera

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## **Presentation**

It is with great pleasure that we offer you this booklet on the Quinceañera (the coming of age of the fifteen-year-old girl), a resource in great demand everywhere.

This is the most complete, clear and concise work ever seen on the subject. In addition to the religious service, includes a historical note as well as pastoral and liturgical suggestions. If anybody has something more to add in this respect, it would be appreciated if it were communicated to us for its incorporation in future editions.

May God bless you!

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## Historical note

The exact origin of this religious-festive tradition is unknown. In the many years that I have been part of it, in my capacity as a priest, I have yet to find a family that could give me a satisfactory reason or that knows how it did begin. It is a practice that, as many others, had a beginning and a purpose, but as the years went by, its performance remained but its primitive motive was forgotten.

Everybody who writes about the celebration of the quinceañera, believe that it began over five hundred years ago and it is linked to the ritual communal traditions of the Aztecs, Mayans and Toltecs.

It actually is a "rite of passage," a ritual of transition from one phase of life to another, a different phase, normally one of more maturity. Most cultures have rituals of this kind. For example, it is known, that primitive tribes initiated young males into manhood by sending them to remote places in the villages or to impenetrable jungles, where they had to live for some time; once the time set concluded, they returned to the tribe, and were invested as warriors and recognized as mature males, apt to start a family, since during the trial period, had demonstrated that they were ingenuous and industrious, sufficient abilities to become the head of a family.

It is unknown if similar practices existed for the young females. However, as time went by, somebody determined that girls also reached a moment in their lives when they stopped being girls and became mothers, and therefore it was opportune to institute a ritual to acknowledge such phase in life. That is how the ritual for young women began. When a girl reached a certain age, her parents gave thanks to the divinity for the gift of life expressed in their daughter, and asked for help so that she, at the same time, could give life. Thus, the girl became a future mother. A party at home followed, with food, music, and dancing. It was a simple and worthy act, from every perspective. Thereafter, this act was christianized as the contemporary ball of the quinceañera.

Today, the quinceañera party, compare to its primitive form, is a little bit sophisticated, costly and the way in which it is celebrated also varies from place to place.

## **Pastoral observations**

As it happens with any tradition subject to time and milieu, for some parents the celebration of the quinceañera, has become a headache, for its practice is expensive and complicated. For this reason, some priests and pastors are not interested in knowing about it. Also, they complain that precisely these are the persons who do not come close to the church.

I believe that, those who think so, are somewhat mistaken, since they are refusing persons who are looking for a religious ceremony, which offers, a pastoral opportunity beforehand.

We know that the young age is one of the most difficult ones. It is a critical period in a person's life, where everything, religion included, is questioned. Consequently, it is in that precise moment when we have groups of youngsters approaching us with the excuse of the quinceañera ball, offering us a precious opportunity for orientation and counseling.

For this reason, the priest or pastor can suggest to the young persons and their families something from the list below. If they wish to celebrate with a ceremony, then they must:

- Attend church every Sunday before the day of the celebration.
- All the young persons who will participate in the ceremony, should attend a certain number of meetings.
- Receive the holy communion during mass. They are prepared for this purpose in advance.
- Participate in the Eucharistic celebrations by reading, collecting the offering, serving as ushers.
- Have a youth retreat.

*The local religious leader can offer other opportunities for pastoral ministry.*

Also, the priest or pastor can talk to the parents and offer advice, so that this occasion becomes a moment to strengthen family and friendship ties. Understood in this way and considering all aspects, the celebration of the quinceañera represents a positive opportunity. Likewise, in some places this ceremony has started to be introduced for young males as well.

Finally, some think that, in contemporary times, the age of fifteen, does not really represent an age of transition, since a girl of this age continues to be a girl. Perhaps, they are right, but a tradition so deep-rooted is not going to change to be celebrated at another age.

## **Liturgical orientations**

The liturgical ceremony has all the aspects of a wedding. Normally, the celebrant together with the girl's companion wait in front of the church, near the altar. Fifteen couples of young people walk in a procession, sometimes they are all girls, and other times they are all boys. In some celebrations, fifteen children organized in ascending age, from one to fifteen, march in a procession. Sometimes, they are followed by couples of godparents, finally the quinceañera walks in and the parents march behind her. At the end of the religious ceremony, the young woman and her companion leave the church first, followed by the youth, the godparents and the parents.

In some places, an arch of flowers is placed before the young woman's seat. According to this, the accompanying fifteen-year-old couples raise their arms forming a tunnel under which the quinceañera walks towards her seat. As one can observe, the practice varies from place to place and from family to family. This is not the moment to thoroughly specify the particular details of the celebration at each place.

During the procession music is often played, usually a march, and likewise as people leave the church. The persons present at the mass may sing familiar songs.

In the homily, the priest must address the sermon to the youth and emphasize the important transcendence of the age in which they are. They are not children any more, and must focus all of their energies in the future, towards the future of their lives, their families, of their society as a whole. To attain this, they should not waste the present moment in superficialities and must start building a solid and firm life.

Given the shortage of priests that some Christian denominations experience, to avoid multiplying masses, it is being suggested that several quinceañeras are celebrated on the same day or on Sundays during mass, as it is with the baptisms.

# Religious Ceremony

## Introduction

Beloved brothers and sisters: we have gathered to give thanks to God for the gift of life manifested in the fifteen years of age of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

Families and friends, we are ready to celebrate with joy and happiness this Eucharist, praying to God for His continued protection and help for the rest of her life.

## Act of Penitence

*"Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Wash me and I shall be clean indeed and my soul shall be white as snow. (Psalm 51)*

Brothers and sisters: before celebrating the holy mysteries we recognize our sins against God and against our neighbor.

*All together*

Most merciful Father: We confess that we have sinned against you by our own fault in thought, word and deed and by what I have done and left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart, we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

*The celebrant alone*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

Lord, have mercy. ***R. Lord, have mercy.***

Christ, have mercy. ***R. Christ, have mercy.***

Lord, have mercy. ***R. Lord, have mercy.***

*The celebrant greets the congregation*

The Lord be with you

*People* And also with you

*Celebrant* Let us pray

Almighty and eternal God, we humbly pray that, as your Only Begotten Son was presented in the temple, in the same way \_\_\_\_\_ has gratefully come to celebrate the life that you have generously given her. Confirm her in her faith, strengthen her in her will, may her life be an example of Christian life. We ask you this, in the name of Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **Liturgy of the Word**

*For practical reasons, it is recommended to use only one reading before the Gospel.*

*After this reading, a song can be sung.*

Suggested readings:

#### Old Testament

Jeremiah 1: 4-10 (Jeremiah's vocation)

Judith 13: 18-20 (Judith, a brave woman)

Isaiah 7: 10-14 (The Virgin will give birth)

#### New Testament

Ephesians 1: 3-6 (The chosen in Christ before creation)

Galatians 4: 4-7 (Divine brotherhood)

Romans 12: 1-2 (The offering that is pleasing before God)

#### Gospel

Matthew 25: 1-13 (The parable of the ten young maidens)

Luke 10: 38-42 (Mary and Martha)

Matthew 5: 14-16 (The light of the world)

John 13: 31-35 (A new commandment)

### **Homily**

#### **Baptismal Covenant and presentation of the offering**

N \_\_\_\_\_ since you were a girl, your parents and godparents, brought you to the temple to incorporate you, through holy Baptism, into the Church, the People of God. Then, on your behalf, they proclaimed the faith and accepted the responsibility of educating you in the Christian faith. The moment has arrived for you to accept, before all, the great responsibility and profess the faith that you bear in your heart.

*Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

*Youth* I do.

*Celebrant* Do you promise to fulfill your Christian obligations and be an example of life, and imitate Jesus Christ?

*Youth* I will, with God's help.

*Celebrant* Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

*Youth* I will, with God's help.

*Celebrant* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

*Youth* I will, with God's help.

*The fifteen year old girl reads her words of offering*

Thank you, Oh Lord, for allowing me to become fifteen, accept my youth, which I offer you wholeheartedly, and I promise to serve you every day of my life. Help me do your will here on earth, and may I, one day, in the company of my loved ones, know the bliss of eternal joy that you have prepared for us.  
*Amen.*

*Or if preferred, say this prayer*

Oh God, who chose the blessed Virgin Mary as mother of your incarnate Son, grant me, redeemed by the Blood of Christ, that I share with her the glory of your eternal kingdom, and following her example, I may learn to love you more every day of my life. To follow such a high example, I ask you Lord, grant me strength and courage so that I do not give in to the temptations of life. I ask you this through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

### **The Prayers of the People**

Let us pray to the Lord by saying:

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

We pray for your holy Catholic Church; that we all may be one.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

We pray for those all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

For all parents, may You grant them enthusiasm and wisdom in the education of their children.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

We pray for \_\_\_\_\_ and all youth present here today, so that they follow the path of righteousness and honesty that leads to eternal life.

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

Oh God, hear the prayers of your people; and grant us what we have faithfully asked you, to the glory of your Name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

### **Blessing and reception of gifts**

*Customarily, at this moment, the quinceañera receives presents, which may include a medal, a ring, a crown, a Bible and flowers. This varies from place to place. The Mañanitas can be sung after giving her the presents.*

### **The Peace**

### **The Offertory**

### **Eucharistic Prayer**

The Lord be with you.

*People* And also with you.

*Celebrant* Lift up your hearts.

*People* We lift them up to the Lord.

*Celebrant* Let us give thanks unto God our Lord God.

*People* It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father, Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. For you are the light and source of life; who has made us in your image, and called us to a new life in Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sign this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

*Celebrant and people*

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

*The Celebrant continues*

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. He stretched out his arms upon the cross and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night before he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks to you, he gave it to them, and said: "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

*Celebrant and people*

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

*The celebrant continues*

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people, the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive his holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy and peace; and, at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom. All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ.

By him, and with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. *Amen.*

As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come.  
Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive our sins, as we forgive those  
Who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
Now and for ever. Amen.

### **The Breaking of the Bread**

*It may be said*

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

[Alleluia] Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;  
*Therefore let us keep the feast. [Alleluia]*

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

*During the communion there can be background music or sing a song.*

### **Prayer after communion**

Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank you for feeding us in these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Grant us through the Holy Spirit, that \_\_\_\_\_ may be to us an effective example in word and action, in holiness of life, loving her neighbor as herself, until she comes to your everlasting kingdom. For Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **The Blessing**

#### **Closing**

Let us go forth in the name of Christ!  
*Thank be to God!*

## **The Fishermen (Pescador de hombres)**

1. You have come to the seashore,  
Neither searching for rich nor the wise  
Desiring only that I should follow

**Lord, with your eyes set upon me,  
Gently smiling you have spoken my name,  
All I long for I have found by the water,  
At your side, I will seek other shores.**

2. Lord see my goods my possessions;  
In my boat you find no power, no wealth,  
Will you accept, then, my nets and my labor?
3. Lord take my hand and direct them,  
Help me spend myself in seeking the lost,  
Returning love for the love you gave me.

## **Las mañanitas**

*A birthday song for the quinceañera, this is just  
a literal translation for people to know the  
meaning of the words.*

These are the mañanitas  
That king David he did sing  
To the most beautiful girls  
Now we are we will sing.

Wake up girl wake up  
Look! It's already dawn  
The little birds have started singing  
The moon already has hid.

How beautiful it is this morning,  
in which I have come to greet you.  
We appear here with great pleasure  
And joy to wish you a happy birthday.

The day in which you were born  
All the flowers began to bloom

And in the baptismal font  
The nightingales they did sing.

**It is already dawning  
The light of day is bathing us  
Get up, it is morning  
Look, it is already daylight.**

I would like to be St John  
I would like to be St Peter  
And come to greet you  
With music from heaven.  
From the stars on the firmament  
Two, would I like to bring you.  
One to say goodbye,  
one to greet you.



