

PROTOCOL FOR TENDER OF THE GIFT OF AGNES OF NAVARRE WITHIN THE ORDER OF SERVICE OF A WEDDING

After the bridegroom has placed the ring on the bride's left-hand ring-finger -- or immediately following exchange of rings, if it is a double-ring ceremony -- the Officiant, whether clergyman or registrar, instructs bride and groom to face one another and the groom to kneel on his right knee only (in exact imitation of the recipient's posture for investiture in Knighthood or nobilitation in higher rank). This done, the bride brings forth The Key, on a neck chain (such as is commonly used for Roman Catholic religious medals), places it around the groom's neck over his head, and while so doing, pronounces the verbal formula below:

Ces te clef porterez,
Carry this key,
Amys, et bien la garderez,
Beloved, and guard it well,
Car c'est la clef de mon tresor.
For it is the key to my treasure.
Je vous en fais siegnieur des or,
I make you lord of it henceforth,
Et desseur tous en serez mestre,
And above all you shall be master of it,
Et si l'aim plus que mon oeil destre.
And therefore I love it more than my right eye.
Car c'est m'onneur, c'est ma richesse,
For it is my honour, it is my wealth,
Et ce dont puis faire largesse.
And 'tis with which I can be generous.

That done, the Officiant now instructs the groom to rise, and tells the groom he may now kiss the bride.

This verbal formula comes from the *Livre du Voir-Dit* (1380) of Guillaume de Machaut (sometimes rendered, Machault). The above eight lines are the words of a chastity belt which she had assumed at her own initiative. Most commentators believe that Lady Beloved to have been Agnes of Navarre. Whoever the Lady was, she gave him nothing less than the most highly honorific of all possible gifts, *bar none*, that a woman can give to a man -- possibly the highest honor a man can receive, this side of the Throne of God -- so it is fully proper for him to go to bended knee to receive it: By it he is nobilitated, if only within the *micro-polis* of their household.