

Wedding Guidelines

Congratulations on your engagement! We are pleased that you have selected St. Joseph Parish to be a part of your special day. We want to help you plan a wedding ceremony that is spiritual and sacramental in accordance with the Catholic belief that marriage is a lifelong commitment and that it is a sacrament.

Parish Registration: The exchange of wedding vows in the Catholic Church is a sacrament (Holy Matrimony) when it is between two baptized Christians. All sacraments, including marriage, are celebrated in the presence of a faith community. Also, registration as a member of our faith community signifies your commitment to practicing the Catholic faith which includes regular attendance at Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis, and living other basics of the Catholic faith. For these reasons, we require that at least one member of the engaged couple (or one of their parents) be a registered parishioner at least 6 months prior to the wedding. Children of St. Joseph's parishioners who are members of another parish must provide us with a letter showing that we have that parish's permission to perform their marriage. Non-parishioners can also be married here at St. Joseph Parish but either the bride or the groom must be a registered member at a Catholic parish and must receive permission from that parish to hold the wedding here.

Days and Times of Weddings: Wedding ceremonies may take place at St. Joseph Parish on Friday or on Saturday. To accommodate liturgical schedules, Saturday weddings can be held at 1:00 in the afternoon or earlier. Friday weddings may be held late afternoon or in the evening. Although weddings may be celebrated at St. Joseph during Advent and Lent, we prefer other times of the year for this celebration because of the prayerful and penitential nature of these seasons. Decorations during Advent and Lent must be appropriate to the Liturgical Season

Alcohol Policy: At NO time before the wedding ceremony is drinking allowed for the bride, groom or any member of the wedding party. The priest presiding at your wedding will refuse to allow the ceremony to occur if the bride, groom or any member of the wedding party has consumed or appears to be under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance at the time. NO alcoholic beverages are allowed on church property.

Planning Your Wedding: Your wedding will be primarily planned by you with the assistance of the Deacon. You will receive a book called "Together for Life." This book contains guidelines for planning Catholic wedding ceremonies that are liturgically appropriate and walks you through the process. When you meet with the pastor who

will preside at the wedding, he will review your plans for the wedding ceremony and make any modifications that may be needed.

We strongly encourage you to follow the guidelines we have provided for you and to work closely with the deacon and pastor to minimize the possibility of any last minute changes deemed necessary by the priest due to lack of liturgical appropriateness. This will help everyone involved to avoid disappointment and keep stress levels to a minimum.

Deciding Whether to Have Mass: If you choose to celebrate Mass as part of your wedding ceremony, the order of liturgical rites would be Liturgy of the Word (scripture readings), Marriage Rite, Liturgy of the Eucharist (consecration and communion). If you choose to plan a wedding ceremony outside of a Mass, the order of liturgical rites would be Liturgy of the Word, Marriage Rite and Blessing.

It is appropriate and encouraged that a Mass be celebrated when both members of the engaged couple are Catholic and the other type of ceremony be celebrated when one of the members of the engaged couple is a baptized Christian of another denomination, or is a non-Christian, or is not baptized. The sacrament of Holy Matrimony is not lessened when Mass is not chosen. There are many reasons why you may or may not choose to celebrate your wedding with Mass. The pastor or deacon can help you make that decision when you meet with him.

Respect for God's House: Please respect the church as the sacred place that it is. We ask everyone to behave in a manner appropriate to being in church. Please refrain from chewing gum, using profane or inappropriate language, letting children run around the church, etc. In order to keep the church clean for your wedding and the services following your ceremony, food, drink and chewing gum are prohibited in the worship space. Food and non-alcoholic drink are allowed downstairs in Ehr Hall, in the Conference Room and the Family Center. No smoking is allowed in the church building.

Wedding Rehearsal: The preferred time is 5:00 or 5:30. All those who have a part in the ceremony should attend including parents and grandparents, musicians, attendants, readers, communion ministers, ushers, flower girl and ring bearer. We ask that everyone arrive on time and carefully listen to all instructions.

Dressing Rooms: Ehr Hall is used by the bride and her attendants. It has a 3 way mirror in the hall between the two bathrooms. The groom and groomsmen can use the Conference Room.

Flowers and Decorations: Please keep your flowers and decorations tasteful and simple to keep the focus on the sacrament. When planning for flowers and decorations, please keep in mind the nature of the liturgical season in which your wedding ceremony will be held. For example, during the weeks after Christmas and Easter the church may already be decorated with Christmas trees and poinsettias or Spring flowers for Easter and you will not need to do much more.

During other seasons you may choose to decorate with floral arrangements at the ambo (the stand from which the scriptures are proclaimed) and in front of the altar.

Throwing Rice: For safety and maintenance reasons we ask you to adhere to our policy regarding rice, birdseed, sparklers, poppers and real flower petals. These represent safety hazards or maintenance problems and cannot be used on church grounds. Flower girl(s) may strew silk petals if desired. Bubbles are allowed outside when the couple is leaving the church.

Photographs and Videotaping: Please remember that a Catholic wedding is a liturgical ceremony. Photographers and videographers must be mindful of this sacredness. To assist them and you, a separate sheet of information is provided which you can give them when they are hired.

The Catholic Wedding: While allowing for certain personal preferences and choices, the wedding liturgy follows certain prescribed norms.

- ♥ The congregation actively participates in both spoken and sung parts of the liturgy
- ♥ Readers (trained) may be family members or close friends with a good reading voice
- ♥ Liturgy of the Word generally consists of a first reading from the Old Testament, a Psalm, a second reading from the New Testament and a Gospel from the New Testament. There are several appropriate scripture selections you may choose from in the booklet “Together for Life.” Usually the readings are proclaimed by the Readers, the Psalm is sung and the Gospel is read by the priest.
- ♥ Intercessions can be found in the “Together for Life” booklet. If parents, grandparents, other family members or close friends of the bride or groom are deceased, it is appropriate to remember them in these prayers. You might also like to offer prayers for a blessed and happy marriage, for your families, the parish community and any other needs that are important to you. You may choose to write your own intercessory prayers.

- ♥ The exchange of wedding vows in the Catholic Church is a liturgical celebration and, therefore, certain formulas must be used according to the Church. Several beautiful ways of exchanging vows can be found in the “Together for Life” booklet.
- ♥ Gift bearers may be family members or close friends
- ♥ Eucharistic ministers may be family members or close friends but they must be trained Eucharistic Ministers in good church standing
- ♥ Musicians and cantors/soloists are provided by you and they must be familiar with the parts of the Catholic Mass.
- ♥ Music selections must be sacred or classical pieces. Because marriage in the Catholic Church is a liturgical celebration, songs played right before or during the wedding ceremony should focus on the religious nature of love—the love that exists between God and the couple being married and the sacred character of Holy Matrimony. This means that any music which would be appropriate at Mass or other liturgical rites is also appropriate for your wedding. The place to focus on the romantic aspects of love is at the reception which is a social and cultural celebration. Some music selections are not appropriate for a Catholic wedding ceremony. Music selections will be reviewed with the Pastor or Deacon during the planning meetings.
- ♥ Church decorations in place prior to the wedding must remain in place.
- ♥ Unity Candle is a popular custom. While it is not an official part of the marriage rite, it may be included in your ceremony. This custom symbolizes how the two of you have become one and hope always to be one. Another option would be to have a Blessing Cup. The priest blesses a cup/goblet and you then use that cup on special occasions in a prayer ritual. A booklet can be purchased with the rituals.
- ♥ The Lord’s Prayer is recited to be inclusive of all faiths present for your ceremony and speaks to the active participation of the congregation.
- ♥ Nuptial blessing is a special prayer for the couple following the Lord’s Prayer. You have several choices of blessings in the “Together for Life” booklet
- ♥ Sign of Peace: the priest will ask the congregation to share a sign of Christ’s peace with one another. You may exchange a sign of affection with each other, your families and wedding party.
- ♥ Visiting the Blessed Virgin Mary is optional. Some couples choose to ask Mary and all the saints to pray for them in their commitment to each other. They also leave a bouquet of flowers or a single rose at the foot of Mary.
- ♥ The Final Blessing is chosen from the booklet “Together for Life.”
- ♥ Preparing a liturgical guide (program). You will need to provide your own. A limited example is in the “Together for Life” booklet.

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