

To: Wedding Couples
From: Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church
Subject: Celebration of Weddings
Date: 9 January 2017

It is in the spirit of charity and Christian simplicity that we have drawn these guidelines for our parishioners who are preparing for weddings in our parish church. Christ invites us to be meek and humble in our actions and the Tradition of the Church teaches us to be modest in the celebration of the sacraments. We should keep in mind that our faith in the Lord's presence as we celebrate special moments in our Christian growth is the important aspect of our celebration. Taking this into consideration, we have based our guidelines for the celebration of weddings in our parish and we invite all our parishioners to understand these norms in relation to the Gospel. We hope that you see in them a way of celebrating marriage that is appropriate with the teachings of Christ and his Church.

1. Weddings take place in our parish church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Friday afternoons or evenings until 8:00 p.m. or Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. Weddings may also take place on weekdays. We do not celebrate weddings during the penitential season of Lent. They are not to take place on Sunday or Holy Days of Obligation. The parish priest or deacon is the witness of the Sacrament of Marriage. If another priest or deacon is desired by the family, permission should be attained from the pastor of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church.

2. Rehearsals generally take place during the week of the wedding in the afternoon or evening. In order to set a time for the rehearsal, please call the parish office at least 10 days prior to the wedding. Attendants, parents, padrinos and the bridal couple should all be present for the rehearsal. Due to our busy schedules, rehearsals will start on time. The couple being married should have decided the proper order of the bridal party for the ceremony (going in and coming out of the church.) The couple should organize this part of the ceremony, not the parents, padrinos, etc. Lectors of the Mass should also be present at the rehearsal.

3. If desired, two floral arrangements may be acquired to beautify the sanctuary for the celebration. The flower arrangements should not obstruct the view of the altar.

4. Music falls under the responsibility of the couple being married. Musical arrangements should be conducive to Catholic liturgical worship. Our parish has the blessing of having several choirs, any of which may play at weddings in our parish. Other groups from outside the parish should be approved by the parish priest or deacon, several weeks before the wedding.
5. Candelabras are used only for Benedictions, not weddings. Only proper altar candles will be used for weddings.
6. Keeping in mind our starving brothers and sisters throughout the world, no rice will be wasted by throwing it after Mass inside or outside the church. Confetti, seeds and flower petals are not allowed inside or outside the church.
7. Our experience has taught us that plastic cloth and plastic runners in the center aisle are dangerous. Due to this, runners are not allowed for weddings in our church.
8. There is a six month preparation period for couples being married. That is, from the time a couple fills out the preliminary papers with the priest or deacon until the actual wedding date. This time period may be extended for personal or pastoral reasons.
9. No marriage arrangements will be started until the bride and groom are at least 18 years of age.
10. For the wedding to take place in our parish, either the bride or groom should be a registered member of our parish. If neither the bride nor groom is registered in the parish, a letter of permission from the pastor of the parish of the bride is required before the marriage process begins.
11. There is usually one couple acting as witnesses (padrinos) to the wedding ceremony. Padrinos, if married, should have been married through the Catholic Church and be registered in a parish. Padrinos may also be single persons as long as they are living as a single person and are registered in a parish. Only one couple of padrinos should sign the marriage certificate.
12. Photographers are asked to be discreet while taking pictures during the wedding ceremony. We request that photographers not enter the sanctuary of the church while taking pictures.

13. The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish hall is not available to be rented for wedding receptions or wedding showers. Tables and chairs are not available for rental.

14. In cases of mixed marriages (a Catholic marrying a non-Catholic) the Mass will not be celebrated, keeping in mind that there are many non-Catholic relatives of the bride or groom who would not be able to understand or participate, in the Eucharist.

15. One of our deacons will generally be the Church witness for the Sacrament of Marriage in mixed marriages. Because of the shortage of priests in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, a priest may not be able to witness your wedding, in which case, a deacon will be asked to perform the ceremony.

16. As you may know, the church has many expenses for upkeep, maintenance and utilities of our worship space. Therefore we request that all couples who are married at Nativity Church, make a \$200 donation to the parish. If the couple cannot afford this, no donation will be requested. If this is the case, we request that the wedding be kept simple with just a best man, maid of honor, flower girl and ring bearer. The donation should be made before the wedding date is set. If the wedding is cancelled, the donation will be returned to the couple.

17. Documents required:

a. A new copy of the baptism certificate from the parish where the bride and groom were baptized. If either the bride or the groom is not Catholic, a dispensation will be needed from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe before the wedding takes place.

b. A marriage license from the state of New Mexico must be brought to the wedding rehearsal. The license is signed during the wedding ceremony, then mailed to the proper county office. After recording it, the county office will mail it back to the return address given on the envelope. Please make sure the return address on the envelope is the address to which you would like the license to be mailed.

c. A certificate of pre-marriage instructions Engaged Encounter or Marriage Enrichment.

d. \$200 donation

A wedding date will not be set until all the paperwork has been completed and is on file in the parish office. After you read and understand these guidelines, please set up an appointment with the parish priest to begin wedding preparations. We thank you for your cooperation in these manners and we pray that your wedding day will be the beginning of a long and happy married life for the two of you.

We understand these guidelines and agree to abide by them..

Groom_____

Bride_____

Date _____

Date _____