

Your Wedding – A Sacrament of the Catholic Church

St. Joseph's Catholic Church ~ Grand Rapids, Minnesota

We are delighted that you have chosen St. Joseph's Catholic Church for your celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony. We are excited that you desire to begin your new life together with us. Our prayers and support will be with you as you prepare to become husband and wife.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony is rooted in the assembly of the Church; it is not a private family function, nor is it a social affair or a personal expression of your love for one another. Rather, it is an action of the entire Church in whose presence you commit yourselves to one another. The liturgy is neither a show nor a performance and is not enhanced by the presence of passive observers.

In light of this we have developed a set of guidelines and procedures for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony at St. Joseph's. This is to ensure that the sacrament, which you ask to celebrate with us, be of the best theological, liturgical and artistic quality and be an unforgettable moment in your lives.

REMOTE PREPARATION

It is our policy that couples planning to marry [and are free to marry according to the laws of the Church] are to make initial arrangements **AT LEAST SIX MONTHS PRIOR** to the planned wedding date. It is preferable that contact be made one year before the planned date to allow adequate time for marriage preparation. **Please do not reserve a place for your reception and then call the parish. We might not be able to accommodate the date you have chosen.**

No wedding date can be confirmed until after an initial meeting of the couple with one of the parish priests. At this initial meeting, the priest will conduct an interview to obtain the needed information and to ensure that there are no obstacles to the wedding being performed in the Catholic Church. At this session the priest will also discuss with you the guidelines and procedures for planning your wedding here at St. Joseph's.

In addition to planning the wedding liturgy, other paper work must be completed. For Catholics, we must have a copy of your baptismal certificate that has been issued within the past six months from the parish in which you were baptized. [If you were baptized here at St. Joseph's we will have those records on hand.] For a non-Catholic, a baptismal date, church and place should be provided.

All couples are expected to plan their wedding ceremony within the guidelines set forth by the Catholic Church. Booklets are available that give various options or suggestions. One of the basic decisions that a couple will have to make is whether or not the wedding liturgy should be celebrated within the Mass or just as a ceremony. Since we are celebrating unity in the Sacrament of Matrimony, it is appropriate that marriages celebrated between practicing Catholics be celebrated within Mass. If either the bride or groom is not Catholic, a marriage ceremony without a Mass is recommended. The unity of the Sacrament of Matrimony is somewhat diminished when one party of the marriage, and usually their family and friends, cannot receive the Eucharistic. It is not appropriate that non-Catholics receive the Eucharistic.

WEDDING POLICY

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THE CHURCH

The following guidelines should be observed:

1. **FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS:** Floral arrangements should not hide the altar, the presider, or any of the participants and should be tastefully arranged. Flowers are never to be placed on the altar itself. Also, any decorations must reflect the liturgical season in which the wedding takes place, especially during Advent and Lent. Decorations must not be attached to the pews or other furniture by pinning, gluing, nailing, tacking or stapling. Bud vases attached to the pew ends are not allowed. Decorations may be attached by elastic bands, plastic pew clips or ribbons. It will be helpful to contact the Director of Liturgy and Music to find out what will already be in the Church at the time of your wedding. No changes are to be made in the liturgical environment. You may not take down the liturgical colors and replace them with your color scheme.
2. **FOOD AND BEVERAGE:** Food and/or beverages of any kind are not allowed in the Church Sanctuary (or Church proper). The church is a sacred place and is considered to be the house of God. If you are planning to bring a cooler of pop/food to the church for wedding rehearsal or on the day of the wedding, this is to be kept in the social hall/Brides Room.
3. **CHURCH ENVIRONMENT:** It is your responsibility to leave the church, the bride's room, the gathering space and the social hall as you found it. Since you will not be able to attend to this yourself, please arrange to have others do the clean up jobs required. This is normally the function of the ushers and the bridal attendants and includes picking up any copies of the programs, anything left in the pews, removing flowers and bows from the pews, picking up the social hall and bride's room of boxes, flowers, empty bottles, etc. and anything else requested by the priest.

4. AISLE RUNNER: The original intent of the aisle runner was to keep the bride's dress off the dirt floor of an ancient church. Today it is nothing more than a social custom and since it has no significance in the context of the wedding liturgy, it is not allowed.
5. THE PRESIDER: The presider may be a priest or a deacon of the parish, or with the pastor's delegation, another priest or deacon whom you might request. [You must obtain the pastor's approval before asking another priest or deacon to preside at the wedding.] The visiting priest or deacon must observe the guidelines and procedures established by the parish.
6. READERS: It is your responsibility to obtain readers who will proclaim the Sacred Scripture readings. The readers you choose should have experience and ability in public speaking. If your wedding is celebrated within a Mass, the readers should be Catholic.
7. SERVERS: Normally, we do not use servers at a marriage ceremony outside of Mass as there is very little for them to do. If your wedding is celebrated within a Mass and you have some relatives or friends who would like to function as servers, please inform the presider.
8. LIGHTS: Our lights are controlled by a panel of dimmer switches. For Mass we typically set them all on 'max setting' which provide a nice light for celebration, pictures and videos. Please do not "experiment" with them. Please talk with Father if prefer a different lighting plan.
9. RICE, BIRDSEED, ETC.: The throwing of rice, birdseed or anything else is not permitted. This includes blowing bubbles inside the church. You may blow as many bubbles as you want outdoors. The practice of sprinkling flower petals as the bride enters is also not allowed.
10. ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO: Alcohol and tobacco are not allowed on church property. The use of alcohol or any other mood altering substances will absolutely not be tolerated during the rehearsal or on the Wedding Day.
11. PERSONAL ITEMS: Do not leave any personal items lying around. If you prefer we can provide a key to lock up the bride's room. The parish is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
12. FEES: The 'Facility Fee' of \$250 is an offering to the parish. If you would like to make a gift to the priest who witnessed your wedding, you should do so in a separate envelope.
 - Fees for the musicians, cantor and soloist **ARE DUE IN THE PARISH OFFICE TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE WEDDING.**
13. UNITY CANDLE: The Unity Candle is not a part of the Roman Catholic Rite of Marriage and will not be used.

PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS

We realize that pictures are an important part of your wedding, but they should be taken unobtrusively so as not to be distracting to your guests or interfere with the prayerfulness of the Sacrament you are celebrating. It is your responsibility to make arrangements for a photographer and to allow ample time before or after the ceremony for the taking of pictures. Only photos taken by a designated photographer are allowed during the ceremony. After the ceremony begins, video cameras must be stationary.

TIMES FOR WEDDINGS

Weddings may be scheduled at any time or season that does not conflict with other regular church activities or liturgical seasons of the Church. The time of the wedding is to be determined in conjunction with the presider in view of such activities as times for confessions, Mass schedules, and other events occurring in the church that day. The Church must be free of activity from 11:00-12Noon on Saturday mornings to allow for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Church must be cleared of people and decorations 1 hour prior to our Saturday evening Mass (which varies by time of year: During Daylight Savings Time/Spring Ahead: Mass is at 5pm. End of Daylight Savings Time/Fall Back: Mass is at 4pm).

THE REHEARSAL

The rehearsal usually takes place the evening before the wedding at a time agreed upon between the couple and the presider.

MARRIAGE LICENSE: Please obtain your marriage license as soon as possible. [It is valid for a six month period.] You must have some sort of legal residence in Minnesota. You should apply for your license at the courthouse and pick it up at the same place. Do not assume that the courthouse will send you the license. The latest you should give the license to the presider is the wedding rehearsal; however, it is preferable to give it to him earlier as certain information must be typed in before the ceremony. Usually the license is not signed by the couple, but by 2 witnesses chosen by the couple.

WEDDING RECEPTION'S HELD IN OUR SOCIAL HALL:

- Contact our parish secretary to confirm availability/fees for our Social Hall.
- In this instance only - wine may be served with dinner.
 - 2 bottles per table of 8 people.
 - Head table = 1 bottle for every 4 people.
 - Must be complimentary - and not exceed above amount for the entire event.
- You must be sure communicate/confirm this request with Father if you wish to serve wine with the meal at least 1 month prior to the Wedding Reception.

MUSIC POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR WEDDINGS

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Soon after your first meeting with Father, our Music Director will set up a time to meet.

- There MUST be a musician from St. Joseph's Parish present at your wedding.
- You may use other musicians for your wedding liturgy in addition to the "required" parish musician.
- Please contact the Music Director with questions at 326-1663, x21.

Music selections and musicians should be decided at least 2 months prior to the Wedding date.

Music unable to be used during a Wedding Mass/Service:

- Any music that is purely secular in nature, and as such, neglects the sacred union of the wedding couple.
- Popular, operatic, or Broadway musical favorites that merely recall sentimental, personal associations will not be accepted. Such music should be reserved for the wedding reception.
- The so-called "traditional wedding marches" by Wagner and Mendelssohn are not allowed. Both of these compositions are "theater pieces" that have nothing to do with the Sacred Liturgy. The tune, "Here Comes the Bride(Wagner) causes the community to focus on the bride only, when it is clear that the groom is an integral part of the ceremony and married life.
- Songs that do not have an obvious relation to prayer.
- ANY RECORDED MUSIC SUCH AS CD'S AND TAPES.
- Any music that seems ambiguous will need approval from the Music Director.
CONSIDER SELECTING YOUR MUSIC FROM THE LIST OF SUGGESTIONS that Diane is able to provide for you.