



*Celebrating your Wedding
At Saint John Vianney*



**Saint John Vianney Catholic Church
4097-18th Street
Bettendorf, Iowa 52722
563-332-7910
Fax 563-332-0833
office@sjvbett.org**

Updated January, 2020



Saint John Vianney Catholic Church

*4097 - 18th Street
Bettendorf, IA 52722-2120*

*Very Rev. James Vrba, V.F., Pastor
Rev. Nicholas Akindelé, Vicar*

R

With great joy we congratulate you both as you desire to celebrate your marriage as a sacrament in the Catholic Church.

The fact that you have approached Saint John Vianney as you prepare for marriage says something important. First of all, you are interested in celebrating your wedding day within the faith life of the Catholic Church. Secondly, it shows a willingness to grow in your understanding of the meaning of this sacrament so that you may celebrate what you believe.

The Rite of Marriage is not a private action between two people. It is part of the public worship of the Church. You are asking the Church, that is, the People of God, to assent and witness your marriage. Therefore, the entire process is treated with great care.

The parish of Saint John Vianney offers you its help and guidance in every possible way to make your wedding day a memorable occasion. Even more importantly, we wish to help make your vocation of marriage a lasting celebration of Jesus' love.

Marriage preparation involves many people who are concerned about helping you enter into a lifetime of love and grace. This packet includes an outline of our pre-marriage preparation process, the requirements of the universal Church, parish policies, regulations of the State of Iowa, a schedule of fees and a guide for preparing the wedding liturgy.

The companion book, "Together for Life" by Joseph Champlin, is included as a planning guide. In it you will find answers to many often-asked questions about weddings on pages 3-9.

There are also two useful online resources -- www.catholicweddinghelp.com and www.foryourmarriage.org.

We have the greatest hopes that your wedding day will be filled with the grace of God, the spiritual energy of the Holy Spirit, and the loving embrace of Jesus. We believe that through careful preparation and planning for your wedding day and married life, your relationship will be strengthened as you face life's challenges and joys.

May the Lord bless you and us as you prepare for a very special sacrament of grace.

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding!

Rev. James Vrba, Pastor
(563) 332-7910
vrba@diodav.org

Eleanor Kiel, Director of Liturgy and Music
(563) 332-7910
liturgy@sjvbett.org

Rev. Nicholas Akindelé
(563) 332-7910
akindelen@diodav.org

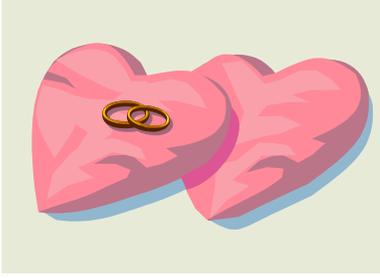
Larry Fitkin, Wedding Coordinator
Tammy Guest, Wedding Coordinator
Lynne Lindstrom, Wedding Coordinator

Daryl Fortin, Deacon
(563) 940-5000
darylfortin@gmail.com

Wedding Preparation Process

- One or both of the bridal couple or their parents must be registered and participating members of St. John Vianney parish. If the couple wants to be married at St. John Vianney, but they do not live in the area, they must be registered and active in a parish where they reside and complete all pre-marital requirements at that parish.
 - Telephone the Parish Office to inquire about a date and time for the wedding and rehearsal **at least nine months in advance of your projected wedding date.**
 - Office staff fill out “Preliminary Wedding Information” form
 - Information is given to priest or deacon
 - The priest or deacon will contact you to set up an informational meeting
 - Informational meeting with priest or deacon
 - Congratulations!
 - Discussion of the sacrament of Matrimony
 - Marriage preparation and wedding policy explained (packet given to couple)
 - Marriage date confirmed – written on parish calendar
 - First part of “Pre-Marital Investigation” form completed
 - Discussion of the wedding in the context of Mass or Scripture Service.
 - Obtain baptismal records with notations and confirmation record and send them to St. John Vianney Church. You will need to contact the parish where you were baptized and confirmed for these documents.
 - Attend a Marriage Preparation Workshop. Attendance is absolutely required for marriage in the Church. An informational sheet and registration form is enclosed.
- You may also visit the Diocese of Davenport website to view the schedule of weekends offered: (davenportdiocese.org – On the home page under “featured links”, click on Marriage Preparation). Or, call 563-888-4242.
- Pre-marriage Inventory (FOCCUS or Prepare-Enrich)– call the Church Office to set up the online registration.
 - FOCCUS or Prepare-Enrich review with the priest or deacon who will be celebrating your marriage with you.
 - At least 4 months before your wedding**, contact the Director of Liturgy and Music (332-7910 x 112) to review the materials to plan your wedding liturgy and schedule wedding musicians (accompanist and cantor). Consult pages 10-13 of the wedding policy. You will also find a CD and a blue handout of wedding music, as well as the book *Together for Life* with the wedding prayers and readings in the folder, which you will use to fill out the light green “Preparing the Wedding Liturgy” forms.
 - Submit fees and wedding license** to the parish office **at least two weeks** prior to wedding. (see page 6 of wedding policy).

Celebrating Marriage in St. John Vianney Parish



The celebration of Christian marriage within a church community is a celebration of the love which unites God and the community as a whole. This love is symbolized in the total self-giving love of man and woman in the Sacrament of Marriage. While it is of deeply personal importance to the individual couple, the wedding ceremony which ushers in their married sacramental life is a public celebration of a worshipping community. As an integral part of this sacrament, the wedding ceremony must reflect and engage the participation of the entire faith community in liturgical prayer. Great care must be taken to see that the prayer of this special moment is reverent, graceful, beautiful, and open to the movement of God's Spirit among us.

Setting the date and time of the wedding and rehearsal:

It is the responsibility of the couple to secure the wedding date with the church before making commitments with reception halls, caterers, etc. One wedding may be celebrated per weekend at St. John Vianney. The standard time for a wedding is Saturday at 2pm (or earlier). The wedding party must exit the church Saturdays by 3:30pm (confessions begin at that time). The standard time for a rehearsal is Friday (the day before the wedding) at 5:30pm. Depending on the parish schedule, a wedding could possibly be scheduled on a Friday evening (with the rehearsal on Thursday, the day before). A wedding could possibly be scheduled on a Saturday during Advent or Lent. Weddings cannot be scheduled on Thanksgiving weekend, between the 4th Sunday of Advent and New Years, or on holidays, i.e., New Year's Eve or the 4th of July.

Marriage License:

Make sure to allow enough time to apply for and receive your marriage license. The civil license must be submitted to the church along with the fees at least two weeks prior to the wedding date. There is an application form with instructions in the folder. The marriage license is signed by the couple and witnesses at the rehearsal. The priest or deacon will sign the license following the actual wedding and send it to the County.

Wedding Rehearsal Guidelines:

Only the immediate members of the wedding party (bride/groom, bridesmaids/ groomsmen, flower girl/ring bearer, parents and ushers) need to attend the rehearsal. The processional will be practiced. Other friends and family members should meet afterwards at the rehearsal dinner. Wedding party members should be prompt. The rehearsal should not last more than 30 minutes if everyone is on time and ready to go. The Parish Wedding Coordinator runs the rehearsal and wedding ceremony. Outside wedding coordinators have no authority in the Church.

Saint John Vianney is not responsible for unattended items left on church property.

No alcohol is allowed in the church or on the church grounds at any time.
Anyone found having consumed alcohol cannot be part of the wedding.

Wedding Fees

The Church office must receive your Marriage License and fees associated with the wedding **at least two weeks prior** to the wedding

(office hours are: Monday-Thursday 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m, Friday 7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.).

St. John Vianney Wedding Fees: Please provide separate checks as follows:

Facility Fee (use of facilities, cleaning, administrative and utility costs): \$100*

Presider: at couple's discretion

Parish Wedding Coordinator: \$150 (custodial duties, liturgical duties, and runs rehearsal)

Organist/Pianist - \$150 (additional \$50 fee for extra rehearsals)

Cantor - \$100 (additional \$50 fee for extra rehearsals)

*an additional fee may be assessed if there are damages to the facility

The Ministers for the Celebration

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the bride and the groom minister the Sacrament of Marriage to one another; a priest or deacon and at least two other witnesses are required to be present.

If the wedding takes place within the context of the Mass, a priest will preside. If the wedding takes place within a Scripture Service (no Communion) a deacon will normally preside. If the ceremony will be celebrated in the context of a Mass, the deacon may assist the priest in his role as presider at the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Director of Music and Liturgy will help couples secure parish music ministers to provide the music for weddings (accompanist and cantor). If the couple requests music ministers other than those available from the parish, these ministers and the musical selections must be approved by the Director of Liturgy and Music. Musicians should be secured approximately four months in advance of the wedding.

The couple is asked to secure lectors (readers) and Eucharistic ministers (if having communion) for their wedding. Family or friends of the couple may serve as readers (usually two are needed). Family or friends of the couple who are trained Eucharistic ministers may distribute communion. If needed, those who serve in the parish as lectors and ministers of the Eucharist are available to serve in these ministries at wedding celebrations. They may be contacted through the Director of Liturgy and Music.

Welcoming your Guests

You have given much thought to inviting family and friends to your wedding. If you were holding a special gathering in your home you would certainly make sure that your guests are welcomed at your door. You wouldn't think of introducing them after the gathering is over.

So, consider both of you being the official greeters and welcome your guests to your wedding. Introduce them to your parents. Invite them to sign the guest book. You will be surprised at what a memorable experience that provides for them and for the both of you!

***See pages 15-16, "New Life for an Old Custom" ***

Preparing for the Liturgy

In consultation with the presider, the couple will determine if the marriage is to be celebrated within a Mass or with a Liturgy of the Word.

The couple will be provided with copies of those Scripture readings most appropriate for weddings as well as the other areas of the celebration where options are available. The couple is encouraged to select readings, prayers, etc., that most reflect the very special relationship they have with each other and with their God.

The Environment of the Worship Space

As part of the preparation for the wedding, the Director of Liturgy and Music will explain to the couple several options for the procession. Seating arrangements of the wedding party will be taken care of at the rehearsal by the wedding coordinator.



Flowers and other Decorations

The worship space is regularly decorated to reflect the liturgical seasons. These decorations should be taken into consideration by the engaged couple when making arrangements for flowers, etc. Because these decorations are part of the on-going life of the Church, it is not appropriate to remove them for the celebration of the wedding, but rather that they be incorporated into the environment of the celebration.

For your use, the church has wooden plant stands of varying heights that can be used for floral arrangements (these match the wood of the altar). Also, there are tall glass cylinder vases available that work well with a plastic insert (the size of a cool whip container) for flowers on the top. These vases may not be taken out of the church.

In keeping with liturgical norms, any flowers placed on the raised area of the sanctuary should be fresh flowers (exceptions are the bridal bouquets). No flower arrangements are to be put in front of, on, or around the altar. We find that flowers work best beside the front candle stands. The glass vases fit well on the step. Also, flowers may be placed in front of or to the side of the ambo. The dropping of flowers/petals/etc. by the flower girl is not allowed.

Pew bows can be attached to the pews with plastic clips (the church has some for your use if interested). Do not use tape or metal clips as they can damage the wood pews. For safety reasons, candles cannot be attached to the pews, nor may any items be placed in the aisles (decorations or otherwise). No swags or bunting, netting or ribbon may be used to tie off pews.

Balloons and the throwing of rice, bird seed, etc. are not allowed. No aisle runners are allowed – with the ceramic tile, it can be dangerous. Please have your florist place all floral arrangements on coasters and not directly on the wood floor or tables.

Keep in mind that depending on the Liturgical season, the church already incorporates flowers and other decorations into various areas of the sanctuary. You may want to consult with a member of the Art and Environment Committee for further information on what will be already in place on your wedding day.

Placement of decorations should not impede the movement of the wedding party.

Photographers

Be sure to share this page with your photographer/videographer!

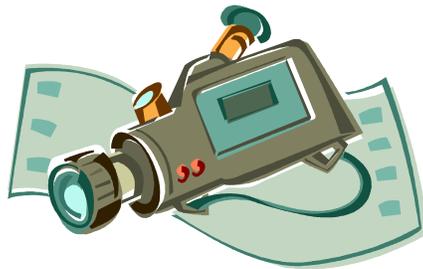
Christian marriage is a sacred event. The sacramental graces sustain the couple throughout their married life, not the pictures or videos. Photography may help to memorialize the event, but the bride and groom must also understand that it is a commercial enterprise for the photographer. In other words, this is how the professional photographer makes a living.

Nonetheless, the sacred liturgy determines the ritual to be observed. That it is a photo opportunity is merely secondary. The photographer does not dictate when and how the ceremony is celebrated.

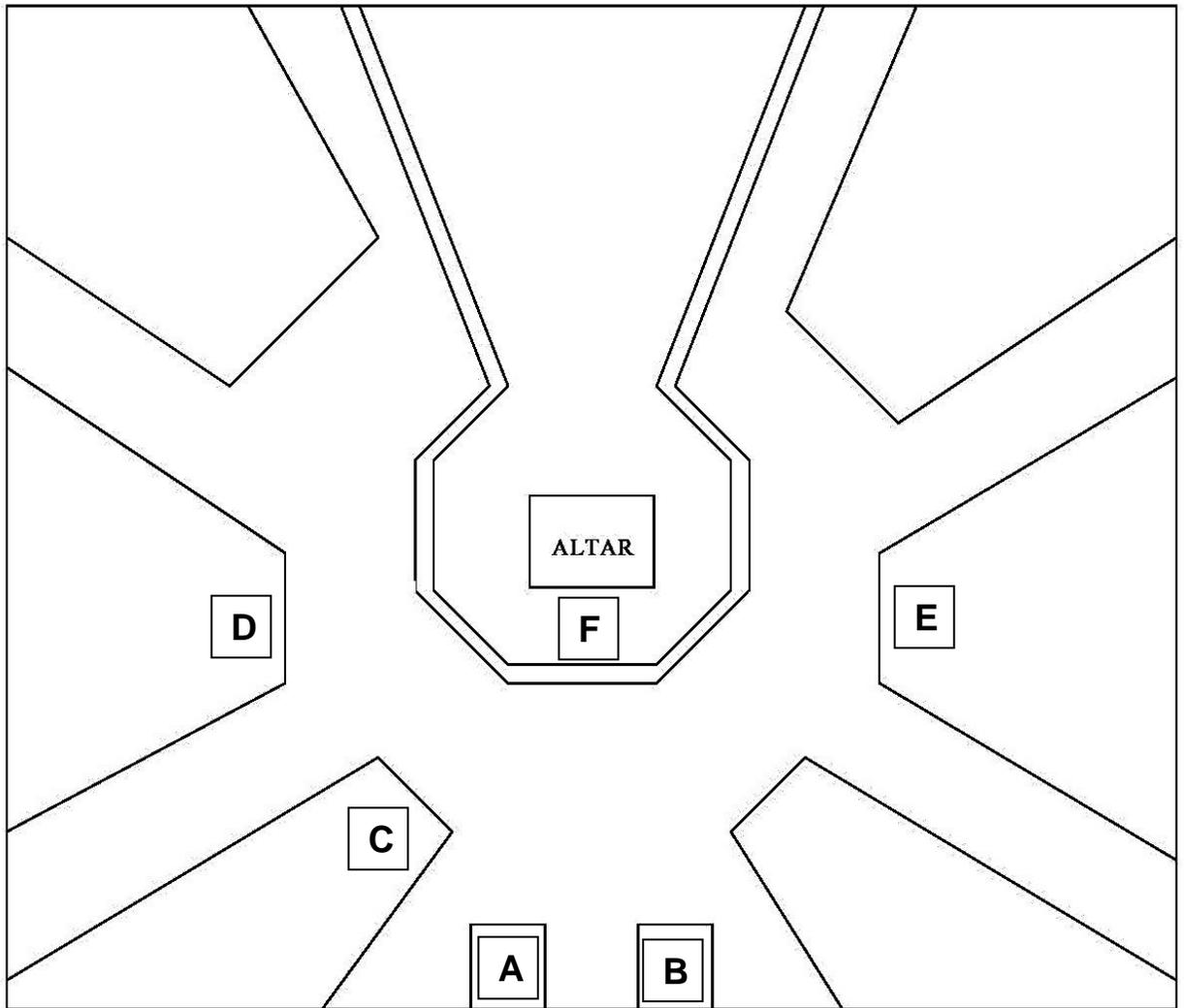
Inform your photographer that the policy and practice of taking pictures before, during, and after the wedding ceremony is well defined and should be followed. The photographer or videographer should inquire about our policy well in advance of your wedding celebration as to when and where photos may be taken. The same courtesy is expected of your wedding guests.

Policy:

1. It is preferable that wedding portraits be taken before the ceremony. Photography must be completed ½ hour before the start of the wedding in order that guests may be seated.
2. During the Mass/wedding ceremony, there will be no flash pictures taken.
3. Once the wedding begins, there should be no moving around to the distraction of clergy, congregation or bridal party.
4. The photographer and videographer are prohibited at all times from the center area inside the large pillars/beams (area surrounding the altar, page 9).
5. Any photos after the ceremony must be completed by 3:30 p.m. since the Sacrament of Reconciliation begins to be celebrated at that time.



Floor plan of St. John Vianney Church



POSITIONS DURING THE WEDDING LITURGY:

After the Opening Procession the wedding party sits in these areas:

- A – Bride’s parents and family
- B – Groom’s parents and family
- C – Bride and Groom
- D – Maid/Matron of Honor and Attendants
- E – Best Man and Attendants

During the actual Rite of Marriage (exchange of vows, etc) the priest or deacon stands in the center aisle by the couples’ parents.

F - The bride and groom stand in front of the altar

The Best Man and Maid of Honor stand on the first step.

The Attendants stand on either side of the altar platform.

Wedding Music Guidelines

In keeping with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops document *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, the music chosen for the wedding liturgy must be selected with the greatest care and concern for the faith life of all participants. Wedding celebrations are liturgy – the public celebration of the faith of the community. Thus, the music for the celebration must reflect the faith of all people present as well as enable those present to express their Christian faith.

Sacred songs which speak directly of the divine-religious dimensions of love are always preferred at a Christian marriage. Secular songs which speak clearly and directly of the divine-religious dimension of love may be allowed if it is judged suitable by the priest and Director of Liturgy and Music. Secular songs which have no reference to, or which negates the divine-religious dimension of love, are unsuitable at a Christian marriage ceremony.

Two outlines are presented here: one for a wedding within Mass and one for a wedding with a Liturgy of the Word.

- †† The moments accompanied by †† are the essential times for music during the wedding liturgy.
- † The † indicates the moments when instrumental music or songs are appropriate. Music is not necessary at those times, however, and they should not be musically more significant than those moments accompanied by ††.

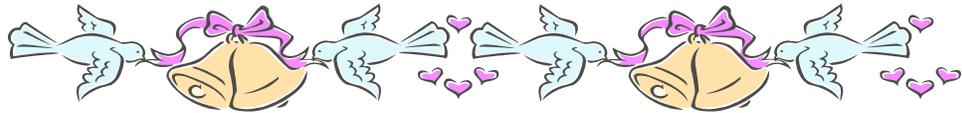
Two parish musicians are needed to provide music for weddings. An accompanist (pianist/organist) is needed to provide the instrumental music for the liturgy. A cantor is needed to proclaim the responsorial psalm and to lead the assembly in their acclamations. The presence of the cantor promotes and enables the assembly's participation.

Dealing With Copyright Permission

The Director of Music and Liturgy will prepare a wedding worship aid for use in your wedding program (see sample in your wedding packet). In this case, the church takes care of copyright permission on your behalf. If you wish to print the music into your program yourself, and forgo the worship aid provided by the parish, you will need to secure reprint permission. Securing reprint permission is generally neither costly nor complicated. Follow these steps, in this order:



1. If any of the music can be found in a hymnal or missalette already in the pew, include in the program a reference number for where to find it.
2. Check with the Director of Liturgy and Music to see if the parish already has a reprint license that covers the music to be reprinted. If so, follow their instructions on what to include in the copyright notice.
3. Write or call the publishing company in question (again, with the Director of Liturgy and Music's assistance, if necessary) to request permission. Most publishers are happy to grant this one-time permission and will be cooperative.



Rite of Marriage During Mass

Introductory Rites

- †† Procession (instrumental)
Welcome
- † Gathering Hymn
Sign of the Cross and Greeting
Glory to God (optional)
Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

- First Reading
- †† Responsorial Psalm (led by cantor, and is sung by all)
Second Reading
- †† Gospel Acclamation (led by cantor, and is sung by all)
Gospel
Homily

Rite of Marriage

- Introduction/Questions Before the Consent
- Consent (Exchange of Vows)
- Acclamation of Assembly (reprise Gospel Acclamation)
- Blessing/Exchange of Rings
- General Intercessions

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- † Preparation of the Gifts and Altar
Eucharistic Prayer
- †† Holy (sung by all)
- †† Memorial Acclamation (sung by all)
- †† Amen (sung by all)

Communion Rite

- Lord's Prayer
- Nuptial Blessing
- Sign of Peace
- †† Breaking of Bread/Lamb of God (led by cantor and sung by all)
- †† Communion Procession (sung by all)
Prayer after Communion

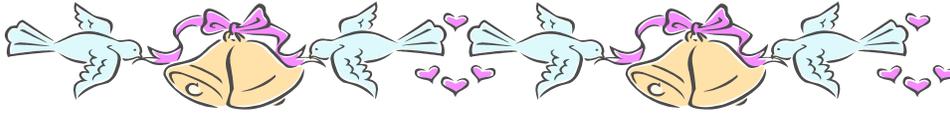
Concluding Rite

- Blessing/Dismissal
- † Recessional (instrumental)

The Church revised the Rite of Marriage in December, 2016. One of the changes concerns the opening procession. It is preferred that both parents accompany the groom and the bride in the opening procession.

The order of procession is:

- 1) the priest
- 2) the attendants as couples
- 3) flower girl and ring bearer (if applicable)
- 4) groom and his parents
- 5) bride and her parents



Rite of Marriage Celebrated with a Liturgy of the Word only:

Introductory Rites

- †† Procession (instrumental)
Welcome
- † Gathering Hymn
Sign of the Cross and Greeting
Glory to God (optional)
Opening Prayer

Liturgy of the Word

- First Reading
- †† Responsorial Psalm (led by cantor, and is sung by all)
Second Reading
- †† Gospel Acclamation (led by cantor, and is sung by all)
Gospel
Homily

Rite of Marriage

- Introduction/Questions Before the Consent
- Consent (Exchange of Vows)
- Acclamation of Assembly (reprise Gospel Acclamation)
- Blessing/Exchange of Rings
- General Intercessions

Concluding Rite

- Lord's Prayer
- Nuptial Blessing
- Sign of Peace
- Blessing/Dismissal
- † Recessional (instrumental)

The Church revised the Rite of Marriage in December, 2016. One of the changes concerns the opening procession. It is preferred that both parents accompany the groom and the bride in the opening procession.

The order of procession is:

- 1) the priest
- 2) the attendants as couples
- 3) flower girl and ring bearer (if applicable)
- 4) groom and his parents
- 5) bride and her parents

*Reprinted from *Handbook of Church Music for Weddings* by Mary Beth Kunde-Anderson and David Anderson.
Copyright 1992 © Archdiocese of Chicago. All Rights Reserved.
Liturgy Training Publications, 1800 N. Hermitage Ave., Chicago, IL 60622-1101
Used with permission.

Optional Rituals

The primary symbol of the sacrament of marriage is your unconditional love for each other that you express as you profess your vows to each other. Your exchange of vows “make” the sacrament take place.

The giving of rings is the outward sign of your inner sacramental love for each other that you expressed in your vows.

Additional expressions of unity are nice, but think about how many are really necessary. When do they become too repetitive or overshadow your vows?

The Unity Candle:

No one seems really clear about the origin of the Unity Candle. Some claim it was popularized by the 1981 wedding of television’s Luke and Laura on General Hospital, although there’s evidence of its use in the mid-1970s. Some sources claim it was developed as a way to sell couples three pounds of wax for \$50 dollars.

In many Catholic churches, the Unity Candle is discouraged or prohibited. It isn’t part of our wedding ritual. Liturgy requires inculturation, but it’s not clear that a Unity candle is part of anyone’s culture.

The fact is, we Catholics already have a powerful symbol of love and unity at our nuptial masses, one that connects us to our families, the whole community of faith, and the communion of saints. We have the Eucharist. For Catholics, that’s a symbol of unity you can’t hold a candle to.

The Blessing/Giving of the Arras:

The Blessing/Giving of the Arras (Coins)—important for Hispanic and Filipino cultures—have already been approved for use in the United States in Spanish since 2010. Making them available in English translation is intended for occasions when one of the spouses has this cultural background but the other does not speak Spanish, or where both couples have this cultural background, but have become more accustomed to English than Spanish.

The word arras literally means “pledge.” Usually, the arras consists of a small cask containing thirteen gilded or plated coins symbolizing prosperity. The formula which both bride and groom say to each other during the exchange of the arras highlights their commitment to share together all the goods which they will receive during their married life.

The Blessing/Placing of the Lazo or Veil

The Blessing/Placing of the Lazo or Veil is another optional ritual which has cultural significance in the Hispanic and Filipino traditions. The lazo is a type of lasso or yoke to symbolize the marriage union. Its most usual form is a double-looped rosary; one loop goes over the groom’s shoulders and the other over the bride’s with the cross hanging between them. The two are now tied together for life, so to speak. To use the biblical expression, they become “one flesh.”

The veil seems to have had its origins as a symbol of both a dying to one’s past self (like a funeral pall) and as a protection from danger (like a cloak or protective covering). While the woman wears the veil, it is placed over the shoulder of the man and oftentimes the lazo helps to hold it in place. It is usually placed just before the Nuptial Blessing, since the Nuptial Blessing, symbolized by the veil, is the “protection” which the Church offers the newly married couple.

Reprinted from www.foryourmarriage.org, an initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Creating a Personal Wedding Program - optional

The program for a wedding has two main functions:

1. to be a guide for the participation of all the guests, Catholics and non-Catholics; and
2. to serve as a keepsake remembrance of the celebration, listing all who was involved in the wedding liturgy.

Who puts the program together? Couples can prepare and print the wedding program, with assistance from the Director of Liturgy and Music, who will provide a wedding worship aid. Programs can range from a single 8-1/2 by 11 inch page folded to several pages with congregational music reprinted and special messages/ acknowledgements from the couple.



What should be included?

The following items may be included:

1. **The names of those involved in the liturgy;**
 - a) bride and groom, date/location, celebrant
 - b) parents, grandparents, other family members/friends involved in the liturgy, including attendants, ring bearers, servers, ushers, musicians, readers. If desired, the relationship to the couple (i.e., brother of the groom) may be included.
2. **Special messages from the couple;** The wedding liturgy itself contains much of the rich language that blessed the union and expresses the theology of marriage, so a couple needn't add that to the program. It is appropriate, however, for the couple to extend a written invitation for their guests to participate actively in prayer and song, and extend gratitude to parents, guests and others for their love, support and encouragement.
3. **An Order of Service;** a guide to what happens during the service and congregational music. The more comprehensive this listing is the more helpful it will be to those of the guests who are not Catholic. **You only need to include an order of service if you request not to have the Director of Liturgy and Music prepare a worship aid for you.**
4. **Music.** Often the titles and composers of instrumental and vocal music are listed. **You only need to include the music if you request not to have the Director of Liturgy and Music prepare a worship aid for you.**

The Director of Music and Liturgy will prepare a wedding worship aid (which looks like a simple Sunday worship aid, with the music scanned in) to aid the participation of those gathered in sung and spoken prayer. You can simply use this worship aid for your ceremony, and skip the personal program. However, there may not be space to include the names of those involved and messages from the couple. Please consult with the Director to see what your worship aid will look like, and if there is room to add the names of attendants and a personal message.

Did You Know.....

Bridesmaids and Groomsmen:

The custom of having the bridesmaids dress like the bride and the groomsmen like the groom was a way of protecting the bride and groom from evil spirits. If all the women were dressed similarly and all the men were dressed similarly, the evil spirits would not know who the real bride and groom were, and, thus, could not bother the couple!

Hiding the Bride from the Groom:

The custom whereby the groom is not permitted to see the bride before the wedding dates from a time when most marriages were arranged by the groom and the bride's father. In return for his daughter, the father received money or some other commodity from the groom. Often, the groom did not even meet his bride until the wedding when he made payment to the father. If the groom did not like what he saw, he could call off the wedding, and the father would not receive his payment. To avoid the possibility of such "bad luck," the father did not permit the groom to see the bride until the time of the transaction.

New Life for an Old Custom, by Ken and Barb Waldmiller



More and more couples are becoming involved in the hospitality extended to guests arriving for the wedding celebration. Here is a wonderful story from a couple who greeted their arriving guests personally while building in some quiet time before the wedding for that special moment when they saw one another in their wedding clothing for the first time.

As we began preparations for our wedding, we realized one of the most important elements we wanted to stress was hospitality. Friends and family are important to each of us and we wanted to convey that message as well as we possibly could. We wanted to make our guests feel welcome at the 'biggest day of our lives,' and one of the best ways we felt we could do that was for both of us to be at the front doors of the church greeting people as they came to the wedding.

Months before the wedding, upon hearing the rumor of this 'untraditional' beginning, relatives and friends tried desperately to help us 'see the error of our ways – before it was too late!' When confronted with comments like "you can't do that; it's bad luck," 'What will your aunts say?' and "It's simply not done," we recalled some of the background of popular wedding customs (see above). Then we asked a simple question of each of our naysayers: 'Would you invite people to your home for a meal and not greet them at the door?'" The resounding answer was, "Of course not!" We explained that we felt the same principle applied to the wedding. We saw one of our primary roles as host and hostess and it would simply be inhospitable not to greet people who came to celebrate with us.

Then came the dilemma: what about that first time he sees her in her bridal gown and she sees him 'dressed to the nines?' We talked a lot about that moment. We wanted it to be a very special time for the two of us. In the 'traditional' option, only the groom is seen before the wedding and the bride is secluded away in a dimly lit, uncomfortable room separated from all the festivities. The first time he sees her and vice versa is a very powerful, intimate moment shared with 250 other people! We wanted to find a way to share that moment with each other. Our solution was to have Ken pick Barb up on the way to church.

When Ken arrived at the house, Barb went to a room in a quiet part of the house. Ken went to the room and opened the door. The moment was very powerful for each of us. He looked so handsome and she radiated with happiness. We stared at each other for a few moments, frozen partly because the magnitude of the step we were taking was finally sinking in and partly because we were nervous, excited and speechless all at once! To be able to have this time alone with each other and not have to share it with anyone else for a while was precious to us. As we rejoined the rest of the people in the house, we were met with raves of joy and tears of happiness. The photographer, who was at the house too, was able to get some great pictures that he otherwise would have missed.



Arriving at the church, we both went to the front doors and greeted each person who arrived for our wedding. We were having so much fun seeing friends and family, we weren't as nervous as we expected we might be, and the whole atmosphere of the church was festive. Our witnesses and parents were also at the door and they had a great time; neither mother cried as much as we feared because they were too busy having fun!

By beginning our wedding celebration this way, we also eliminated another 'traditional' trap: the receiving line. The idea of standing for well over an hour making little more than small talk with people who were important to us and who had come to celebrate with us while the rest of our guests began the reception festivities without us, went against the sense of hospitality we had tried to impart for our wedding liturgy. Without the receiving line, we were able to enjoy the reception with everyone else. We were able to take advantage of that extra time and spend more time with our guests.

So, with a little bit of planning and ingenuity, we were able to begin our married life symbolizing the graciousness and hospitality that we hope to emulate throughout the rest of our lives together.

Barb Conley Waldmiller
And Ken Waldmiller
Married June 23, 1990
St Michael Church, Syracuse, NY

Reprinted from "Celebrating Marriage: Preparing the Roman Catholic Wedding Liturgy", Paul Covino, ed., Pastoral Press, Portland, OR, pages 2, 24-26.