



Liturgical Guidelines for the Sacrament of Marriage

- To receive the Sacrament of Marriage fruitfully, the spouses are strongly advised to receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. [CIC can. 1065 #2]
 - The Sacrament of Reconciliation should be received as close to the wedding date as possible such as after the rehearsal or the morning of the wedding.
- It is advised to discourage marriage celebrations on Sundays and certain holy days and seasons (e.g. Holy Thursday through Easter). Also “When a marriage is celebrated during Advent or Lent or other days of penance, the parish priest should advise the couple to take into consideration the special nature of these times.” (Rite of Marriage 11) This would affect the texts/readings of the day that must be used rather than the readings for the Rite of Marriage. Decoration of the worship space will also be minimal to none.
- The sacred nature of the Mass must be respected in any celebration. Care must be taken when advising couples in liturgical planning.
 - It is imperative that parish guidelines be given to the couples preparing for marriage. The parish guidelines should incorporate:
 - Liturgical needs including lectors, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, altar servers, cantor and organist who is familiar with liturgical celebrations.
 - Explanation of the need to use sacred music to respect the sanctity of the Mass. (USCCB Guidelines can be found in *Music in Divine Worship*).
 - Photographers should be advised to be respectful of the Liturgy and are not allowed into the sanctuary area during the Liturgy.
 - Couples cannot write their own vows.
 - Information on the readings to choose from should be provided. (e.g. the book ***Together for Life*** by Joseph M. Champlin; www.togetherforlifeonline.com)
 - The Liturgy is Sacred
 - All present at the Sacrament of Marriage are to be active witnesses and participants beyond the wedding party. A worship aid to enable full participation is advised.
 - The ceremony is to take place in a Catholic Church or Chapel. No ceremonies allowed on the beach.
- If the Marriage is taking place between two baptized Catholics, the Rite for Celebrating Marriage during Mass is strongly encouraged. If the Marriage is between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, the Rite for Celebration of Marriage outside of Mass is to be encouraged. The non-Catholic is not given Communion if Mass is celebrated (RM 8).
- If it is determined that the bride, groom or witnesses are inebriated, the Sacrament cannot take place.

Familiaris Consortio 67

“Inasmuch as it is a sacramental action of sanctification, the celebration of marriage-inserted into the liturgy, which is the summit of the Church's action and the source of her sanctifying power (166) must be per se valid, worthy and fruitful...

...Inasmuch as it is a sign, the liturgical celebration should be conducted in such a way as to constitute, also in its external reality, a proclamation of the word of God and a profession of faith on the part of the community of believers. Pastoral commitment will be expressed here through the intelligent and careful preparation of the Liturgy of the Word and through the education to faith of those participating in the celebration and in the first place the couple being married.

Inasmuch as it is a sacramental action of the Church, the liturgical celebration of marriage should involve the Christian community, with the full, active and responsible participation of all those present, according to the place and task of each individual: the bride and bridegroom, the priest, the witnesses, the relatives, the friends, the other members of the faithful, all of them members of an assembly that manifests and lives the mystery of Christ and His Church. For the celebration of Christian marriage in the sphere of ancestral cultures or traditions, the principles laid down above should be followed.”

For further information on Familiaris Consortio and the Pontifical Council for the Family's document on Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage visit the Vatican website www.vatican.va

Pope John Paul II. ([On the Family/Familiaris Consortio](#)) December 15, 1981.

This is a foundational document on the nature and tasks of the Christian family and the scope of pastoral care needed by families. It describes marriage as a covenant relationship and the family as domestic church.

[Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage](#), May 13, 1996.

This document provides extended commentary and guidelines on the importance of preparation for Christian marriage, the stages of preparation, and the celebration of marriage.