

CELEBRATING MARRIAGE AT ST. JOSEPH CHURCH

[updated 4/17/10]

INTRODUCTION:

Weddings are special and joyful times for brides and grooms, for their families and friends, and for the parish community. We are happy that St. Joseph Parish will play a part in this sacred and blessed event in your lives. Know that we will do everything we can to make your wedding a memorable and beautiful occasion. Feel free at any time over the next months to call upon us to answer any questions or provide whatever help we can, to prepare you as a couple for this momentous event in your life.

You can help by keeping in mind that your wedding remains essentially a very sacred and religious event. A life-time promise of committed love is about as profound a human event as there can be. Great care should be taken to see that the prayer for this special moment is reverent, graceful, beautiful, and open to the movement of God's Spirit among us. Finally we hope that, together, we will plan a wedding that will convey to all, the sacredness and beauty of what is occurring.

Our only norm is that, whatever is planned, it should communicate to all present the dignity and sacredness of what you are about to do. Everything in your wedding should speak of committed love and dedication. We hope that your wedding day will be the happiest ever.

In this spirit, St. Joseph Parish provides the following guidelines for celebrating weddings in the parish Church.

1. WHO MAY BE MARRIED:

Marriage is a once-in-a-lifetime commitment. In order to be married at St. Joseph Church, both parties must be free to marry (i.e. never been married before). If one or both of the parties have been married before, an annulment from the Catholic Church must first be granted regardless if the party is Catholic or not. In addition to being free to marry the following must also be in effect:

- *One or both parties must be a registered, participating member of St. Joseph Church.*
- *One or both parties must be attending Sunday Mass on a regular basis.*
- *If one of the party is Catholic but not a registered member of St. Joseph Parish, permission must be granted from the pastor of the parish where the party belongs.*
- *The couple must successfully complete a Marriage Preparation Program.*

2. SETTING THE DATE AND TIME OF THE WEDDING:

Couples are expected to contact the parish priest at LEAST SIX MONTHS in advance of the date on which they hope to celebrate their wedding. Weddings are scheduled with respect to the couple's wishes and the availability of the Church building and the parish priest.

Weddings are usually scheduled on Saturdays from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. It is also possible to schedule a morning wedding on Saturday. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays and on occasion, they may be celebrated on Fridays. Because of the Saturday evening mass and reconciliation, couples are asked to vacate the Church by 4:00 p.m. Wedding parties are asked observe the time limit for the ceremony and post-ceremony activities, (usually no more than 2 hours). There are certain weekends in the year when weddings are not scheduled. (i.e. Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday Weekend, Christmas Eve/Day, Christmas Weekend)

3. MINISTERS FOR THE CELEBRATION:

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the bride and groom minister the sacrament of marriage to one another; a priest and at least two witnesses are also required to be present.

Ordinarily, the priest of the parish will preside at weddings in the parish. Priest relatives are also welcomed to preside with the approval of the pastor. Likewise, the parish music minister is available to provide music for weddings. However, other musicians and soloists are welcomed. Regardless, all couples must meet with the parish music minister in regards to all music and wedding music in particular. Common courtesy is to inform the parish priest of any visitors as soon as possible.

4. MARRIAGE PREPARATION:

All couples are required to participate in an approved marriage preparation program. St. Joseph offers its own preparation program in which most couples are expected to participate. For those who participate in programs other than St. Joseph's, a written letter or certificate stating successful completion of the program is required. The Marriage Preparation Program consists of:

- **Meetings with Priest:** All couples will meet with the priest to begin the preparation program. The couple usually meets with the priest three times. Unusual circumstances may necessitate more sessions. A pre-marriage assessment inventory tool (FOCCUS) is part of these meetings.
- **Engaged Encounter Weekend/Retreat Day:** After completing the meetings with the priest, the engaged couple is expected to participate in either "God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage" diocesan retreat day OR a Catholic Engaged Encounter weekend. Information will be given when the couple meets with the priest.

5. PERMISSION AND BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATES:

If the bride or groom is not a registered member of St. Joseph Parish it is necessary for the non-member to receive permission from their parish church. This can be obtained by calling the pastor of the parish in which they belong. Likewise, all Catholics must obtain a recent copy of their baptismal certificate. This can be obtained by calling the parish in which they were baptized and asking for a certificate. Those who are not Catholic but baptized must also present a recent certificate/letter testifying to their baptism as well.

6. PARISH WEDDING COORDINATOR:

The Parish Wedding coordinator is here to assist you in the planning of your wedding celebration. The coordinator can offer valuable advice and insights into planning the celebration as well as to your environment. The coordinator will conduct the rehearsal and assist you on the wedding day. The coordinator's fee is \$150.00. St. Joseph's coordinator is Chuck Casalicchio (216-544-7332).

7. WHETHER OR NOT TO HAVE A MASS:

It is first important to understand the difference between a wedding ceremony and a wedding with Mass. When a wedding is celebrated at Mass, the rite of marriage takes place after the homily and before the prayers of the faithful; the Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows. When a wedding is celebrated outside of Mass, the rite of marriage takes place after the homily and before the prayers of the faithful. The ceremony then concludes with prayers and blessings. In both rites, the Liturgy of the Word remains the same. Likewise, practices such as the wedding candle, visitation, sign of peace may be included in both.

The following should be considered when deciding on the type of ceremony:

- *What is our relationship to the Sunday Eucharist?*
- *Are we faithful to the Church's Sunday prayer?*
- *Are we committed to returning and participating on a regular basis in the Sunday worship?*
- *Is Mass or a Ceremony the better context for the celebration of our wedding?*
- *Who will be your guests?*
- *Is the celebration of the Eucharist the best way to help your guests to be with you and pray with you?*
- *Will they feel included?*

If a good number of your family and friends are from outside the Catholic community, you may want to consider celebrating your wedding outside the context of Mass.

Finally, some think that a couple is not really married, or that the ceremony was not completely Catholic unless the wedding takes place at Mass. This is simply not true. The celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage can, but does not have to be, celebrated with Mass. Consideration should be given to the quality and degree by which the parties and those in attendance can participate and understand their participation. Your decision should be based on that which will provide the best context for prayer and celebration.

8. MUSIC:

The music at the wedding liturgy sets the tone for many levels of experience. It is one of the most creative and exciting elements of the liturgy. Its purpose is to draw people into the celebration and foster their participation in a way that words can never do. It is an expression of the assembly's prayer and praise to God. At its root, music is not something to be listened too, but a vehicle to foster fuller participation by all those present. Choices should reflect this consideration.

The parish music minister is Bill Davies. You may contact him for an appointment by calling 330-990-0267 or email at musvad@gmail.com. This should be done as soon as possible. It is asked that all couples meet with the parish musician to discuss the music at the ceremony. We ask that you keep in mind the sacred nature of your wedding event and select music that is liturgically permitted. The parish musician is available to help in selecting appropriate music. Likewise, vocalists and other musicians are permitted and the parish musician can assist in making these options available. Guest musicians should have knowledge of church music and liturgical experience. Please be aware that information regarding payment for all musicians and vocalists is the responsibility of the couple. If another organist is chosen, the parish musician still receives a bench fee (ie. normal stipend for a wedding).

9. ENVIRONMENT AND FLOWERS:

The environment is an important part of your wedding celebration. However, please remember that “more does not mean better!” The sanctuary will always contain some environmental setting depending on the various liturgical times of the year. This setting must be respected, and it may not be changed or moved. It may, however, be added to through simple floral arrangements and plants. Every attempt should be made to see that flowers, plants and trees, are genuine and real. Floral arrangements may be left in the Church, or couples may wish to take them to the reception. Couples are asked to contact the parish priest or wedding coordinator for additional information.

We ask that you observe the following:

- *Be aware that at certain times of the year (Christmas, Easter, Lent, Advent) there will be extensive sanctuary decorations; rearrangement of these decorations is prohibited. Floral arrangements may not be placed on the altar.*
- *Floral arrangements should not in any way impede the approach to the altar or the ritual movement or action.*
- *Pew decorations are optional, if used, the pews are not to be marred or defaced in any way.*
- *Candelabras in the sanctuary are optional. A plastic covering must be on the carpet to avoid wax damaging the carpet.*

Couples are to see that the florist or an appointed person remove all the decorations (except flowers if they are being left) after the ceremony and before the Saturday evening mass.

10. OTHER CUSTOMS:

- **UNITY CANDLE:** The practice of lighting a “unity candle,” during the ceremony is an option for the couple. The unity candle is usually a trio of candles, two small and one large, with the expectation that the bride and groom share in lighting the larger candle with the light from the two smaller candles. If the unity candle is to be included, the candles are to be simple, non-decorative white candles. The candle holder should be plain and simple. Flowers should not be placed around the candles. The couple is responsible for providing the candles and stand if this is to be part of the ceremony.
- **FLOWERS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN:** The practice of visiting the Blessed Virgin Mary statue is an option for all couples. In order for this gesture to have a fuller meaning, it is presumed that the faith of the couple embraces a devotion and dedication to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In exercising this option, please remember that the gesture, movement, song and flower should remain simple and reverent.
- **BIRDSEED, RICE AND BALLOONS:** Due to insurance and liability the throwing of birdseed, rice, etc. after the ceremony is prohibited. Likewise due to environmental concerns the releasing of balloons, while permitted is not encouraged.
- **AISLE RUNNER:** The practice of a white aisle runner became common when Church floors were dirt and unfinished. The main purpose was to protect the wedding party’s clothing. Because of safety concerns and protection of the carpet, aisle runners are NOT permitted.

11. PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOS:

The liturgy during which you celebrate your marriage is a sacred moment. While we understand your desire to record this moment, we ask you to observe the following so that the sacred joy of this day will not be marred by photo and taping equipment and those who operate it:

- *Please instruct all professional photographers and videographers to speak with the priest before the wedding.*
- *Photographers and videographers may not enter the sanctuary or obstruct the assembly's view at any time for pictures.*
- *Once the ceremony has begun movement should be kept at a minimum.*
- *Post-ceremonial pictures may be taken provided there is no conflict with scheduled liturgies.*
- *Wedding parties are asked to remain reverent and respectful of the sanctuary.*
- *Please, no pictures in front of the tabernacle or in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel area.*
- *Consider prohibiting the taking of pictures by non-professionals so as not to disrupt the service.*

12. REHEARSAL:

Rehearsals are usually in the evening a day or two before the wedding. Punctuality is appreciated since there may be more than one rehearsal that evening. All members of the bridal party are expected to attend.

13. PARTICIPANTS IN THE WEDDING:

Your family and friends have an important role in your wedding celebration. Their support is shown by their active participation in the prayers and responses. In addition to the wedding party, couples are encouraged to involve others in the ceremony. Friends and family members may read a reading from Scripture, lead the prayers of the faithful or present the bread and wine. Children under the age of 5 as part of the wedding party are not encouraged. Members of the clergy from other faiths are most welcome to participate in the ceremony as well

14. FEES:

The question about fee's for the Church and a gift to the priest is often a concern for the couple. There is no charge for the use of St. Joseph Church. As a member of the parish you have a right to the Church building to the extent that we are able to provide it. The musician will inform the couple of the stipend for her services as well as for other musicians and vocalists in advance. The priest celebrant is free to accept any offering that might be made and that offering should be in line with any other expenses incurred in the wedding. It is the responsibility of the couple to see that all stipends are promptly distributed. As a courtesy, payment should be made before the ceremony and can be given to the wedding coordinator at the rehearsal.

15. LICENSE:

A civil license is to be obtained and presented to the priest before the ceremony, usually 3-4 weeks beforehand. After the ceremony the priest will give the wedding license to the couple before they depart from the Church. Portage County residents may apply at the Portage County Building in Ravenna.

16. ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE:

The use of alcohol or any other illegal substance prior to the wedding ceremony will not be tolerated. The priest reserves the right to cancel or postpone the ceremony immediately if any one in the wedding party or family is suspected of being intoxicated or using alcohol or illegal substances. The wedding ceremony will not be allowed to start until the person(s) have left Church property.

17. CHURCH MAINTENANCE:

We are happy to have you celebrate your wedding here at St. Joseph. We ask that you be aware, that normally there are other events scheduled on the same day as your wedding. Please respect the time restrictions for weddings, and in all reasonableness, we also ask that the Church be left in the same order in which you found it. The bride and her party may use the All-Purpose Room in the Church before the ceremony. After the wedding, we ask that the room be left in order and that all belongings be taken.

18. SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

The Sacrament of Reconciliation, if desired or needed, should be received prior to rehearsal. The Sacrament is offered before the 5:00 p.m. Saturday Mass (4:00-4:30 p.m.) by appointment. The bride and groom should advise members of the wedding party and family of this opportunity to receive the Sacrament.

CONCLUSION:

The above information has been provided to help you in your planning of your wedding. It is hoped that the day and celebration will be one of beauty and lasting memory for the two of you. If you have any concerns or further questions do not hesitate to call the Parish Office (330-274-2253).