



ST. PATRICK PARISH

The Sacrament of Marriage Parish Celebration Guidelines

This booklet is an aid and guideline towards the proper preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony at Saint Patrick Parish.

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Table Of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Introduction.....	3
What God Has Joined.....	3
Marriage in the Church: An Icon of Your Lasting Faith.....	4
Common Situations.....	5
This We Believe.....	5
The Marriage Preparation Program.....	6
Six Month’s Notice	6
Opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.....	6
Teen Marriages	6
Pregnancy / Second Marriages.....	7
Setting the Date	7
Documents.....	8
Preparing the Liturgy.....	8
Rehearsal.....	9
The Wedding Liturgy.....	9
The Ministers / The Assembly.....	9
Bride & Groom / Presider.....	10
Lector (Reader) / Ministers of Holy Communion.....	10
Music Ministers / Witnesses.....	11
Attendants / Ushers / Children.....	11
Master & Mistress of Ceremonies (Host/Hostess).....	11
The Order of Liturgy.....	12-13
Inter-Faith Marriages.....	13
Other Details.....	14
Dress / Bridal Room / Use of the Church Building & Parish Hall.....	14
Photography & Videography.....	15
Church Environment / Clean Up / Fees & Stipends.....	15-16
Music at Your Wedding.....	16
Music is Prayer.....	16
Some Guidelines.....	17
Location of Music within the Liturgy.....	17-18
Conclusion.....	18

Agreement & Signature Page.....19

This last page is to be signed by the Bride and Groom and given to the Priest or Deacon of St. Patrick Parish. It is an agreement by the Wedding Couple that they have read and agree to abide by the wedding policies of St. Patrick Parish. Once this page has been returned to the Priest or Deacon and any fees that may apply have been paid, then the wedding date will be finalized in the Parish Wedding Book.

Introduction

“The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator... Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament.”

“The Sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church. It gives spouses the grace to love each other with the love with which Christ has loved His Church; the grace of the sacrament thus perfects the human love of the spouses, strengthens their indissoluble unity, and sanctifies them on the way to eternal life.”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1660-1661.)

You have asked to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage within the St. Patrick Parish Community. We are excited to explore with you the true significance of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony and its importance to both you and the Church. This booklet is intended to inform, guide, and aid you through some common questions concerning the practical and spiritual preparations for marriage. The Table of Contents found in the front of the booklet offers a brief overview and guide for those planning and celebrating a Catholic wedding.

At St. Patrick Parish, our goal is for a truly Catholic, Christian, and holy celebration of the Marriage Sacrament. We believe that this sacrament is the *action of Christ within your lives*. As with any sacrament, the recipient must stand before Christ, prayerfully disposed, maturely aware, and as a faith-filled member of His Body, the Church. We hope this booklet, along with our common effort in the upcoming months, may help you approach your wedding day faithfully prepared before God to receive the seal of the Holy Spirit upon your new covenant as husband and wife.

What God Has Joined

God Himself is the author of Holy Matrimony and Jesus Christ Our Lord abundantly blesses this multi-faceted love. We see in the Old Testament that God was made present to His people through a covenant of love and fidelity, so now Christ and His Church joins the lives of married Christians through the Sacrament of Matrimony. It is an intimate union, which involves total fidelity and a permanent oneness between the spouses for their own sake and the good of their children. *‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.’* (Matt. 19: 5, 6)

Marriage is an everlasting conviction of holy love. Christians believe that all human love is a reflection of the single-minded, passionate, and total commitment of God to His creation as personified in Jesus Christ. Therefore, when Christian marriage is properly understood

Marriage is by its very nature perpetual and exclusive; strengthened and consecrated by God through the grace of the sacrament. It is the promise of a man and a woman, before God, to present the love of Christ to one another. By their pledge of obligations and duties, they proceed through life together to live out the mystery of God's perfecting love and grace in this world.

Marriage is a source and sign of God's presence in our community and the world. It is to emulate the Holy Family of Jesus Christ as a modern source of self-sacrifice, abundant Christian charity, confidence in the Lord's care, and as a foundation of deep conviction for us to live moral lives to build up the Church and witness to the salvation of souls.

"Because of the seriousness of the vocation of Christian marriage, the Church has an obligation to do all that it can to preserve the dignity of marriage and offer its members the guidance and support that will help to prepare a couple for their married life." (Sacramental Handbook for the Diocese of Grand Rapids)

Marriage in the Church: An Icon of Your Lasting Faith

A Catholic parish is the local faith center established for the Christian service of the surrounding faithful community. *It is the place where all the faithful can be gathered together for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life: it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ's saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love.* (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2179.) By active participation in the parish community, we commit ourselves to God's plan for the world as well as provide a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and his Church.

In order to receive the Sacrament of Marriage as a member of St. Patrick Parish, it is necessary that either the bride or groom is a Catholic and has been a registered and financially active supporting member of the parish for a time period before requesting to celebrate their marriage in the parish. For Catholics, **active parish participation is expected for six months prior to requesting to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage.** While new parishioners are always welcome, we do not register persons for the sole purpose of being married in the parish.

This parish community incorporates faith, hope, and trust in God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. It presents a Christian faith that is formed in the presence of the sacraments, in a community of believers, and in participation in the Catholic Church. This formation reaches to all parts of the human person, and defines our lifelong struggle to live our lives in response to the message of the Gospels. To be a registered, active, and financially supporting member of a parish means that you have acknowledged the message of the Gospels and are striving to live Christian lives of prayer, moral uprightness according to the teachings of the Church, loving service to your neighbor, ongoing education in your faith, social investment in this community, and participation through your presence at Sunday Mass and holy days of Obligation.

Common Situations

“I was raised Catholic. I have not been to Church in a long time, but still consider myself Catholic and would like to get married in a Catholic Church.”

A marriage at St. Patrick Parish is not a celebration of past faith, but rather a sacrament celebrated by those who currently and openly confess themselves as members of the Catholic faith community. It would be unfitting for a young couple to confess: “I loved you a few years ago, so I want to marry you now.” Similarly, the Christian wedding requires presently existing Christian faith.

“Well, I will be interested in more participation sometime in the future.”

Wonderful! We will support your faith in every way we can, however, would you marry someone who said to you, “I want to marry you now, and I am sure that I will love you once we are married?” Likewise, it is unfitting to request a marriage at the parish now with only a promise of future relationship with the Church.

At St. Patrick Parish, we understand and wish to respect these very real life situations. Through it all, our main goal is to promote and serve your faith. This is important because a Christian wedding is more than just a public statement of your love for your fiancé. To aid us in our service, we ask that you are honest in regard to your own commitment toward your faith.

This We Believe

Christian marriage arises in a covenant, an irrevocable promise, which each partner freely offers and accepts from the other. The intimacy of this union and the good of the children that may flow from it make necessary a total faithfulness from each of the partners, which builds a foundation of unbreakable oneness between them.

By its very nature, the institution of wedded love in matrimony is ordained for the generation and education of children and finds in this its ultimate crown. Christian couples, therefore, nourish and develop their marriage by undivided affection, which springs from the fountain of God’s love. In that merging of the love of God and the love of their partner, they find the strength to remain faithful in heart and mind, in good times and bad.

We also understand marriage in terms of mission: You have been sent by God to care exclusively and totally for your spouse. It is your lifelong task to bring your partner to greater fulfillment. It is your God-given mission to look to the sanctity of your partner. Jesus Himself sends you to this man...this woman, that your love, your sharing, your sacrifices, your praying and growing together, you must bring your lover - through good times and bad - back to your Maker. Marriage is a mission, a challenge to grow in holiness through mutual love and support. You are involved in completing God’s act of creation. If you are unable to positively affirm this reality, it may be prudent to further discern your

desire to have your marriage within the Church. The Parish is a community of Christian believers, who undertake sacramental celebrations as acts of faith.

It is with this faith vision that we invite you to share in the Marriage Preparation Program of St. Patrick Parish.

The Marriage Preparation Program

All couples wishing to enter into marriage must complete the Parish Marriage Preparation Program. No finalizations of weddings will be made until it is determined that the couple is willing to suitably prepare for marriage. The couple must provide proof of participation (i.e. certificate, letter, etc.) in any preparations not done at St. Patrick Parish.

The Priest or Deacon will explain all of the steps involved in this process.

Six Months Notice (Minimum for the Diocese of Grand Rapids)

As this will be one of the most important decisions of your life, a responsible decision for marriage can only be made with a clear understanding of the responsibilities of married life. Along with this, it is also helpful for the Christian to hold a complete understanding of one's own self, and an appreciation of the blessing and insights that your Christian heritage may shed on love, married friendship, and the blessing of children. This marriage program is designed to help couples prepare for their married life through learning, sharing, prayer, and personal growth.

The marriage policies of all the Dioceses of the Province of Michigan require that a couple initiate the process of arranging their marriage at least six months before the date of the wedding. Often, it is necessary and advisable to do so even earlier.

Opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation for a Catholic is to be considered as an integral part of the preparation program and should be discussed with the Priest. Confessions are heard at some prearranged time close to the wedding. A general examination of one's life and confession of sins is highly recommended so you may celebrate this new sacrament—the sacrament of your love—with a clear conscience.

Teenage Marriages

Generally, the church discourages marriage between teenagers since statistical evidence indicates that the probability of permanence in such marriages is greatly reduced. Therefore:

1. If either party is not yet 19 years old, consideration for marriage in the church will be given only after consultation with parents and after a favorable recommendation from a counselor approved by the Priest or Deacon.

2. Rarely, if ever, will permission be given for marriage in the church for anyone under 18 years of age.

Pregnancy

When pregnancy occurs outside of marriage, it is a time of great stress and turmoil for the parties involved and their families. The church views such situations with compassion and concern. However, marriage should not automatically be presumed to be the appropriate solution in these situations. The Priest or Deacon may offer counsel regarding other morally acceptable alternatives.

In any case, the occurrence of pregnancy does not diminish the need for the preparation required by parish policy. In fact, it is even more vital to the success of such marriages that the established procedures be observed and the couple complete six months of preparation or longer.

If either member is under 20 years of age, or they were not engaged prior to the pregnancy, special counseling and evaluation must be obtained from a counselor approved by the Priest or Deacon. This counseling must be completed before consideration will be given to a request for the Sacrament of Marriage in the church.

Second Marriages

Those eligible for a second marriage in the church (due to the death of a previous spouse, a decree of nullity, etc.) are viewed with a special concern owing to their different circumstances and past experience with marriage. Thus, even greater care should be given the engaged couple in the six months preparation to address these special concerns. The Priest or Deacon will discuss this matter with the couple.

Please Note!

Wedding invitations, hall rental, hiring a band, etc., should not be done until all the preliminary arrangements are completed, especially the freedom to marry in the church, as well as the availability of the church and the Priest or Deacon. Only then can the wedding date be put on the parish calendar.

Setting the Date

The wedding date may be set for a Friday evening or for a Saturday afternoon no later than 1:00 PM on Saturday. Note: Weddings are discouraged during Advent and Lent and not permitted during Holy Week. Due to the congestion, two weddings are not held on the same day.

The date and time for the wedding may be set tentatively at the couple's first meeting with the Priest or Deacon. Only after the completion of the other requirements will the date and time be finalized.

In addition, at this meeting the Priest or Deacon will want to spend some time with you exploring such topics as: prayer and spiritual growth in your life, moral guidelines for married couples, the responsibilities of parents, the deeper meaning of the Sacrament, and the centrality of total self-sacrifice in the quest for true love and happiness. You should schedule such an appointment with the Priest or Deacon as soon as you are considering marriage.

Documents

All couples must also complete/provide the necessary documents:

1. For Catholics a NEW certificate of Baptism along with notations or certificates of First Communion and Confirmation must be obtained and given to the Priest or Deacon. Baptismal certificates should normally be dated no later than six months prior to the wedding.
2. The Prenuptial Questionnaire is to be completed by the Priest or Deacon with the bride and groom. This provides basic information along with personal testimony of freedom to marry and the desire to do so without reservations.
3. In the case of a mixed religion marriage, the Catholic partner is asked to sign (or vocally agree to) a statement promising to live his/her faith, to respect the faith of the partner, and the desire to Baptize and educate the children as Catholic to the best of his/her ability.
4. When a Catholic wishes to be married in a Protestant Church, a dispensation from Canonical Form must be granted by the Bishop. This will be handled by the Priest or Deacon.
5. If one or both parties were previously married, and an annulment is needed, a marriage date in the Catholic Church will not be set until the annulment papers are finalized.
6. A marriage license from the State of Michigan must be obtained from the County in which one party resides. This license must be presented to the Parish Office one week before the wedding.

Preparing the Liturgy

All couples will work with the Parish Wedding Coordinator assigned to them by the parish (unless other arrangements have been made with the parish Priest or Deacon) and meet with the Wedding Music Coordinator in preparing the music for the wedding liturgy. This is done by reviewing the materials in the last half of this booklet, along with any other material the Priest or Deacon considers helpful, and discussing their plans with the Parish Wedding Coordinator.

Rehearsal

All couples, together with their wedding party and any assisting ministers (Readers & Ushers), must meet with the Wedding Coordinator to rehearse the wedding liturgy. This is usually done the evening before the wedding, or at some time arranged by the wedding party and the Wedding Coordinator.

(Please note that the rehearsal time is not intended for the practice of music.)

If a Non-Catholic Minister is to participate, it is presumed that he will also be present for the wedding rehearsal. Priest or Deacon relatives or Priests/Deacons who are close family friends may be invited to preside, concelebrate, or assist at the wedding. Parents of the couple or Master/Mistress of Ceremony do not conduct the rehearsal. This is the job of the Wedding Coordinator, Priest, or Deacon.

Please note that in order to be courteous to all other groups who frequent the facilities of St. Patrick Parish, no food or drink (water is an exception) should be consumed in the Parish Hall area before or after the wedding. **NO alcoholic beverages are allowed on church property out of respect for the sacredness of the ceremony that is being celebrated.** *Please note: Consumption of alcoholic beverages prior to the wedding will result in cancellation of the wedding.* All areas used must be left as they were found. The parish kitchen is not open for making meals. The telephone is reserved for cases of emergency.

The Wedding Liturgy

The Liturgy is the pinnacle of the celebration of your wedding. Therefore, the church urges you to carefully assist the Wedding Coordinator and Wedding Music Coordinator in the preparation of the Liturgy. At the parish, we want to help you in every way possible. We ask you to keep in mind that while your wedding day will consist of many moments, the Liturgy is a moment of prayer...a time for praising God and asking for His blessing. Also remember that even though it is your wedding, the wedding liturgy belongs to the Church.

The Ministers

There are a variety of ministerial roles involved in the Liturgy. These roles should be carried out by people who through their lives speak a message about their faith. We invite you, therefore, to consider *carefully* the people you would ask to assist at the Liturgy.

The Assembly

The assembly or congregation is of great importance to the celebration of the marriage sacrament. They gather together to pray with you and for you. They will participate by word, song, and gesture in the celebration.

While the families of the bride and groom traditionally sit on opposite sides of the church, this is not required. We encourage everyone to sit together to form a community in prayer and worship.

Bride and Groom

The bride and groom are the Ministers of the Marriage Sacrament. In a very real sense, they “marry” each other while the Priest or Deacon and the congregation witness the event.

The practice of the bride and groom not seeing each other for one day before the wedding is no longer a required aspect of wedding tradition. It is strongly encouraged that the bride and groom consider together greeting their guests as they enter the church. This significantly speaks of hospitality and welcome, especially for those who are not Catholic or have never been in a Catholic Church before. Personal greeting by the bride and groom will certainly make them feel welcome and indirectly invites them to enter into prayer for the bride and groom, rather than sitting passively and observing the ceremony. This would also enable photos to be done prior to the wedding. Professional photographers appreciate fresh make-up, cleanly pressed suits and tuxes for pictures, it also helps to relax the bride.

It is also encouraged that the bride and groom spend some time together in prayer before the ceremony begins reflecting upon the sacrament they are about to celebrate.

Presider

The Priest (or Deacon) presides at the liturgy, that is, he calls the assembly to prayer, coordinates the various ministers, and addresses God in prayer. He is also the official witness of the church to the marriage. If a minister from another faith is present, he may participate as prior agreed upon by the priest or deacon.

Lector (Reader)

It is our hope that your friends, relatives, or members of the wedding party will function as readers of the Scriptures at the wedding celebration. These people should be faith-filled and have a talent to proclaim these readings effectively, and should practice the readings with our microphone system at the Rehearsal.

Ministers of Holy Communion (Mass only)

Ministers may help distribute the Body and Blood of Christ. Relatives or friends who are *Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* may be asked to assist. The Priest may delegate this ministry to others, including the bride and groom if they intend to continue this ministry into their marriage, to assist him and share in this act of service. Please consult with the Wedding Coordinator or the Priest.

Music Ministers

Music is to be “live” and not recorded. Since music is an integral part of the liturgy, **only qualified liturgical musicians may serve as accompanists, soloists, or leaders of song.** This ministry proclaims our faith in song, helping the assembly to pray more deeply.

Parish musicians are available to provide music for the wedding, but others who are qualified may be used with the approval of the Wedding Music Coordinator. Friends, relatives, and outside musicians must be skilled at leading liturgical music. This requires choosing, preparing, and performing music within the religious realm of the parish and should always be exercised under close supervision of Parish Wedding Music Coordinator.

Witnesses

The Best Man and the Maid/Matron of Honor must be at least 18 years of age. They need not be Catholic but must take their role seriously as sacramental witnesses.

Attendants (Bridal Party)

The choice and number of attendants should reflect the involvement of both families as well as those people who will be the support of the couple's Christian faith and future marriage.

Ushers

Ushers greet people at the door, and welcome them to the celebration. They direct guests to their seats, distribute worship aids if necessary, and assist people whenever they can. Ushers or the Master & Mistress of Ceremonies (Host & Hostess) should remain near the back of the church during the service to assist in seating late arrivals or anyone looking for a restroom. The Ushers (and the Master/Mistress of Ceremonies) are responsible for making sure the church is in order before they leave.

Children

If a child by age 6 or 7, is mature enough to be able to fully participate and witness the Marriage Rite, then it is an option for him/her to be part of the wedding party. Children younger than this (no matter how cute they may be) should **not** participate in the wedding. More often than not, this puts too much pressure on them and many become frightened and unable to “perform” according to adult standards.

Master/Mistress of Ceremonies (Host/Hostess)

It is customary to have a Master/Mistress of Ceremonies for the church service to assist in the smooth order of the service. Once the service has begun, they (or the Ushers) should remain near the back of the church to assist in seating any late arrivals, or if someone is looking for the restroom. The Master/Mistress of Ceremonies (and the Ushers) are responsible for making sure the church is in order before they leave.

The Order of the Liturgy

Except for cases where the couple is of mixed religion, the Rite of Christian Marriage is usually celebrated within the Order of the Mass. Therefore, the wedding liturgy appears very similar to the Sunday Eucharist. The following is an outline of the wedding liturgy together with some possible options.

The Entrance: The entrance procession should highlight those who are to be involved in the celebration. The preferred option for the procession is as follows: Processional cross carried by an altar server (if Mass), followed by the Presider, the attendant couples, and the groom with his parents. Then the bride along with her parents enters and joins the groom and his parents at the front of the aisle where families welcome one another symbolizing families being joined together in this marriage. It is also most appropriate that step-parents also join in this welcoming.

Hymn of Praise: (Mass only)

After the entrance of the Bridal Party, a Gathering hymn sung by all is encouraged and serves the purpose of uniting the community for worship as well as praying for the bride and groom.

The Greeting and Opening Prayer: On behalf of the bride and groom, the Presider will welcome those who have gathered for this celebration and invite them to pray for the couple.

Liturgy of the Word: Usually there will be three readings: one from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament Epistles, and one from the Gospels. There will be a sung Responsorial Psalm, which will follow the First Reading.

The Rite of Marriage: Immediately after the homily, the Presider will introduce the marriage rite. He will then invite the bride and groom to stand in front of the whole assembly for the exchange of vows. The best man and maid/matron of honor (or the entire wedding party) will also come forward at this time. Following the exchange of vows there is the blessing and exchange of rings.

Question: Can a “unity candle” be used at a Catholic wedding?

The following is a reply from the Congregation for Divine Worship (12/29/99):

*“At the discretion of the Conference of Bishops and at the time of their approval of the Rite of Marriage for their territory, certain rites having roots in the tradition of a particular people, and which authentically express Gospel values pertaining to marriage, may be inserted at appropriate points in the Rite of Marriage. Such gestures [e.g., **unity candle**] should **not** be included within the celebration of the rite if they do not appear at least as an option within the Rite of Marriage for which is approved by the Bishops and published with the recognitio of the Holy See for the territory in which the marriage is celebrated. It is possible that other gestures might be carried out after the completion of the Rite and the final blessing, or at a non-liturgical ceremony, such as a reception. To insert into the Rite gestures which are not approved by the Conference of Bishops with the recognitio of the Holy See, constitutes an abuse, even if perhaps well-intentioned.”*

Therefore, it is clear that the use of a couple's "unity candle" is no longer allowed. Everything we do in the church says something about what we believe. In the eyes of the Catholic Church **the** Unity Candle is the Paschal Candle (Easter Candle) that unites us all and cannot be superseded by a couples' unity candle.

General Intercessions (Petition Prayers) will follow the exchange of vows and rings.

The Preparation of the Table and Gifts: (Mass only) This is a transitional time in the Liturgy when we change focus from proclaiming the Word of God and witnessing the exchange of marriage vows to the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The unity of families and friends should be acknowledged in the presentation and preparation of the gifts. It is common for the bride and groom or the parents of the bride and groom to bring to the altar the bread and wine to be offered in sacrifice. This again symbolizes the uniting of two families. Also, a gift for the poor (box of non-perishable food, for example) from the bride and groom is encouraged.

The Eucharistic Prayer: (Mass only) The Presider will choose an appropriate Eucharistic Prayer and invite those gathered to participate with him in praising God, thanking Him for His goodness, and remembering Our Savior's death and Resurrection. At this time, the acclamations should be sung.

The Sign of Peace: (Mass only) This is a moment where all express their love for one another and pray for peace and unity in the church and with all people. At this time, the bride and groom may wish to extend this sign to each other with a kiss and then to their wedding party and parents.

The Communion Rite: (Mass only) Holy Communion is the presence of the Lord Himself. As a Catholic you were baptized, and in Him you become one flesh. Christ is an integral part of your love and marriage. He is the very foundation of your dignity as individuals; He is the essence of your love for each other. Jesus Christ is who brought you to each other. The unity of all Christians is not yet a reality. Therefore only Baptized practicing Roman Catholics would ordinarily come forward for Communion.

The Blessing and Recessional: The Presider will invite all gathered to join with him in calling God's blessing upon you and upon your married life. The Presider will present the newly married couple to the congregation who then lead out the wedding party in procession.

Inter-Faith Marriages

When one of the parties to the marriage is not Catholic, the ceremony is usually celebrated without the Holy Eucharist. This is done in consideration of the non-Catholic family members. If a Mass is requested by both parties and would not be offensive to their families, the request is considered. These matters should fully be discussed with the priest.

In some cases, a couple of differing Christian traditions may, for various reasons, choose to celebrate their wedding in the non-Catholic partner's Church with his/her minister as witness. This is also possible within the Church's law, with the previous approval of the Catholic party's Bishop.

In the event of an inter-faith marriage in the Catholic Church, the Pastor or Minister of the non-Catholic party may be invited to share in the ceremony. This is a sensitive matter and needs to be discussed in advance with the Priest or Deacon preparing you for marriage. It is appropriate for the pastor of the church where the wedding is taking place to sign the marriage license and receive the vows of the wedding couple.

In a mixed religion marriage, the subject of the Catholic practicing his/her faith and the baptism and religious upbringing of the children

Other Details

Dress

The type of the clothing chosen for both bride, groom and wedding party should reflect norms of modesty and good taste and appropriateness. (The dresses for the bride and bridesmaids must have shoulders covered and should not be low-cut). Whatever is offensive or immodest will not be permitted, even if it is necessary to delay the wedding.

Bridal Room

The Parish Hall serves as the bridal room. All personal items should be removed from the Parish Hall **before** the wedding. The facility must be left in the same clean and tidy condition in which you found it. All males in the wedding party are asked to dress at home and not at the church.

Use of the Church Building & Parish Hall

Couples are reminded that because of the extensive use of the church on weekends, their time and use of the church is limited. Decorating and other preparations for the wedding may begin at the Rehearsal **IF** there is nothing scheduled in church prior to the wedding the next day. Couples are asked to designate a person from their group (perhaps the Ushers or the Master / Mistress of Ceremonies) to clean up wedding materials (booklets, Kleenex, etc.) after the wedding. The wedding party should not assume that they would be able to use the Parish Hall for anything other than dressing for the wedding.

On occasion there may be something scheduled in the Parish Hall at the same time. If this were the case, then the Bride and the Bridesmaids would dress in the Multi-Purpose Room directly below the Parish Hall.

Photography / Videography

Photographers / Videographers must understand and respect the reverent nature of this occasion. Once the bridal party has come down the aisle, any pictures during the service should be taken without flash from designated areas. Consult with the Wedding Coordinator concerning these locations and any additional instructions. Pictures may be posed and taken before or after the ceremony. **The Church and Parish Hall will be open by 10:00 AM on Saturdays.** After the wedding pictures may be taken **until 3:00 PM** when everyone including the photographer needs to exit the church.

Church Environment

Live plants and cut flowers add life and beauty to a festive occasion. It is suggested that only one or two plants or bouquets of flowers be brought into the church, and they should be placed so as to enhance, rather than distract. Simplicity can be very nice. The principle of “less is more” is a good working philosophy and it allows all those gathered to focus on the real meaning of the marriage taking place and enter more fully into prayer for the couple getting married.

It is customary that plants or flowers used at the wedding service remain in the church for weekend Masses for the benefit of other parishioners, rather than taking them to the reception. Torch candles attached to the pews or additional candelabras, are **not** allowed. Aisle runners are **not** allowed because they can be a hazard on the slippery floor of the church. Plastic clips or elastic may be used to attach bows or floral arrangements to the pews. No tape allowed.

Cleanup

If booklets and programs are used, the ushers or Master/Mistress of Ceremonies are asked to remove these from the church after the service and straighten up any hymnals in the pews that were used for the wedding. The church should be left in the same order as it was before the wedding.

No rice, confetti, birdseed, or similar substances may be thrown at the church, however bubble blowing outdoors after the wedding is permitted. The sprinkling of rose petals is allowed during the wedding service, but should be picked up after the service.

Isle Runners (Isle runners are not permitted)

Fees / Stipends

If you are a registered member and we have a record of your regular financial stewardship support of the parish for the past six months, then there are no fees for the marriage preparation done at St. Patrick Parish or at an agency or church in collaboration with St. Patrick Parish. There will also be no fees for use of the church. However, there are fees connected with Pre-Cana classes (which are normally

done outside St. Patrick Parish). These fees would be the engaged couples responsibility, as would any fees connected with music for the wedding. Fees for musicians/cantors for the wedding should be given to the musicians/cantors **prior to** the wedding service.

If you personally have not been a registered and regular financially supporting member of the parish for six months then the following fees apply:

1. Marriage Preparation at St. Patrick or in collaboration with St. Patrick Parish, as well as use of the church for the wedding, is..... \$250.00
2. Marriage Preparation done elsewhere, but the Marriage is at St. Patrick Parish.....\$150.00
3. Marriage Preparation at St. Patrick Parish but the marriage is celebrated elsewhere.....\$175.00
4. A gift for the priest/deacon presiding at the wedding may be given, but is not required, nor expected. If the engaged couple asks a priest or deacon relative or friend to preside at the wedding (with permission of the pastor), it is the responsibility of the bride and groom, rather than the responsibility of the parish, to give the priest or deacon a stipend gift.

Note: Any fees for marriage preparation/wedding at St. Patrick Parish are paid at the first meeting with the Priest

Music at Your Wedding

Music is Prayer

As you select music for your wedding liturgy, please remember the prayerful nature of the wedding liturgy. You have chosen to begin your married life in the context of a Catholic sacrament. Members of the community gather with you to offer praise and thanksgiving, and to pray that God will shower His blessings upon you. The music you select should foster and deepen this sense of prayer. The readings of Mass are from Holy Scripture, as should be the music.

Therefore, music chosen for the wedding must reflect the Church's invitation to a prayerful and sanctifying liturgy, whereby all present enthusiastically acknowledge the community's Christian faith.

We want marriages to be participatory celebrations where the assembly is given the opportunity and is encouraged to sing at times which are appropriate.

While the songs/melodies should be as musically attractive as possible, the music should be chosen primarily for its text, which should be identifiable as prayer. In this regard, consider if the lyrics of a particular song express a Christian view of love.

Some Guidelines

In addition to selecting music from the standard (traditional and contemporary) repertoire of religious music, some couples consider selecting certain "popular" songs for the wedding liturgy. The following are four principles that will aid in determining the suitability of any popular musical text for your wedding service:

1. Does this song explicitly speak of the Christian dimension of love?
2. Are the words sung in the song suitable? Are there texts that, while not speaking explicitly about Christian/religious dimensions of love, do so in at least more general and implicit manner?
3. Texts which have only a tenuous or faintly implied connection with the religious dimensions of love, or which contain only "inspiring" or "consoling" sentiments are unsuitable. Simply ask yourself: "is this song about two people in love, or is it about two people proclaiming their love *before God?*"
4. Texts that explicitly deny the religious and specifically Christian dimensions of love are unsuitable. Music used for the wedding liturgy should be considered suitable for almost any weekend or Sunday Christian celebration.

The above principles reflect the Grand Rapids Diocesan guidelines for music in wedding liturgies. The Wedding Music Coordinator will make the final decision about any music that is found questionable.

Further, attention needs to be paid to where the music will occur in the ceremony. Music must emphasize and enhance whatever portion of the liturgy it occurs within.

Location of Music within the Liturgy

The following are appropriate places for music in the wedding liturgy:

Pre-service music: Instrumental and/or appropriate sacred vocal pieces.

Processional music: An instrumental, vocal solo or hymn sung with the assembly is appropriate.

Gathering song (for Mass): Invites people to join together as a worshipping community to pray for the engaged couple. If a significant number of people attending the wedding are not Catholic, please consider hymns everyone can sing.

Gloria: (for Mass): The Gloria is required at all Wedding Masses except during Lent and Advent.

The Responsorial Psalm: Since the Psalms were written as songs, it has always been prescribed that they are sung. The Psalm can be especially effective when there is a short refrain to be repeated by the whole congregation while a cantor sings the verses.

The Gospel acclamation: this acclamation (generally an "alleluia") introduces the Gospel Reading. It should be reverent, joyful and easy to sing.

The Eucharistic acclamations & prayer: If Mass is celebrated, then the acclamations during the Eucharistic Prayer (Holy, Holy; memorial acclamation; concluding acclamation) should be sung (preferably) or recited by all in the assembly.

The Sign of Peace: The sign of peace should not be unduly prolonged. Some instrumental music may accompany this rite.

Communion hymn: During Holy Communion, it is appropriate for all to sing a general Eucharistic song of praise and thanks.

Recessional: An instrumental or a hymn sung by all is appropriate.

As there exist many possibilities, we certainly do not require that you choose music for all of these times. The Wedding Music Coordinator is prepared to help you. Please choose discreetly so that the music is shown to be an integral part of the prayerful wedding liturgy.

The Lord's Prayer is meant to be the prayer of all the people. As such, we ask that it not be sung as a vocal solo.

When choosing congregational music, consider carefully the people who will be in attendance and their familiarity with the music you may choose. It is customary to provide a worship aid to better facilitate participation by the assembly. If any music is printed in the worship aid copyright permission is required. The Wedding Music Coordinator can assist you in obtaining this permission.

The Parish Wedding Music Coordinator must approve all music to be used in the Liturgy.

Conclusion/Final Note

These policies are set forth to aid couples in the planning and preparation of their marriage. It is not the intent of the parish that couples feel burdened by heavy restrictions but, rather, it is an acknowledgement of our desire that weddings celebrated at St. Patrick Parish reflect their true sacramental character and contribute to bringing Christ's joy and peace to all connected with the celebration.

Exceptions to these Guidelines will not be made or allowed.

At St. Patrick Parish, we understand and wish to respect these very real life situations. Through it all, our main goal is to promote and serve your faith. This is important because a Christian wedding is more than just a public statement of your love for your fiancé. It is an expression of giving thanks to God for the gift of that love and the gift of our faith.

Please remove this page from the Marriage Policy Booklet, sign and date this page which acknowledges that you have read and agreed to these policies, and then return this signed page to the priest or deacon at St. Patrick Parish. Once you have done this, then the wedding date will be written into the parish wedding book.

I have read the above Wedding Ceremony Policies of St. Patrick Parish and agree to abide by them.

Groom's Signature

Date

Bride's Signature

Date

Wedding Date



