

St. Charles Borromeo Parish

Wedding Planning Guide



The Wedding Ceremony

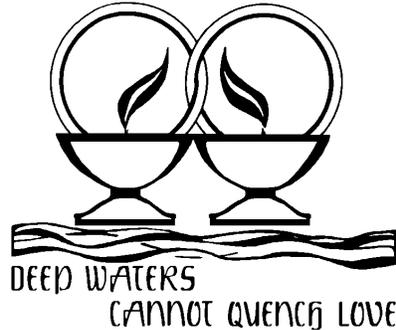
The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish a lifelong partnership between themselves, has been raised up by Christ to a higher dignity and is now numbered among the Sacraments of the New Covenant. This sacred bond does not depend on human choice but rather on the Author of Marriage, God Himself. Therefore, the wedding ceremony is rightly understood first and foremost as an expression of the Church's faith. Saint Charles Borromeo Parish has developed the following guidelines to help couples plan their wedding so that all who gather to celebrate their Marriage may more fully participate in the Church's liturgy.

Who May Have Their Wedding at St. Charles Borromeo?

- Church law requires that marriages take place in the parish where either the bride or the groom has domicile (can. 1115). Therefore, St. Charles Borromeo Parish is the proper parish of marriage for any baptized Catholic who currently lives within the parish's territorial boundaries, regardless of parish registration. These boundaries are: West Center Road (North), Cornhusker Road (South), 180th Street (East), and the Platte River (West).
- A Catholic who lives outside the parish's territorial boundaries may celebrate a wedding at here if it is one's "home parish" (e.g., he or she grew up here). In such a case, the bride and groom should obtain permission to marry at St. Charles Borromeo from the pastor(s) of the parish(es) where they currently have residence, even if they are not registered there.
- A Catholic who does not live within the territorial boundaries of the parish may have a wedding here if he or she has been registered as a member in the parish for at least six (6) months and is active in the life of the parish.
- The Pastor of St. Charles Borromeo presides at all weddings at the parish. In some cases, one of Deacons assigned to the parish may do so in the Pastor's stead. A Priest or Deacon who is a relative of the bride or the groom, however, may preside over the wedding with the prior permission of the Pastor of St. Charles, if requested by the couple. Priests or Deacons who are not related to the couple but are considered friends may not preside over the ceremony but are welcome to attend the liturgy, concelebrate the Mass, and/or preach the homily.

Setting a Date and Time

- The Archdiocese of Omaha requires that a couple contact their parish Priest a minimum of six (6) to nine (9) months before the proposed wedding date. This allows ample time to complete the Marriage preparation program.
- In keeping with the regulations of the Archdiocese of Omaha, St. Charles Borromeo allows weddings—within or outside of Mass—to be conducted Monday through Friday, beginning no later than 8:00 p.m., and on Saturday, beginning no later than 2:00 p.m. The Ritual Mass for the Celebration of Marriage is not permitted on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation.
- The bride or groom may schedule a wedding with the Pastor by calling the parish office. Weddings will be scheduled only for those who are free to marry. If either the bride or groom has been married previously, an ecclesiastical Decree of Nullity (i.e., annulment) or a death certificate will be required to prove that no Marriage bond persists.



Planning the Liturgy

The celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony, like all Catholic liturgical actions, is a celebration of the whole Church. All the usual regulations governing the liturgy within the Archdiocese of Omaha will be followed. The wedding ceremony should not become a production or a show that turns the assembly into an audience. Rather, it is a prayer in which the whole assembly actively participates. The couple should keep this in mind when planning.

Choosing the Prayers and Readings

- The ceremony must follow the Roman Catholic Order of Celebrating Matrimony.
- The Marriage of two Catholics ordinarily takes place within the celebration of Mass. Likewise, the Marriage of a Catholic and a non-Catholic ordinarily takes place outside of Mass, in the context of a Liturgy of the Word. The Pastor will determine which rite will be used.
- Couples are to choose the readings from Scripture and the prayers for the liturgy from a resource given to them by the Priest with whom they are doing their preparation.



Music for the Wedding

Music is an essential part of the prayer of Catholic liturgy and is not to be considered an “extra”. Within the wedding liturgy, the most important elements of song are those which the assembly sings: Opening Song, Responsorial Psalm, Alleluia, (*Gloria, Sanctus, Mystery of Faith, Great Amen, Agnus Dei*, and Communion Song). Music should also be planned for the Entrance Procession, (the Offertory,) and the Recessional. *Music in parentheses are included only in a Nuptial Mass.*

- All music should be appropriate and should express the faith of the Church. Therefore, songs associated with movies, theatre, or popular culture are not permitted in the church before, during, or after the wedding. All music selections must be planned with and approved by the parish’s music director. The Pastor has the final say on all music selections.
- It is recommended that instrumentalists and cantors be selected from among those who are familiar with playing/singing at St. Charles Borromeo’s Masses. If a couple desires to ask friends or to hire professionals to assist with the wedding music, they must discuss this with the parish music director before making any arrangements. Anyone not from the parish must meet with the music director prior to practicing in the church.
- Instrumentalists and cantors must be familiar with the Catholic liturgy. When Marriage is celebrated within Mass, the instrumentalists and cantors must be able to play/sing all the music associated with the Order of Mass (i.e., *Gloria, Responsorial Psalm, Alleluia, Sanctus, Mystery of Faith, Great Amen, and Agnus Dei*).
- The cantor’s primary goal is to lead the assembly in singing. Having a musician “perform” all the wedding music is not acceptable because it lessens the role of the assembly, who then is not able to be part of the sung prayers within the liturgy.
- The piano is not to be moved; and the sound system and microphones are not to be adjusted in any way.
- Recorded music is not allowed.



Extra Ritual Acts

- Popular secular practices, such as the “Unity Candle,” the mixing of colored sands, and so forth, are not part of the Catholic ritual for Matrimony, and so they are not permitted at St. Charles Borromeo during the wedding liturgy.
- The practice of presenting flowers before the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary is also not part of the Catholic ritual for Matrimony. It is, however, part of local Catholic custom and so is permitted to any couple who may desire it.
- The throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, and so forth is not permitted either inside the church or on the church’s grounds.



Liturgical Ministers and the Wedding Party

- Catholic Priests who may be attending the wedding are welcome to concelebrate the Mass. The couple should make the celebrant aware of this possibility beforehand. Likewise, if the couple has invited a Deacon to attend the wedding, he may minister at the altar with the celebrant’s permission. If a non-Catholic minister is to attend, special arrangements will be made regarding his or her participation in the liturgy.
- Those who proclaim the readings at Mass must be Catholic. It is preferable to ask an already-mandated Lector to perform this task; however, any practicing Catholic may fulfill this ministry. Please select someone who is comfortable and talented enough to proclaim Sacred Scripture effectively. (Outside of Mass, the reader may be non-Catholic.)
- Only Priests, Deacons, instituted Acolytes, and mandated Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) may distribute Holy Communion during Mass.
- At least two people must witness the exchange of vows in addition to the minister. Typically, this is done by the best man and maid/matron of honor. Many weddings include additional groomsmen and bridesmaids—it is recommended that the number of couples be not excessive. Each attendant couple must be comprised of a male groomsman and a female bridesmaid. Same-sex coupling is not permitted.
- Children in the wedding party (e.g., “junior bridesmaids,” flower girls, ring bearers, etc.) are to be old enough to take a role in the liturgy without incident. The use of wagons, strollers, bicycles, and so forth is not permitted during the wedding.
- Pets and other animals are not permitted in the church or on church grounds.
- It is helpful to select one (1) to three (3) altar servers to assist the presider.

Proper Attire

When in the church—for rehearsal, taking pictures, or the ceremony itself—one should be properly dressed. One’s attire should always convey the virtues of chastity and modesty. Keep this in mind especially when selecting dresses for the bride and bridesmaids.

- Please avoid dresses with plunging necklines, with high slits, with immodestly short skirts, and those that are completely backless. Coordinating shawls or wraps are desirable for dresses which expose bare shoulders and low backs.
- All members of the wedding party (i.e., bridesmaids and groomsmen) must dress according to their sex-at-birth: men must dress as men; women must dress as women.
- Men should never wear hats inside the church.
- Costumes and/or “Theme Weddings” are not permitted.
- Sunglasses are not appropriate in church.

The Wedding Rehearsal

The rehearsal for the wedding liturgy should be scheduled with the Priest (or Deacon) in advance. All people who have a role in the ceremony (e.g., wedding party, lectors, servers, ushers, etc.) should plan to attend the rehearsal in church. If parents and grandparents are to be formally seated by the ushers before the wedding, they should plan to attend the rehearsal as well.

- All planning regarding the ceremony should happen with the presider prior to the rehearsal itself. While a wedding consultant, parents, and friends may be of assistance to the couple regarding the planning of their wedding, the final decisions and planning of the ceremony belong solely to the bride, the groom, and the Priest (or Deacon).
- Please arrive at the church at least ten minutes before the rehearsal is scheduled to begin.
- Please give your marriage license to the Priest (or Deacon) at the rehearsal, at the latest.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

It is important to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony in a state of grace. Therefore, a Catholic bride and/or groom should make arrangements to go to Confession prior to their wedding so that they will be able to enjoy the full benefits of the graces of Matrimony from the first moment it is received. The couple may request to do this with the Priest either before or after the wedding rehearsal for them and for any members of the wedding party who may also wish to receive the Sacrament.

Decorating the Church

Any decorating must keep in mind the liturgical season in which the wedding is taking place. The church's seasonal decorations (e.g., flowers, plants, candles, etc.) are part of the liturgical environment and may not be removed or changed for weddings. Flowers are not permitted in the church during Lent and should be kept to a minimum during Advent. Any flowers or decorations added to the church's environment ought to enhance the ceremony and not distract from it. All decorations must be discussed with and approved by the Pastor beforehand.

The pews may be adorned with bows or the like, but they must be attached with elastic, ribbon, or string. No tape, tacks, or other means of affixing them may be used.

The following kinds of decorations are not permitted in the church:

- candelabra; pew/aisle candles
- aisle runners
- decorative archways
- banners, signs, and balloons



Thermostat and Lights

- The thermostat will be preset for the day of your wedding. To maintain the appropriate level of comfort, do not leave doors open from one space to another. If you think some adjustments need to be made, please contact the Pastor at the rectory (402-614-2473).
- For pictures prior to the ceremony, be sure to get instructions regarding the lighting controls from the Priest (or Deacon) at the rehearsal.
- Please do not prop any exterior doors open.



The Blessed Sacrament

Catholics recognize the Real Presence of Jesus Christ—Body, Blood, soul, and divinity—in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, which is reserved in the tabernacle in the church. All Catholics, upon entering and leaving a church are required to make an act of worship by genuflecting toward the tabernacle. Furthermore, the church is a sacred space, reserved for the worship of God. Proper respect, piety, and devotion are expected at all times when in the church.

Before and After the Ceremony

- For purposes of dressing and getting ready for the wedding, the bride and bridesmaids may make use of the kitchen, which has easy access to a private bathroom, sinks, and a mirror. The groomsmen and other wedding party members may use the gymnasium as a place to gather and wait.
- A receiving line may be formed in the narthex after the wedding, if it is desired by the couple.
- All children must be supervised at all times while on the premises.
- Alcoholic beverages are not permitted on the parish grounds—including vehicles—before, during, or after a wedding or a wedding rehearsal.
- Wedding party members and guests are to be sober when attending the rehearsal and wedding. If a wedding party member appears to have been drinking or using drugs, he or she will not participate in the wedding ceremony. If either the bride or the groom appears to have been drinking or using drugs prior to the ceremony, the wedding will be cancelled immediately.
- There is a one-hour Eucharistic fast before receiving Holy Communion. Those who will be receiving Communion should neither eat nor drink anything (except water and/or medication) at least one half-hour prior to the beginning of a wedding Mass.
- Valuables should not be left unattended before, during, or after the ceremony. The parish is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
- All wedding items must be removed from the church, entryways, and restrooms *immediately* after the church is emptied of wedding guests. This includes hangers, bows, empty boxes, plastic bags, programs, pins, beads, sequins, and so forth. Trash from the wedding should not be left on the premises. All trash and recyclables should be collected in proper receptacles and taken to the trash and recycle dumpsters outside the kitchen. *Please be sure to separate recyclables from trash and to place them in the proper bins outside.*
- On Saturdays, Confessions begin at 3:30 p.m. Therefore, we kindly ask that the wedding party have everything cleaned up and be departing the premises no later than 3:20 p.m.



Photography and Videography

The church building is dedicated solely to the worship of God. Therefore, it is important that all photographers and videographers conduct themselves with reverence in the sacred space. The celebration of a wedding is foremost a sacramental moment. To maintain the high dignity of the liturgy and the quality of the prayer, photographers and videographers must adhere to the guidelines laid out on the last pages of this packet, which may be detached and given to the photographer and videographer to keep for their own reference.

Deposits and Stipends

There is no cost to receive any Sacrament in the Catholic Church. All Sacraments are moments of grace given freely by God to those who request them in faith. However, it is customary for the couple to provide an offering to the parish to help cover the expenses that naturally arise from using the church building on a special occasion (e.g., electricity, heating, air-conditioning, etc.). Likewise, it is customary for the couple to give a stipend to certain ministers involved in the wedding ceremony, especially if they are not family or friends.

While one is free to give as much or as little according to one's means, the following are suggested minimum stipends and offerings by today's standards.

- Offering to the Parish: \$200
- Stipend for the Priest (or Deacon): \$150
- Stipend for the Instrumentalist: \$125 (required if using the parish's pianist/organist)
- Stipend for the Cantor: \$100 (required if using the parish's cantor)
- Stipend for each Server: \$ 10

You may give the Priest (or Deacon) his stipend and the offering to the parish at the wedding rehearsal. Other stipends should be given directly to the individuals carrying out the various ministries. Make checks out to the individuals themselves. The offering to the parish may be made out to "St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church." For convenience, it is recommended that envelopes of cash be given to the altar servers.

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- Flash photography may be used only for the entrance processional and the recessional. Flashes may not be used at any other time during the liturgy.
- Photographers, videographers, and stationary cameras are not allowed in the sanctuary area (i.e., the raised, tiled area in the front) at any time. During the entrance procession, photographers may use the main aisle.
- Photos during the ceremony may be taken from the back of the church or from the side aisles. Photographers and videographers are not allowed in the sanctuary area and should not be moving up and down the center aisle during the ceremony. No one is permitted to stand on chairs, pews, or platforms.
- Wedding group photos are encouraged prior to the ceremony rather than afterwards. Photography not related to the wedding party should be taken elsewhere.
- The behaviors of all involved should be respectful of the sacred nature of the church, keeping in mind the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. There should be no boisterous talking, running around, smoking, eating, drinking, or chewing gum inside the church. Children should be controlled at all times; the church is not a playground or a racetrack.

**** THIS COPY IS FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER TO KEEP. ****

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