

Wedding Guidelines



*St. Robert of Newminster
Ada, Michigan*

Greetings,

In the following pages you will find information regarding weddings at St. Robert of Newminster Parish. In the Catholic Church, weddings (like all sacraments) are normally celebrated for those who are members of the parish. Of course, this includes those who have grown up in the parish and have moved away. In today's very mobile world, consideration is also given to those who have moved away from home and are seeking to be married in their new home.

To schedule a wedding or for more information, please contact the pastor:

Fr. Leonard Sudlik (616) 676-9111, ext. 122

Lsudlik@strobertchurch.org

Marriage Preparation

In our world today, many people treat engagement as the time needed to prepare for a wedding day. Much of your time and energy will be caught up in sending invitations, renting facilities, choosing a cake, hiring a limousine, etc. etc.

In the Catholic Church, engagement is seen as that special time in your life when you will focus on each other and the commitment you are to make. The church requires at least six months of engagement before your wedding day. We will not provide a six month program for you. However, we do ask that you take this time seriously and deepen your bond of love in the Lord.

Your preparation time should include:

1. Prayer and worship together. If you are both Catholic, make a commitment to attend Mass together. Let God's Word and Sacrament strengthen you.
 - If you are of different faith traditions, let your engagement be a time in which you more deeply explore each other's churches.
 - pray for your fiancé every day. Don't forget to also pray with your fiancé as part of your relationship.
2. Pre-Cana – St. Robert's conducts a one day pre-cana session. It is held twice a year: a Saturday in October and another in March. The topics covered in pre-cana are meant to enhance your engagement. Couples are encouraged to not wait until just before their wedding to attend. Be sure to register early. Spaces are limited and we do open our pre-cana program to couples from other parishes.
If you are unable to attend our pre-cana, we will help you to find another marriage preparation program in the diocese. Couples living outside the Grand Rapids area may need to do their marriage preparation in their neighboring church.
3. Foccus – Couples are asked to take a pre-marital Inventory called The Foccus (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, & Study). When the Foccus results are returned, they are sent to Julie Mollan, a professional counselor at the Octagon House. You will be asked to make an appointment to review the Foccus results with Julie.
4. Liturgy preparation – Liturgy materials are provided for you. You are invited to meet with Lori Martin to review music and with Fr. Len to complete liturgy preparation.

Wedding Times

Saturday at 2:00 p.m. (The church should be cleared for Saturday Mass by 3:45 pm).

Friday weddings – time is set with Fr. Sudlik

Liturgical Guidelines for Your Wedding

Introduction:

A Catholic wedding, whether in the context of Eucharist or a ceremony, is to reflect our faith in God and covenant love expressed in the Sacrament of Marriage. Many of today's wedding customs are not only unchristian, some are actually contrary to our faith. It is important to remember that being married in the Catholic Church is entering into the liturgy of the Church. Secular customs and traditions should be reserved for the wedding reception.

Ceremony

Traditionally, two Catholics exchange their vows in the celebration of a Catholic Mass. As they become one in their marriage vows, they are also joined in their reception of Eucharist.

When either bride or groom is not Catholic, the Church recommends a wedding ceremony outside of Mass. Since Communion is not shared with those who are not Catholic, the celebration of Eucharist is not appropriate in an ecumenical wedding. A wedding ceremony does include all that does not pertain to Eucharist, i.e. song, scripture, intercessions, blessings, etc.

At times, even Catholics find that most of their guests will be non-Catholic and therefore choose a ceremony for the sake of good hospitality.

Decorations and Environment

All flowers and decorations need to be respectful of the liturgy and the church. Flowers are allowed in the sanctuary but cannot overtake the more important elements of altar, presider, bride and groom.

Floral arrangements can be attached to the pews but only in ways that do not damage the pews, e.g. glue, tape.

Seating of the Congregation

Just as the bride and groom are united, so are their family and friends joined together by a wedding. Marriage is about a bond of unity. The intermingling of guests is more important than having guests seated on the “bride’s side’ and “groom’s side.”

Increasingly popular is the practice of the couple themselves greeting the guests as they arrive. It is an apt expression of the hospitality which should characterize Christians. The secular custom of the bride hiding from the groom until the procession is reminiscent of an older time when marriages were arranged and the veiled bride was handed over to the groom. However, we do understand that brides and grooms often treasure these secular customs.

The Place of the Couple and Attendants

The bride and groom are given a place of honor in the sanctuary. Their backs are not to be to the congregation. During the ceremony, they should be attentive to the scriptures and prayers that are for them on this day. They should refrain from talking to each other during the ceremony.

Attendants are seated with the Congregation but do accompany the bride and groom at the time of the exchange of vows.

The Ceremony

In secular ceremonies, the wedding is often an expression of “the Bride’s Big Day.” All is in place, the doors at the back of church are closed and then reopened as she appears.

Catholic weddings are called to be expressive of two people coming together in the Lord to join in covenant love.

The Procession

The ideal Catholic procession envisions Cross Bearer, Lectionary and priest processing to the altar to welcome bride and groom (ideally escorted by their parents), followed by the wedding party. We do recognize that brides most often look forward to the tradition of being escorted by their father.

Even when a more secular procession takes place:

- aisle runners are never allowed.
- doors are not closed and reopened for the bride’s entrance.
- only one piece of processional music should be played for the entire wedding party.
- attendants process as couples.
- when the bride is escorted by her father the Church still remembers that she comes freely and without reservation. Therefore there is never the question, “who gives this woman?”

Gathering Hymn

The Congregation at a wedding is always encouraged to prayerfully participate. We begin all weddings with a Gathering Hymn. The parish music director will guide you in choosing a song that is well known to all who attend.

Liturgy of the Word

Only readings from the Scriptures may be used at weddings. Fr. Len can provide you with suggested readings from the wedding section of the lectionary, any passages from the Bible are welcome. One reading from the Old Testament, one reading from the New Testament letters, and one gospel passage are chosen. Bride and Groom taking the time to prayerfully select their scriptures is a wonderful way to prepare for a wedding day.

Reading the scriptures is an important role at any Catholic liturgy. Readers should be capable and rehearsed. Most importantly, those who read Scripture should be people of faith who believe in God's Word.

Exchange of Consent

The vow ceremony is central to a wedding. If you choose in any way to write your own vows, they must be in addition to the vows found in the Catholic Ritual.

The Unity Candle

The Unity Candle is not part of the Catholic Ritual but is a common image that expresses the unity of marriage. If a Unity Candle is present, side candles are usually lit by parents (often mothers) at the time of their seating.

After their vow ceremony, the couple joins in lighting the center candle. This brief ritual is not to be accompanied by a song.

General Intercessions

A form of General Intercessions is included with the selections from Scripture. Couples are also welcome to write or add petitions. Names of those who have died are often included in the final Intercession.

Couples provide someone to lead the Intercessions. If not, they are to ask the priest to lead these prayers.

Offertory Gifts

At a Wedding Mass, it is appropriate to have the gifts of bread and wine presented. Couples are to choose someone significant (parents, godparents) for this role.

Communion

At wedding Masses, bride and groom are welcome to share in the Blood of Christ. Usually the cup is not offered to the congregation unless it is known that most attending are Catholic and will receive Communion. If offering the cup is chosen, the bride and groom are asked to provide two Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist.

Marian Devotion

Like the Unity Candle, the practice of taking flowers to Mary's Shrine in church is not part of the Catholic ritual. Unlike the Unity Candle, it is an ancient, religious tradition. If chosen, bride and groom process to Mary's statue before the final blessing, placing a flower as they ask Mary, wife and mother, to pray for their marriage.

Nuptial Blessing

Both Mass and ceremony conclude with the nuptial blessing. At St. Robert's, we usually use a sung form of this blessing prayer. The congregation is asked to join in the simple refrain. It is important that the words to the refrain be included in your wedding program.

Dismissal of the Congregation

How the congregation is released is entirely up to the bride and groom. Usual options are:

- bride and groom returning to greet the congregation row by row
- receiving line in the back of church
- meeting the guests at the place of reception.

Additional considerations

Church Environment

Flowers – Flowers can accentuate a wedding. However, they always give preference to that which is more important. Flowers are not allowed on the altar and when placed in front, must not be higher than the altar itself.

Floral arrangements also need to take into consideration the seating of the priest and bride and groom in the sanctuary.

Candles – may not be used on the pews. A Unity Candle is allowed. If it is provided by your florist, it should include a plastic floor covering to protect from dripping wax.

Pew Bows – and decorations are allowed. But they are not to be fastened to pews with tape, glue or wire.

Aisle Runners – are not permitted. A runner on our flooring is a liability.

Church Decorations – please respect any flowers or other decorations that are present in church. The liturgical season in which you marry is part of your wedding day.

Outside – Rice, balloons, birdseed or sparklers are not allowed.

Photographers

Photographers should always realize that they are guests in our church and are accountable to the priest for their conduct. Bride and groom should encourage their photographer to seek out the priest on the day of the wedding. He will give, not only guidelines and restrictions, but advice for getting good photographs. Most importantly, photographers should not command the attention of the congregation during a wedding.

Little Children

When choosing little children as part of your wedding party, take care that they are old enough and emotionally ready for their role.

Facilities

Dressing Room

The Parish Facility does offer various rooms for the Bridal Party, men and women, to prepare for the wedding. Wedding clothing may be brought on the night of the rehearsal and can be locked securely in preparation rooms. All food and beverages that you wish to provide for your attendants should be removed and areas cleaned before you leave.

Alcohol and Smoking

Alcohol is absolutely forbidden on St. Robert's premises on your wedding day. This includes the parking lot. Please make sure that your wedding party is aware that we reserve the right to cancel a wedding if alcohol is present. Those under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be asked to leave the premises. Smoking is not permitted inside any buildings.

Rehearsal

Fr. Sudlik will direct and schedule your rehearsal. Be sure to schedule the time with him. On the day of the wedding, Fr. Sudlik is also the one who opens the church and is present before your wedding. Be sure to let him know what time the church needs to be open for wedding party, florist, etc.

Clean-Up

St. Robert's does not provide a wedding co-coordinator and therefore does not charge couples a fee for church maintenance.

We do ask that you provide someone to clean up food and beverages in the preparation rooms. After the wedding, please remove programs from the pews and petals from the floor of church.

Be aware that in addition to celebrating your wedding, Fr. Sudlik is taking the time for your rehearsal and opening the church and being present on the day of your wedding.

Guest Priests

Occasionally couples ask a priest friend or relative to officiate at their wedding. In those cases, be sure to determine how the marriage file and marriage preparation are to be done.

Wedding Fees and Marriage License

St. Robert's does not charge a fee for the use of the church for your wedding. We hope that those who are members of the parish will support the church through their weekly offering.

There are fees for services provided:

\$75 Parish Pre Cana Program and Foccus Materials.

\$250 Lori Martin. The parish music director meets with each couple to plan their liturgy and is the instrumentalist at their ceremony.

\$150 A cantor at your wedding will lead the congregation, sing the Responsorial Psalm and Nuptial Blessing, and other musical pieces you select.

\$250 Priests do not charge for Sacraments. However, weddings do involve meetings, rehearsals, and being available to open the church and take care of details on the day of the wedding. The amount listed is suggested but never required.

Please be sure that all fees (musician(s), cantor, priest presider) are brought to church no later than the wedding rehearsal. All checks, including Fr. Len Sudlik, must be made to the person named. Checks made to St. Robert of Newminster Church are considered a church donation and cannot be given to the intended individual.

It is your responsibility to obtain a wedding license. Please bring all license copies and envelopes to the church along with the fees.

Music

Lori Martin is our Director of Liturgical Music and should be contacted right away to secure the date, set up a time to meet and plan the music for your wedding. Plan to meet with Lori at least 6-8 weeks before your wedding.

Lori will assist you in finding a cantor and any other instrumentalists you may want to add. Instrumentalist's fees vary. They are generally about \$150 per musician.

If you are using musicians from outside the church, they must follow parish guidelines. Lori will furnish those guidelines upon request. A fee of \$50 is paid to the parish music director to act as consultant to outside musicians.

Organist/Pianist

Lori Martin, Liturgical Music Director

Lmartin@strobertchurch.org 616-676-9111 ext. 120

A Nuptial Blessing

Refrain:

May God bless you, hold and keep you; may God's mercy shine on you, guide your work and guard your resting, keep your love forever new.

Verses:

1. May God satisfy your longing, be refreshment at your table, and provide your daily bread, guard your going and your coming, be the solace in your silence: life within the lives you wed.
2. May God join your hopeful spirits, fill your hearts with truth and courage, trust to share both joy and tears, teach love to your children's children; may your household learn to witness living faith through all your years,
3. May God make your home a refuge where you warmly welcome strangers and the lowly find a place; make you caring, kind companions, help you meet the needs of neighbors, finding Christ in every face.

by Rev. J. Michael Joncas
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