

# *GUIDELINES FOR WEDDINGS*

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## PREPARING YOUR WEDDING

This brochure has been prepared to help you plan your wedding celebration at St. Mary's. We believe that adequate preparation will facilitate your growth in love for God and for each other throughout your married life. We are here to assist you in making your marriage celebration a happy and memorable occasion. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Normally a couple should contact a priest or deacon at least six months before any proposed date of marriage. The priest/deacon will want to discuss preparation for marriage courses, the documents required for marriage, and the ceremony itself.

Refer to "Questions You May Have..." in your resource booklet **CELEBRATING OUR LOVE**

## MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSES

Couples preparing for marriage are required to attend a marriage preparation course. Several options are available and we will discuss these with you. We suggest you make these arrangements as soon as possible as courses tend to fill up well in advance.

## DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR MARRIAGE

**A CERTIFICATE OF BAPTISM** is required for those who have been baptized. This can be obtained from the church where you were baptized. For a Catholic, the certificate must be issued within six months of the marriage. For those who are not Catholic, the original certificate may be used.

**A LETTER FROM TWO PEOPLE** is required when the persons to be married are not personally known to the priest. The letter will verify that the person is not presently married and is free to marry at this time. Often parents or family members are asked to submit the letter. A sample letter has been provided at the back of this booklet.

**A MARRIAGE LICENSE** is required in order to comply with government regulations. This may be obtained from any License and Registry Service within three (3) calendar months prior to your wedding date as the license is valid for three months only. Check the yellow pages of your phone book for listings. Both parties must be present to obtain a license.

**A QUESTIONNAIRE** will be completed with each couple and kept with the marriage papers. This will also assist us in completing the Government Registration Form which will be signed on the day of your marriage and forwarded to the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

**INTER FAITH:** If the couple is of different faiths, permission will be received from the Bishop's office for the marriage. The couple should discuss how they will practice their faith. The Catholic party must agree to raise their children in the Catholic faith.  
The non-Catholic party is informed of the intention of the Catholic party.

**PREVIOUS MARRIAGE:** If either party has been previously married, a Declaration of Nullity may be required on the previous marriage. You should not make any plans to marry until you have met with us to determine if this is required.

**TEENAGE MARRIAGE:** (Marriage of those under the age of eighteen). Before the priest or deacon can arrange the date of a marriage of someone eighteen years or younger, he will want to meet with the partners individually and the parents of each party.

**MEMBERS OF ANOTHER PARISH:** Since a wedding is a celebration of the Church, customarily it takes place in the parish of the bride. If the bride is not Catholic it takes place in the parish of the groom. If neither bride nor groom is a member of St. Mary's Parish, please contact the parish priest to arrange for permission to celebrate your wedding at St. Mary's Parish.

**VISITING PRIEST:** If you would like a priest or deacon who is not on staff at St. Mary's Parish to officiate at your wedding, he is warmly welcome. Since permission is required from the Bishop and, in some cases, from the Province, please inform the parish priest of your plans so that these permissions may be obtained well in advance.

## **PLANNING THE CEREMONY**

Couples are encouraged to be involved in the planning of the Marriage Ceremony. This includes the selection of readings, prayers, etc. A selection of readings and prayers is included in this booklet. As this is the most important part of your day, please spend time reading over and reflecting on the readings and prayers you select.

The wedding ceremony may be celebrated within Mass or outside of Mass. The Mass (Eucharist) fully celebrates the Sacrament of Marriage. If Mass is to be celebrated, both parties should be practicing Catholics. If the marriage is one of mixed religion, Mass is not usually celebrated as part of the wedding ceremony. We ask each couple to decide with prayerful consideration what is most appropriate to their situation.

Catholic parties should celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation within a week or so of the marriage.

**READERS:** You will need one or two readers to proclaim the scripture readings during the ceremony and to read the Prayers of the Faithful. You should choose someone who has read in a liturgical setting and is comfortable reading in public. Provide them with the readings in advance to give them time to prepare. Ask those who have the necessary gifts to proclaim God's word effectively and reverently.

**USHERS:** Your ushers (women or men) have a number of responsibilities. They make sure everyone is seated in the church before the ceremony begins. They are often called upon to give

directions to your guests and must be able to act in case an emergency arises. For this reason at least two of your ushers must be over 18 years of age.  
Recommend: one usher per 50 people.

**RECEIVING LINES** are intended as an opportunity to welcome your guests at the reception. The church must be prepared for the parish Mass following your wedding, therefore, time does not usually allow for receiving lines at the church.

**ORDER OF SERVICE PROGRAMS:** Although it is not necessary, you may wish to provide your guests with a program of the wedding celebration. Samples are included at the back of this booklet. Couples are responsible for preparing the booklet. Please have the ushers remove the programs from the church at the end of the celebration.

**RING BEARERS AND FLOWER GIRLS:** Young children often become agitated when faced with a church full of people. For this reason we ask that if children are to be a part of the wedding party that they be **at least six years of age**.

If a Ring Bearer is used, symbolic rings are used to be carried in the procession. The rings used for the ceremony are to be carried by the witness (best man).

**ALTAR SERVERS:** Altar servers are not generally required. When required, we recommend you use altar servers from the parish as they are familiar with procedures followed in this parish. It takes several weeks to train someone to effectively serve in this ministry.

## PLANNING THE MUSIC

Music is an integral part of the worshiping community's Liturgical and Sacramental Celebrations. Music unites and brings together God's people. At a wedding ceremony we are brought together to worship God and thank God for the love that He has made visible to us. With this in mind, the music that is chosen for your wedding should enable all those assembled to pray.

The music chosen for your wedding should express a clear relationship to God, not just to you, the couple. You may have the "perfect song" that expresses your love for each other, but if it does not express God's love or call us to worship, it would be more appropriately used at your reception. Only Sacred music (music that reflects the sacred nature of the Sacrament of Marriage) may be used in the wedding ceremony.

Our musicians have helped plan and have assisted at many weddings. Experience has taught us that the most successful ceremonies involve those who know the Liturgy and are familiar with procedures followed in this parish. For this reason, we ask you to use our parish musicians for weddings at St. Mary's.

Occasionally, couples planning weddings at St. Mary's have relatives or friends who are involved in music ministry in other parishes. We understand their desire to include them in the celebration of their wedding. Our musicians will be happy to include them and work with them. An additional fee will be required for our musicians for extra rehearsals with non-parish musicians.

Please consult with the parish music director before any decisions are made on music for your wedding. This will save you a lot of time and effort. The parish Music Director will spend time with you in selecting appropriate music, explaining the parts of the Liturgy and will arrange for an Organist and Leader of Song.

Although our parish Music Director will discuss your musical selections in detail, there are some general guidelines we would like you to be aware of before you begin planning.

- \_ Recorded music is not permitted in Liturgical celebrations
- \_ Only one processional hymn is played for the wedding party procession.

"Here Comes the Bride" is not permitted in Catholic marriage ceremonies. This is not sacred music and is not reflective of the sacrament we are celebrating.

## DECORATING THE CHURCH

Wedding shops and florists are in the business of selling flowers and decorations. They are not usually the best people to advise you on what you need to make your wedding ceremony "perfect" in any particular church. Placing large bouquets and candelabra in the sanctuary can restrict the space needed for the ceremony.

During special seasons of the year the church decorations will be more than adequate for your wedding ceremony. If you wish to purchase flowers, we recommend you provide only one large bouquet to be placed in front of the altar (approximately 2'W X 3'H).

For safety reasons, the use of candelabra in the sanctuary, aisles or attached to the pews, is not permitted. The placing of an arch is not permitted.

**PEW BOWS:** The aisle of the church is narrow providing just enough room for the procession. Our experience has been that pew bows are often knocked off during the procession. We do not recommend the use of pew bows as they are a lot of work for very little effect. If you wish to use them they must be attached with string or elastic. Tape may not be used on the pews as it removes the finish.

**UNITY CANDLE:** The use of the unity candle is optional. Some couples like to use a unity candle as a symbol of their being united in marriage. The candle is lit by the couple after the signing of the register. If you intend to use a unity candle please bring it to the rehearsal. If baptized, couples may use their baptism candles.

**FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS:** Any extra decorations are the responsibility of the couple. Check first to see if there are any other weddings scheduled on your wedding day. You are strongly encouraged to use real flowers. You are asked to bring your flowers to your rehearsal or arrange to have them delivered the day of your rehearsal only during office hours: 9:00a.m. to 4:00p.m., Tuesday to Friday.

In addition to corsages, boutonnieres and bouquets, many desire to place floral arrangements in the church. Please observe the following when making arrangements with florist:

1. Floral decoration should never impede the approach to or the encircling of the alter, lectern (reader), table for signing of registration form or any of the ritual movement and action.

2. A floral arrangement may be placed in front of (but never upon) the altar. A floral arrangement may be placed in front of the lectern. The setting up of the stands and vases elsewhere in the area near the altar and lectern is not permitted.
3. As the whole space is to be considered the arena of decoration, a floral arrangement may be placed in the gathering space near the front doors of the church. Such fragrant flowers would be a gracious sign of welcome.
4. If flowers or bows are to be used to decorate the ends of pews, they should be used at regular intervals along the entire length of the aisles, enhancing the whole worship space and the assembly which fills it. Such arrangements should not be limited only to the first several pews, serving as “reserved” signs. Draping of ribbons between any church pews is not permitted.

All arrangements are to be attached to the ends of pews by hanging them over the ends of each pew with ribbon, elastic or string. **ALL TACKS AND TAPES OF ANY FORM ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED.**

5. For safety reasons, the setting up of stands for any candles in the aisle and near the altar (other than those provided by the church) is not permitted.
6. You are encouraged to leave some floral arrangements in the church after the celebration of your wedding. Your flowers will continue to enhance our parish worship, especially at the weekend celebrations.

### **CONFETTI / RICE**

Obviously, confetti / rice are a serious janitorial problem and an environmental concern. Its use inside or outside the church is forbidden - not following this expectation may result in a fee for clean-up being levied on the couple. Birdseed is also forbidden.

### **VISITING CLERGY**

Visiting priests and deacons are always welcome. They must be a priest/deacon in good standing with the Church and the Diocese of Calgary, and have a valid marriage license. The couple is responsible to ensure that a proper honorarium is provided to the visitor. The couple is also required to inform one of the Priests of St. Mary's of this arrangement as soon as possible.

### **PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOTAPING**

The liturgy during which you celebrate your marriage is a sacred moment of rejoicing in prayer, song and gesture. 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:

1. Since the celebration of marriage is a sacred event, all those attending will be asked to respect that there are only three times permitted for any photo/videos: (a) processional (coming in) (b) signing of the register and (c) recessional (going out). Couples are asked to inform your official photographer of this requirement.
2. Any worship aid which the couple prepares/distributes should contain a note asking all to refrain from pictures/videos during the time of prayer, except at the three permitted times.
3. Photographers/video tapers are not permitted to roam about the church once the liturgy has begun. Violations of this will necessitate the priest's corrective announcement during the liturgy - **to be avoided!**
4. Only the lighting already available in the church may be used. No additional lighting may be brought into the church.
5. After the wedding, provided there is no conflict with other scheduled liturgies, the church and/or grounds may be used for other pictures. Couples requesting these post-wedding photo opportunities must request and book such requests well in advance to confirm.

## THE REHEARSAL

Please ask the wedding party to be on time for the rehearsal. Those directly involved in the wedding ceremony should be present at the rehearsal:

- \_ the wedding party
- \_ Readers
- \_ ushers

Musicians are not involved in the rehearsal. It is intended to be a simple "walk through" of the ceremony and should only take a half an hour.

**PUNCTUALITY:** Everyone needs to be on time for the rehearsal as lateness inconveniences many people. Sometime there are other rehearsals scheduled, and so punctuality is an important courtesy. It is equally important that all concerned be on time for the wedding. Remember, it is neither fashionable nor polite for the bride to arrive late. Bridal parties are asked to arrive at least \_ hour in advance.

## THE ENTRANCE PROCESSION

The Entrance Procession shows the special role of the bride and groom in the marriage liturgy. The procession should be faithful to the nature of marriage, which is a relationship of mutuality between wife and husband. The Bride is not "given away", rather, the couple give themselves to each other in marriage. Therefore, the procession should include both bride and groom and not just one of them.

How often have we heard: "It is bad luck for the groom to see the bride before the wedding ceremony begins"? In ancient times the groom saw what he "bought" only after she was unveiled at the altar. This kind of thinking does not reflect the Christian celebration of Marriage. Therefore, if the bride wears a veil, the veil is lifted once she reaches the front of the church.

What we do should reflect what we believe.

Most couples are nervous prior to the ceremony. Our experience has been that the bride and groom are much more relaxed if they gather together with the bridal party prior to the ceremony. The meeting room in the administration wing of the church is provided for this purpose.

## ORDER OF PROCESSION

The following order of procession is recommended for Christian weddings. Any variation should be discussed with the priest or deacon.

### (Option 1)

Bride and Groom (last)  
Maid of Honor and Best man  
Bridesmaid and Groomsman  
Priest or Deacon (first)

### (Option 2)

Bride and her Parents (last)  
Groom and his Parents  
Maid of Honor and Best man  
Bridesmaid and Groomsman  
Priest or Deacon (first)

### (Option 3)

Bride and Groom (last)  
Maid of Honor and Best Man  
Bridesmaid and Groomsman (first)  
Priest or Deacon

## FEES FOR WEDDINGS

A. TOTAL FEE:

- |    |                                   |          |
|----|-----------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | From <b>In</b> Parish:            | \$500.00 |
| 2. | From <b>Out</b> of Parish:        | \$700.00 |
| 3. | <b>Additional</b> Damage Deposit: | \$500.00 |

B. IMMEDIATE & REQUIRED BOOKING FEES:

50% PAYABLE TOWARDS TOTAL:

- |    |                     |          |
|----|---------------------|----------|
| 1. | From in Parish:     | \$250.00 |
| 2. | From out of Parish: | \$350.00 |

3. Refundable Damage Deposit \$500.00  
Returned within 30 days of Wedding.

C. BEING MARRIED AT ANOTHER PARISH:  
Non-Refundable \$150.00.

D. REMAINING 50% FEE PAYABLE TO “ST.MARY’S CHURCH” IS REQUIRED WITHIN  
60 DAYS OF WEDDING DATE.

E. MUSICIANS’ FEES:  
For instrumentalist the normal fee is \$100.00 and \$100.00 for a Leader of Song or  
Soloist. Musicians may charge additional fees to accommodate special music  
requests.

### **WHO CAN PRESIDE AT YOUR WEDDING?**

Normally only a Priest or Deacon may officiate at Catholic weddings. Deacons may officiate at weddings when the celebration of the Eucharist is not part of the ceremony. Some couples have a special relationship with a priest or deacon who is not from this parish. We are happy to accommodate these special relationships.

## CHECK LISTS

**As soon as possible:**

Register for a marriage preparation program.

### 6 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Request an updated baptismal certificate from the church where you were baptized (Catholic) or copy of original (non-Catholic)
- Contact parish musicians to begin planning the music.
- Select readings and prayers from the booklet “Celebrating Our Love; Liturgical Resources for Preparing and Celebrating Marriage”.
- Select readers, ushers and Wedding party

### 3 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Obtain marriage license.
- Make an appointment with Priest / Deacon to complete required paper work and return documents and finalize details.

### 2 MONTH BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Final payment
- Final choice for readings
- Prepare and print program (optional)

### FOR THE REHEARSAL

- Please remind everyone to arrive early for the rehearsal
- Only the following are needed for the rehearsal: (do not ask musicians to attend)
  - ushers
  - wedding party
  - readers
  - servers (if required)
- Bring programs (optional)
- Bring unity candles (optional)

### THE DAY OF YOUR WEDDING

- Ushers arrive at the church 45 minutes prior to the ceremony
- Bridal party arrives 30 minutes prior to the ceremony

## MARRIAGE VOWS

In your Liturgical Resources for Preparing and Celebrating Marriage: “Celebrating Our Love; Liturgical Resources for Preparing and Celebrating Marriage”, please see “Declaration of Consent(vows)” page 58.

## **PRAYER FOR ENGAGED COUPLES**

Thank you Lord,  
For this wonderful gift of love  
which already has brought us so much joy.  
Grant that we may continue to love  
reverently, patiently, generously,  
seeing You in each other.

Guide us in your wisdom to discover each other,  
that our understanding and compassion may deepen and mature.  
Teach us to forget ourselves and live in each other,  
that we may become truly one.

In these hurried days of final preparation,  
grant us the peace and calmness  
to reflect at times upon the sacramental moment  
when You will seal and sanctify our promises,  
binding us together in profound intimacy forever

**We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen**

## **A BLESSING FOR A WEDDING BANQUET**

God and Father of us all,  
you are the giver of all good gifts.

We praise and thank you today  
for the love you have placed in the hearts of (name) and (name)  
and for allowing us to share in that love.

We thank you for the joy we feel  
when we gather with friends.  
We thank you for the food we are about to share.

Let this banquet be for us  
a sign of your constant care.

Bless us, Father, and the food we eat.  
Give us grateful hearts to sing your praise.

**Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen**

## **Sample Program: Marriage without Mass**

**The Wedding celebration of  
John Paul Doe  
And  
Mary Susan Smith**

**Saturday, May 5, 2008  
St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Presider: Deacon John Doe**

Processional:	“Canon in D”
First Reading	Genesis 2: 1 – 13 Ashley Browne (Cousin of the Bride)
Responsorial Psalm:	“Let All The Earth Rejoice”
Second Reading:	Colossians 1: 12 – 17 Kim Jones (Friend of the couple)
Gospel:	John 15: 9 – 12
Homily:	Father John Doe
Exchange of Vows and Blessing of Rings	
General Intercessions	Alice Browne (sister of Groom)
The Lord's Prayer	
Nuptial Blessing	
Signing of the Register	“God is Love”
Lighting of the Unity Candle	
Closing Blessing	
Recessional	“Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring”

**Sample 1    continued.....**

Parents	John and Mary Doe Garth and Zeida Smith
Maid of Honor	Suzy Jones
Bridesmaids	Alice Frank Jodi Childs
Best Man	Jim Wolf
Groomsmen	George O'Hara Michael Smith
Accompanist	Jane Black
Soloist	Mabel Green
Ushers	Bruce Getz John Jacobs

**Pictures / Videos are only permitted three times (a) processional (coming in) (b) signing of the register (c) recessional (going out).**

**Thank you for your kind cooperation.**

*Thank you for sharing this  
special day with us.*

*John and Mary*

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Gospel:	John 15: 9 – 12
Homily:	Father John Doe
Exchange of Vows and Blessing of Rings	
General Intercessions	Alice Browne (sister of Groom)
LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST	
Communion Hymn:	“Come Let Us Sing”
Signing of the Register	“God is Love”
Lighting of the Unity Candle	
Closing Blessing	
Recessional	“Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring”

**Sample 2      continued.....**

Parents	John and Mary Doe Garth and Zeida Smith
Maid of Honor	Suzy Jones
Bridesmaids	Alice Frank Jodi Childs
Best Man	Jim Wolf
Groomsmen	George O'Hara Michael Smith
Accompanist	Jane Black
Soloist	Mabel Green
Ushers	Bruce Getz John Jacobs

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