

# **WEDDING GUIDELINES, PLANNING, AND PREPARATION**



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Dear Friends,

Congratulations on your decision to marry! Marriage is one of the seven sacraments, which are at the heart of our Catholic Faith. Sacraments are not the prayers of individuals alone but of the whole church. In this context, the wedding day does not “belong” to the bride and groom; your wedding is the celebration of a sacrament and thus belongs to the whole church. It is in this sense that we invite you to prepare for your wedding at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish.

This booklet of information is given to aid you in your preparation for the celebration of the Sacrament of Christian Marriage. We hope that this time of preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage will itself deepen your love and your commitment to each other – and strengthen the church.

As Marriage is a sacrament of the Catholic Church, there are some essential conditions that must be met:

- At least one of you must be a practicing member of the Catholic faith in good standing with the Church.
- In addition to regular participation at Mass, at least one of you should be registered members of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish. In an interfaith marriage, the Catholic party is required to make a promise to continue living the Catholic faith and doing all in their power to have the children baptized and raised as Catholics.
- If you are a summer resident of Elkhart Lake and worship with us regularly while in the area, we will accept the wedding with the following conditions:  
*You will need to work through your home parish for all the marriage preparation requirements. We encourage you to have your home pastor come and celebrate the marriage to maintain the sacramental continuity between your home parish and the place of your wedding. There is also a non-parishioner fee for a wedding here.*

- Both of you must be *free to marry*. This means that neither party has been validly married before. If one or both of you have been married previously, you must speak to your pastor about your situation.
- There must be enough time for us to help you prepare for the sacrament. The Catholic Common Policy for the State of Wisconsin requires a minimum of six months. It is not uncommon for couples to contact us one year or more in advance.
- Both of you must be willing to make a permanent commitment to each other that will be open to having children and will include a promise of marital fidelity. You will be asked to make these promises during the wedding ceremony.
- The Sacrament must be celebrated in the parish church in the presence of a priest or deacon, and two witnesses. As such, it can be a very simple ceremony. Church weddings do not have to be elaborate or expensive.
- Diocesan policy does not allow for the Sacrament of Marriage outside of a church. Outdoor weddings at a park or at the lakeshore are not permitted.

## **ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL PHASE**

### **1. REQUESTING A DATE FOR THE WEDDING:**

Please contact the pastor to request a date for the wedding. This needs to be done by either the bride or the groom and not by the parent. At that time he can tell you what dates are available and possibly “pencil-in” your request. **This must be done BEFORE reserving a hall for your reception.**

***Because of the preparatory nature of Advent and the penitential nature of Lent, weddings and baptisms are only allowed in extreme circumstances during these Seasons.***

### **2. THE INITIAL MEETING WITH THE PASTOR:**

Set up a meeting with the pastor as early as possible, but at least six months in advance of the wedding. At this time, he will explain the major phases of the marriage preparation and will fill out the pre-nuptial questionnaire with the couple. You will be asked to provide certificates noting the date and location of your Baptism and Confirmation. These certificates can be obtained by requesting them from the church where the sacraments were administered. These certificates must be newly issued documents and not copies of an existing certificate.

### **3. MEETING WITH A MARRIED COUPLE:**

After taking the FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study) Inventory, you will be directed to meet either with a married couple from St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, or with the pastor who will help you discuss the results. This inventory is not a test, but rather an opportunity to see how well you are communicating about important issues and to assess the strengths and growing edges of your relationship.

#### 4. ENRICHMENT DAY FOR THE ENGAGED:

You will also be directed to participate in an Enrichment Day for the Engaged sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and offered at parishes throughout the Archdiocese. An explanation of these and a schedule will be given to you at your initial meeting.

#### 5. ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTION:

The pastor may also want to meet with you for additional instruction. If one or both of you have not been practicing the faith on a regular basis, or if one or the other has not received the Sacrament of Confirmation, you may be asked to participate in a program to aid in the growth of your faith and to deepen your spirituality.

#### 6. SPIRITUAL PREPARATION:

With all the excitement of preparing for your wedding, please remember that you are really preparing for the **Sacrament of Marriage**. The most important element of your preparation is your spiritual preparation, because this is what will carry you through as the years go on. We recommend, and strongly encourage you to pray together often and regularly. **Attend Mass together every Sunday**. If this hasn't been your practice, start a new tradition now. Studies show that couples who actively practice their faith have happier and longer lasting marriages, and better values to pass on to their children. Finally, **receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation** before your wedding. This will help you to have a wonderful and spiritual new beginning. Your pastor will be happy to help you with any of the above. Please ask.

**A SPECIAL NOTE ON COHABITATION –  
LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE MARRIAGE.**

- One should not marry because one is expected to or feels obliged to do so. Marriage must be a truly free choice if it is to be a marriage at all. Living together may not allow either person enough emotional distance and objectivity to make this extremely important life decision.
  
- Catholic teaching opposes cohabitation before marriage, but it also strongly supports a couple's right to marry. It opposes cohabitation only because it supports sexuality and marriage as sacred and wants couples to achieve marital success and happiness.
  
- While the Church wants to support the couple and their relationship, it also adheres to religious values that the couple seems to be denying by their choice to live together before marriage.



## **THE LITURGY PLANNING PHASE**

### **1. RITUAL PREPARATION:**

Once the Assessment and Instructional Phase has been completed, the couple meets with the priest for preparation of the wedding liturgy. An explanation of the various liturgical options (processions, prayers, Scripture readings, placement, ministers, etc.) is included in “The Wedding Liturgy” section of this booklet and are discussed in detail. All decisions regarding the liturgy are subject to approval by the Pastor and the Director of Music.

### **2. Music:**

It is the preference of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish that the Director Music and a parish cantor provide music for weddings. All choices of wedding music are subject to approval by the Director of Music. Once you have met with the priest to discuss the liturgy, be sure to arrange a personal appointment with the Director of Music at least two months in advance of your wedding date. The Director of Music is more than willing to help you select music for your wedding. Please read and review the music section of this booklet regarding music choices and the selection of music for the wedding liturgy.



### 3. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE WEDDING LITURGY AND USE OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS PARISH

- A. **Use of Alcohol and Tobacco:** No smoking is allowed in the church; no consumption of alcohol or other behavior-influencing chemicals is allowed anywhere on parish grounds. Anyone under the influence of such substances will be asked to leave. If the bride, groom, or other attendants are involved, the priest has the right to postpone the marriage. The marriage, if witnessed while the bride or groom has been drinking, could be considered invalid because of the lessening of one's freedom through the use of alcohol/drugs.
- B. **Buildings & Grounds:** No rice, bird seed, confetti, flower petals, or other matter is to be thrown. The Bride's Room, church entry area, and the chairs are to be in good order after your wedding. Anything which was moved should be replaced in its original position.
- C. **Aisle Runners:** The parish does not allow aisle runners of any kind. The aisles of the church are for the use of all of those gathered, and aisle runners have proven to be hazardous to wedding guests. Insurance restrictions also prohibit the use of runners.
- D. **Church Decorations:** Although the church is already decorated for the seasons of the church year, you may choose to bring flowers into the church. Your church decorations may not conflict with those of the parish and the parish decorations may not be disturbed. **No flowers or decorations may be placed on top of the altar, or in such a way as to obscure it.** Anyone involved in decorating the church for your wedding should see the Art and Environment (Wedding Decorations) pages for more information.

- E. **Unity Candle:** If you desire to light the unity candle during your wedding liturgy, you must provide the larger candle, the two smaller candles, and any necessary candle-holders and tapers. These items will be placed on an appropriate table, provided by the parish, and not on the altar.
- F. **Videography and Photography:** Be sure to read the pages entitled, "Guidelines regarding Videotaping and Photography." Anyone involved in this process should receive these guidelines and confer with the priest beforehand to resolve any related questions.
- G. **Order of Worship:** Finally, a well designed printed participation booklet greatly enhances the assembly's participation in your wedding ceremony. St. Thomas Aquinas Parish provides for the preparation of your booklet. Please note that the Director of Music should have all of the information for your order of worship no later than four weeks before the wedding to guarantee the completion of the orders of worship on time.  
**It is your responsibility to take the completed and approved Order of Worship to a printer to have it duplicated, folded, and stapled.**
- H. **After the Wedding/Clean-up:** Please make sure that all areas of the church building are cleaned up following the wedding ceremony: including the main church, the pews, the sacristies, both entrances, the bride's room, the room for the groomsmen, and the parking lot. Please take everything with you, as we are not responsible for anything left behind.

## **THE REHEARSAL**

Rehearsals are usually scheduled the evening prior to the wedding. The average length of a rehearsal is one hour. Rehearsals may be scheduled on other days of the week, depending on the availability of the priest and parish personnel. The rehearsals are facilitated by the priest officiating at the wedding ceremony or by a Wedding Liaison from the parish.

Please have everyone ready to begin ON TIME. The rehearsal is a time to practice what has already been decided, so make sure that everyone knows their position, responsibilities, etc.

The wedding is primarily a religious ceremony in a sacred place. Proper dress (no t-shirts or shorts) and behavior are expected during the rehearsal and the wedding.

**The use of cellular phones in the church proper and chapel is strictly prohibited. Please be respectful of the sacred space and make sure your cell phones are off.**

No smoking is allowed in the church; no consumption of alcohol or other behavior-influencing chemicals is allowed anywhere on the parish grounds before, during, or after the rehearsal or wedding.

**Please bring to the rehearsal:**

- **The marriage license**
- **All fees for the church, priest, musicians, etc.**
- **Orders of Worship, Unity Candle (if using one), etc.**

# THE WEDDING LITURGY

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Wedding Liturgy is first and foremost the public worship of God. In other words, even though it focuses on the bride and groom, the wedding liturgy is the total community's act of worship, within which the bride and groom's exchange of vows takes place. It is an opportunity for all guests to join the bride and groom in praising God for the gift of love.

What happens at Sunday Mass is really the model and guide to be used in planning your wedding. Therefore, the easiest way for a couple to plan and prepare this liturgy, is to think about what happens at Sunday Mass.

## **CHOICE OF MINISTERS**

Just as there are many people involved at Sunday Mass, so too, with your wedding liturgy. Rather than honoring friends and relatives by asking them to be part of the wedding party, the bride and groom could consider honoring them by asking them to minister at the wedding liturgy. Those who minister should be active in the practice of the faith and in their own parish or church. The liturgical ministries are:

**ASSEMBLY:** participates in song, prayer, and gesture.

**PRESIDER (PRIEST):** calls the community to prayer, coordinates the various ministries, and leads the worship.

**USHERS/GREETERS:** welcome the people, help them find a place to sit, and distribute the orders of worship.

**CROSS BEARER (optional):** carries the processional cross. The procession that begins each worship service is intended to focus the attention of the community on the Lord and the fact that we have gathered to worship. The processional cross is that focal point. You might choose a family member or friend to carry the processional cross, or even one of the servers. This person should be at the rehearsal.

**LECTORS/READERS:** proclaim the Word of God from the Sacred Scriptures and the general intercessions (petitions). You may choose to have one lector read all three or you may divide the responsibility among two or three lectors. Ideally, the lector would be someone who reads in their church and is familiar with Catholic liturgy. However, anyone who reads well may proclaim the Scriptures. The lector also carries the Book of the Gospels in the procession. Lectors should be present at the rehearsal.

**GIFT BEARERS:** present the bread and wine. If the wedding is celebrated within Mass, you will need two gift bearers to bring up the bread and wine. You may also want to share the joy of this day with the poor and needy. If so, you can have a basket of non-perishable food brought up at the same time. Anyone may serve as a gift bearer.

**MINISTERS OF COMMUNION:** assist in the distribution of Holy Communion. If the wedding is celebrated within the context of Mass, one minister of the bread, and two ministers of the cup will be needed for the main body of the church. If you have friends or relatives who perform this service at their Catholic parish, you might ask them to distribute at your wedding. They should be present at the rehearsal.

**MUSIC MINISTERS:** lead the assembly in song. It is the preference of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish that the Director of Music and a parish cantor serve as the musicians for all weddings. You will need to consult with our Director of Music after meeting with the priest. It is preferable that this take place at least two months before the wedding. You may invite a soloist or instrumentalist(s) to lead at your wedding with the approval of the Director of Music. **Do not make any arrangements before speaking with the Director of Music.**

In addition, the **BRIDE and GROOM** are the ministers of the Sacrament of Marriage, while the best man and maid of honor are the legal witnesses. Other than the two legal witnesses (who must be 18 years of age or older), there is no function for other attendants at the wedding. Therefore, please try to keep the number of attendants at a minimum. The participation of children under the age of 6 years in the wedding party is highly discouraged.

## WEDDING MUSIC GUIDELINES

Music is a basic, central, and integral part of Catholic Worship, and so it should be for the wedding liturgy as well. Music is not a frill, but a basic and important element that cannot be overlooked. The most important moments for music in the wedding celebration are the times for congregational song and participation. Unfortunately, that is often the last type of music couples consider.

The music during your wedding liturgy is the time for those who gather to celebrate with you to rejoice in song. Allowing musicians to “perform” all the music at your wedding liturgy is not compatible with Catholic liturgy. There are other, more appropriate times during your wedding celebration to invite others to perform. Choosing songs and refrains the assembly can sing, and printing the songs, or at very least, the song numbers from the hymnal in your Order of Worship, will allow the assembly to express their joy and participate more fully in the liturgy.

### **When selecting music for your wedding, there are three basic criteria:**

- 1) Music must be able to be sung by the assembly.
- 2) Music must fit the spirit and structure of the liturgy.
- 3) Music must be of high quality and appropriate content.

To put it another way, the music must fit the context of faith and the dignity of the occasion. The texts should speak of a Christian concept of love and marriage, not a romantic one. Every generation has its love songs, and some of them are great music. They may have a place in your wedding day, but that place is not your wedding liturgy. This includes almost ALL secular music.

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish has many musicians who are willing to assist you by providing music for your celebration. We strongly encourage that you select musicians from our parish, as they are most familiar with our liturgical rites, music, and acoustical environment. ***It is the preference of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish that the Director of Music provide music for all weddings.*** Any guest musicians are required to adhere to our parish wedding music guidelines, and must work directly with the Director of Music.

## **SUGGESTED MUSIC** **FOR YOUR WEDDING AT STA**

### **Gathering Songs/Processionals:**

All Are Welcome (Haugen)  
Gather Us In (Haugen)  
God, We Praise You (NETTLETON)  
Holy God We Praise Thy Name (GROSSER GOTT)  
Holy, Holy, Holy (NICEA)  
Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise (ST. DENIO)

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You (HYMN TO JOY)  
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (HYFRYDOL)  
We Gather Together (Kremser)

### **Responsorial Psalms:**

Psalm 1: Happy Are They Who Hope  
Psalm 19: Lord, You Have the Words  
Psalm 25: To You, O Lord  
Psalm 25: I Lift Up My Soul  
Psalm 25: To You, O God, I Lift Up My Soul  
Psalm 33: Let Your Mercy Be on Us  
Psalm 34: Taste and See  
Psalm 34: O Taste and See  
Psalm 40: Here I Am  
Psalm 63: My Soul Is Thirsting  
Psalm 66: Let All the Earth

Psalm 84: Happy Are They  
Psalm 85: Lord, Let Us See Your Kindness  
Psalm 92: It Is Good to Give Thanks to You  
Psalm 98: All the Ends of the Earth  
Psalm 103: The Lord is Kind and Merciful  
Psalm 116: The Name of God  
Psalm 126: The Lord Has Done Great Things  
Psalm 128: Blest Are Those Who Love You  
Psalm 145: I Will Lift Up Your Name  
Psalm 145: I Will Praise Your Name



### **Preparation of the Gifts:**

Be Thou My Vision (SLANE)  
Blest Are They (Haas)  
Faith, Hope, and Love (Haas)  
Glory and Praise to our God (Schutte)  
God Be In My Head (Brown)  
I Have Loved You (Joncas)

Only A Shadow (Landry)  
Seek Ye First (Lafferty)  
The King of Love My Shepherd Is (ST. COLUMBA)  
The Summons (KELVINGROVE)  
You Have Called Us (Farrell)

### **Communion Songs:**

Eat This Bread (Taizé)  
Gift of Finest Wheat (Kreutz)  
One Bread, One Body (Foley)  
See Us, Lord, About Your Altar (Elgar)

Taste and See (Moore)  
We Have Been Told (Haugen)  
We Remember (Haugen)

### **Songs Specifically for Weddings:**

Hear Us Now, Our God and Father (HYFRYDOL)  
The Servant Song (Gillard)

**\*\*Please note: Other than the Responsorial Psalms, many other music suggestions can be appropriate for more than one moment during the Liturgy.\*\***

*Example: "I Have Loved You" is listed as an appropriate song for the Preparation of the Gifts. However, it could be used appropriately for the Gathering Song or Communion Song instead.*

## **OTHER MUSIC SUGGESTIONS:**

### **Instrumental (Processional/Recessional):**

Canon in D (Pachelbel)  
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (Bach)  
Largo (Handel)  
Ode to Joy (Beethoven)

Sheep May Safely Graze (Bach)  
Trumpet Tune (Purcell)  
Trumpet Voluntary (Clarke)

### **Solo Music:**

Ave Maria (Bach)  
Ave Maria (Schubert)  
Prayer of St. Francis

The Wedding Prayer  
The Wedding Song

**SPECIAL NOTES FOR INTERDENOMINATIONAL  
OR INTERFAITH COUPLES**

- A. It is generally presumed that interfaith couples will celebrate marriage without the Eucharist. This is done so that all those present can fully participate in the entire liturgy. It is not necessary to celebrate Mass as part of the wedding liturgy and The Rite of Marriage outside of Mass is a beautiful ritual. Ministers of other Christian denominations (e.g. the pastor of the non-Catholic spouse) are most welcome to participate at the wedding ceremony.
  
- B. If the marriage is to take place in another Christian church, the permission of the Archbishop is required. Please discuss this with the priest.

## WEDDING FEES

### **MARRIAGE PREPARATION FEE AND USE OF THE CHURCH:**

*(These fees are non-refundable and due when the wedding is scheduled)*

|                                  |              |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Church Fees: (members)</b>    | <b>\$350</b> |
| <b>Church Fees: (nonmembers)</b> | <b>\$500</b> |

This fee includes preparation materials, books, training for FOCCUS couples, typing fees, processing and miscellaneous parish expenses.

## MUSICIAN FEES

|                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Organist:</b> | <b>\$150</b> |
| <b>Cantor:</b>   | <b>\$100</b> |

These include consultation to select music, the playing and singing of music at your wedding, other services.

**TOTAL FEES (DUE TO: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS PARISH): MEMBERS: \$600**  
**TOTAL FEES (DUE TO: ST. THOMAS AQUINAS PARISH): NONMEMBERS: \$750**

**All fees are due before the wedding rehearsal begins.**

## **GUIDELINES REGARDING** **PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY**

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

Professional photography and/or videography may take place during the wedding liturgy. However, the photographer and/or videographer may not interfere with the liturgy in any way. The photographer and/or videographer are not allowed in the sanctuary or in front of the first row of pews/chairs. Once the ceremony has begun, flash photography is prohibited.

**All pictures must be completed, the church cleaned-up, and vacated by 4:00PM.**

Silence and quiet are part of this holy place. Please show respect and reverence. Prayerful conduct is expected always on church grounds.

**CHOIR LOFT:** Professional photographers and videographers are welcome to use the choir loft at the rear of the church. Please be aware that musicians may be using the steps to get in and out of the loft during the liturgy, so please keep these areas clear.

### **VIDEOGRAPHY:**

**MICROPHONES:** Please do not attach microphones to any church furniture or any existing church microphones. This includes the Ambo (Pulpit), Altar, and microphones for the Cantor (song leader).

**SOUND SYSTEM FEED:** There is no sound system feed in the main body of the church or in choir loft. However, you may be able to patch into the main system in the sacristy. Please contact the Director of Liturgy and Music at least one week prior to the date of the wedding for details.

## **ART AND ENVIRONMENT** **(WEDDING DECORATIONS)**

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish is set-up and decorated for special events and seasons within the Liturgical Year. We ask that you respect the decorations which are in place. Under no circumstances should you move or rearrange the environment already set-up in the church. In the same respect, absolutely no church furniture may be moved or rearranged. All decorations must be removed after the liturgy. **The church must be cleaned-up, and vacated by 4:00PM.**

- Although the church is already decorated for the seasons of the church year, you may choose to bring flowers into the church. Your church decorations may not conflict with those of the parish and the parish decorations may not be disturbed.
- **NO nails, tacks, screws, staples, pins, or tape** are to be used in any part of the building or on any furniture. Only ribbon or specially designed pew clips may be used to secure bows and flowers to pew ends.
- We require that only drip-less candles be used to prevent dripping on the floor or carpet. In the event of such dripping, you will be responsible for removing any spilled wax. It is required that a plastic sheeting be placed beneath any candles that might drip to avoid such occurrences, including the Unity candle.
- Flowers need to be placed where there will be no water damage or other stains. **No flowers or decorations may be placed on top of the altar, or in such a way as to obscure it. Nothing is to be placed on top of the musical instruments.**
- No rice, birdseed, flower petals, potpourri, glitter, or confetti may be used inside or outside on the church property. The release of balloons, butterflies or doves is also not permitted. Bubbles may only be used outside the church building.
- The parish does not allow aisle runners of any kind. Aisle runners have proven to be hazardous to wedding guests. Insurance and building codes also prohibit the use of runners.