

Importance and Dignity of the Sacrament of Matrimony

Married Christians, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and share in the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church. They help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children; and they have their own special gift among the people of God.

Marriage arises in the covenant of marriage, or irrevocable consent, which each partner freely bestows on and accepts from the other. This intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on each of them and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them. Christ the Lord raised this union to the dignity of a sacrament so that it might more clearly recall and more easily reflect his own unbreakable union with his Church.

Christian couples, therefore, nourish and develop their marriage by undivided affection, which wells up from the foundation of divine love, while, in a merging of human and divine love, they remain faithful in body and in mind, in good times as in bad.

(Taken from "Rite of Marriage")

The Place

1. A Catholic wedding takes place in the parish where either the bride, or the groom is registered.
2. A person residing outside the boundaries of this parish who wishes to be married at the church must obtain a letter from the pastor of the parish in which they do reside giving permission to the parish clergy to perform the service.
3. Those persons at college or in the military will be considered part of their parents' families if their parents are registered members of *Sacred Heart Catholic Church*.

The Date

4. The parish priests will be most happy to help in every way. A minimum of six months are required for processing the various Church requirements for the celebration of the sacrament of marriage.
5. Should circumstances require a decree of nullity of a former invalid marriage, it will not be possible to set a final wedding date until this difficulty is resolved.
6. The number of weddings scheduled at *Sacred Heart Catholic Church* makes it advisable to notify the priest of the date you prefer as soon as possible.
7. **Both parties in person** must arrange the wedding date. No **final** date can be agreed upon until the pre-nuptial investigation has been completed. (See #10)
8. Because of the many parish duties occupying the priests on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, weddings will not be scheduled on these days. No weddings are permitted on Ash Wednesday, or between Palm Sunday and the Monday after Easter (Holy Week).

The Time

9. Parish schedule permitting; weddings (both simple ceremonies and full Masses) may take place Friday evenings after 5:00pm (except during the seasons of Advent and Lent), or Saturdays at 10:00am and 12:00 Noon, 6:00pm, or at a time agreed upon by both the priest and the couple. For the convenience of all, two hours time is usually allowed between weddings scheduled on the same day.

Pre- Nuptial Instructions

10. Because marriage is a Sacrament, a new Christian vocation, and a serious life commitment, the Church will permit the celebration of marriage only after she is satisfied that the bride and groom are sufficiently informed about the meaning of Christian marriage. Whenever possible, this requirement is to be fulfilled by attendance at the “Evenings for Engaged,” held at various times during the year. If this is not possible, arrangements will be made for the couple to receive these instructions at an “Engaged Encounter” weekend retreat. Ideally, the couple should attend the same instructions. However, if circumstances prevent this, each party must fulfill this requirement wherever he or she might happen to be. This is especially important to inter-faith marriages.

Pre- Nuptial Investigation

11. In addition to making certain that the couple is sufficiently informed about the meaning and obligations of Christian marriage, the priest who will preside at a wedding must carefully ascertain whether each party is free to marry. He should seek if there are any impediments (i.e., a previous marriage which may need to be annulled) existing which would prevent the marriage and whether they are approaching the marriage with the right intentions. In this investigation, the following documents are usually involved:

- A. General questionnaire for bride and groom. (Form A)
- B. The written testimony of two people (usually relatives or long time friends) to establish their freedom to marry. (Form B)
- C. For the Catholic, a recent copy of the certificate of Baptism must be presented. The copy of the certificate must not have been issued more than six months before the date of the wedding.
- D. The marriage license and certificate issued by the state.

12. In the event that the bride or groom were previously married, one or both of the following also will be necessary.
 - A. Legally certified copy of the certificate of death of the former spouse.
 - B. Copy of the decree of nullity of former marriage issued by a Church Tribunal.

The Wedding Liturgy

13. Weddings can only be celebrated in a Sacred Place. A wedding may be celebrated in a non-Catholic church providing the couple has been prepared by the Catholic Church and has received a dispensation for the celebration from the Diocese of St. Petersburg. When this dispensation is granted, the Catholic Church empowers the non-Catholic minister to act as the official witness of the Catholic Church. Therefore, the marriage is a Catholic marriage, even if celebrated in a non-Catholic Church without a priest present.
14. The Rite of Marriage may take one of two forms. The WEDDING CEREMONY is quite noble in its simplicity. The service begins with a greeting, reading from the Scriptures, and homily or instruction by the priest. The exchange of vows, the blessing and exchanging of the rings and the Lord’s Prayer follow this. The rite concludes with a prayer and the wedding blessings. (Please see Appendix B for the order of the ceremony.)

The WEDDING and MASS contains all the elements of the wedding ceremony celebrated within the context of the Eucharist. This longer celebration is the most beautiful and meaningful way in which a Catholic couple could begin their marriage. (Please see Appendix A for order of the ceremony) It is also the primary way in which Catholic parties are asked to celebrate their wedding.

The reception of Holy Communion by the bride and groom, together with their families and friends, clearly expresses the union of the couple to the mystical Body of Christ and their desire to live their new vocation in the midst of the Christian community.

15. The Mass may be celebrated as part of an inter-faith marriage. However, the fact that the non-Catholic party cannot fully participate, especially in the reception of Holy Communion, might suggest the inadvisability of this type of celebration. This should be discussed with the priest who is doing the couples preparation.

16. The Church allows the couple to select the prayers and readings to be used at their wedding ceremony and at the Mass. A booklet with the approved prayers and readings from which you may make your selection will be provided at the time of the Pre-nuptial instruction. Your choices for the texts should be communicated to the priest, who will conduct the service, well in advance of your wedding day.

17. Selections from books other than the Bible, as well as forms of the vows not approved by the Church, may not be used in the wedding service.

Visiting Priests

18. On occasion a couple may wish to have a priest from another parish officiate at the wedding ceremony. Should this be the case, the couple should notify the parish clergy during the pre-nuptial investigation. The visiting priest must receive permission to

perform the service from the Pastor of *Sacred Heart Catholic Church* well in advance of the wedding date. Visiting clergy are expected to observe all the liturgical norms set out in this booklet.

Participation by Non-Catholic Clergy

19. In interfaith marriages the non-Catholic party may wish his or her minister to take part in the wedding ceremony. The Church, recognizing the importance of this day in the life of the couple, is happy to extend an invitation to the minister of the non-Catholic to be a participant.

20. If the couple desires the presence of a non-Catholic minister, it becomes their obligation to see to it that he is invited and that he contacts the priest who will conduct the service.

21. Since there are special norms for conducting the wedding service in these circumstances the particulars of the ceremony will be arranged by the two clergymen.

Readers and Altar Servers

22. Members of the bridal party or a member of the congregation may act as lector (reader) during the wedding service. Should the couple wish this they should make arrangements with the person well in advance of the service. It is the couple's duty to provide the reader with the scripture text that will be used. No one should be chosen for this important role who is not comfortable with public speaking, or who does not have a clear and declarative voice.

23. If the couple so desires, Altar Servers may be assigned for the wedding service. Under extraordinary circumstances the couple may request an Altar Server who is not a current Altar Server at *Sacred Heart Catholic Church*, this may be done by contacting the parish office.

Spiritual Preparation

24. A wedding of two baptized persons is more than a personal and social contract; it also is a Sacrament, one of seven signs of grace in which God gives Himself to us in a special way. To receive this Sacrament presupposes a life of faith, daily prayer, regular attendance at Mass, the frequent reception of the Eucharist, and of course, the state of Sanctifying Grace. Even if **one** is free from serious sin, it is advisable to receive the Sacrament of Penance in preparation for marriage, since it is the beginning of a new vocation in life. If the Mass is not part of the wedding, the Catholic should make provisions to receive Holy Communion at one of the parish Masses scheduled earlier in the day.

The Rehearsal

25. It is important that all those directly involved in the wedding (the bride, groom, parents, attendants, ushers) be on time both for the rehearsal and for the wedding itself.

26. Rehearsals generally take place at 6:00pm the evening before the wedding. If the time needs to be changed, please let the office know well in advance.

Wedding Music

27. Music for a wedding at *Sacred Heart Catholic Church* forms an integral part of the ceremony. This includes music before and after the ceremony (if it is a wedding without a Mass) as well as music during the Mass, if it were part of the wedding ceremony. The solemnizing of the vows through the Sacrament of Matrimony is the primary purpose of celebrating this liturgy in the House of God. Because of this, all acts, prayers, gestures, and music should be relevant to this solemn aspect. Musically, therefore, anything that relates to the secular, with no identification to God or His sacrament, should be avoided.

28. For this reason, requests for music of social or theatrical nature must be avoided. If certain songs relate to the events of the courtship of the couple, the couple should strive to have this

desired music at the parties, rehearsal dinner, or actual wedding reception rather than for the church ceremony.

29. Music chosen could involve psalms or specified religious songs that would be applicable to the reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony. The Sacrament of Marriage is a celebration of the Church, the whole People of God, and it is fitting that the assembled congregation join together in offering prayers and songs to God.

30. The music director of *Sacred Heart Catholic Church* is available for consultation concerning the program of wedding music, which is available for the service. You will find him both cooperative and knowledgeable and we are sure you will be pleased with the various selections that may be used for this important event. Mr. Roberts may be contacted at (727) 541-4447.

31. Under no circumstance may music inappropriate for Church use be considered.

32. The music director should be contacted as soon as the wedding date has been finalized.

33. The church organist/pianist, or his designee, must be hired to perform the music for your wedding. A parish cantor will also be present to lead the congregation's song and other responses. If you have friends or relatives who you wish to take part in the wedding, they must contact Mr. Roberts who will help assess their capabilities as well as assure that only sacred music and music appropriate to the celebration of a catholic wedding is performed at the ceremony. Please note that musicians will not be able to rehearse as part of the wedding rehearsal the day before the wedding. Vocalists must meet with Mr. Roberts no later than 45 minutes prior to the wedding. If you are considering other musicians, such as a violinist, trumpeter, or others, please contact our Mr. Roberts as soon as possible; also

note that there may be an additional charge for this arrangement. (see #46)

Songs For A Wedding Liturgy

Processionals

Ave Maria – Schubert or
Gounod
Trumpet Voluntary – Clark
Trumpet Tune – Purcell
Jesu, Joy – Bach
Arioso – Bach
Canon in D – Pachelbel
Bridal Chorus – Wagner

Gathering Songs

Joyful, Joyful We Adore
Thee
Gather Us In
We Gather Together
Gather Us Together
Table of Plenty
Now As We Gather

Responsorial Psalm

16 – Center of My Life
33 – Taste and See
33 – The Earth Is Full Of The
Goodness
33 – Let Your Mercy Be On
Us, O God
103 – The Lord Is Kind and
Merciful
103 – Loving and Forgiving
128 – Blest Are Those

Unity Candle (If applicable)

We Are Many Parts
Where There Is Love
Instrumental

Preparation of the Gifts

(selection from Unity
Candle)
All My Days
The Servant Song
We Have Been Told

Communion

One Bread, One Body
Ubi Caritas
Gift of Finest Wheat
Song of The Body of Christ
Behold The Lamb
Taste and See
The Supper of The Lord

Recessional

(Selection from Processional)
Praise the Lord – Karg-Elert
Prelude to Te Deum –
Charpentier
Water Music – Hornpipe -
Handel
Psalm 19 – Marcello
Toccata on Ode to Joy –
Beethoven

Wedding March -

Mendelssohn

Decorations

34. Candles or candelabra, other than the Unity Candle, are prohibited both in the sanctuary and on the pews. If pew bows are used, please advise the florist that they must be tied rather than taped.

35. A white aisle runner is not permitted. Neither is the use of real flower petals. However, silk petals are allowed as long they are used with care. And there should be no use of birdseed, rice, or any other thrown objects at the church (see #45).

36. It is expected that receiving lines be done only at the reception.

37. The parish priest or secretary should be consulted several weeks before the ceremony if you have any questions.

Photographs

38. Photographs may be taken. The photographer may not enter the sanctuary or take pictures in such a way as to disturb the congregation or the priest. Posing for pictures inside the Church after the ceremony is permitted for 30 minutes, and not after 3:00pm.

Proper Dress

39. The attire of those in the wedding party can be as formal or as simple as desired. However, Christian modesty and good taste will exclude low-cut or sleeveless gowns or dresses, pantsuits and other inappropriate attire. The bride and her attendants may use the “Bride’s” room located near the entrance of the church and groom with his best man may use Conference Room 1, located across from the Usher’s Closet, but care should be taken to leave the room clean and in good order for weddings that may follow. Smoking and alcoholic beverages are not permitted inside the Church: this includes the dressing rooms, lavatories, vestibules and sacristy.

Other Observations

40. Non-Catholics are welcome to participate in the ceremony as attendants to the bride and groom. However, they must understand that they will be expected to observe the usual Catholic procedure in matters of ceremony.

41. The Parish Hall is never rented for wedding receptions or bridal showers.

42. If you wish to print out a map with directions for your guests, you are welcome to have them contact our parish office at (727) 541-4447.

43. The marriage license and check (see #46) are to be brought to the office no later than a week prior to the wedding. The priest and the best man and maid of honor will sign the license immediately after the service.

44. The ushers should arrive in the Church at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the ceremony and members of the wedding party at least 15 minutes before the appointed time.

45. Because of the safety-hazard, neither rice nor birdseed may be thrown at the door of the Church or anywhere on the Church property.

Fees

46. The Church wedding is not only the most important part of the wedding day; it is also the least expensive. If one were to attempt to rent a hall as large and as beautiful as the Church, one would expect to pay a great deal. In addition to this, should a person have to consult with numerous people necessary to organize and arrange a dignified and beautiful service such as your wedding, there would again be a large fee. The requested offering to the Church for all services and consultations is: \$425.00. Fees **MUST** be paid no later than two (2) weeks prior to wedding.

If a wedding is scheduled for Friday or Saturday evenings after 5:00pm an additional \$50 will be added to cover the expense of our maintenance personnel.

If additional musicians and rehearsals are needed there is an extra fee of \$50, plus the fee charged by the additional musician.

47. The Parish Office telephone number is (727) 541-4447.

MAY THE PEACE OF CHRIST BE ALWAYS
IN YOUR HEARTS AND HOME

NOTES

APPENDIX A

THE ORDER OF A WEDDING MASS:

PRELUDE - Music played by the musician, while the congregation is being seated.

SEATING OF THE MOTHERS - Occurs approximately 5 -10 minutes before the ceremony is scheduled to begin. Consists of the mothers (bride's mother first) being escorted to their seats, after they have lit the appropriate candle on the Unity Candle (usually bride's mother lights the candle on the left).

PROCESSIONAL - The bridal party begins, groomsmen and bridesmaids in couples, followed by ring-bearers/ flower children, followed by Maid/ Matron of Honor, followed by Bride and her father. The Bride and Groom meet at steps of the Altar where her father will give her hand to the Groom. Music ends at some point after this.

INTRODUCTORY RITES - The Priest will welcome the people assembled, offer a prayer and invite everyone to listen to the readings.

FIRST READING - Usually from the Old Testament.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM - Usually a song lead by the Cantor/ Organist to which the congregation responds on the refrain. You might want to put this refrain in the program.

SECOND READING - Usually from the New Testament.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION - Usually sung. It is the "Alleluia" that's sung before the Priest proclaims the Gospel. Everyone should stand.

GOSPEL - Proclaimed by the Priest.

HOMILY

EXCHANGE OF VOWS - Has three parts: 1) Statement of Intentions, 2) Giving of Consent/ Vows, 3) Exchange of Rings.

LIGHTING OF THE UNITY CANDLE - The couple lights the main candle, blows out the two smaller candles, then greets each others' parents. There is usually music playing at this time.

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS - Lead by a reader, the congregation gives a response. You might want to print the response in the program.

PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS - These can be brought to the Altar by selected persons, if you so choose.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER - This is just like at a Sunday Mass.

THE LORD'S PRAYER - Usually spoken.

NUPTIAL BLESSING - The Priest offers a special prayer for the newly married couple.

COMMUNION - Beginning with the newly married couple, who should stay kneeling, then moving out to the whole congregation.

VISITATION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY-Within some cultures this is a very important part of the ceremony and so I offer it as an option for anyone who would care to do it.

CLOSING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE

DISMISSAL - The kissing part is here. Music starts at that point.

APPENDIX B

THE ORDER OF A WEDDING WITHOUT MASS:

PRELUDE - Music played by the musician while the congregation is being seated.

SEATING OF THE MOTHERS- Occurs approximately 5 -10 minutes before the ceremony is scheduled to begin. Consists of the mothers (bride's mother first) being escorted to their seats, after they have lit the appropriate candle on the Unity Candle (usually bride's mother lights the candle on the left).

PROCESSIONAL - The bridal party begins, groomsmen and bridesmaids in couples, followed by ring-bearers/ flower children, followed by Maid/ Matron of Honor, followed by Bride and her father. The Bride and Groom meet at steps of the Altar where her father will give her hand to the Groom. Music ends at some point after this.

INTRODUCTORY RITES - The Priest will welcome the people assembled, offer a prayer and invite everyone to listen to the readings.

FIRST READING - Usually from the Old Testament.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM - Usually a song lead by the Cantor and Organist to which the congregation responds on the refrain. You might want to put this refrain in the program.

SECOND READING - Usually from the New Testament.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION - Usually sung. It is the "Alleluia" that's sung before the Priest proclaims the Gospel. Everyone should stand.

GOSPEL - Proclaimed by the Priest.

HOMILY

EXCHANGE OF VOWS - Has three parts: 1) Statement of Intentions, 2) Giving of Consent/ Vows, 3) Exchange of Rings

LIGHTING OF THE UNITY CANDLE - The couple lights the main candle, blows out the two smaller candles, then greets each others' parents. There is usually music playing at this time.

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS - Lead by a reader, the congregation gives a response. You might want to print the response in the program.

THE LORD'S PRAYER - Usually spoken.

NUPTIAL BLESSING - The Priest offers a special prayer for the newly married couple.

CLOSING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEWLY MARRIED COUPLE

DISMISSAL - The kissing part is here. Music starts at that point.