

MARRIAGE GUIDELINES

St. Joseph Catholic Parish

(Vanderburgh County)

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding. The people of St. Joseph Parish join in praying with you and for you on this most special day. A wedding is the focus of many social customs, cultures, and expectations, but for the Catholic Christian it is, first and foremost, the celebration of a sacrament. It is a celebration of mutuality and ministry, a commitment of love in the context of both family and community. The focus of this celebration is far more than a one-day ceremony; it envisions a commitment by the couple to remain rooted in a Christian community and to grow spiritually within that community. Marriage preparation is meant to assist the pair to live a sacramental life together as a couple and as members of their extended family, the church.

SCHEDULING

Before a wedding will be scheduled at St. Joseph, you must contact the Pastor at St. Joseph Parish. This initial contact should be made a minimum of six months before the anticipated wedding. This will allow ample time for the marriage preparation programs that are required for all couples desiring to get married. Only after this initial contact with the Pastor will a marriage ceremony be scheduled.

Weddings are typically celebrated in the context of a Nuptial Mass. Weddings may be celebrated any day of the week and on Saturday. Because Mass is celebrated at 5pm on Saturday, weddings can be scheduled anytime between 8 am and 2:00 pm. This will allow ample time for the wedding and subsequent picture taking and will ensure that the proceedings will be finished for our Saturday evening Mass at 5 pm.

If the bride and groom are of different faiths, the sacrament may be celebrated outside of the context of the Mass with the Liturgy of the Word and the Rite of Matrimony. A minister of any denomination is welcome to be present at the altar and to take part in the Marriage Ceremony.

Weddings are not permitted during Holy Week. According to Catholic Custom, weddings are also not held during the season of Lent. (This Season varies from year to year, depending on the date for Easter. Normally this involves the time from mid February through mid April.)

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

We spend many years in school to prepare for life in society and for a lifetime of work. Life together as husband and wife also requires serious preparation. In keeping with the diocesan policy, couples desiring to be married in the community of the church are to notify the priest or deacon as soon as they have the intention to marry (formal engagement) and at least six (6) months prior to the anticipated time of their wedding. All couples marrying in the Diocese of

Evansville are asked to take an active part in an assessment process and formal preparation programs for marriage.

VISITING PRIEST OR DEACON

A priest or deacon, who is a relative or friend of either party, is always welcome to preside at the marriage. In keeping with the diocesan policy "the priest or deacon, who by right or by delegation is to witness the marriage, has the responsibility of helping the couple to assess their readiness and to prepare for the sacrament of marriage." If the priest or deacon who is to witness the marriage is coming from a distance, he should arrange with the pastor to assume proper assessment and preparation for marriage. All visiting ministers are to abide by the policies and procedures of the Diocese of Evansville and St. Joseph Catholic Church

DOCUMENTATION

- The couple will need to provide their baptism certificates. These must be originals (not photocopies), issued by the church of baptism within the last six (6) months. This also applies to non Catholic Christians. Some non-Catholic Christian churches do not keep permanent baptismal records. In this case, the baptismal certificates can be obtained by writing or calling the church of baptism and requesting that they send a copy to St. Joseph Catholic Church, 6202 West St. Joe Rd., Evansville, IN 47720. For those baptized at St. Joe, the certificate is not required.

- A Vanderburgh County marriage license is also needed. This can be obtained at: County Clerk's Office, 216 City/County Building, Evansville, IN 47708 Monday through Friday, 8:00 am - 4:00 pm. Both parties need apply in person for the license. Documentary proof of age for both must be presented. Only one person is needed when picking up the license. No waiting period is required before the license is issued. The current license fee is \$18.00. Personal checks are not accepted. If couples are from out-of state, the fee is \$60.00. The license is valid for sixty (60) days. One person needs to apply for the marriage license in the county of legal residence. Birth certificates and picture IDs with valid addresses are also required of both parties.

WEDDING CEREMONY

The actual ceremony is the culmination of months of planning and preparation for many people. It is typically a highly charged emotional day and tensions can run high. A caution for all those involved: Realize now that the effort has been expended to make everything as perfect as can be, relax and enjoy this day. All involved should also realize the ceremony is a time of prayer. This is an opportunity for the family and friends to pray with and for the bride and groom. Every person in attendance at the wedding has a responsibility to be an active witness to the commitment the bride and groom make to one another and to society. The tendency at many weddings is for people to assume they are there to "watch a performance" rather than to be active participants. In fact, many weddings are planned to encourage those present to merely watch. At St. Joseph Church, we hope the opposite is true. We want and invite all those present, whether Catholic or not, to actively take part in the ceremony. St. Joseph Church does everything possible to encourage the wedding party to be leaders in this effort.

MUSIC

St. Joseph Parish adheres to the guidelines for music at weddings as established by the Catholic Rites for celebrating weddings. The music during the wedding ceremony is to be prayerful and of a religious nature. **All couples who are planning to be married at St. Joe, must work with Kristan Gilles, our parish organist and Director of Liturgy. You will need to contact her (963-6485) to arrange a time to meet with her.**

All who are present for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony have a part in the liturgy. The music selected should enable all in attendance to participate in sung prayer. Wedding music should be not only an expression of sentiment, but also an appropriate aid to religious expression, with the lyrics expressing what is unique and distinct about Christian love. Certain pieces of music which are traditionally used at weddings, e.g. "pop" songs heard on the radio, are not to be used in the church ceremony but rather at the reception where the cultural and social prospects of marriage are celebrated. This music does not reflect the Christian nature of the gathering or the meaning of the sacrament.

The Director of Worship at St. Joseph Church will give you a list of approved musical selections from which you will be able to choose. She will also assist in arranging for an organist, other musicians, or cantor/vocalist if desired. In choosing an organist and cantor, it is necessary that they be familiar with the Catholic Mass. Both a cantor and an organist are necessary for all weddings in this parish.

DECORATIONS

The church is our parish house. Couples are not permitted to remove and/or rearrange church furnishings and decorations at will. Flowers or greenery to decorate the church may be very expensive and are not necessary at the wedding. St. Joseph Catholic Church is very attractive as it is. Decorations are welcome but are not to interfere with the service. Decorations are subject to the approval of the pastor or his delegate. Seasonal (Advent, Christmas and Easter) decorations, flowers, etc. may not be altered or removed.

- **Aisle Runner** Aisle Runners are not necessary. Plastic or paper aisle runners are not permitted due to liability issues.
- **Flowers and Greenery** If you are scheduling a wedding during the season of Advent, Christmas or Easter, please be aware that there will already be flowers and decorations in place. If you are scheduling a wedding at another time during the year, there are a selection of ferns and greenery and a limited selection of silk flowers, which can be used to decorate the church for your wedding. Our wedding coordinator will be able to show you these things.
- **Unity Candle** A Unity Candle is not necessary. If a couple chooses to have a unity candle, it is not to be placed on the altar. It has a special place on the baptismal font. Lighted candles in the Catholic tradition have a connection with baptism where the baptized are given a lighted candle symbolizing the "light of Christ" they have received in baptism. If a couple chooses to use a unity candle, it is most appropriate that their baptismal candles be used as part of this ritual. If a unity candle is used, please do not move candles until the wax solidifies to avoid spills or drips on the floor/carpet.

Couples are not permitted to “rope off” or put any kind of decorations on any doors or pews that would prevent the flow of people in and out of church and/or pews. No items that cause damage to the altar, ambo, pews, etc (e.g. nails, tacks, tape, unpadded clamps, etc.) may be used.

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Photographs may be taken during the ceremony. A good rule of thumb for a photographer should be that they are able to do their job without being noticed. Professional photographers will have no problem doing this. All picture taking should be finished by 4:15 to allow for our regular Saturday evening Mass at 5:00 pm

VIDEO CAMERAS

Filming of the wedding is permitted. Again, the rule of thumb is that they not be a source of distraction to the wedding ceremony or the congregation. Placement of video cameras is subject to the approval of the presider. Cameras are usually placed in the balcony and/or on the side of the church. Videographers are not to be in the sanctuary or move around during the service.

BRIDE'S ROOM

It is most appropriate that couples come to the church dressed for the wedding. Sometimes, there is a need to freshen up or do some last minute adjustments to wedding gowns etc. School restrooms may be used for this purpose. It should be noted that these rooms are very small and not really conducive to be used as a dressing area. The wedding coordinator will make sure that such places are open and available for your use. The church may not be used for dressing. School restrooms and the church are to be cleared of all personal effects of the wedding party immediately after the ceremony.

RICE, BALLONS, PETALS, BUBBLES

The custom of throwing rice (birdseed, etc.) at the church door is not allowed out of respect for the church as a place of worship, and because insurance regulations prohibit it.

Balloons are not to be used at the church because they are an environmental hazard to birds and can become tangled in electrical wires and trees.

Fresh or silk petals are not permitted to be strewn down the aisle.

Bubbles may not be used inside or outside the church.

PROGRAMS

It is appropriate to prepare a worship aid (program) for your wedding. However it is not required. A sample copy of a worship aid is included with these guidelines. If you choose to prepare a program the following information will be of help to you. Please make the choice and size of type legible (the most common complaint heard about wedding programs is that they are not legible). A sample program is included with these guidelines.

ALTAR SERVERS

Normally altar servers are not assigned to weddings. If there are friends or relatives who wish to serve, the arrangements are made with the presider during the liturgy planning meeting.

REHEARSAL

The wedding rehearsal is a time of joy, a meeting of families and friends, at the beginning of the celebration of marriage. All decisions concerning the liturgy and the whole of the ceremony are to be completed before the rehearsal night. Every effort should be made to insure that the members of the wedding party arrive on time. The marriage license and any other necessary documents are to be brought to the rehearsal, if they have not already been given to the presider. The wedding rehearsal usually lasts thirty (30) minutes. It is not necessary for the ministers of music to be at the rehearsal.

COST

For members of St. Joseph Parish who are active in the life of the parish and who are actively support the parish with their financial contributions, there is no cost for the wedding. Parishioners who have not been supporting the parish financially are asked to make a contribution of \$200 to the church. Under special circumstances, couples from outside St. Joseph Parish will be allowed to schedule weddings at St. Joe. In such cases, these couples are asked to make a \$300 donation to the parish for use of the church.

WEDDING ASSISTANT

St. Joseph Parish has a wedding assistant to help you with the preparations of your wedding. The wedding assistant is Marie Gumbel You can contact her at 963-3183. She will be able to show you the flowers and greenery, which can be used for decorations for your wedding and will work with you to decorate the church in an appropriate manner. **ALL COUPLES** whether they be parishioners or non-parishioners) are asked to work with this wedding coordinator. **All couples are asked to pay this coordinator \$40. This fee is to be paid prior to the wedding.**

SMOKING & BEVERAGES

Smoking is prohibited in the church and school at any time. The consumption of any beverage in church (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) prior to, during or following the wedding (and rehearsal) is prohibited. Consumption of alcoholic beverages is not permitted on church property except at wedding receptions in the cafeteria.