

Liturgy and Ceremony Preparation

Marriage is an intensely personal event in the lives of two people, but Christian marriage is more than just a private celebration of the couple's love. Because it takes place in the presence of the community, the wedding should acknowledge those gathered and invite their active participation in praise of God and in support of the two whose marriage they have come to witness. The rubrics of the Catholic marriage ceremony are meant to do just that. Within these rubrics, there are many opportunities for personalization of the ceremony. **At least five months prior to the wedding date** the couple will need to set up an appointment with the Director of Music and Liturgy to begin planning the ceremony. The couple is encouraged to bring ideas and questions to this meeting, but not to make definitive plans for the ceremony until after this initial meeting.

1. *Marriage during Mass or outside Mass?*

- a. When the bride and groom are both Catholic – Traditionally the exchange of vows between two Catholics takes place within the context of a Mass.
- b. When only one of the bride and groom is Catholic – If one of the couple is not Catholic, the marriage rite outside of Mass is the norm. This offers the couple the opportunity to join to families together at the wedding liturgy without the fear of excluding members of the assembly who would not be invited to communion.
- c. Interfaith weddings – The minister of the non-Catholic party is most welcome to participate in the ceremony as the couple wishes. The invitation to is extended by the couple. The role which the minister will play is to be determined by the priest/deacon and the couple, while respecting, as much as possible, the wishes of the minister.

2. *Liturgy Planning Sheet* – After deciding whether the ceremony will be within Mass or outside of Mass, the couple will be given a folder with a liturgy planning sheet which should be completed with the assistance of the Director of Music and Liturgy, the chosen musicians, and the priest/deacon. The completed sheet needs to be given to the Director of Music and Liturgy at least two months prior to the wedding date.

3. *Music*

- a. Congregational Music – Music at the wedding liturgy is to express the faith of those gathered to worship and should encourage the full and active participation of all gathered. At a minimum, each wedding will include a gathering song, a responsorial psalm and the Mass acclamations led by a cantor. If the wedding will take place within a Mass, the song during communion should also be a congregational song.
- b. Solo Music – The couple is welcome to personalize the wedding ceremony with solo selections before the ceremony or during approved parts of the liturgy. Any secular music and lyrics must be approved by both the priest/deacon and Director of Music and Liturgy. Songs that do not express Christian love should be reserved for the wedding reception.
- c. Musicians – The couple is encouraged to hire experienced musicians for their wedding ceremony. St. Pius X welcomes outside musicians and soloists or the couple may choose from our list of recommended musicians. Please discuss with the Director of Music and Liturgy about music requirements for the Catholic wedding ceremony before hiring musicians. Any outside musicians must contact the Director of Music and Liturgy to discuss sound equipment needs. If the hired musicians are not familiar with the Catholic liturgy they must receive instruction from the Director of Music and Liturgy. Musician stipends vary and should be discussed with the individual or group.

4. *Liturgical Ministers* – Outside of the wedding party, there are a number of ways to involve friends and family in the wedding ceremony.
 - a. Lectors – From one to three people needed. Lectors read the scriptures and the Prayers of the Faithful chosen by the couple. Need not be Catholic. The parish can provide a lector if needed.
 - b. Ushers – From two to four people needed. Ushers serve as greeters for the guests and may help seat the guests. Ushers are also in charge of clean up after the ceremony unless another group has been designated by the couple. Need not be Catholic.
 - c. Gift Bearers – For weddings *within a Mass*, two to three may be used. Gift bearers present the bread and wine for the Eucharist. This is also a great way to involve young people in the wedding ceremony. Need not be Catholic.
 - d. Eucharistic Ministers – For weddings *within a Mass*, zero to three needed depending on the size of the guest list. These ministers must be practicing Catholics in good standing in the church. The parish can provide Eucharistic Ministers if needed.
 - e. Altar Servers – For weddings *within a Mass*, two may be requested by the celebrating priest. These should be experienced altar servers from St. Pius X or another Catholic parish. The parish can provide altar servers if needed and they are paid \$10 each.
5. *Optional Parts of Ceremony* – None of the following are a part of the Roman Catholic Marriage Rite but may be included in the ceremony: Unity Candle, Prayer to Mary/St. Joseph, Flowers to Mothers, Signing of Marriage Certificate, some cultural tradition, etc. At St. Pius X these typically take place after the vows and exchange of rings. We ask that you limit these secular traditions as they add to the length of the service and are not a part of the rite.