

# Holy Trinity Parish

## Marriage Planning Guide



### Christian Marriage

Christian marriage and the Christian wedding ceremony belong not only to the couple but to the whole Church as well. Christian weddings are an expression of faith for the community: we believe that God creates, supports, and nourishes all love as His gift to the Church. Since you have asked to be married within the Church's communion, Holy Trinity Parish has expectations and norms regarding your wedding celebration. These guidelines are intended to help all who gather for the ceremony to celebrate the marriage and participate in the prayer.

### Who May Have Their Wedding at Holy Trinity?

- Holy Trinity is the proper parish of marriage for any baptized Catholic who currently lives within the parish's boundaries.
- One who lives outside the parish's boundaries may celebrate their wedding at Holy Trinity if it is the "home parish" of either the bride or the groom. In such a case, each of them should obtain the permission from the pastor(s) of the parish(es) where they currently have residence.
- All weddings at Holy Trinity are to be witnessed by a parish priest or deacon assigned to Holy Trinity Parish. The pastor prefers to perform the weddings at his church. He is the shepherd of this community and this is the place where the sacraments for the community are celebrated. Permission can be given for another priest to witness a marriage.

### **Setting a Date and Time**

The Archdiocese of Omaha requires that a couple contact their parish priest a minimum of six months before the proposed wedding date. This allows ample time to complete the marriage preparation program.

In keeping with the regulations of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Holy Trinity Parish allows weddings—within or outside of Mass—to be conducted Monday through Friday beginning no later than 8:00 p.m. and on Saturday beginning no later than 2:00 p.m. The ritual Mass of Marriage is not permitted on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation.



### **Planning the Ceremony**

Catholic celebrations of marriage, like all Catholic liturgical actions, are celebrations of the whole Church. All of the usual regulations governing the celebration of the liturgy within the Archdiocese of Omaha are to be adhered to. The wedding ceremony should not become a production or a show that turns the assembly into an audience. Rather, it is a prayer in which the whole assembly actively participates. The couple should keep this in mind when planning their ceremony.

#### ***Choosing the Prayers and Readings***

- The marriage ceremony must follow the Roman Catholic Rite of Marriage.
- The rite of marriage of two Catholics ordinarily takes place within the celebration of Mass. It is recommended that the rite of marriage of a Catholic and a non-Catholic should take place outside of the Mass, in the context of the Liturgy of the Word.
- Couples are to choose the scriptural readings and prayers for the ceremony from the Archdiocesan booklet, *Marriage: A Journey for Life*.



### *Music for the Ceremony*

Music is part of the prayer of Catholic liturgy and is not considered an “extra”. Within the wedding liturgy, the most important elements of song are those which the assembly sings: the Responsorial Psalm, the Alleluia [the *Sanctus*, the Memorial Acclamation, the Great Amen, the Lamb of God and a Communion Song]. Music should also be planned for the Entrance Procession, [the Presentation of the Gifts,] and the Recessional. *Songs in brackets are included only in a wedding Mass.*

- All music must be in keeping with Catholic liturgical tradition. Lyrics and melodies must clearly express the Christian faith and be conducive to prayer. Therefore, songs associated with movies, theatre, or popular culture are not permitted in the church before, during, or after the wedding ceremony. All music selections must be approved by the pastor, even for a wedding at which he does not preside.
- Instrumentalists and cantors must be familiar with the Catholic liturgy and ought to be able to play/sing all of the music associated with the Order of the Mass (i.e., Responsorial Psalm, Gospel Acclamation, *Sanctus*, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, and Lamb of God).
- The cantor’s primary goal is to lead the assembly in singing. Having a musician “perform” all the wedding music is not acceptable under any circumstances because it lessens the role of the assembly who then are not able to be part of the sung prayers within the liturgy.
- It is recommended that instrumentalists and cantors be selected from among those who are familiar with playing/singing at Holy Trinity’s Masses. All musicians not from Holy Trinity must meet with the pastor or his delegate prior to practicing in the church.
- The piano is not to be moved, and the sound system and microphones are not to be adjusted in any way.
- Recorded music is not allowed to be played.



### *Liturgical Ministers and the Wedding Party*

- Catholic priests who may be attending the wedding are welcome to concelebrate the Mass. The couple should make the celebrant aware of this possibility beforehand. Likewise, if the couple has invited a deacon to attend the wedding, he may minister at the altar with the presider's permission.
- Those who proclaim the readings at Mass must be Catholic. It is preferable to ask an already-mandated Lector to perform this task. However, any practicing Catholic may fulfill this ministry. Please select someone who is comfortable and talented enough to proclaim Sacred Scripture effectively. (Outside of Mass, the reader may be non-Catholic.)
- Only priests, deacons, and mandated Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) may distribute Holy Communion during Mass.
- Children in the wedding party (i.e., "junior bridesmaids," flower girls, ring bearers) are to be at least 5 years old. Younger children may be included in your pictures as part of your wedding party, but they may not take a role in the liturgy itself, unless they demonstrate at rehearsal that they are able to fulfill their roles.

### *Extra Ritual Acts*

- The unity candle is not a part of the Catholic Rite of Marriage, and so it is forbidden in all the parishes of the Rural North Central Deanery of the Archdiocese of Omaha (effective fall 2009). If a couple wishes to make use of a unity candle, it is recommended that it be incorporated at the blessing of the meal at the reception afterwards.
- The practice of presenting flowers before the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary is also not part of the Catholic Rite of Marriage. It is, however, part of Catholic local custom and so is permitted to any couple who desires it.
- The throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, etc. is not permitted either inside the church or on the church's grounds.

### *Proper Attire*

- When in the church—for rehearsal, decorating, or for the ceremony itself—one should be properly dressed. One's attire should always convey the virtues of chastity and modesty. Keep this in mind especially when selecting dresses for the bride and bridesmaids. Please avoid dresses with plunging necklines, with high slits, with immodestly short skirts, and those that are completely backless. Coordinating shawls or wraps are desirable for dresses which expose bare shoulders and low backs.
- Men should never wear hats inside the church.

## **The Wedding Rehearsal**

The rehearsal for the wedding ceremony should be scheduled with the priest (or deacon) in advance. All people who have a role in the ceremony (e.g., wedding party, lectors, servers, ushers, etc.) should plan to attend the rehearsal in church. If parents and grandparents are to be formally seated by the ushers before the wedding, they should plan to attend the rehearsal as well.

- All planning regarding the ceremony should happen with the celebrant prior to the rehearsal itself. While a wedding consultant, parents, friends, etc. may be of assistance to the couple regarding the planning of their wedding, the final decisions and planning of the ceremony belong solely to the bride, the groom, and the priest (or deacon).
- Please arrive at the church at least five minutes before the rehearsal is scheduled to begin.
- Please give your marriage license to the priest (or deacon) no later than the rehearsal.



## **Decorating the Church**

Any decorating must keep in mind the liturgical season during which the wedding is taking place. Seasonal decorations (i.e., flowers, plants, candles, etc.) are part of the liturgical environment and may not be removed or changed for weddings. Flowers are not permitted in the church during the Season of Lent and should be kept to a minimum during Advent. Any flowers or decorations you may wish to add to the church ought to enhance the ceremony and not distract from it. Keep in mind that the altar is the focal point of the church and should not be obscured or ignored. No decorations, moreover, may be placed upon it.

- If candelabras are used, their candles should be enclosed in votive cups or globes. Taper candles, if they are completely enclosed are permitted.
- Aisle runners are not permitted.
- Pew candles or aisle candles are not permitted.
- No decorative archways are allowed in the center aisle. If pew bows are to be used, they must be attached with plastic clips, elastic, or string. No tape may be used.
- Banners and balloons are not permitted inside the church.
- Decorations may be arranged in church the afternoon before the wedding after 1:00 p.m., provided there is nothing scheduled in the church both that evening and the following morning before the wedding.



### **Before and After the Ceremony**

- Alcoholic beverages are not permitted on the parish grounds (including your vehicles) before, during, or after a wedding or a wedding rehearsal.
- Wedding party members and guests are to be sober when attending the rehearsal and wedding. If a wedding party member appears to have been drinking or using drugs, that person will not participate in the wedding ceremony. If either the bride or the groom appears to have been drinking or using drugs prior to the ceremony, the wedding will be cancelled immediately.
- Remember that there is a one-hour Eucharistic fast before receiving Communion. Those who will be receiving Communion should neither eat nor drink anything (except water and/or medication) at least one half-hour prior to the beginning of the wedding Mass.
- Food items, including beverages, are not permitted in the church itself.
- Valuables should not be left unattended before, during, or after the ceremony. The parish is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
- All wedding items must be removed from the church, entryways, and restrooms *immediately* after the church is emptied of wedding guests. This includes hangers, bows, empty boxes, plastic bags, programs, pins, beads, sequins, etc. Trash from the wedding should not be left in the restroom garbage cans. All trash should be collected in proper receptacles and removed from the premises by someone designated by the couple.

### **The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

It is important to receive the Sacrament of Marriage in a state of grace. Therefore, the bride and/or the groom (depending on who is Catholic) should make arrangements to go to Confession prior to their wedding so that they will be able to enjoy the full benefits of the graces of Marriage from the first moment it is received. The couple may request to do this with the priest either before or after the wedding rehearsal for them and for any members of the wedding party who may also wish to receive the Sacrament.

### **Thermostat and Lights**

- Do not attempt to adjust the temperature in the church. If you think some adjustments need to be made, please contact the priest at the rectory.
- It is usually not necessary to have all the lights on in church during the photo session. Be sure to get instruction regarding the lighting controls from the priest (or deacon) at the rehearsal.
- Please do not prop any doors open.

### **Photography and Videography**

The church building is dedicated solely to the worship of God. Therefore, it is important that all photographers and videographers conduct themselves with reverence inside the church. The celebration of a wedding is foremost a sacramental moment. To maintain the high dignity of the ceremony and the quality of the prayer, photographers and videographers must adhere to the following guidelines.

- Flash photography may be used only for the entrance processional and the recessional. Flashes may not be used at any other time during the ceremony.
- Photographers and videographers are not allowed to stand at the front of the church or in the center aisle during the entrance procession.
- Photos during the ceremony may be taken from the back of the church or from the side aisles. Photographers and videographers are not allowed in the sanctuary area or the center aisle during the ceremony. No one is permitted to stand on pews or in the area above the sacristy and storage room on either side of the sanctuary.
- The church is not a photo studio. Sittings and other photos not related to the ceremony should be taken elsewhere.
- The behaviors of all involved should be respectful of the sacred nature of the church, keeping in mind the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and those who are in prayer. There should be no boisterous talking, running around, smoking, eating, drinking, or chewing gum inside the church. Children should be controlled at all times; the church is not a playground or a racetrack.
- Copies of these guidelines are attached at the back of this booklet for the photographer and videographer to keep for their own reference.

## Deposits and Stipends

There is no cost to receive any Sacrament in the Catholic Church. All Sacraments are moments of grace given freely by God to those who request them in faith. However, it is customary for the couple to provide an offering to the parish to help cover the expenses that naturally arise from using the church building on a special occasion (e.g., electricity, heating, air-conditioning, etc.). Likewise, it is customary for the couple to give a stipend to certain ministers involved in the wedding ceremony, especially if they are not family or friends.

While you are free to give as much or as little as you see fit and according to your means, the following are suggested *minimum* stipends and offerings by today's standards.

- Offering to the Parish:                   \$150.00                   (out of Parish: \$300.00)
- Stipend for the Priest (or Deacon):   \$100.00
- Stipend for the Instrumentalist:     \$ 75.00
- Stipend for the Cantor/Singer:       \$ 50.00
- Stipend for the Servers (each):     \$ 10.00

You may give the priest (or deacon) your parish offering and any stipends you wish him to distribute in separate envelopes at the time of the wedding rehearsal.

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