

Wedding Preparation Guidelines

Church of St. Raphael

6-1-2010

Congratulations on your engagement and plans to marry! You have made a decision and are preparing for one of the most important steps in your lives. We at St. Raphael Parish are happy for you and want to help you prepare for marriage and to have a great wedding celebration. While a wedding lasts for a day, marriage is a lifetime. Christian marriage is a covenant relationship which must be freely entered into with the ideals of fidelity, perpetuity, openness to the possibility of children, maturity, and the capacity to live out the vocation of marriage.

As Catholics, we believe that marriage is one of the seven sacraments, a visible sign of God's invisible loving action and presence. A sacramental marriage is not just a one-time magic shot to see the couple through life. Rather it is a lifelong blessing as the couple continues to reaffirm their "yes" with each other and to Jesus being an integral part of their marriage. Since the laws of any community reflect what it believes, the marriage laws of the Catholic Church have been developed over 2,000 years, not to make it difficult to get married, but to help couples prepare for this lifetime union of love. As you prepare for marriage, we will use these next months to help you grow in your relationship with each other and with Christ and the Church.

The Catholic party or parties must be a registered member of a Catholic parish. It is also important that the Catholic party(ies) be practicing their Catholic faith and intend to continue doing so.

The wedding preparation guidelines listed below are meant to provide you with a view of what to expect as part of preparation for your wedding at St. Raphael's. The need to do the preparations with a priest also applies when a Catholic is marrying a non-Catholic in a non-Catholic church or elsewhere. I hope that these guidelines and the prayerful preparation and planning of your wedding celebration will be only the beginning of a long, happy, and faith-filled marriage.

Fr. Dennis C. Labat

A. Scheduling and Preparation for your Wedding

1. Scheduling the Date

- a. You must contact your pastor or pastoral administrator at least six months before the date you are considering for your wedding. You may make this contact earlier if you wish to do so. **This is required of all Catholics, even if you are getting married in a non-Catholic church or elsewhere.** This allows sufficient time for planning and preparation.
- b. When you call, a date for your wedding can be reserved. This reservation is not a definite OK for the wedding, but reserves the date for you. Some initial preparations and determination of the freedom to marry for the couple is necessary before the final OK is given.

2. Time of Wedding

- a. The scheduling of the wedding must take into account other services which are or could be scheduled before and after your wedding. You cannot assume you have the church for the whole day. For scheduling and planning purposes, **you have about a four-hour block of time in the church proper** – from two and a half hours before to one and a half hours after the wedding start time. This allows time for the wedding party to have pictures taken before the wedding and some time after the wedding. You would have access to the dressing room and family room earlier.

- b. **Time of wedding** - On Saturday, the latest time in the afternoon that a wedding can be scheduled is **3:00pm**. This allows time to be ready for the regularly schedule reconciliation and Mass for the parish. On Friday or other weekdays there is more flexibility. They usually are late afternoon or early evening.
- c. Normally, there is only one wedding scheduled on a day. However, allowance must be made for a second celebration on that day. This might be a funeral or another wedding. Once you have the date reserved you have the first choice of time for your wedding. The block of time mentioned above makes allowance for another celebration, if this is necessary.

3. **Wedding Rehearsal**

- a. We practice for important events so that everyone involved knows their role and that the celebration flows smoothly. Therefore, we normally have a rehearsal for the wedding party.
- b. The bride and groom first meet with the celebrant for a final review of details a few minutes before the rehearsal starts.
- c. **Those who should be at rehearsal:** bride, groom, best man, maid/matron of honor, groomsmen, bridesmaids, ushers, flower girl, ring bearer, lectors, servers (if you have them), person(s) in charge of decorating and cleanup, and escort(s) of bride (and groom).
- d. People who do not need to be at rehearsal include musicians, vocalists, and extraordinary ministers of communion (if there is Mass). They may attend if they wish to do so.
- e. **Rehearsal time** will last from 45 to 60 minutes. Normally, the rehearsal is scheduled the evening before the wedding, usually sometime between 5:00pm and 7:00pm. Sometimes, for a small, simple wedding, a rehearsal is done earlier on the day of the wedding. We will practice things only once, so it is important that everyone pay attention and any others at the rehearsal be quiet during rehearsal. This will help you know when to schedule the rehearsal dinner if you are having one.
- f. **Setup** – Sometimes the parish has Eucharistic adoration on Friday which may affect any early setup or preparation for the wedding. Please let your musicians and others who will be working on decorations know that they are **not to practice or set up during Eucharistic adoration**. Eucharistic adoration normally ends at 6:00pm. If the rehearsal is earlier it will end at least 30 minutes before rehearsal. Please check with the pastor about this.
- g. **Invitation to groom’s dinner or wedding reception** – Because of Saturday reconciliation and Mass schedule, the priest is generally not able to attend the wedding reception. If you choose to invite the priest to the groom’s dinner please do so in the same manner and time as for the others invited, not at or after the rehearsal.

4. **Marriage License**

- a. **No priest, minister or Justice of the Peace can witness your marriage without a marriage license in hand.** You must be married in the state where the license is issued. However, you do not have to be married in the county in Minnesota where the license is issued. It must be purchased at the courthouse in any county in Minnesota. It is good for six months.
- b. **To apply for a marriage license:** At least one party must apply in person at the Court House, the Clerk of Court Office. Closest ones are at Redwood Falls and New Ulm. There is a \$ 100 license fee to be paid by check or cash at the time of application. **For those who have participated in the pre-marriage workshop and parish preparation, the county deducts \$50 from the cost as long as you have a certificate indicating participation.** There are no blood tests required in the state of Minnesota at this time. There is a 5-day waiting period (not counting Saturday, Sunday, and holidays) before the license is issued. (Day of application does not count toward the 5 days.) You will be asked where you were born. (Proof not required.) Some counties require that you provide some identification - either a valid driver's license with correct address or a birth certificate. If only one party is appearing in person, you' must have identification for the other party with you - preferably a birth certificate. No license will be issued until the identification of the other person is produced. (You can apply without the other person's identification and the 5-day waiting period begins running, but they will not issue the license until they have seen the identification.) The license can be picked up by either party at the Clerk of Court Office after the 5-day waiting period. Some counties will mail the license after the 5-day waiting period. Check

with them about that. You will have to swear under oath that you do not have another spouse, that information you have given is correct, and that one is a man and one is a woman. If there has been a previous marriage - a certified copy of divorce papers (has the raised seal) is required proving your freedom to marry. A marriage license is good for 6 months, so there is no need to wait until the last minute.

- c. The **marriage license** is signed by the officiating minister who witnesses the marriage vows and the two witnesses. The bride and groom each get a copy and one is sent to the Court House by the priest/minister. The County will send you a certified copy after the marriage has been recorded.
- d. After you complete a marriage preparation inventory and a marriage preparation workshop the priest or pastoral administrator will complete a form which you take with you when getting your marriage license. It will save you \$50 off the price.
- e. **Bring the marriage license to the celebrant at your last meeting with him or to the rehearsal.**

5. Documents Required

- a. **Pre-nuptial questionnaire** is completed with the bride and groom by the priest.
- b. A **Baptismal certificate** made out within the last six months is required from each Catholic, if they were not baptized where the wedding is taking place. A newly reissued baptismal certificate must be requested from the parish where you were baptized. This certificate will indicate the baptism, confirmation dates and any previous marriage. **Non-Catholics** who have been baptized are requested to provide a copy of their baptismal certificate. This does not need to be a newly issued certificate.
- c. **Freedom to Marry Form** is completed for individuals whose freedom to marry is not known by the pastor.
- d. **Dispensation** (permission) for a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic. If the marriage will take place in the non-Catholic church and/or by the non-Catholic minister a **dispensation of form** is required.

6. Church Preparations Required

- a. **FOCCUS Questionnaire** is a tool reviewing many areas of relationship for a couple and is the first thing a couple completes. This is reviewed with the couple after their answers are scored.
- b. Participation in a **Diocesan Marriage Preparation program** or equivalent approved program is required.
- c. Participation in **God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage** in Sleepy Eye.
- d. Completion of and review of other **forms and documents for parish records** provided by the priest.
- e. Planning the **Wedding Ceremony** which includes choosing the prayers, scripture readings, and music for the wedding. The priest will give the couple the booklet and forms for this planning.

Guidelines for choice of music and songs for the wedding help to indicate that a church wedding is a sacred rite asking God's blessing on this wedding. Therefore the music and songs chosen must support the dignity of this celebration. A form listing common options for music or songs to be used the weddings will be given to the couple.

Your wedding will take place within the context of the Catholic liturgy. The form of this liturgy is similar to a regular parish Mass, but with the addition of the wedding vows and exchange of rings following the homily. **When two Catholics marry**, the marriage ordinarily occurs within Mass. **If one of the couple is not Catholic**, the wedding ceremony usually takes place within a Liturgy of the Word without Mass. The difference is that there is neither Eucharistic prayer nor receiving of communion. These options will be reviewed and discussed with the priests as part of your planning. A booklet will be given to the couple to plan their wedding liturgy.

A **wedding program** may be prepared for the guests at the wedding. This is reviewed with the priest as they finalize wedding plans to be sure that everything is in proper order.

B. The Church Building

1. **Place of the Wedding** – The ordinary place for the celebration of marriages is the parish church. **It is the policy of the Diocese of New Ulm not to allow out-of-door weddings or in buildings other than a church.** (Social Concerns, Family Life 7) There are many practical problems of having Mass outside the parish church in addition to the possibility of weather problems. A wedding is a celebration of a parish community and celebrating the wedding where so many other signs of God's presence are putting a focus on the place of God and community in our lives.
2. **Worship Space**
We must always treat the church, our house of worship, with respect. The altar must never be used as a table to set things on. When people are in church, they must keep in mind that they are in sacred space. Food or beverages are NOT allowed in church.
3. **Decorations/environment in church and gathering space**
 - a. The **focus** should be on the people, especially the bride and groom, the sacramental symbols, and the altar when there is Mass. It is important to have the person in charge of decorations in church to contact the pastor regarding parish decorations. Setting up your wedding decorations, taking them down after the wedding, and returning parish decorations to their proper place should be done by the same person(s). **Cleanup must be done immediately after the wedding so the church is back in its original environment.**
 - b. **The altar, pulpit, keyboard, and other sanctuary furnishings are NOT to be moved** without the permission of the pastor.
 - c. Floral arrangements are not required for a wedding. Simplicity is preferred.
 - d. **Candelabras** are NOT permitted. Often they drip wax on the carpet and require a very complex cleanup. The focus should be on the liturgical candles and unity candle, if used.
 - e. Any decorations in the gathering space or narthex must be removed immediately after the wedding guests have left.
 - f. You need to **assign a person to be in charge of decorations.** This same person should take care of clean up in the church, the narthex, and the gathering space after the wedding.
4. **Dressing room/Family room**
 - a. The **St. Anne Room** is in the lower level of the church and is used by the women as their dressing room. It has a large mirror with lights. This room is also used by the quilting ladies. If they have some quilting frames setup, please do not move them. This room must be cleaned up immediately after the wedding and all items belonging to the wedding party removed.
 - b. The **Holy Family Room** is in the lower level of the church and can be used to set out snacks and non-alcoholic beverages for family and wedding party. All furniture must be returned to its original place. The room must be cleaned up immediately after the wedding and all items belonging to the wedding party removed.
5. **Protecting your valuables**
St. Raphael's Church is a building with free access to outsiders during celebrations such as your wedding. For this reason, we cannot accept responsibility for any personal possessions left unattended in the church. Do not leave personal valuables unattended. Arrange for securing all valuable personal items.
6. **Cleanup immediately after the wedding**
Food and non-alcoholic beverages must be confined to the family room and the area near it. **Cleanup immediately after the wedding** that must be done by the ushers and designated person includes prior to 4:30pm on Saturday:
 - a. Put up all kneelers, removing all wedding programs and other wedding materials in the pews
 - b. Take down any items put on the pew ends
 - c. Put all trash in waste baskets
 - d. Clean up St. Anne's room and the Holy Family room in the lower level of the church
 - e. Clean up or take down any items in the narthex and gathering space from the wedding
 - f. Close all doors and pick up all wedding items and decorations anywhere in the church

C. Wedding Celebration

1. **Wedding Party**

- a. The Church and state require every marriage ceremony to have one couple as witnesses. They must be at least 16 years old.
- b. The other couples in a wedding party have no special function. It is costly to have a large wedding party. Simplicity and a smaller wedding party are recommended.

2. **Wedding Attire**

The bride and groom already have the most attractive thing of all – their love for each other. Please dress with modesty and respect for the body. Choose your wedding dress, bridesmaids' dresses, and suits with a desire to inspire honor, beauty and faithful love and not to allure curious interest. Suits and dresses that can be worn for other formal occasions are practical.

3. **Ring Bearers/Flower Girls**

- a. If you wish to have a flower girl or ring bearers, **children must be at least four years old.** Younger children pose numerous problems during practice, pictures, and the wedding ceremony and become a major distraction.
- b. The **rings** of the bride and groom should not be tied to the ring bearer's pillow, if there is one.
- c. Dropping **flower petals** in the aisle before the bride **is not permitted.** They are very difficult to cleanup and may also stain the carpet or floor.

4. **Ushers**

- a. Their responsibilities include seating people for the wedding. Be sure they know any special seating arrangements you have. They may also hand out the wedding programs unless you have others assigned to this task. Five minutes before the start time of the wedding the ushers quit escorting people to their place but invite them to seat themselves. Seating of grandparents and parents should begin so that all are seated 3-4 minutes before the start time.
- b. After the wedding party has processed out of the church after the wedding, two ushers invite people from the pews to follow the wedding party out of the church.
- c. After everyone is out of the church the ushers help cleanup things in the pews, put up all kneelers, pickup any materials from the wedding from the floor in the narthex and gathering space.

5. **Alcohol/drugs/smoking**

Absolutely NO alcohol or mood altering chemicals may be consumed on church property. Smoking is not allowed in the buildings. One of the gifts everyone in the wedding party gives to the bride and groom is the gift of themselves at their best and their prayer and support. If any consumption of alcohol is observed the wedding may be canceled. The offending party will not be permitted to be part of the wedding party. Be sure that everyone in the wedding party is aware of this policy.

6. **Wedding Programs**

- a. Many couples have a program listing all the members of the wedding party, the flow of the wedding liturgy, and all liturgical ministers.
- b. Normally the left page of the interior lists the order of the wedding ceremony. It should include the names of the songs, the scriptural references of all scripture readings, and the psalm response verse, if it is being recited.
- c. The wedding program should be reviewed by the priest or pastoral administrator you are planning the wedding with before being printed.

7. **Aisle Cloth** –It is easy to trip or slip when walking on the aisle cloth. For safety and liability reasons, an **aisle cloth is not permitted.** The original reason for having an aisle cloth – to avoid snagging the brides dress on a wood floor – is no longer a factor.

8. **Candles and Pew Decorations**

- a. **Unity candle** – is optional. **The sand ceremony or other things are NOT permitted.** If you chose to have one it is purchased by the couple. The parish does have a stand for the unity candle and its two small candles. Plastic must be put under the stand to keep wax off the cloth and table. Be sure to bring the unity candle to the rehearsal.
- b. **Candelabras** are NOT permitted. Often they drip wax on the carpet and require a very complex, time consuming and expensive cleanup. The focus should be on the liturgical candles.
- c. **Pew Decorations** are permitted. They must not cause any damage to the pews or obstruct movement in and out of the pews.

9. **Photography/Videography**

- a. Because the church is a house of worship and prayer, we ask that photographers, videographers, and the wedding party conduct themselves in a manner of reverence and respect when in the church. **No food or drink is allowed in the church.**
- b. **Formal wedding pictures** should be taken before the ceremony. Time for pictures before the wedding is limited to a **maximum of 90 minutes**. All photography must be finished in church at least 30 minutes before the wedding. **Pictures must not be scheduled earlier than two hours before the wedding start time.** This allows for 15-20 minutes for the photographer to get setup for pictures. The reason for this is to allow for possible other use of the church in the morning – such as a funeral or another wedding. Check with the pastor about which lights to turn on for pictures. **Use of the church for pictures cannot start more than two and a half hours before the wedding start time.**
- c. **During the wedding** – Flash photography is allowed only during the procession and recessional, never during the ceremony. You may want to make note of this in your program also. The photographer must not move around during the service.
- d. **Videographer** – must remain in one place during the service. For the processional and recessional, they may move to a designated place. They must use available lighting.

The parish has its own two camera video system and a trained videographer available to video your wedding. The charge for videoing from 15 minutes prior to the wedding, the wedding, and the guests leaving church is \$125.00. This fee goes to pay the videographer, provide a DVD copy, and expenses for the system.

- e. Both the photographer and videographer must check in with the pastor prior to the wedding to be sure they know the guidelines and the best place(s) to be during the ceremony.

10. **Rice/Bird Seed/Flower Petals**

Dropping flower petals, throwing rice, birdseed, or other materials is **not permitted**. Inform the wedding party and families.

11. **PA System**

- a. There is an on-off switch to the left of the sacristy door going into church.
- b. No one is allowed to adjust the volume settings on the PA system. That is the reason it is locked.
- c. If extra microphones are needed, contact the pastor to arrange for the equipment.

D. Stipends and Parish Fees

1. There is a **parish wedding preparation fee of \$225** to cover the FOCUS pre-marriage inventory, other preparation materials, supplies, custodial and upkeep expenses. This fee is to be paid when the couple begins preparation for the wedding. The parish fee when neither the bride nor the groom, nor their parents are currently members of the parish is \$350.
2. A stipend or honorarium is properly given to the **presiding clergy, musicians, and vocalists**. Often musicians and vocalists will have a set stipend for their services.
3. As a sign of Christian stewardship it is appropriate to make a **sacrificial gift to the parish**.

4. **Video fee** of \$125 for use of the parish video system, DVD, and payment of the videographer trained to use the parish system. This must be arranged several weeks before the wedding. This is to be paid prior to the wedding practice.

E. After the Wedding

1. Know that we at St. Raphael Parish will keep you in our prayers as you begin your marriage.
2. If you have not done so yet, be sure to **join a Catholic parish in the community where you live**. One of the most important factors in having a permanent, happy marriage is to be a couple who pray together, worship weekly at Mass, and keep Jesus as a daily, active partner in your marriage. If you are living in Springfield or the Springfield area we do invite you to be a member of our parish.
3. If you have any questions about marriage or our Catholic faith, always feel free to contact us at St. Raphael Parish and we will do what we can to help.