

2. Ceremony Planning

Christ the King Catholic Church
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SETTING UP FOR THE WEDDING

The Florist: Ordinarily, the florist can come to set up about an hour before the wedding, due to other scheduled services in church. When there is more than one wedding on a given day, couples sometimes wish to choose flowers together and share the cost. The following parish regulations are designed to protect church furnishings as well as to promote a dignified celebration of the wedding rites.

Flowers: All the flowers are the responsibility of the bridal party. The most effective place for flowers in this church is on the floor in front of the altar, which is near the bride and grooms kneelers. No flowers may be placed on the altar itself. Flowers for people to wear should be placed in the church narthex (vestibule) so people can find them as they enter the church building. If there is a flower girl, she should have silk or other artificial petals -- not real flowers. Real flower petals stain the carpet and thus are not allowed in this church.

Flowers in Advent and Lent: During the seasons of Advent and Lent, but particularly during Lent, floral arrangements are at a minimum, and the church is decorated in purple and violet colors. The entire tone of weddings during these liturgical seasons is somewhat subdued as well. Please keep this in mind when planning a wedding during these special liturgical times of the church year.

Pew Ribbons: If there are pew ribbons, they may not be taped to the pews or attached with wires which might scratch the finish of the pews. Rubber bands and plastic clips are acceptable. There are fifteen pews on the main aisle of the church.

Aisle Runners: If there is an (optional) aisle runner, it should be 90' long, and is obtained from a florist. Make sure it is securely fastened down in front and back. The runner must be securely in place at least five minutes before the start of the ceremony or Mass.

Candles: Any extra candles are the responsibility of the bridal party and the florist. Aisle candles are not recommended because they do not attach easily to the pews, they block the view of the congregation, and the candle effect is negated by the video equipment, which requires as much light as possible in the church. A unity candle is really not part of the Catholic ritual as such. If you wish to use it, it should rather be incorporated into the wedding reception by having the bride and groom light it at the beginning of the wedding banquet, after the invocation or before the toast. Otherwise, it may be lighted towards the end of the service.

Removal of Decorations / Church Cleanup: The ushers or other designated persons should help remove the decorations, such as the aisle runner, etc., after the wedding. They also should pick up anything dropped on the floor or left in the pews. Flowers may either be taken to the reception or be left behind for use in the church. Please let us know your preference in advance.

BEFORE THE WEDDING STARTS

Bridal Party: The bridal party should arrive at

least twenty to thirty (or more) minutes early to avoid a last minute rush or delay the beginning of the ceremony. The bride and bridesmaids should go directly to the bridal room for privacy.

The groom and groomsmen may wait either in the main vestibule or the northwest vestibule of the church. The first row of pews is reserved for members of the bridal party.

Ushers: The ushers should arrive at least thirty minutes early to familiarize themselves with the location of the washrooms, etc. The ushers should also direct the members of the bridal party to the place where their flowers are kept.

Ushers should seat guests as soon as possible after they arrive to avoid a last minute rush for seats when the ceremony is about to begin. It is not really necessary for all the bride's guests to sit on the bride's side of the church, or vice-versa. However, the bride's side is the south side of the church (cf. Mary's statue), and the groom's side is the north side of the church (St. Joseph's statue).

The second row of pews is reserved for the parents of the bride and groom. Check with the parents concerning other pews being reserved for family members, especially grandparents.

About ten minutes before the ceremony is about to begin, the ushers no longer seat any guests. The remaining guests may seat themselves, as the bridal party is lining up to enter the church in procession. If an optional white aisle runner is used, the ushers should pull it down the aisle and out the doors, just before the bridal party enters the church in procession.

No Rice or anything that comes down: Please remember to tell your guests ahead of time not to throw any rice or bird seed, confetti, or anything else after the wedding is over. Soap bubbles do seem in vogue these days, and are acceptable. Please remind the ushers to help take down your special wedding decorations after the wedding is over, and to restore the bridal room to the condition in which it was found before the wedding. Thank you for your help in this regard.

ENTRANCE PROCESSION

General Options: There are three options for the entrance procession, which is accompanied by

appropriate religious or classical music:

a) *Continental Custom:* The priest or deacon greets the bridal party at the church door, and leads them up the aisle in procession as couples. The bride and groom enter together first, followed by their parents and the other members of the bridal party as couples. Although this entrance custom is suitable for any couple getting married, this is the recommended format for couples who are already married either outside the Catholic Church, civilly, or by common law.

b) *Liturgical Procession:* The priest or deacon greets the bridal party at the church door, and leads the groom in first, escorted by his parents. Next come the members of the bridal party in pairs as couples. Finally, the bride enters, escorted by her parents. This is the actual entrance format prescribed in the official liturgical books of the Church. Afterwards, when the groom arrives at the front of the church, but before his parents enter the front pew, the groom may present them with flowers or some other token. The bride may do likewise for her parents when she arrives at the front of the church.

c) *American Custom:* Before the ceremony begins, the parents of the groom are seated second to last, and the mother of the bride is seated last. The groomsmen come to the altar -- either with the priest / deacon, or from the northwest vestibule -- and wait for the bridesmaids to enter from the church door. The groomsmen may go down the aisle half way to escort the bridesmaids up the aisle the rest of the way. The father of the bride usually accompanies the bride up the aisle, or she may walk up the aisle by herself.

Sometimes, combinations of these three options can be worked out for the entrance procession. Only the best man and the maid of honor enter the sanctuary with the bride and groom as the official witnesses of the Church, with the priest or deacon, to the wedding vows. Additional members of the bridal party do not have a role in the liturgy of the wedding, and are seated in the front pews. These attendants may stand by the altar steps for the exchange of vows and rings, however.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The bride and groom select three appropriate Bible readings from this wedding handbook. Other translations may be used, with the prior approval

of the priest or deacon. Before the wedding starts, the readers should sit near the organ, so they are near the pulpit for their readings. Later, they can join their families and friends in the pews when the people stand for the gospel reading, if they wish.

In section three of this wedding handbook, the regular set of scripture readings are provided. Please use the form at the end of this section to mark your preferences in preparation for your planning session with the priest or deacon.

RITE OF MATRIMONY

The bride and groom select the appropriate form of the vows and nuptial blessing from this wedding handbook. When the entire bridal party comes forward to the altar steps for this part of the ceremony, the parents remain seated, along with the rest of the congregation. The celebrant will explain the various options of how the bride and groom join hands and face each other for the recitation of their vows. Then the nuptial blessing is imparted to the newly-married couple.

In section four of this wedding handbook, the vows and nuptial blessings are provided. Please use the form at the end of this section to mark your preferences in preparation for your planning session with the priest or deacon.

WEDDING MASS

If there is a Mass along with the wedding ceremony, people are sometimes selected to bring up the offertory gifts of bread and wine. Please read the instructions on who may receive the Eucharist in the Catholic Church, which is included in the front of the hymnals in the church pews.

CLOSING RITES

Optional Rites: Although not really part of the Catholic ritual as such, three optional rites may be incorporated into the ceremony after the final prayer but before the final blessing, at the discretion of the priest or deacon who is officiating at the ceremony:

A unity candle may be lighted by the bride and groom, at a small table to the side, but this would actually be more appropriate at the beginning of the wedding banquet in your reception hall.

Flowers may be presented to the parents by the bride and groom. Usually the bride and groom go to the bride's parents first, then the groom's parents. The groom usually gives the flower to the bride's mother, and then the bride usually gives the flower to the groom's mother.

The bride may present a bouquet at the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The groom should ideally escort the bride for this presentation of flowers.

Recessional: The bride and groom are presented to the congregation and lead a procession out from the church into the narthex (vestibule). If there is no receiving line, they may go along the back pews to return to the front of the church for pictures via the side aisle. Or they may wait momentarily in the bridal room until the guests have left the church.

Receiving Lines: Having a receiving line at the church may make the receiving line at your reception redundant. We do not recommend it, therefore, at this time. However, it would be quite appropriate for the parents to wait at the church door to thank the guests for attending the Church portion of the total wedding celebration. During this time, the bride and groom may have their formal pictures taken at the altar. Once again, please tell your guests not to throw rice or birdseed, confetti, or anything else after weddings. No balloons may be brought into the worship space of the church beyond the vestibule. Bubbles are acceptable.

CHURCH MUSIC FOR WEDDINGS

Religious Music: Music at weddings must be religious in nature due to the sacredness of the ceremony and the church setting. General secular love songs, although not appropriate for use in church, may be very well appropriate at your reception. A fine repertoire of appropriate religious music, traditional and modern, will be shared with couples at the time they meet with the parish music director.

Musicians: The standard procedure here is to employ one of our regular parish musicians, who are specially trained for the way wedding liturgies are celebrated in this parish. We may, however, in individual cases permit certain outside musicians to perform at weddings after we have interviewed them, at least over the phone. It is sometimes possible to use our staff musicians in conjunction with outside musicians to meet these criteria of acceptability. Fees for musicians are negotiated individually, and depend on the amount of music to be performed, the number of musicians, the need for rehearsal time, etc.

RULES FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

Introduction: The photographers and/or video people must always introduce themselves to the priest or deacon before setting up. Photographers and video people may not enter the sanctuary area itself. This means that they cannot come up the steps for any reason before or during the ceremony. Flashes and floodlights may not be used during the actual ceremony itself (after the processional has concluded). Video equipment should be stationary during the ceremony, although during communion time it may be moved to the rear of the church to film the recessional. After the wedding service, photographers and all concerned should keep in mind that the church building is not a private picture studio. The behavior of all parties after the wedding should reflect the fact that they are still within a sacred place of prayer. For a 12:00 wedding, the cut-off time is 1:30. For a 2:00 wedding, the cut-off time is 4:00.

BEHAVIOR

No alcoholic beverage is to be consumed on parish grounds. No bottles, cans, containers from any beverage are to be left on parish grounds.

CEREMONY OUTLINES

If you are preparing an optional wedding program booklet, here are the usual outlines for services:

Wedding Ceremony

- Opening Rites
 - Prelude
 - Entrance Procession
 - Opening Prayer
- Liturgy of the Word
 - Old Testament Reading
 - Responsorial Psalm
 - New Testament Reading
 - Gospel Acclamation
 - Gospel Reading
 - Sermon
- Liturgy of Marriage
 - Statement of Intentions
 - Exchange of Vows
 - Exchange of Rings
 - Lord's Prayer
 - Nuptial Blessing
- Concluding Rites
 - Optional Additional Rites
 - Final Blessing
 - Recessional

Wedding Ceremony with Mass

- Opening Rites
 - Prelude
 - Entrance Procession
 - Opening Prayer
- Liturgy of the Word
 - Old Testament Reading
 - Responsorial Psalm
 - New Testament Reading
 - Gospel Acclamation
 - Gospel Reading
 - Sermon
- Liturgy of Marriage
 - Statement of Intentions
 - Exchange of Vows
 - Exchange of Rings
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - Offertory and Eucharistic Prayer
 - Lord's Prayer
 - Nuptial Blessing
 - Communion
- Concluding Rites
 - Optional Additional Rites
 - Final Blessing
 - Recessional