

CELEBRATING THE
SACRAMENT OF
MARRIAGE
AT
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER
PARISH



Weddings are special and joyful times for brides and grooms, their families and friends, and for the parish community. A wedding is a new beginning, a grace-filled time of celebration of the love, promise and hope shared by a man and woman who have chosen a commitment to each other for the rest of their lives.

So important is this grace-filled celebration in the life of the Church that it is recognized as a sacrament and solemnized in the context of our prayer as a Christian community. And so, great care is taken to see that the prayer for this special moment is reverent, graceful, beautiful and open to the movement of God's Spirit among us.

Our celebrations of the sacraments, marriage included, are rooted in listening to the scriptures so that we can be nourished and strengthened by God's Word. And we always celebrate the sacraments as a community. We gather our sisters and brothers in faith and ask for their prayerful support. These celebrations are incomplete unless they are filled with song, with prayerful gestures and with silence in which we hear the voice of God in our lives. In this spirit, St. Francis Xavier Parish provides the following information and guidelines for celebrating weddings in the building that shelters the prayer of our community.

Who May Marry in our Parish Church?

The answer to this question is governed, in part, by the Code of Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church. Generally speaking, members of our parish may celebrate their weddings at St. Francis Xavier church. Roman Catholics who live within the boundaries of the parish but who have no formal relationship with the parish community may speak to someone on the parish staff about establishing a relationship with the parish ~ ~ with an eye towards celebrating a wedding in the future. Former members of the parish should speak both to their present pastor and to the pastor of St. Francis Xavier parish if they wish to

solemnize their marriage in this church. This also applies to young adults who live and worship elsewhere but whose parents are still parishioners of St. Francis Xavier parish.

Tradition has usually dictated that the parish church of the bride is the church of the celebration. While this still is most often the case, the parish of the groom is equally appropriate for the marriage celebration.

Setting the Date of the Wedding

To request dates for your wedding, please contact the rectory office at 708/352-0168. At this time someone in the front office will fill out a Wedding Request Form with some pertinent information such as name, address, etc., as well as the dates you are requesting. Your form will then be given to the pastor's secretary and she will return your phone call. At this time your wedding date can be discussed.

If either of you is pursuing an annulment, the final notification that the annulment has been granted must be received before a date can be finalized.

Scheduling The Time Of The Celebration

Weddings are scheduled in accord with your wishes and the availability of the church building and parish ministers. Weddings are usually scheduled on:

<u>Friday</u>	4:00 p.m. or later
<u>Saturday</u>	1:00, 3:00 and 6:30 p.m.

These times have been arranged to allow for other regularly scheduled events in church, such as the Rite of Reconciliation and weekend masses. As a result, weddings must begin at the scheduled time. Parking lots need to be cleared between services to allow for adequate parking for the next service. On Saturday, the parking lot needs to be cleared by 4:30 p.m.

The church is available to you for two hours, beginning 30 minutes before your wedding. For example, if your wedding is at 3:00, the church is available to you from 2:30 until 4:30.

There are a few days in the liturgical year when a wedding cannot be celebrated. There are also times in the Church year when the liturgical calendar is less conducive to the celebration of weddings. For example, the season of Lent is a time of penance in the life of the church community; that spirit touches and colors all parish liturgies between Ash Wednesday and Easter. The staff member with whom you are working will discuss this with you if the proposed date for your ceremony is affected.

Certain civil holidays should also be considered when selecting your preferred date. We encourage you to remember that legal holiday weekends throughout the year often provide families and individuals with their only time to enjoy a break from their work schedule without fulfilling other social obligations.

Making The Plans

We will work with you in this process of preparation. Some of these preparations include the gathering of certain documents, the completion of a pre-marital questionnaire, and your participating in a pre-marriage preparation program.

Important Documents you will Need to Obtain

Each Catholic Party is requested to provide a **Baptismal Certificate** dated within six months of the wedding. In the marriage of a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian, the non-Catholic is also asked to present a record of baptism if that is possible. These certificates are easily obtained by writing or phoning the church in which the baptism took place.

A **Confirmation Certificate** is also requested for all Catholics. Both the confirmation and baptismal certificates remain on file at St. Francis Xavier, while copies of them are returned to you.

A civil **Marriage License** is required for the marriage to take place in church. This can be obtained at the Office of the Cook County Clerk, 118 North Clark Street in Chicago, or at the Maybrook Center, First Avenue and the Eisenhower Expressway in Maywood.

Be sure to check with the Clerk's Office in plenty of time before you will need the license. The license cannot be used on the day it is obtained, but then is good for sixty days.

Church Documents We Will Need to Fill Out Together

A statement of intention by both bride and groom, called a pre-nuptial questionnaire, is required.

In cases where the priest preparing you for marriage does not know you or your family, two affidavits for each of you may be required. These affidavits are completed by adults who know you well. Close family members (parents, sisters, brothers) are most acceptable since they can easily answer the questions asked. They need not be Catholic, but should be at least eighteen years of age.

In case of a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, a dispensation is needed. The staff member will help you arrange for this.

In case of a marriage ceremony at a non-Catholic church involving a Catholic and a non-Catholic, a dispensation is needed from the Chancery Office of the Archdiocese before the wedding. Because of the time involved in such a procedure, it is advisable to complete all of the necessary paperwork as soon as possible.

Wedding Banns were once part of the official documentation for weddings in the Catholic Church, but are no longer required. Your wedding will be announced in the parish bulletin.

Pre-Cana

Pre-marriage preparation includes a program that offers you the time and setting to consider together your life as a married couple. A number of programs are available to you.

Popular programs include Discovery Weekend, Engaged Encounter, and the Archdiocesan Pre-Cana. These programs are approved and suggested by the Archdiocese. You are asked to make arrangements for the programs you choose. Reservations are encouraged for all programs at least three months in advance. Please go to www.familyministries.org to register.

Planning The Liturgy

The Ministers of the Celebration

In the Roman Catholic Tradition, the bride and groom minister the sacrament to one another; they are the celebrants of the ceremony. A priest or deacon and at least two witnesses are also required to be present as formal witnesses to your marriage.

Presider

Ordinarily, one of the priests on the parish staff will preside at weddings celebrated in the parish. If you have a special relationship with one of the priests, you are free to ask him to preside.

Or, you may have a priest or deacon friend or relative whom you want to invite to preside at the wedding. In this case, a parish priest from St. Francis Xavier will meet with you to complete all paperwork and he will host the visiting priest for the rehearsal and for the ceremony. He will provide resources and guidelines to assist you in planning the ceremony with the visiting priest. The involvement of a friend or relative in your preparation for marriage can be important to you and to him. Visiting priests are asked to observe local parish customs regarding the celebration of weddings. For marriages between Roman Catholics and members

of other churches, ministers of other churches are welcome to participate in the ceremony.

If one of you is not a member of the Catholic Church, do you want to include something in this celebration in which only one of you will be able to take part? Who will your guests be? Is the celebration of the Eucharist the best way to help them to be with you and pray with you at your wedding? If many of your guests are not from the Catholic community, you may want to consider celebrating your wedding with the Liturgy of the Word. You should make your decision in consultation with the member of the parish staff who is assisting in the preparation for your marriage.

Lectors/Readers

The marriage celebration includes selections from scripture and general intercessions. We encourage you to ask family members or friends to serve in your wedding as Lector or reader. When choosing family members or friends, please select those who are accustomed to public speaking and have a familiarity with this type of reading.

Ministers of Communion

If a wedding is celebrated during Mass, there may be a need for the service of Ministers of Communion for the distribution of Communion. Family members or friends who participate in this ministry here or in another parish are welcome to assist with the distribution of Communion at your wedding.

Ushers

The groom's attendants usually function as ushers and ministers of hospitality. The bride's attendants, and, indeed, the bride and groom and their families may also act as ministers of hospitality. It is a gracious gesture for all members of the wedding party to greet members of the assembly as they gather to celebrate.

Servers

Two altar servers from the parish will be scheduled for your wedding celebration. If you have specific servers you would like, or have members of your family who fulfill this ministry here or in another parish, please let the priest know.

Ring Bearers/Flower Girls

Couples are asked to consider the age of children involved in these roles and their ability to participate in a church service.

Wedding Sacristans

As a ministry of the Women's Club, a group of women in the parish volunteer their time to be in attendance on the day of your wedding. In addition to preparing the altar space before the wedding, these women will be available to assist you in any last minute details that need attention.

Music Preparations

In order to make your wedding liturgy a true reflection of your love and commitment, you are encouraged to participate in the selection of music for your wedding. After your first meeting with the priest, you are asked to schedule an appointment to meet with our music director, Allen Sterwalt. Please call the rectory at 708-352-0168 and ask for Maureen Pipal to schedule your appointment. These appointments are scheduled for Monday evenings.

Allen Sterwalt is also the organist and pianist for most weddings held at St. Francis Xavier. During your meeting with Allen, guidance will be given in choosing the most appropriate music for your sacred day. Selecting a cantor (leader of song) and any extra instrumentalists such as strings or brass will also be discussed. Hiring extra instrumentalists beyond the organist/pianist is optional. **PLEASE DO NOT HIRE MUSICIANS ON YOUR OWN BEFORE YOUR FIRST MEETING WITH ALLEN.**

General Concerns

Church Address

For the purpose of printing your wedding invitation, the church address is:

St. Francis Xavier Church
Ogden and Spring Avenues
LaGrange, Illinois 60525

If you need to include directions for your guests, Spring Avenue is 5 blocks west of LaGrange (or Mannheim) Road (Routes 12 and 45), or 1.8 miles east of the Tri-State Tollway (Interstate 294). At Spring Avenue, Ogden Avenue (Route 34) is about 3900 South. The phone number is 708/352-0168.

Rehearsal

Most couples choose to hold a rehearsal a day before their wedding. The rehearsal time can be set with the Priest who is arranging your wedding with you. A rehearsal takes about 45 minutes.

In addition to the bride, groom and members of the wedding party, you may want to have your readers present in order to learn where they will sit, when they will read, and (if they would like) to go through their reading at the rehearsal.

Parents and any of your guests are always welcome at the rehearsal.

Please ask everyone who will be attending the rehearsal to be at the church 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time. Often there will be other rehearsals before or after yours. A late starting rehearsal will usually be briefer than desirable.

Offerings for Church and Ministers

It is customary to make an offering to the church on the occasion of the celebration of a marriage. This offering is for the costs associated with the operation of the church building and the salaries of office staff members who assist in scheduling and routine paperwork associated with your wedding. Keep in mind the total cost of your wedding.

A minimum donation of \$300.00 is requested of **parishioners**.

You may wish to make a separate gift to the priest who has helped you prepare for your wedding.

A parish organist/pianist (usually the Music Director), as well as a cantor, can be engaged for your wedding. Each requires a separate fee. Instrumentation beyond the organ or piano is arranged through the Music Director, and incurs additional fees set by those musicians.

We encourage you to make a small offering to the altar servers (between \$5 and \$10 per server).

Flowers

It has been traditional for wedding couples to provide floral decorations for church on the day of their wedding. We encourage you to use fresh flowers with strong colors, as arrangements of white flowers and greenery tend to “disappear” in this large space.

Usually two large arrangements placed on either side of the altar platform will serve as beautiful and dignified decorations. They will be placed so that they will not interfere in any of the movements of the wedding party.

Please do not order any flowers to be placed upon the altar itself. The altar is meant to be kept very simple.

Be sure to let your florist know if you are choosing to make a floral tribute to the Blessed Virgin Mary or are presenting flowers to members of your family.

Runner for the Center Aisle

If you wish to have a runner for the center aisle, this can be arranged through your florist. The center aisle is approximately 85 feet long.

Pew Decorations

If you choose to have bows or other decorations placed upon pews in the center aisle, please inform your florist that they may not use tape on the wooden pews (it removes the finish). Also, please inform your florist that access to pews should not be blocked with any type of decoration. Alternative to tape, such as elastic bands or ribbons, should be used. There are 24 rows of pews on each side of the main aisle.

Wedding Consultants

As you make your preparations for the many details of your wedding, you may choose to employ a wedding consultant whose services will be varied. If you do hire such a consultant, please ask that person to speak to the staff person with whom you are working prior to the rehearsal. This discussion will focus on the consultant's participation at the rehearsal and at the wedding itself. We discourage the consultant's participation in the ceremony itself if that person is not familiar with the Catholic marriage rite and is not present at the rehearsal.

Photography & Videotaping

There is available to you a wide selection of photographic and videotaping possibilities for recording your wedding day. We respect your desire to obtain a remembrance of this most important day. However, we do ask that the photographer and/or videographer you employ to record your wedding be unobtrusive and not obstruct or distract attention from the primary focus of the celebration ~ ~ the bride and groom and the sacrament you are celebrating.

If your photographer wishes to pose you for photos in front of the altar before or after your wedding, there will often be a time limit of 15 minutes; especially if another service is scheduled to begin soon after your wedding. During the seasons of spring, summer and autumn, you may also wish to pose for photographs on some of the grassy areas around church.

There is adequate lighting in the church for all contemporary photographic and videotaping equipment. No additional lighting should be used.

Attire

When considering your attire for your wedding, please remember what you choose to wear at your reception may not be the best choice for church.

Rose Petals/Balloons/Rice, etc.

Because of the danger it poses to elderly and handicapped parishioners, we ask that nothing be thrown on church grounds. This includes rice, birdseed, and other items such as confetti. We appreciate your concern for the safety of others. Please do not bring balloons into the church. If you wish to release them after your wedding, we ask you to keep them outside and clear from the porch, where they can easily become entangled in the portico. If you are going to use rose petals, please only use synthetic ones, as real ones stain the floor. Also, please have someone clean up the synthetic rose petals after the wedding, as our maintenance personnel are not present on Saturdays.

CONGRATULATIONS!

We look forward to sharing this time of preparation and celebration with you. The commitment you make to one another in the presence of God and the community is of great importance to the ongoing life of this parish, and the life of the church at large.