



## Church of the Nativity Weddings

Christ performed his first miracle at a wedding feast, and the Church has always considered marriage to be a Sacrament which confers a special grace on the couple to live out their life together as a witness to God's love for us. The Church's prayer at a wedding ceremony asserts that the love of husband and wife bears the imprint of God's own divine love. "Our churches are not performance halls nor concert halls, or for cultural or entertainment activities. The church is the house of God." Marriage is sacred and for this reason, its celebration takes place within a service of worship and in a place of worship.

For a couple preparing for marriage, the following information and guidelines are set forth to assist you in preparing for the celebration of your wedding at the Church of the Nativity as well as answer some practical questions. We are a small but very active church so adhering to the guidelines and policies will help ensure smooth preparation and planning.

### Setting the Date

You must meet with one of the parish Priests or the Deacon from the Church of the Nativity at least six months before the proposed wedding date. **If either party has been married previously, you must inform the Priest or Deacon immediately.** The six-month preparation period is the policy of the Archdiocese of San Francisco. This waiting period is used to complete all the requirements and paperwork prior to your wedding.

Wedding dates at the Church of the Nativity fill quickly, and there are other worship events or activities at the church, so it is best to contact the parish office to see if a preferred date and time is available before you do any more planning. It is good to have alternative dates and times in mind if your first choice is not available. **Wedding dates and times are not reserved until the fee for the church is paid in full.**

Weddings are scheduled on Saturdays at 11:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m. We do not have weddings on Sundays or Holy Days; however, other days of the week are possible pending the availability of the church, the celebrant, and the wedding coordinator. If you intend to ask a Priest or Deacon that you know from outside the parish to officiate at your wedding, please contact the church office as soon as you know who will officiate, and provide his contact information. **A Priest or Deacon from another parish must take responsibility for preparing you for your marriage.** If this is the case, *we require that the necessary paperwork and other documentation be on file at the Church of the Nativity at least four weeks prior to the wedding ceremony. A visiting priest should plan to attend the rehearsal and bring his own vestments including alb and stole for the wedding ceremony.*

## **Wedding Coordinator**

A Wedding Coordinator will be assigned to your wedding and they will contact you once you are registered with the church no later than 3 or 4 months before your wedding. They will:

- Discuss the parish guidelines as outlined in this booklet.
- Set the date and time for the rehearsal (rehearsals are scheduled on the Thursday or Friday immediately preceding the wedding, at 4:00 p.m. or 6:15 p.m.). However, on First Friday's (of every month), the 6:15 time is not available. No weddings or rehearsals are scheduled on Holy Days of Obligation.
- Discuss the planning for your wedding ceremony.
- **Please note:** If you have your own Wedding Coordinator or event planner, please have them contact the Wedding Coordinator assigned to you.

## **Proof of Freedom to Marry**

In order to marry in the Catholic Church, the Priest or Deacon must have proof of your freedom to marry, which is established in the following ways:

1. If you are Catholic, you need a baptismal certificate which can be obtained from your parish of baptism. The certificate must be issued within the previous six (6) months. A copy of your original baptismal certificate will not suffice; it must be a new official certified original.
2. If you are not Catholic, but have been baptized, we ask that you provide documentation to establish the date and place of your baptism. If you have not been baptized, inform the Priest or Deacon to that fact.

3. You will be asked to complete a form about yourself and your fiancé (Form A). The questions will establish your freedom to marry as well as your intentions concerning the proposed marriage.
  
4. Each of you will be asked to provide a witness who has known you since at least your thirteenth birthday and who can testify to your freedom to marry. These witnesses will be asked to complete a form (Form B). Parents, if available, usually are the best witnesses.

There may be other paperwork that will need to be completed depending on your circumstances.

### **Regarding Previous Marriage(s)**

It is extremely important to declare any previous marriage to the person taking down initial information for your possible wedding at Nativity. This would include:

1. A religious marriage either in the Catholic Church, or another Christian church by either party (Catholic or non-Catholic)
2. A civil marriage entered into by either party (Catholic or non-Catholic)

Even if these marriages ended in a civil divorce or civil annulment, it is necessary to mention these since they will have to be dealt with prior to your confirming a date to marry at Nativity. If you have obtained an annulment from another church (e.g., Orthodox, Episcopal) you will need to have these re-examined and ratified in the Catholic Church.

### **Marriage License**

All marriages are regulated by the state. Therefore, you must secure a marriage license from the State of California. The license can be obtained from any County Recorder in the state. The license is valid for a period of three (3) months from the date of issue. It is critical that the marriage license is brought on the day of the wedding or given to the Wedding Coordinator at the wedding rehearsal. **By law, the Priest/Deacon cannot and will not officiate at the wedding unless there is a marriage license!**

### **Pre-Marital Inventory**

During one of your meetings with the Priest or Deacon you will be asked to take the FOCCUS, which is a premarital inventory. The inventory is designed to facilitate the discussion of certain key areas and to identify areas of concern. In addition, the following is either recommended or required:

- *Natural Family Planning Class*

While Natural Family Planning (NFP) is approved, and strongly encouraged by the Catholic Church it is not mandated that couples take NFP classes. Should you be interested in learning more about NFP, the Church of the Nativity provides an introduction to NFP. The classes are held on the 3rd Saturday of the month at the Church of Nativity's O'Hare Center and are conducted by Finola Glassmoyer R.N. Contact Finola at 650-868-3090 or [love2pray@gmail.com](mailto:love2pray@gmail.com).

- *Marriage Preparation Program*

You are required to enroll in a Marriage Preparation Class. You will need to work with Church of the Nativity staff, who in coordination with the Archdiocese of San Francisco, will help with class enrollment. The class is conducted by trained staff and usually includes other engaged couples. The topics covered include communication, conflict, money/finances, sexuality, and marriage as a sacrament.

Any cost associated with the program(s) must be borne by the couple.

### **Wedding Fees**

Fees are required for the use of our church. In cases of financial hardship, a couple may be considered for a more modest offering, pending pastoral approval.

#### **Fees are \$2,000:**

For Non-registered Parishioners - are eligible **ONLY**:

1. IF related to registered parents and/or grandparents **OR**
2. IF the bride or groom is a Church of the Nativity School Alumni.

**Registered Parishioners of one year and above, and active participants: \$2,000 is our current policy.**

These fees **DO NOT** cover the gift to the Priest, Deacon, altar server(s), or the music.

### ***Gift to the Priest, Deacon and Altar Server(s)***

- It is customary to give a gift to the Priest or Deacon, whether he is from Church of the Nativity, another parish, or a family friend. The gift should be in a marked and sealed envelope and given to the Wedding Coordinator at the rehearsal. The amount of the gift is up to your discretion.

- An Altar Server provides needed assistance to the Priest and/or Deacon during the wedding ceremony. The parish can arrange for an altar server for your wedding. It is customary to acknowledge the service with a gift. The gift should be in a marked and sealed envelope and given to the Wedding Coordinator at the rehearsal. The normal amount is **\$25.00**.

### *Flowers*

- Two floral arrangements for the main altar are required and are provided by the Church of the Nativity Altar Society for a mandatory fee of **\$200**. (See below for more information on flowers).

## **Planning Your Wedding Ceremony**

A Catholic wedding offers many options both in the way the ceremony is conducted and its content. Weddings between two Catholics usually includes a Mass. Weddings between a Catholic and a non-Catholic is usually a simple ceremony. However, a Mass may occur pending approval from your Bishop.

Either the Priest, Deacon, or Wedding Coordinator will explain the options to you and provide you with material to choose the prayers and readings that will make up your ceremony. We hope that you will take the time to plan your ceremony carefully and thoughtfully.

If you will have a personal event planner helping with all of your wedding arrangements, they must adhere to all the policies of the Church of the Nativity and the guidelines of the Wedding Coordinator. Please provide the contact information to your assigned Wedding Coordinator from Church of the Nativity to ensure smooth coordination.

## **Wedding Attire**

To respect the solemnity and sacredness of the Church and the occasion, it is required that the couple and their wedding party adhere to our policy regarding wedding attire. Brides may wear a modest strapless gown; however, their shoulders should be covered during the ceremony. Bridesmaids must also wear a modest dress and have their shoulders covered. The bride's and the bridesmaid's clothing should not be low-cut, nor is skirt length to be shorter than the top of the knee. The groom's and groomsmen's clothing should be dignified; in keeping with the formality of the occasion.

## Rehearsal

Your rehearsal will be scheduled in consultation with the Wedding Coordinator and discussed during the first meeting. Rehearsals are typically held on the Thursday or Friday evening preceding your wedding at 4:00 p.m. or 6:15 p.m. However, the 6:15 time slot is not available on the first Friday of every month. No weddings or rehearsals are held on Holy Days of Obligation.

Rehearsals last up to one hour. It is important that rehearsals start and end on time. The complete wedding party, including parents, bridal attendants, readers, and Priest or Deacon, should be present for the rehearsal.

A copy of the outline of the ceremony, from the back of the Together for Life booklet you were given at your first meeting with the Wedding Coordinator, should be given to the Priest or Deacon and your Wedding Coordinator at least one week before the rehearsal. The outline lays out your choices for the Readings during the ceremony.

At the rehearsal, please give your Wedding Coordinator the marriage license and the gifts for the Priest, Deacon and altar server.

## Bride Room

You must come to the Church prepared to walk down the aisle. The bride's room is located in the O'Hare Center behind the church. The room will be available 30-60 minutes before your ceremony. This room is not intended to be used for changing. You may have water, but no food or other drinks are allowed.

Someone should be designated to let you know when to come to the Church for the wedding procession. You will also need to identify someone to clean and remove everything out of the Bride Room no later than **30 minutes** after the wedding. The Church of the Nativity is not responsible for missing or misplaced items.

## Flowers

Floral arrangements add to the beauty of your wedding ceremony. Two floral arrangements for the main altar are required. The Church of the Nativity Altar Society will provide these arrangements for a fee of **\$200**. If there is more than one wedding on a given Saturday, you may wish to share the cost of the church flowers for the back altar with the other couple getting married that day. **The flower arrangements on the altar must be left on the altar as a gift to God in Thanksgiving.** The Wedding Coordinator can assist you with those arrangements. Other flower arrangements you

may want will need to be provided by a florist of your choice. There is a floral agreement in your wedding packet that you and your florist will need to sign and return to the Church of the Nativity office two weeks prior to the wedding.

Floral decorations must be real flowers and plants with placement permitted one hour before the beginning of the ceremony. Permission is granted to place flowers in the following locations outside of Liturgical seasons (Ordinary Time):

- On the two tables in the vestibule area (entrance to the church).
- By the 2 side altars (Blessed Mother and Sacred Heart) on 2 columns/pedestals.

If there are more arrangements, we ask that you consult with the Wedding Coordinator for proper placement.

### **Inside Decorations**

- Flowers, as well as pew bows, may be attached to the pews with rubber bands, ribbons, or pipe cleaners). **Do Not** use staple, tape, or tacks, as they damage the wood.
- Swags from one pew to another are **NOT** allowed.
- Flower petals, real or silk, are NOT allowed to be scattered outside the church or down the aisles.

### **Outside Decorations**

- Wreaths under 24" outside diameter can be placed on the designated brass hardware of the interior doors of the church.

Placement of flowers, plants, and arrangements are permitted one hour before the ceremony begins, depending on scheduled weddings. All decorations and arrangements other than those on the altar must be taken after the wedding.

Your floral arrangements must be in keeping with the reverence and environment of the church. Couples are asked to take note of the liturgical season of the church during which their wedding will take place. **Liturgical decorations/enhancements cannot be moved aside or removed for the wedding (e.g. red bunting and during Christmas; the purple panels during Advent and Lent, etc.).**

There are restrictions regarding the display of flowers allowed during Advent and Lent. As a result, we discourage the use of flowers in the church during these two seasons. However, if you would like to provide your own flowers during these liturgical seasons, they need to be in the liturgical color (purple) and may be placed on columns on the side of sides of the main altar but must be removed after the wedding.

Please discuss with your Wedding Coordinator should your wedding date fall during the Advent, Christmas, or Lenten season. **These liturgical seasons are the only times a couple will not be required to pay the \$200 fee as the Altar Society will provides the arrangements for the main altar.**

Please share this section with your florist and anyone else assisting you with the decorations for your wedding. Our church can seat about 350 people with a capacity of 400. There are 24 rows with 48 pews on the main nave, and 6 rows with 6 pews each of either side chapel.

## **Candles**

Candles other than what is existing in the Sanctuary are prohibited.

## **Music**

The music selected for your wedding should reflect and enhance the religious celebration of the service, creating an atmosphere of prayer and joy. All coordination of your music must go through our music director, Jill Mueller at (650) 493-1963 or [sjillmueller@comcast.net](mailto:sjillmueller@comcast.net). Please consult with Ms. Mueller directly about her fees.

The music director is responsible for guiding you in the selection of appropriate music for your wedding service. They will help you plan music for your wedding that you can remember as a prayerful expression of faith, trust, and love for God and each other. Please confer with them before you make any decisions about your wedding music.

Outside musicians are welcome, keeping in mind the limited space in the church. However, he/she must meet with Jill Mueller. **Our church organ is very delicate and may only be played by Jill or by someone she has approved.** A consulting fee is applicable in these circumstances. Financial arrangements must be made directly between you and musician(s) you select. Be sure to ask about their fees.

Should your vocalist(s) or instrumentalist(s) desire a microphone, please advise the Wedding Coordinator who will make suitable arrangements. It is not necessary to use a microphone near the piano. Please see our "Wedding Music Policy" flyer for details.

## **Photography**

It is your responsibility to secure a photographer. The vast majority of photographers are truly professional and responsible. Remember that you hired the photographer. As a responsible professional, he/she should abide by your requests as well as all parish

regulations. It is very important that at all times he/she must be professional and non-obstructive to the ceremony.

### **[PHOTOGRAPHERS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN THE SANCTUARY]**

Before the ceremony, posed photos should be completed twenty minutes before the scheduled start of the wedding. This allows time for discussion of last-minute details by the Priest or Deacon and Wedding Coordinator and also time for the wedding party to make final preparations. Candid shots, as long as they are not intrusive, are allowed.

During the ceremony, time exposure photographs are permitted. In general, pictures may be taken during the ceremony as long as the photographer does not become a distraction to the Priest or Deacon wedding party or wedding guests and does not enter the sanctuary.

After the ceremony, to speed the process, you should inform all those who you wish to be in post-wedding photographs to stay in church or return to the church immediately following the ceremony. The bridal party should also return to the altar immediately after the ceremony for pictures. One and one-half hours after the scheduled start of the wedding, the wedding party and guests must be out of the church (e.g. a 2:00 p.m. wedding must be out of the church by 3:30 p.m.). Therefore, you may have up to **30 minutes after** the wedding for pictures in the church.

### **This is to be strictly adhered to and you should inform your photographer.**

Therefore, any delay in starting the ceremony will reduce the time available after the wedding for photos.

- **Video Recording**

Video recording is only allowed from camera locations designated by the Wedding Coordinator. Video recording is allowed as long as there are no added bright lights. The church is bright enough to provide sufficient lighting. The video camera person(s) should follow the guidelines for photographers as outlined above. Video recording should be done discreetly and without requests to move furnishings.

### **Rice, Confetti, Birdseed, Balloons, Glitter, Petals**

For environmental and safety/liability reasons, **NO** rice, confetti, birdseed, balloons or glitter may be thrown inside or outside of the church building. Furthermore, **NO** flower petals, real or silk, are to be thrown on the carpet or outside the church. Aisle runners are not allowed.

## **Wedding Programs**

Wedding programs are optional and your responsibility. If you decide to have one, please consult the Wedding Coordinator about the order of the service and the options available. The coordinator may have samples to help you with your planning. It is important you and the Wedding Coordinator are in agreement before you print your program. Distributing the programs is your responsibility.

## **Other Customs**

Many ethnic groups have particular customs as part of their wedding ceremonies. This should be discussed with the Priest or Deacon who is performing your wedding. Not all customs are appropriate for the liturgical ceremony, but can be used, for example, at the rehearsal dinner or reception. If you wish to have a certain custom be part of your celebration, please inform the Wedding Coordinator during the planning stage. Should you decide to have the cord (lasso), veil, bible, or coins (las arras), you should purchase those items from a local wedding supply or religious goods store. Be sure to bring them to the rehearsal **and** take them with you after the wedding.

Unity Candles are **not** a Catholic tradition and are not used for wedding ceremonies at the Church of the Nativity. However, it could be very beautiful and effective at the wedding reception.

## **A Matter of Decorum**

Drinking alcohol of any kind before or after the wedding ceremony in or around any area of the church grounds is **NOT** allowed. Such behavior shows a lack of respect. Please reserve this form of celebration for the reception.

## **After the Wedding and Before the Reception**

Food, drinks, or water may not be served on the church grounds after the wedding to fill the time between the wedding and the reception. Once you are out of the church, you and your guests are welcome to have pictures taken around the grounds, or visit.

***[IMPORTANT NOTE: The wedding party is responsible for any damage done to the church or church property related to the wedding event and includes the cost of repairs or replacement.]***