

Wedding Planning for the Northern Cross Area Catholic Community

This policy is universal to the four churches of the Northern Cross Area Catholic Community: Sacred Heart (Dent, MN), Holy Cross (Butler, MN), St. Lawrence (Rush Lake, MN), and St. Henry's (Perham, MN).

Marriage Preparation Requirements:

- **STEP 1:** Contact the Parish Office **at Least 6 Months** in Advance.
 - o Here a meeting will be set to meet with the priest/deacon to complete the *Prenuptial Investigation*.
 - Note: A date for the wedding will not be scheduled until the *Prenuptial Investigation* is completed.
 - o Introductions will also take place at this meeting and the plan for marriage prep will be laid out.
- **STEP 2:** After the Completion of the *Prenuptial Investigation* call the Parish Office to set up a date/time and reserve the Church (**About 6-5 months out**).
 - o It is also helpful to know at this time whether the wedding will simply be the marriage ceremony or if it will be the marriage ceremony within a Mass.
 - o The Parish Office phone number is 218-346-4240.
- **STEP 3:** Complete the Fully Engaged Survey.
 - o The priest will explain this and send this to you.
 - o After the results are received, a discussion with your sponsor couple and/or the priest will follow.
- **STEP 4:** Attend a Marriage Preparation Weekend.
- **STEP 5:** Meet with your assigned sponsor couple.
 - o You will be assigned a marriage couple by the priest and over the course of 6 months, you will meet with them ~5x or 5-10 hours.
- **STEP 6:** Meet with the priest to plan the wedding liturgy itself (**~1 month out**).

Wedding Fees:¹

- Use of the Facilities (to be paid to the church) ...
 - The rental of the basement/kitchen may entail an extra fee.
 - o For Non-Members: \$500
 - o For Members (a member of the Northern Cross ACC for 6 months): \$300
- Fees Related to Music (to be paid directly to the accompanist/cantor) ...

¹ See *Celebrating The Rite of Marriage: Liturgical Guidelines*, Office of Worship Diocese of Saint Cloud, 2006, 7.

- For a Church Accompanist: \$200
- For a Church Cantor: \$200
- Stipend for the Priest/Deacon (to be paid directly to the priest/deacon): \$150

Important Documents to Acquire:

- ***Baptismal Certificates (Both the Groom and the Bride) ...***
 - To acquire your baptismal certificate, call the parish where you were baptized and ask them to send a copy to the Northern Cross Area Catholic Community Offices (234 2nd Ave. SW Perham, MN 56573). **Must be issued within 6 months of the Wedding.**
 - If either the bride or the groom is a baptized non-Catholic, call the church which they were baptized in to make the request. A copy is acceptable. Ask the priest for guidance if needed.
- ***A Marriage License...***
 - Presenting a certificate of completion from the marriage preparation weekend **to the parish office** allows you to receive a discount voucher for your marriage license!
 - A Marriage License should be brought from the State of Minnesota **30-60 days prior to the wedding date** at any courthouse in Minnesota. Our priests only have the faculties to witness marriages in the State of Minnesota. It is extremely helpful and prudent to bring your Marriage License to the church office before the wedding for safekeeping so that it does not get misplaced during the last-minute preparations. **Without the Marriage License, the wedding cannot proceed (It is illegal to celebrate a marriage without a marriage license).**

Ceremony Requirements:

- **Wedding Party...**
 - Bride and Groom...
 - There is a set formula for the wording of the Marriage Vows pre-set by the Catholic Church.
 - We ask that wedding parties consist of no more than 6 couples (12 people).
 - Ring Bearers/Flower Girls
 - “These children are not ministers, nor are their services required for the celebration of the Rite of Marriage.”²
 - We ask that Ring Bearers/Flower Girls should be at least five years old and must be able to walk unassisted down the aisle.
- **Alcohol...**

² *Celebrating The Rite of Marriage: Liturgical Guidelines*, Office of Worship Diocese of Saint Cloud, 2006.

- Alcohol is not permitted on church property at the time surrounding the wedding rehearsal and any time prior to the start of the wedding liturgy. Minnesota State Law dictates that a marriage could be declared null if “a party lacked capacity to consent to the marriage at the time the marriage was solemnized because of the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other incapacitating substances,” (MN Statute 518.02).
- **Music...**
 - **Purpose:**
 - “The focus of a wedding liturgy, like all liturgy of the Church, is first of all the worship of God... Music in the wedding liturgy enables those gathered to express their faith and to enter into the worship of God; music expresses thanksgiving for the mystery of the love that God has created and transforms through this sacrament... Music is sung or played instrumentally during the liturgy to create an environment of prayer. Music is the most accessible and concrete way in which the assembled community can be transformed from being passive spectators into being full, conscious and attentive participants in the prayer and action of the liturgy. Every song or musical selection should be chosen for its capacity to encourage and enable the assembled community to become active participants and to unite one another in worshipping God.”³
 - **Secular Music (Within the Liturgy):**
 - “Pop songs, show tunes and love songs may be used during your wedding reception and/or wedding dance and are not appropriate for use in a Catholic church before or during the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage.”⁴
 - Secular music (i.e. not sacred music) should be saved for the festivities outside of the sacramental liturgy.
 - “Expressions of personal taste, such as a favorite song, can be effectively used at the rehearsal dinner or wedding reception, but may not be used during the celebration of the Rite of Marriage at the church.”⁵
 - “Any song, inappropriate because of its words, is also inappropriate as an instrumental, since the tune alone will convey the song’s words to those members of the assembly who are familiar with the song.”⁶
 - Any exceptions to this rule must be discussed with the priest prior to the wedding.
 - **Pre-recorded Music:**

³ *Celebrating The Rite of Marriage: Liturgical Guidelines*, Office of Worship Diocese of Saint Cloud, 2006, 10.

⁴ *Celebrating The Rite of Marriage: Liturgical Guidelines*, Office of Worship Diocese of Saint Cloud, 2006, 10.

⁵ *Celebrating The Rite of Marriage: Liturgical Guidelines*, Office of Worship Diocese of Saint Cloud, 2006, 10.

⁶ *Celebrating The Rite of Marriage: Liturgical Guidelines*, Office of Worship Diocese of Saint Cloud, 2006, 10.

- “Taped music, pre-recorded sound tracks or any other form of recorded music replacing the sung prayer in the liturgy is prohibited from use at any time, either before, during or after the wedding liturgy.”⁷
- **Important Notes:**
 - **During the processional, the music cannot change for anyone (i.e. One song is allowed for the processional).**
 - One processional piece is required in order to maintain the union between the bride and the groom which this sacrament celebrates through every action of the liturgy.
 - “It is most desirable to use a single piece of instrumental music to accompany the entire procession as its members proceed from the entrance of the church to take their place within the liturgical assembly.”⁸
 - **Music should be chosen from the approved list on this site.**
 - This ensures that the church musicians can play the requested music.
 - This also helps by offering musical selections appropriate for the dignity of this beautiful sacrament.
 - **If your musicians are not from St. Henry’s, we will arrange to have a delegate from St. Henry’s at the wedding rehearsal to help with the sound system.**
- **Decorations...**
 - Any decoration requests not mentioned here must be approved of by the pastor/parochial vicar of the parish.
- Flowers:
 - Flowers and Plants must be real (i.e. not artificial).
 - This is an official diocesan directive.
 - “Floral arrangements must be placed where they do not obscure the altar, ambo (pulpit) or chairs for the presider and couple. Flowers may NOT be placed on top of the altar.”⁹
- Liturgical furnishings are sacred; They may not be moved, removed, or replaced.
- An aisle runner is allowed but not recommended.
- **No pets** will be allowed in the church or in the procession.
- **No wagons or signs** will be allowed in the procession.
- **Unity sand, unity candles, and unity crosses** are not allowed during the ceremony.
 - The reception is often a great place to insert these secular traditions.

⁷ *Celebrating The Rite of Marriage: Liturgical Guidelines*, Office of Worship Diocese of Saint Cloud, 2006, 10.

⁸ *Celebrating The Rite of Marriage: Liturgical Guidelines*, Office of Worship Diocese of Saint Cloud, 2006, 12.

⁹ *Celebrating The Rite of Marriage: Liturgical Guidelines*, Office of Worship Diocese of Saint Cloud, 2006, 6.

- Bubble machines, balloons, and karaoke machines may not be used in the church at any time before, after, or during the wedding.
- The throwing of rice, birdseed, potpourri, confetti, etc. is prohibited on church property for cleanliness and safety. Rose petals may be permitted if a person is delegated to clean the space afterwards.
- Food, beverages, and chewing gum are not permitted within the sacred worship space and smoking, vaping, and alcohol is prohibited on all church property.

Photography:

- In keeping with the sacredness of the Rite of Marriage, the following guidelines are to be observed by all photographers within the Diocese of Saint Cloud:¹⁰

- 1) The church is to be respected during the photography session because it is a house of worship. Professional attire and behavior is expected.
- 2) **The liturgical furnishings** (altar, lectern, candles, chairs) **and liturgical environment** (plants and décor) are **NOT** to be altered in order to accommodate a photography session in the church. These are sacred liturgical items, not props.
- 3) The photography session before the liturgy may utilize the worship space and church grounds. The photography session must be completed one-half hour before the start of the liturgy.
 - a. Photography is allowed after the wedding ceremony, but all photography should be completed one-half hour before the beginning of the next liturgy/Mass/scheduled confessions.
- 4) The photographer/videographer and their equipment are **not permitted in the sanctuary during the liturgy**. They, nor their equipment, must ever block the view the worshipping assembly. If you have any questions regarding where to stand, please seek guidance from the priest.
- 5) The photographer/videographer **must limit movement during the liturgy**. Equipment operators may not interfere with the procession nor are they permitted to walk with the procession in order to take pictures of the wedding party.
- 6) The use of flash photography is strictly forbidden during the sacred liturgy as well as the use of alternative light sources.
- 7) The use of drones for taking of pictures/videos is strictly prohibited.

A Walk Through the Wedding Liturgy:

- Within a Mass...

- Usually, only if both parties are Catholic.
- The Procession...

¹⁰ See *Celebrating The Rite of Marriage: Liturgical Guidelines*, Office of Worship Diocese of Saint Cloud, 2006, 18.

- At this time, the bridal party, the groom, and the bride enter the church and take their places near the altar.
 - According to diocesan policy, the processional order is to be comprised as either...¹¹
 - Option 1:
 - Bride and Bridegroom walking together in procession to the altar.
 - Option 2:
 - Each party escorted by his/her parents
 - Option 3:
 - The bride walked down the aisle by a family member to meet the groom at the altar.
 - **Note: Option 1 or 2 are preferred.**
- The Sign of the Cross and the Greeting...
 - The Priest will then say the Sign of the Cross and greet those present explaining the significance of what is about to happen.
 - Gloria...
 - Penitential Act is omitted.
 - Opening Prayer
- Liturgy of the Word...
 - 1st Reading – A Reading from the Old Testament.
 - Responsorial Psalm
 - This is usually sung.
 - 2nd Reading – A Reading from the New Testament.
 - Gospel -Read by the Priest.
 - Homily.
- The Celebration of Matrimony...
 - The Questions before the Consent
 - The Consent/The Vows
 - I, **N.**, take you, **N.**, to be my wife/husband. I promise to be faithful to you, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and to honor you all the days of my life.
 - I, **N.**, take you, **N.**, for my lawful wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do us part.
 - The Blessing and Giving of Rings
- The Universal Prayer...
- Liturgy of the Eucharist...

¹¹ See Instruction: *Pre-Nuptial Help Guide for Preparers of Parties Seeking Marriage in the Church*, Oct. 3, 2025.

- Offertory
 - Eucharistic Prayer
 - Communion Rite...
 - Our Father
 - Nuptial Blessing takes place after the Our Father.
 - Sign of Peace
 - Communion
 - Prayer after Communion
 - Dismissal...
 - Final Blessing
 - Recessional
- **Outside a Mass...**
- Usually used if one of the parties is a Christian Non-Catholic. Permission is needed from the local ordinary in order to have a Mass.
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- 2nd Reading – A Reading from the New Testament.
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- Dismissal...
 - Final Blessing
 - Recessional

Issued August 2026

Pastor/date

Groom/date

Bride/date