



*Celebrating your Wedding  
At Saint Alphonsus*

**Saint Alphonsus Catholic Church  
607 S. Jackson St.  
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641  
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**St. Alphonsus Catholic Church**

607 S. Jackson St.  
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641

With great joy we congratulate you both as you desire to celebrate your marriage as a sacrament in the Catholic Church.

The fact that you have approached St. Alphonsus as you prepare for marriage says something important. First of all, you are interested in celebrating your wedding day within the faith life of the Catholic Church. Secondly, it shows a willingness to grow in your understanding of the meaning of this sacrament so that you may celebrate what you believe.

The Rite of Marriage is not a private action between two people. It is part of the public worship of the Church. You are asking the Church, that is, the People of God, to assent and witness your marriage. Therefore, the entire process is treated with great care.

Our parish of St. Alphonsus offers you its help and guidance in every possible way to make your wedding day a memorable occasion. Even more importantly, we wish to help make your vocation of marriage a lasting celebration of Christ's love.

Marriage preparation involves many people who are concerned about helping you enter into a lifetime of love and grace. This packet includes an outline of our pre-marriage preparation process, the requirements of the universal Church, parish policies, regulations of the State of Iowa, a schedule of fees and a guide for preparing the wedding liturgy.

The companion book, "Together for Life" by Joseph Champlin, is included as a planning guide. In it you will find answers to many often-asked questions about weddings on pages 3-9.

There are also two useful online resources:

[www.catholicweddinghelp.com](http://www.catholicweddinghelp.com) and [www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org).

We have the greatest hopes that your wedding day will be filled with the grace of God, the spiritual energy of the Holy Spirit, and the loving embrace of Jesus. We believe that through careful preparation and planning for your wedding day and married life, your relationship will be strengthened as you face life's challenges and joys.

May the Lord bless you and us as you prepare for a very special sacrament of grace.

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding!

Rev. Ross M. Epping, Pastor  
(319) 385-8410

## Wedding Preparation Process

Telephone the Parish Office to inquire about a date of the wedding and rehearsal *at least one year in advance of your projected wedding date.*

- Fill out “Preliminary Wedding Information” form.
- Information given to the parish priests
- The priest will contact you to set up an informational meeting

Informational meeting with Fr. Ross

- Discussion of the sacrament of Matrimony
- Marriage preparation process is explained
- Marriage date confirmed
- First part of “Pre-Marital Investigation” form completed
- Discussion of the wedding in the context of Mass or Scripture Service.

Obtain current copies (issued within the last six months) of your baptismal records with notations and confirmation record and send them to St. Alphonsus Catholic Church. You will need to contact the parish where you were baptized and confirmed for these documents.

Attend a Marriage Preparation Weekend. Attendance is required for marriage in the Church. This can be done in-person, or through an online company.

You may visit the Diocese of Davenport website to view the schedule of weekends offered: ([www.davenportdiocese.org](http://www.davenportdiocese.org) – hover on “OFFICES”, then under the section “Faith Formation”, click on “Marriage and Family”. Next, click on Marriage Preparation: Requirements and Resources). Or, call 563-888-4242.

Pre-marriage Inventory – call the Church Office to set up the online registration.

Pre-marriage Inventory review with Fr. Ross.

**At least 4 months before your wedding**, contact St. Alphonsus (385-8410) to review the materials to plan your wedding liturgy and music.

**Submit fees and wedding license** to the parish office **at least two weeks** prior to wedding.

# *Celebrating Marriage in St. Alphonsus*

The celebration of Christian marriage within a church community is a celebration of the love which unites God and the community as a whole. This love is symbolized in the total self-giving love of man and woman in the Sacrament of Marriage. While it is of deeply personal importance to the individual couple, the wedding ceremony which ushers in their married sacramental life is a public celebration of a worshipping community. As an integral part of this sacrament, the wedding ceremony must reflect and engage the participation of the entire faith community in liturgical prayer. Great care must be taken to see that the prayer of this special moment is reverent, graceful, beautiful, and open to the movement of God's Spirit among us.

## **Setting the date of the wedding:**

Those requesting marriage at St. Alphonsus should be registered parishioners. Couples should contact the parish office at least one year in advance of their tentative wedding date. Once the dates for the wedding and the rehearsal have been secured, the engaged couple will meet with Father to complete the necessary paperwork and to arrange for the couple's participation in the marriage preparation program. It is the responsibility of the couple to secure the date with the church before making commitments with reception halls, caterers, etc.

## **Scheduling the time of the celebration and rehearsal:**

The standard time for a wedding is a Saturday at 1:30PM. The standard time for a rehearsal is Friday (the day before the wedding) at 5:30PM. Weddings may also be scheduled on Friday evenings or Saturdays between 11:30AM to 1:30PM.

Weddings are not scheduled after 1:30PM on Saturdays nor on Sundays.

Weddings also cannot be scheduled during Lent, between the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent and New Years, or on holidays, i.e., New Year's Eve or the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

## **Marriage License:**

Make sure to allow enough time to apply for and receive your marriage license.

The marriage license is signed by the couple and witnesses at the rehearsal.

The priest or deacon will sign the license following the actual wedding and send it to the County.

## **Wedding Rehearsal Guidelines:**

Only the immediate members of the wedding party (bride/groom, bridesmaids/ groomsmen, flower girl/ring bearer, parents and ushers) need to attend the rehearsal. The processional will be practiced. Other friends and family members should meet afterwards at the rehearsal dinner.

Wedding party members should be prompt. The rehearsal should not last more than 35 minutes if everyone is on time and ready to go. The priest or deacon runs the rehearsal.

Outside wedding coordinators have no authority in the Church.

St. Alphonsus is not responsible for unattended items left on church property.

**No alcohol is allowed in the church or on the church grounds at any time.**

**Anyone found having consumed alcohol cannot be part of the wedding.**

## *Wedding Fees*

The St. Alphonsus office should receive your Marriage License and fees associated with the wedding **at least two weeks prior** to the wedding (office hours are: Monday-Friday 8AM-4PM)

**St. Alphonsus Wedding Fees:** Please provide separate checks as follows:

Facility Fee (use of facilities, cleaning, administrative and utility costs): \$200\*

Presider: at couple's discretion

Deacon: at couple's discretion

Musicians (if provided by St. Alphonsus): \$100 per musician (cantor, pianist, etc.)

\*an additional fee may be assessed if there are damages to the facility

## *The Ministers for the Celebration*

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the bride and the groom minister the Sacrament of Marriage to one another; a priest or deacon and at least two other witnesses are required to be present.

If the wedding takes place within the context of the Mass, one of the priests will preside. If the wedding takes place within a Scripture Service (no Communion) the deacon or priest will preside. If the ceremony will be celebrated in the context of a Mass, the deacon may assist the priest in his role as presider at the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

We will help couples secure music for the upcoming wedding. If the couple requests music ministers other than those available from the parish, these ministers and the musical selections must be approved by the priest.

The couple is asked to secure lectors (readers) and Eucharistic ministers (if having communion) for their wedding. Family or friends of the couple may serve as readers. Family or friends of the couple who are trained Eucharistic ministers may distribute communion. If needed, those who serve in the parish as lectors and ministers of the Eucharist are available to serve in these ministries at wedding celebrations.

## *Welcoming your Guests*

You have given much thought to inviting family and friends to your wedding. If you were holding a special gathering in your home you would certainly make sure that your guests are welcomed at your door. You wouldn't think of introducing them after the gathering is over.

So, consider both of you being the official greeters and welcome your guests to your wedding. Introduce them to your parents. Invite them to sign the guest book. You will be surprised at what a memorable experience that provides for them and for the both of you!

## *Preparing for the Liturgy*

In consultation with the presider, the couple will determine if the marriage is to be celebrated within a Mass or with the Liturgy of the Word.

The couple will be provided with copies of those Scripture readings most appropriate for weddings as well as the other areas of the celebration where options are available. The couple is encouraged to select readings that most reflect the very special relationship they have with each other and with their God.

## *Flowers and other Decorations*

The worship space is regularly decorated to reflect the liturgical seasons. These decorations should be taken into consideration by the engaged couple when making arrangements for flowers, etc. Because these decorations are part of the on-going life of the Church, it is not appropriate to remove them for the celebration of the wedding, but rather that they be incorporated into the environment of the celebration.

In keeping with liturgical norms, any flowers placed on the raised area of the sanctuary should be fresh flowers (exceptions are the bridal bouquets). No flower arrangements are to be put on the altar. Also, flowers may be placed in front of or to the side of the ambo.

*The dropping of flowers/petals/etc. by the flower girl is not allowed.*

No swags or bunting, netting or ribbon may be used to tie off pews.

Balloons and the throwing of rice, bird seed, etc. are not allowed.

No aisle runners are allowed – with the tile, it can be dangerous.

Keep in mind that depending on the Liturgical season, the church already incorporates flowers and other decorations into various areas of the sanctuary.

# *Photographers*

Christian marriage is a sacred event. The sacramental graces sustain the couple throughout their married life, not the pictures or videos. Photography may help to memorialize the event, but the bride and groom must also understand that it is a commercial enterprise for the photographer. In other words, this is how the professional photographer makes a living.

Nonetheless, the sacred liturgy determines the ritual to be observed. That it is a photo opportunity is merely secondary. The photographer does not dictate when and how the ceremony is celebrated.

Inform your photographer that the policy and practice of taking pictures before, during, and after the wedding ceremony is well defined and should be followed. The photographer or videographer should inquire about our policy well in advance of your wedding celebration as to when and where photos may be taken. The same courtesy is expected of your wedding guests.

## **Policy:**

1. It is preferable that wedding portraits be taken before the ceremony. Photography must be completed ½ hour before the start of the wedding in order that guests may be seated.
2. During the Mass/wedding ceremony, there will be no flash pictures taken.
3. Once the wedding begins, there should be no moving around to the distraction of clergy, congregation or wedding party.
4. The photographer and videographer are prohibited at all times from the Sanctuary.
5. Any photos after the ceremony must be completed by 3:00PM.

## *Wedding Music Guidelines*

Because of its great importance, the music chosen for the wedding liturgy must be selected with the greatest care and concern for the faith life of all participants. Wedding celebrations are liturgy – the public celebration of the faith of the community. Thus, the music for the celebration must reflect the faith of all people present as well as enable those present to express their Christian faith.

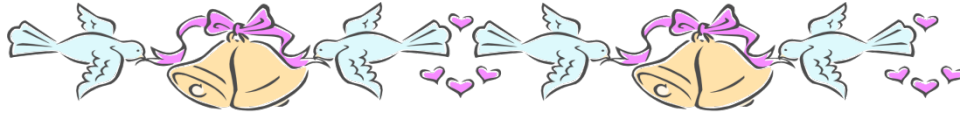
Sacred songs which speak directly of the divine-religious dimensions of love are always preferred at a Christian marriage. Secular songs which speak clearly and directly of the divine-religious dimension of love may be allowed if it is judged suitable by the priest and Director of Liturgy and Music. Secular songs which have no reference to, or which negates the divine-religious dimension of love, are unsuitable at a Christian marriage ceremony.

Two outlines are presented here: one for a wedding within Mass and one for a wedding with a Liturgy of the Word.

†† The moments accompanied by †† are the essential times for music during the wedding liturgy.

† The † indicates the moments when instrumental music or songs are appropriate. Music is not necessary at those times, however, and they should not be musically more significant than those moments accompanied by ††.

Two parish musicians are needed to provide music for weddings. An accompanist (pianist/organist) is needed to provide the instrumental music for the liturgy. A cantor is needed to proclaim the responsorial psalm and to lead the assembly in their acclamations. The presence of the cantor promotes and enables the assembly's participation.



## *Rite of Marriage During Mass*

### **Introductory Rites**

†† Procession (instrumental or hymn)

Welcome

Sign of the Cross and Greeting

Opening Prayer

### **Liturgy of the Word**

First Reading

† Responsorial Psalm (led by cantor, and is sung by all)

Second Reading

† Gospel Acclamation (led by cantor, and is sung by all)

Gospel

Homily

### **Rite of Marriage**

Introduction/Questions Before the Consent

Consent (Exchange of Vows)

Blessing/Exchange of Rings

General Intercessions

### **Liturgy of the Eucharist**

† Preparation of the Gifts and Altar

Eucharistic Prayer

†† Holy (sung by all)

†† Memorial Acclamation (sung by all)

†† Amen (sung by all)

### **Communion Rite**

Lord's Prayer

Nuptial Blessing

Sign of Peace

†† Breaking of Bread/Lamb of God (led by cantor and sung by all)

†† Communion Procession (sung by all)

Prayer after Communion

### **Concluding Rite**

Blessing/Dismissal

† Recessional (instrumental)

The Church revised the Rite of Marriage in December, 2016. One of the changes concerns the opening procession. It is preferred that both parents accompany the groom and the bride in the opening procession.

The order of procession is:

- 1) the priest
- 2) the attendants as couples
- 3) flower girl and ring bearer (if applicable)
- 4) groom and his parents
- 5) bride and her parents



## *Rite of Marriage Celebrated with a Liturgy of the Word only:*

### **Introductory Rites**

- †† Procession (instrumental or hymn)  
Welcome
- † Gathering Hymn  
Sign of the Cross and Greeting  
Opening Prayer

### **Liturgy of the Word**

- First Reading
- † Responsorial Psalm (led by cantor, and is sung by all)  
Second Reading
- † Gospel Acclamation (led by cantor, and is sung by all)  
Gospel  
Homily

### **Rite of Marriage**

- Introduction/Questions Before the Consent
- Consent (Exchange of Vows)
- Blessing/Exchange of Rings
- General Intercessions

### **Concluding Rite**

- Lord's Prayer
- Nuptial Blessing
- Sign of Peace
- Blessing/Dismissal
- † Recessional (instrumental)

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The order of procession is:

- 1) the priest
- 2) the attendants as couples
- 3) flower girl and ring bearer (if applicable)
- 4) groom and his parents
- 5) bride and her parents

## Optional Rituals

The primary symbol of the sacrament of marriage is your unconditional love for each other that you express as you profess your vows to each other. Your exchange of vows “make” the sacrament take place.

The giving of rings is the outward sign of your inner sacramental love for each other that you expressed in your vows.

Additional expressions of unity are nice, but think about how many are really necessary. When do they become too repetitive or overshadow your vows?

### **The Unity Candle:**

No one seems really clear about the origin of the Unity Candle. Some claim it was popularized by the 1981 wedding of television’s Luke and Laura on *General Hospital*, although there’s evidence of its use in the mid-1970s. Some sources claim it was developed as a way to sell couples three pounds of wax for \$50 dollars.

In Catholic churches, the Unity Candle *is prohibited*. It is not part of our wedding ritual. Liturgy requires inculturation, but it’s not clear that a Unity candle is part of anyone’s culture.

The fact is, we Catholics already have a powerful symbol of love and unity at our nuptial masses, one that connects us to our families, the whole community of faith, and the communion of saints. We have the Eucharist. For Catholics, that’s a symbol of unity you can’t hold a candle to.

### **The Blessing/Giving of the Arras:**

The Blessing/Giving of the Arras (Coins)—important for Hispanic and Filipino cultures—have already been approved for use in the United States in Spanish since 2010. Making them available in English translation is intended for occasions when one of the spouses has this cultural background but the other does not speak Spanish, or where both couples have this cultural background, but have become more accustomed to English than Spanish.

The word arras literally means “pledge.” Usually, the arras consists of a small cask containing thirteen gilded or plated coins symbolizing prosperity. The formula which both bride and groom say to each other during the exchange of the arras highlights their commitment to share together all the goods which they will receive during their married life.

### **The Blessing/Placing of the Lazo or Veil**

The Blessing/Placing of the Lazo or Veil is another optional ritual which has cultural significance in the Hispanic and Filipino traditions. The lazo is a type of lasso or yoke to symbolize the marriage union. Its most usual form is a double-looped rosary; one loop goes over the groom’s shoulders and the other over the bride’s with the cross hanging between them. The two are now tied together for life, so to speak. To use the biblical expression, they become “one flesh.”

The veil seems to have had its origins as a symbol of both a dying to one’s past self (like a funeral pall) and as a protection from danger (like a cloak or protective covering). While the woman wears the veil, it is placed over the shoulder of the man and oftentimes the lazo helps to hold it in place. It is usually placed just before the Nuptial Blessing, since the Nuptial Blessing, symbolized by the veil, is the “protection” which the Church offers the newly married couple.

## *Did You Know.....*

### **Bridesmaids and Groomsmen:**

The custom of having the bridesmaids dress like the bride and the groomsmen like the groom was a way of protecting the bride and groom from evil spirits. If all the women were dressed similarly and all the men were dressed similarly, the evil spirits would not know who the real bride and groom were, and, thus, could not bother the couple!

### **Hiding the Bride from the Groom:**

The custom whereby the groom is not permitted to see the bride before the wedding dates from a time when most marriages were arranged by the groom and the bride's father. In return for his daughter, the father received money or some other commodity from the groom. Often, the groom did not even meet his bride until the wedding when he made payment to the father. If the groom did not like what he saw, he could call off the wedding, and the father would not receive his payment. To avoid the possibility of such "bad luck," the father did not permit the groom to see the bride until the time of the transaction.

## *New Life for an Old Custom,* by Ken and Barb Waldmiller



More and more couples are becoming involved in the hospitality extended to guests arriving for the wedding celebration. Here is a wonderful story from a couple who greeted their arriving guests personally while building in some quite time before the wedding for that special moment when they saw one another in their wedding clothing for the first time.

*As we began preparations for our wedding, we realized one of the most important elements we wanted to stress was hospitality. Friends and family are important to each of us and we wanted to convey that message as well as we possibly could. We wanted to make our guests feel welcome at the 'biggest day of our lives,' and one of the best ways we felt we could do that was for both of us to be at the front doors of the church greeting people as they came to the wedding.*

*Months before the wedding, upon hearing the rumor of this 'untraditional' beginning, relatives and friends tried desperately to help us 'see the error of our ways – before it was too late!' When confronted with comments like "you can't do that; it's bad luck," 'What will your aunts say?' and "It's simply not done," we recalled some of the background of popular wedding customs (see above). Then we asked a simple question of each of our naysayers: 'Would you invite people to your home for a meal and not greet them at the door?' The resounding answer was, "Of course not!" We explained that we felt the same principle applied to the wedding. We saw one of our primary roles as host and hostess and it would simply be inhospitable not to greet people who came to celebrate with us.*

*Then came the dilemma: what about that first time he sees her in her bridal gown and she sees him 'dressed to the nines?' We talked a lot about that moment. We wanted it to be a very special time for the two of us. In the 'traditional' option, only the groom is seen before the wedding and the bride is secluded away in a dimly lit, uncomfortable room separated from all the festivities. The first time he sees her and vice versa is a very powerful, intimate moment shared with 250 other people! We wanted to find a way to share that moment with each other. Our solution was to have Ken pick Barb up on the way to church.*

*When Ken arrived at the house, Barb went to a room in a quiet part of the house. Ken went to the room and opened the door. The moment was very powerful for each of us. He looked so handsome and she radiated with happiness. We stared at each other for a few moments, frozen partly because the magnitude of the step we were taking was finally sinking in and partly because we were nervous, excited and speechless all at once! To be able to have this time alone with each other and not have to share it with anyone else for a while was precious to us. As we rejoined the rest of the people in the house, we were met with raves of joy and tears of happiness. The photographer, who was at the house too, was able to get some great pictures that he otherwise would have missed.*



*Arriving at the church, we both went to the front doors and greeted each person who arrived for our wedding. We were having so much fun seeing friends and family, we weren't as nervous as we expected we might be, and the whole atmosphere of the church was festive. Our witnesses and parents were also at the door and they had a great time; neither mother cried as much as we feared because they were too busy having fun!*

*By beginning our wedding celebration this way, we also eliminated another 'traditional' trap: the receiving line. The idea of standing for well over an hour making little more than small talk with people who were important to us and who had come to celebrate with us while the rest of our guests began the reception festivities without us, went against the sense of hospitality we had tried to impart for our wedding liturgy. Without the receiving line, we were able to enjoy the reception with everyone else. We were able to take advantage of that extra time and spend more time with our guests.*

*So, with a little bit of planning and ingenuity, we were able to begin our married life symbolizing the graciousness and hospitality that we hope to emulate throughout the rest of our lives together.*

Barb Conley Waldmiller  
And Ken Waldmiller  
Married June 23, 1990  
St Michael Church, Syracuse, NY