

Ten Tips for Keeping Your Catholic Wedding Focused on Faith

A bride and groom getting married in the Catholic Church know that their wedding is about more than the perfect dress or expertly staged pictures: for baptized Christians, marriage is a sacrament, and for all couples getting married Catholic, the wedding is a profound expression of God's love and a witness to the couple's faith. Here are some ways to help keep your wedding focused on what truly matters.

1. Keep it simple.

In "[The Joy of Love](#)" (*Amoris Laetitia* [AL]), Pope Francis notes that sometimes all the practical considerations about the wedding—the things that wedding magazines focus on, like color schemes, makeup design, or clothing—“tend to drain not only the budget but energy and joy as well” (no. 212). Pope Francis does not want you to be “exhausted and harried” on your wedding day instead of “focused and ready for the great step that [you] are about to take” (AL, no. 212).

2. Can't afford a fancy wedding? Get married anyway.

Sometimes people are so concerned with the fact that they can't afford a grand celebration that they decide not to marry. The Holy Father says to these couples: “Have the courage to be different. Don't let yourselves get swallowed up by a society of consumption and empty appearances... You are capable of opting for a more modest and simple celebration in which love takes precedence over everything else” (AL, no. 212). If cost is a true obstacle, ask your parish priest for help. There may be people in your parish who can pitch in to make things more affordable, or perhaps another couple getting married around the same time with whom you could share the expense of decorations.

3. Choose your readings and prayers carefully and pay attention to the liturgy.

There's a reason that the engaged couple chooses the [readings](#) and a number of the prayers in the [Order of Celebrating Matrimony](#): the love that God has given you to share is the reason that you and your loved ones are together for this celebration. "In their preparation for marriage, the couple should be encouraged to make the liturgical celebration a profound personal experience and to appreciate the meaning of each of its signs" (AL, no. 213). Don't rush through your choices, and discuss with each other what each reading means to you.

4. Choose lectors well, and give them some practice.

Generally an engaged couple can choose people to read the [first reading](#), [responsorial Psalm](#), and [second reading](#), and to offer the Prayers of the Faithful. Because these moments of hearing Scripture and praying together are an important part of a faith-filled Catholic wedding, choose lectors who have read in church before, or who are comfortable speaking in public. Give them a copy of the reading and/or prayers well in advance and ask them to attend the wedding rehearsal so they can practice in the church. Make sure they understand the solemnity of the occasion.

5. Let the music at your wedding lift hearts to God.

Music during a Catholic wedding can add beauty and dignity to the ceremony, and also plays an important liturgical role. Parishes may have policies about what music can be used, so check with your pastor. The parish organist or music minister can help you choose songs and possibly provide musical talent, or connect you with a cantor and/or musicians. There are many beautiful songs that reflect God's love, both instrumental classical pieces and songs that can be sung together by the entire congregation. Secular or pop music is best saved for the reception.

6. Show care to the needy.

Part of your [vocation of marriage](#) is helping those around you, including the poor. There are creative ways to do this on your very first day as husband and wife. You could include an intention in the Prayers of the Faithful for those who are struggling or in need. You could also omit wedding favors in order to give a donation to a local charity (you could announce this at your reception with a nice table display). Some couples invite their guests to bring a donation to a food bank, and set up a basket at the reception to collect them. The jewelry you buy and the gifts you register for can express care for the poor as well, [as is explained here](#).

7. Remember what it is you are doing.

During the wedding, when there are quiet moments, take a deep breath and recollect that you are in God's presence. When it is time for the [exchange of consent](#), remember that this is *the* moment – the heart of the wedding. Pope Francis says, “In the case of two baptized persons, the commitment expressed by the words of consent and the bodily union that consummates the marriage can only be seen as signs of the covenantal love and union between the incarnate Son of God and his Church” (AL, no. 213). After you have exchanged your consent, you are married, and are a sign of God's love for everyone else in the church!

8. Be attentive to all the signs at the wedding.

The wedding ceremony is full of signs and symbols: the processional, [readings](#), rings, and so forth – all of these speak of the beauty of marriage and its permanence. The most eloquent symbol, in fact, is your union in love. Pope Francis says, “In the baptized, words and signs become an eloquent language of faith” (AL, no. 213). The liturgy that celebrates the marriage of two Christians speaks of a God of love who draws human beings into this love in a profound way. Try to listen and to see with the eyes of faith.

9. Pray, pray, and pray some more.

Now is the perfect time to start praying daily with your future spouse; wedding-planning stress gives ample opportunity to share your concerns with the Lord! A great way to incorporate prayer into wedding planning is by reading through the [Scripture readings](#) and prayer options for your wedding ceremony slowly, letting the words sink into your hearts. Another great idea is to host a Eucharistic Holy Hour the evening before your wedding for your bridal party and family; one newlywed couple [explains how that worked for them](#). And remember to say a quick prayer – together or separately – on your wedding morning!

10. Above all, remember...the wedding is only the beginning!

Pope Francis encourages everyone in the Church to help couples live out married life. “They [young people] need to be encouraged to see the sacrament not as a single moment that then becomes a part of the past and its memories, but rather as a reality that permanently influences the whole of married life” (AL, no. 215). The Sunday after the wedding (and every Sunday!), be sure to come back to church and meet your community again, this time as husband and wife. And

remember that the vows you say at your wedding day are all in the future tense (“I will”); they “involve a totality that includes the future: ‘until death do us part’” (AL, no. 214).