

St. Columban Parish - Loveland, Ohio

Guidelines for Marriage

SCHEDULING

Why a minimum of six months for Preparation?

One of the most important decisions that a person makes in life is the entrance into marriage. We often spend years of academic preparation for a career which we change quite readily, whereas we spend little time understanding the skills that result in a happy marriage to which we commit ourselves for a lifetime. Statistics inform us that half of all present-day marriages end in divorce, and that forty percent of the divorces occur within the first two years.

The Church has great concern that there is adequate preparation for marriage. We believe at least six months is needed to adequately prepare a couple for marriage. Some couples even begin their preparation a year or more before the date of their wedding. Occasionally a couple will decide to postpone or call off their wedding if they discover issues which reflect a lack of readiness. We will spend whatever time that is necessary until you feel that you are as ready as possible for the celebration of your marriage.

When celebrated?

Normally marriage can be celebrated on any Saturday, except Holy Saturday or a Saturday that itself is a holyday, such as Christmas. Our Saturday morning Mass is at 8:00 am and our evening Mass is at 4:30 pm. Wedding ceremonies may be scheduled between the hours of 10:30 am and 1:30 pm or after 6:29 pm. A Friday evening wedding is also an option. Any variations need the approval of the Pastoral Associate responsible for marriage preparation or the pastor.

Who presides?

The pastor is the normal celebrant for the Sacrament of Marriage. If the celebration is to be without Mass, either the pastor or one of the deacons may be the celebrant. If you have a special relationship with a priest or a deacon in another parish, that person may be designated to celebrate your wedding. Permission is to be obtained from the pastor of St. Columban. If a non-Catholic party has a special relationship with his/her minister, that minister may be invited to assist in the ceremony.

Mass or not?

If both the bride and groom are practicing Roman Catholics, the wedding usually takes place within the celebration of the Eucharist. If only one party is Catholic and the other is either a baptized Christian, or not baptized, a wedding celebration within the Eucharist is not permitted in accord with Church law.

PREPARATION

Preliminary

Your first meeting is normally held with Don Kruse, one of the Pastoral Associates at St. Columban parish. It is a time for gathering information and for explaining to you the process that will follow as you prepare for your wedding. This session will usually takes about one and a half hours. If a priest or deacon from another parish is scheduled to officiate at your wedding ceremony, that person may be involved in this initial meeting and in the subsequent portions of your preparation.

F O C C U S

The acronym "F O C C U S" stands for *Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study*. This is a pre-marriage questionnaire that we use to help you discover the extent of your sharing and communication of your goals, needs, and expectations. The use of this questionnaire is required by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. It will be administered during our first meeting. The results will be used as part of our preparation program.

Engaged Encounter or Pre Cana Archdiocesan Programs

The Archdiocese of Cincinnati requires that you attend *either* the Engaged Encounter weekend or the one-day Pre Cana conference. We highly recommend the weekend program because of the smaller group size and the more individualized sessions. You should make arrangements to attend a session as soon as possible. Brochures that we will give you will list the dates of each conference.

Sponsor Couples

A sponsor couple will be assigned to aid you in your preparation for marriage. These couples have been fully trained and will be available to you as associates, not as teachers. They will share with you the results of the F O C C U S questionnaire, and will use it as a guide in their meetings with you. They may share some of their experiences with you, but their main desire is to assist you in your communication skills and sharing with each other.

Your sponsor couple may keep in contact with you during the early years of your marriage. After the honeymoon period, many couples go through the experience of a time of "disillusionment". This is a normal process of growth in a relationship. However, many couples never work through this disillusionment.

Other aids

During your time of preparation we may share with you certain books, periodicals, pamphlets, and videos that could be of help to you both during your time of preparation and during your married life together. We highly encourage you to read books on marriage and attend seminars and retreats which will enrich your marriage.

Follow-up

The pastoral associate preparing you for marriage will meet with you a few times during the course of your preparation in order to assist you and to answer any questions you might have about the ceremony itself and about issues related to marriage and human sexuality.

M-1 Form

Each (arch)diocese in the United States has a formal document that is filled out by the person preparing a couple for marriage and kept in the parish archives. In our Archdiocese, it is called the “*M-1 Form*”. This form contains a series of questions about your canonical, spiritual, and personal readiness for marriage. You will be given a copy of the questions beforehand and asked to make notes as to your responses.

Wedding License

The wedding license is obtained by the bride and groom at the county court house in the county either party resides. In Ohio, you may obtain a license in any county. It should be obtained approximately one month before the wedding and given to the celebrant or delivered to the parish office at least two (2) weeks before the celebration. If the license is not in the possession of the celebrant prior to the wedding, the ceremony cannot legally take place.

Baptismal Certificate

Each Catholic person will need to obtain a recently issued baptismal certificate from the Church where you were baptized. Simply contact the Church of your baptism and they will mail the certificate to you. You may elect to have the certificate sent directly to St. Columban Parish (attention Don Kruse). If your fiancée is not Roman Catholic, we will need verification of his/her baptismal and prior marriage status. This is usually done through the church of his/her baptism and/or through a letter from his/her parents. A form will be given to you for this purpose.

Expectations

For a priest or deacon to witness a marriage in the Catholic Church, at least one of the parties must be an active, practicing Roman Catholic. It is our hope that both parties will have a good faith life. If neither party is actively practicing their faith, then we must question their reasons for requesting a marriage ceremony in the Catholic Church. We expect that at least the Roman Catholic party is serious about his/her commitment to participate in the faith community on a regular basis. Both parties must be free to marry in the Roman Catholic Church.

Cohabiting couples

We realize that many couples have decided to live together before marriage. Statistics tell us that the chance for divorce is 38% higher for couples who cohabit, than for couples who do not live together before marriage.

MARRIAGE LITURGY

Marriage as Sacrament

Marriage is the only Sacrament in which the persons receiving the Sacrament are also the ministers and sign of the Sacrament. The priest or deacon witnesses your wedding vows. This Sacrament doesn't just happen on the day of your wedding. Rather, you give the grace of the Sacrament to each other as you live through the various life cycles and changes in your marriage. We encourage you therefore to conduct yourselves during the marriage liturgy with a mature manner, respectful of your dignity as ministers and signs of the Sacrament. This includes the need for the entire wedding party to refrain from the consumption of any alcoholic beverages before the ceremony.

Planning

You, as a couple, will be involved in the planning of your marriage ceremony. The celebrant will aid you in the selection of readings and in choosing various prayers and blessings. It is important to remember that your marriage is a Sacrament of God's people, the Church. In your marriage you are very much in the center of life in the Christian community. Your wedding ceremony is thus a prayer for and by the entire assembled community and should be regarded as a time of public prayer together. The planning of your marriage ceremony should thus reflect your faith.

Music

The parish music director is responsible for all music at weddings at St. Columban Church. She/he will assist you in the selection of music for your marriage celebration that will be pleasant as well as appropriate for a Christian liturgical celebration. You need to consult the music director as soon as possible even if you plan to use someone else for music and/or song. (See Wedding Music Guidelines.)

Readings

You, as a couple, will select the readings for your wedding ceremony. Usually there will be an Old Testament reading followed by a Responsorial Psalm, then a New Testament reading and a Gospel. During the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, if you are having a marriage celebration within a Mass liturgy, the second reading (New Testament) must be from the readings for the Sunday liturgy.

You may wish to have friends or members of your families proclaim the Old and New Testament readings. Because this is an important ministry, we encourage you to choose those persons who are capable of proclaiming the Word of God well. The vocalist or the musician usually cantors the Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation. The Gospel that you select will be proclaimed by the celebrant.

Prayer Selection

You will be provided with a book of selections for prayers, for the exchange of your vows, and for the blessings used at your wedding ceremony. You will be encouraged to make selections from the ones that seem most meaningful for you.

Flowers and Decorations

In the Church, everything should be natural. Therefore, it is improper to use artificial flowers at the altar. St. Columban Church was designed to use a minimum of decorations. It is the people who make the Church come richly alive. An excess of flowers or other decorations will make the Church look overdone and spoil the atmosphere of your wedding. The decoration of the Church may normally begin one hour before the ceremony.

Since the decor must be returned to the way it was before the ceremony, any decorations, candle holders, etc. that you want to save should be taken with you after the wedding. At times there may already be proper and sufficient decorations in the Church and additional decorations would be unnecessary. When two weddings are celebrated on the same day, decorations and their cost may be shared. Flowers, if left, may be used as part of the decorations in the church for the balance of the weekend liturgies.

Rehearsal

Normally the rehearsal is conducted by a parish wedding coordinator. The priest or deacon who will celebrate your wedding liturgy may attend if invited. The rehearsal is usually held during the evening prior to the marriage ceremony. The entire wedding party, including parents and readers, should be in attendance. Please ensure that all people involved are informed of the time of the rehearsal and the importance of starting on time.

OPTIONS:

Pew Decorations

Candles and/or floral pieces may be placed at the ends of the first few pews. Candles must be free standing and have glass globes. Floral pieces may be attached to the pews by removable tape or by clips provided by your florist.

Aisle Runner

Aisle runners date to the era when church aisles were dirt, wood or stone. Back then, they were needed to keep the trailing material of the long dresses from getting dirty. Our 50 ft main aisle is tiled and clean. The aisle-runner is an unnecessary option that can become a hazard, and should not be used.

Flowers at the Statue of Mary

If you have a special devotion to the Blessed Mother, flowers may be placed at the statue of Mary. Since our statue is in the back of Church, and not easily accessible due to the narrow aisle and fullness of wedding dresses, it is recommended that this sign of devotion be made as part of prayer at the rehearsal.

Unity Candle

The Unity Candle is not an official part of the ceremony. Its use began as a way for another Christian denomination to extend the length of their wedding ceremony. We strongly discourage its use since the new *Revised Guidelines for Marriage* will either discourage or eliminate its use in the Catholic Church.

Gift for the Poor

Since we are all called as Christians to provide for the less fortunate, it is proper for the bride and groom to make some monetary or material offering to the poor as part of this celebration. The gift may be brought forward as part of the offerings procession if the wedding is celebrated during a Mass. If the celebration is outside the Mass, the gift is placed on the offerings table at the back of the Church. All such gifts are given to the St. Vincent de Paul society.

Programs for the Ceremony

If you choose to print a program for your celebration, the celebrant and the music director will assist you in the preparation. You must have the permission of the publisher before printing any copyrighted song (words and/or music).

MISCELLANEOUS

Photographer

A good professional photographer will obtain all the photos of your wedding that you desire without getting in your way or the way of the celebrant. This is not the time to ask an inexperienced friend or family member to do you a favor and take pictures. Your photographer should consult with the celebrant to see if he has any restrictions. There is ample time both before and after the celebration to pose for special photographs.

Video Taping

Video taping is permitted as long as the camera is placed in one location for the entire liturgy. Video camerapersons are not permitted to move around the Church. The operator is to consult with the celebrant and with the still photographer for the best location for the video camera.

Confetti, Rice, Bird Seed

The throwing of confetti, rice, and birdseed is not permitted on Church property. It is not good for the environment and the wildlife. Also it is a pagan custom that does not belong at a Christian celebration.

Dressing Rooms

Just off the main gathering space for the Church is the Family Room, which can be used for the women in the wedding party to freshen up. It is recommended that all the wedding party members dress at home before coming to the Church. Because the Family Room and washrooms are used on Sundays, any hangers, cosmetics, etc., must be removed before the wedding party leaves.

FEES / COSTS

Church Use by Parishioners

The parish has established a church usage fee of three hundred dollars (\$300.00). A 50% non-refundable deposit (\$150.00) is due within 30 days of booking a wedding date. The balance is due two months before the wedding.

The fee helps cover the costs of hiring a custodian and marriage coordinator for the several hours necessary to open the facility, set up the sanctuary area for the wedding, return the sanctuary area to the set up for Mass, assist with the necessary cleanup, and close the facility when you are finished. This fee also helps cover the cost of utilities, altar candles and other items used in the Church. It is due two months before the wedding.

A parishioner is defined as one where the bride, the groom, or the parents of either have been active members of St. Columban parish for at least six months prior to the request for a wedding date.

Church Use by Non-Parishioners

The fee for the use of the Church by non-parishioners is six hundred dollars (\$600.00). A 50% non-refundable deposit (\$300.00) is due within 30 days of booking a wedding date. The balance is due two months before the wedding. It is understood that the bride and groom will be completely prepared for marriage by the priest or deacon they have chosen to celebrate their wedding ceremony, and that all required paperwork will be delivered to St. Columban parish no later than one month prior to the wedding date.

Musician / Vocalist

You are responsible to compensate any musicians and vocalists who assist with the celebration of your wedding. Our music director is salaried for our normal Mass schedule. Compensation for weddings are **not** included, and our music director is to be compensated as you would any other musician you might hire. (See Wedding Music Guidelines.)

Celebrant

It is the practice of the Catholic Church to **not** charge for a Sacraments of the Church. Therefore, there is no *required fee* for the celebrant. You may offer a stipend or a gift as you so desire. Etiquette guides suggest the stipend is the responsibility of the groom. Normally, a stipend (check or cash) is placed into a Thank-You card and given to the best man. The best man usually gives the presider the card (normally in the sacristy) just prior to the wedding ceremony.

It is expected that you would cover the expenses for any celebrant that you bring in from outside the parish.