

Wedding Celebration Guidelines

Ss. John and Paul Parish

We are pleased to help you prepare for marriage at Ss. John and Paul Parish in Altoona. Since you wish to enter into a Catholic wedding, the Church has guidelines for your preparation. In our parish we will ask you to work with a sponsor couple as well as the pastor in preparing for the ceremony.

Registered parishioners, preparation materials One of the couple must be a registered member of Ss. John and Paul Parish and a practicing Catholic. It is assumed that you support the Church family by sharing your time, talent and treasure with regular giving and involvement in weekend Mass and activities. The Diocese and our parish use the material “Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study” (FOCCUS) as a guide for preparing you to make a lifelong commitment to each other. The tool helps you to review and discuss various life issues that are important to a good and life-giving relationship in marriage.

Donations—Church, music people, clergy It is the custom of church members to give a donation to the parish for the expenses—to cover the cost of heating or cooling the church, the use of the facility, the preparation process, etc. The donation for our church is \$500 for registered, active parishioners, \$750 for inactive or nonparishioners. Once your date is set and you have made this donation to the parish, then the date for the wedding is entered in our parish calendar.

Stipends for your musician and song leader are to be arranged with them. Many have a fee according to the frequency of meetings and the practice time needed.

If you wish to give a gift to the priest or deacon, that is your choice and the amount is left to your discretion. Certainly a gift of money should be given to visiting clergy who travel here for your ceremony.

Planning the Wedding Ceremony The engaged couple plans the wedding liturgy, including the music, with the pastor or guest clergy and with the music director. The wedding liturgy is primarily a public act of worship and a sacrament of the Church. There are guidelines of the Church for the quality of music and of the celebration.

- a) *The music for the liturgy is arranged with the music director and the pastor.* The music is for congregational participation and needs to be suited to this worship service. By lifting our voices in prayer, we are praising and thanking God for married love and the love this couple will express in their vows to each other. Some music not suitable for the liturgy might be used at the reception or sung prior to the start of the liturgy.
- b) We plan on *one piece of music for the entrance procession*, accompanying the entire procession, including the priest and lectors, as well as the bride. In this way, we mark this as a communal celebration, with the wedding party and the bride and groom as part of the community gathering for the liturgy.
- c) The priest will guide you in considering possible Scripture readings for the wedding and reflecting upon them in advance. Often, the priest will ask the couple to assist in the selection of readings and in preparing for the preaching.

- d) Think in advance of lectors for the Scripture readings (persons who serve as lectors in this or another parish), Communion ministers (those who serve as Communion ministers in this or another parish), and another person who can lead the Prayers of the Faithful at the liturgy.
- e) The rite of marriage itself is deliberately simple and elegant—formal questions to the couple, their public exchange of commitment to each other, and the blessing and exchange of rings.

Decorations in the worship space In this worship space, very little is needed by way of added decoration. The seasonal decorations of the Church are to be left in place. Please be sure that no one moves or removes any of the seasonal decorations, flowers and plants, or church furnishings. “The simpler, the better” is a good rule of thumb. We refrain from other items like garlands on the pews, throwing of flower pedals, wagons with little children or animals in the procession, etc.

Dressing Area The parish provides an area for the bride and attendants to dress. There is also an area where the groom and groomsmen may dress. ***Both areas should be cleaned up prior to or after the ceremony.***

Clean Up Since our church has no weekend custodial service, it is your responsibility to designate people to *be sure all is left in good order*. We ask you to leave the facility clean and neat for the people who will come to worship for weekend Mass.

Be sure that:

- ushers collect any programs or wedding items from the church;
- wedding items in the gathering space, dressing areas, and kitchen are removed;
- trash from the dressing areas and kitchen is removed to the dumpster.

NO drugs, alcohol or smoking

All parish buildings and grounds are smoke free; no smoking is permitted.

NO ALCOHOL is permitted on the premises with the wedding.

This means that no alcohol is to be brought indoors or consumed in the parking lot.

It is the responsibility of the couple that families and guests respect these rules.

RICE OR BIRDSEED

For reasons of safety and maintenance, nothing is to be tossed or thrown before or after the wedding.