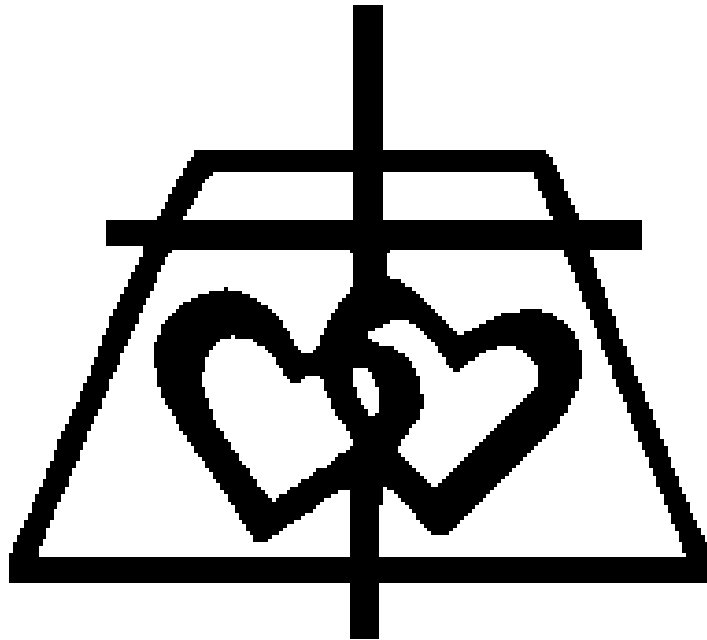


**GUIDELINES
for the
Celebration of
CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**



**in the
Parish of Saint Eugene
Asheville, North Carolina**

CONGRATULATIONS!

What a wonderful gift it is for a Parish Community to celebrate the love of a man and a woman in the sacrament of matrimony! In witnessing this love the Community is reminded of the love of Jesus Christ for his spouse, the church (Ephesians 5:22).

In ministering to the engaged couple and in celebrating their marriage, the church not only expresses its love and support for the couple but acknowledges the value of their married life as a help to each other to attain holiness and as a blessing for society and for the rest of the church. In forming a family, you become a “domestic church.” By word and example you are heralds of the faith with regard to your circle of friends after marriage and with regard to your children in the future (L.G.: 11).

Because of the seriousness of the vocation of Christian marriage, the church has an obligation to do all that it can to preserve the dignity of this sacrament and to offer you the guidance and support that will help prepare you for married life.

We offer you these guidelines to help you with your preparation.

1. **Who May Marry in Our Parish Church:**

As much as possible, we wish to be a welcoming Parish. This means we try hard to make many different people feel as comfortable as they can in our church home. We try to balance this call to hospitality with a concern for the laws of the church and the integrity of the sacraments. The combination of these three realities lead us to the following with regard to marriage ceremonies here.

a) Generally speaking, *members* of our Parish Community may celebrate their weddings here. Membership in the Parish of Saint Eugene is defined by the completion of a registration form and by participating in the life of the Parish Community.

b) Roman Catholics who live within the bounds of this Parish but who have no formal relationship with it will need to speak to the pastor about first establishing a relationship with the Parish - with an eye toward celebrating a wedding here *sometime in the future*.

c) Catholic individuals from outside the area who wish to marry in our Parish church must present the permission letter as well as a completed preparation file from their home Parish. The use of the Parish by non registered persons will be decided by the pastor on a case by case basis.

2. **The Use of Other Catholic Churches for Parish Weddings:**

Since the Parish church is the “sign” of the baptismal community to which an individual belongs, weddings should normally take place in the Parish church here at Saint Eugene. There are a few exceptions.

a) If both parties are Catholic and the wedding is scheduled to occur in the Parish church of the other party.

b) If there is a Catholic Church of historical or important significance that the party wishes to use (this is, of course, subject to that church’s wedding policies).

In this case, written permission from the *pastor at Saint Eugene* must be obtained and presented to the church where the wedding will occur.

c) Generally speaking, the clergy at Saint Eugene will not “travel” to other Catholic churches, even in the Asheville area, for such weddings. Arrangements must be made with the church of marriage or with other clergy by the couple.

3. Setting the Wedding Date:

a) Couples should contact the church office at 254-5193 at least six months in advance of the date they hope to celebrate marriage. The reservation of the wedding date will become formal upon receipt of the down-payment and after their first meeting with the priest or deacon.

b) The time of the wedding is set with respect to the couples' wishes and the availability of both the church and the clergy of the parish. Weddings are usually scheduled on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. through 2:00 p.m. The church facilities and parking lot must be cleared for services that begin at 4:00 p.m.

c) Outside of the scheduled, weekend Eucharist, no Saturday evening or Sunday weddings are permitted. Evening weddings may be celebrated on Friday evenings, if clergy are available.

d) Since a wedding is a public sign expressed for the whole church, weddings may be celebrated at any of the weekend parish liturgies. The Parish Staff can assist the couple in planning a wedding in just such a context.

e) There are some times in the church year when the celebration of a wedding is discouraged or prohibited. They are not permitted on Christmas or the Triduum of Holy Thursday, Good Friday or Holy Saturday. A nuptial mass may not be celebrated on All Souls Day or other solemnities of obligation. While weddings may be celebrated during Lent, they must reflect the simplicity and the spirit of that penitential season.

4. Use of Church Space:

Symbols are important to Catholic believers. The church building, the house of God's people, is an important symbol of the whole body of Christ. Since marriage is a public celebration of the whole church, Catholic weddings take place in the church building to make this connection between the couple and the people.

a) Scheduling the church for your wedding is done at the initial meeting with the priest or deacon. Rehearsal times are generally at 5:00pm the day before, unless other arrangements are made.

b) Alcohol is forbidden on church property.

5. The Ministers of the Celebration:

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the bride and groom minister the sacrament of matrimony to one another. A clergyman, as official witness and two other witnesses are required to be present.

a) Ordinarily, the priest or deacon from our parish will be the official witness at a wedding. If a couple has a special relationship with a priest friend or if they have a relative who is a priest or deacon, you are welcome to invite them to preside over the church's rites at your wedding. Please be sure you mention this possibility when making your initial arrangements at the parish.

Visiting Catholic clergy are expected to observe church law and parish customs regarding the celebration of the sacraments.

b) Ministers from other Christian traditions, who have a connection to one of the parties, are invited to participate as well. There are many different possibilities for their presence and participation in your wedding. This can be discussed as you meet with Parish Staff to plan your ceremony.

c) Other ministers of the celebration include:

Acolytes or servers. None are necessary. One is sufficient. A relative or friend might fill this role. Servers from the parish are not usually available for this role.

Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Communion: If the wedding is celebrated in the Eucharist, Communion is shared under both forms, as is our custom. Family members or friends who serve in the ministry - whether in this parish or elsewhere - are welcome to do so. Individuals, including the couple, can be designated for this one-time event as well. At least two (2) are needed.

Reader(s). At least one reader is needed. Two are desirable if there are two scripture readings before the Gospel and if doing petitions. The role can be given to a friend or a family member of the couple.

Music Ministers. You have the music ministry of the Parish available to you. Additionally, you may have musician friends that you may wish to invite to play or sing. Keep in mind that music in the celebration of a wedding is not for performance value alone. The music should involve the assembly. Opportunities for the assembly to sing should be designed. During your preparation process the Director of Music will meet with you to discuss these values and help you plan your ceremony with them in mind.

Please note that music ministers set their own fees. They are not regulated by the Parish but they do reflect the time necessary for practice, rehearsal, and performance. Please clarify these fees as you begin to plan your musical program with your musicians.

Hospitality Ministers. Sometimes called ushers they offer hospitality to your guests, which is an important aspect of the overall worship experience. Ushers welcome guests as they arrive. They provide them with any worship aid that may have been printed. They assist guests in being seated. We find that 2 - 4 individuals are appropriate for most weddings. In more formal situations, groomsmen perform this function. Whoever does assist in this way at your wedding should be comfortable enough with our space to graciously assist people with their needs.

6. The Rehearsal:

a) The rehearsal is usually held at 5:00pm the evening before the wedding. Other arrangements can be made when necessary. It is expected that the entire wedding party be present (and on time) for the rehearsal. Because the Parish has other activities that may be occurring the evening of your rehearsal, it is important to be prompt, and have everyone assembled at the prescribed time. Rehearsals rarely last longer than one hour and they begin with a short prayer service.

b) The Parish has a team of wedding coordinators. One will be assigned to you at your initial meeting with the Parish clergy. That individual will help facilitate your needs with regard to the Parish building for your rehearsal and wedding. Your coordinator will be sure the spaces you need are available, and will assist with the delivery and preparation of flowers, etc. She is also available to arrange space for members of the wedding party to dress prior to the wedding. Often, the coordinator will also preside over the rehearsal.

c) The Parish does not utilize the services of outside "Directresses."

d) Couples are encouraged to drop off the North Carolina state Marriage License, obtained from the local Courthouse prior to the rehearsal. Simply bring it to the Church Office as many as sixty (60) days prior to the ceremony. If you do not bring it to the office prior to rehearsal, then it must be presented at the beginning of rehearsal. A rehearsal will not begin without this documentation.

7. The Liturgy:

Marriage in the Catholic Church is not just the concern of the couple. It is a celebration of the whole Christian community. At the beginning of the preparation period you are given a guide book that outlines the Rite of marriage and offers readings, prayer options for its celebration in the context of the Eucharist or the Liturgy of the Word (outside of mass). There are also varieties of options for processions and other optional rites. You will be able, in your meetings with the priest or deacon, to shape your ceremony appropriately.

a) The celebration should include opportunities for the assembly to respond in song and in prayer.

b) The Catholic Church does not permit weddings to take place in other than the sacred space of the church building. The building represents the whole community which is connected to this couple's love and which is a support for their role as signs of God's love in the world.

c) Generally, the marriage of two Catholics takes place during the celebration of the Eucharist. The wedding of a Catholic and a member of another Christian church takes place during the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word. Sometimes the composition of family and friends present for a particular wedding may shape the type of liturgy used for celebrating it. The Parish Staff working with you will help you with this aspect of planning.

d) There are two additional things that aid in good liturgical celebration that the couple must remember.

Decoration. Our sanctuary is small. It does not take much greenery or flowers to decorate it. Bear this in mind as you plan your wedding. Be sure you understand the Parish's flower schedule for the day of your wedding. This can assist you in planning for flowers at your wedding and your reception. Generally, if your wedding is not at a weekend liturgy, your flowers are not expected to remain at the church after the wedding since the Parish has a weekly memorial flower program.

Photography. You certainly have the option to decide if you wish to have photographs taken during the ceremony or at some other time. The Parish's only requirement is that the photographer or videographer may never obstruct the view of the assembly at any time during the celebration. Also, there is to be no flash photography during the ceremony. Photos taken in the church after the wedding ceremony are restricted to a thirty (30) minute period to assist us in preparing for the next worship service in the Parish. Please share this time limit with your photographer as you meet to plan your wedding picture program.

8. Fees

a) Use of the church building for church members is \$150. The use of the church building for a wedding by non - parish couples carries a fee of \$500.00. One third 1/3 of the fee is due to reserve the date. The remainder is due one month before the wedding.

b) The use of the Social Hall for a reception is rare. The spaces and the parking lots are needed for weekend liturgies. This often precludes the use of that space for receptions. If there is a schedule that would permit the use of the Social Hall, the fee for use is \$300. While this fee includes a maintenance fee, the wedding party is responsible for set-up and clean up.

c) Musicians set their own fees, which are negotiated with the couple during the planning process. Fees noted above do not include a stipend for these (or other) ministers of the liturgy.

9. Wedding Customs:

a) The parish wishes to support those ethnic and multicultural wedding customs that represent the best of liturgy and culture for individuals from other countries or with a strong, cultural heritage. The proper use of these customs will be shaped in the planning process as you meet with the Director of Liturgy and Music.

b) The throwing of rice or birdseed is not permitted in the Parish of Saint Eugene. The use of rice is an ancient, pagan fertility symbol which is not consistent with Christian practice and the substitution of birdseed, which remains on the walkways and stairwells after the wedding party leaves, is a safety hazard and a potential risk for injury.

c) The use of cloth or disposable aisle runner is not permitted in the Parish of Saint Eugene. The purpose of the runner was to protect a gown from the every day dirt of stone floors in churches. Practically speaking, since our aisle is carpeted and has both a vertical and horizontal slope, walking on an additional, unsecured layer is dangerous.

d) Flower petals may not be scattered or dropped by an attendant or flower girl at a wedding in the church. All flowers (including white ones) contain dyes that stain the carpet. They (as well as undyed petals from one's garden) also create the same safety hazard noted above.

e) There are no exceptions to (b), (c), and (d) above.

10. The Order of Service:

Most weddings follow this pattern closely:

-Procession

-Greeting and Prayer

-Reading from Scriptures

-Homily

-The Wedding Ceremony

1. Statement of Intentions

2. Vows

3. Rings

-General Intercessions

(If Mass is celebrated the Offering of the Gifts occurs at this point and Mass continues as normal until the beginning of the Communion Rite, when the rite resumes:)

-The Lord's Prayer

-The Nuptial Blessing

-The Closing Prayer and Blessing

-The Recessional