



THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY AT EPIPHANY OF THE LORD CATHOLIC PARISH, TOLEDO



COUPLES PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CAREFULLY!
MAY GOD BLESS YOU IN YOUR ENGAGEMENT!

PRIOR TO CONFIRMING ANY DATES WITH RECEPTION HALL VENUES OR OTHER RELATED
DETAILS, YOU MUST HAVE YOUR WEDDING DATE CONFIRMED AND APPROVED BY FATHER
GEIGER AND THE RESERVATION MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE CHURCH FACILITY FEE.



INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your engagement and upcoming marriage! Your wedding – this entering into a lifelong covenant of love with each other and with God – is a special, joyous event, not only for you and your family but for the whole Church community. A Christian marriage creates strong families and healthy children. The Christian home allows both adults and children to grow in the experience of God’s love. The health of society and the vitality of the Church rest on these foundations, so the parishioners of Epiphany of the Lord have a stake in your marriage becoming the very best it can be.

Nevertheless, it is a tragic fact that despite these beautiful truths, many marriages end in divorce. It is sobering to realize that those marriages that end in suffering and humiliation began with the same expectations as those that prove to be joyful and fruitful and lasting. Our parishes consider it a serious responsibility, as well as a privilege and a pleasure, to assist you in your preparations. May we be in your prayers and you in ours as this preparation begins for your wedding day, but more importantly, for your lifelong marriage.

These guidelines follow the Marriage Preparation Policy of the Diocese of Toledo, formulated specifically for this purpose. These pages you have in your hands detail the local situations here at Epiphany of the Lord Parish. We hope that this document answers many of the questions that engaged couples have. If you have any that are not covered here, feel free to ask the priest who is helping you with your preparations.

YOUR FIRST ARRANGEMENTS

SCHEDULING THE WEDDING DAY

The proper place for a couple to be married is in one’s home parish community. If you are not a registered parishioner of Epiphany of the Lord Parish for at least one year prior to notifying us of your intended marriage, or if you do not live within the parish boundaries of Epiphany of the Lord, your wedding is ordinarily not permissible except in rare circumstances. No marriage date can be secured until approved by a Priest or Deacon of Epiphany of the Lord Parish. Once all the preliminary information is gathered, the Priest or Deacon assigned to oversee your marriage preparations will be in touch with the couple to discuss marriage preparation requirements and schedule a meeting time for the first marriage preparation meeting. Because of the large number of weddings at Epiphany of the Lord Parish as well as the scheduling commitments of our Priests and Deacons, requests for certain Priests or Deacons are not permissible. Weddings are ordinarily conducted on Friday or Saturday. Saturday weddings may be scheduled no later than 1:30 pm. Ordinarily, only one wedding per date will be scheduled. Once again, **NO WEDDING DATE IS CONFIRMED UNLESS APPROVED AND CONFIRMED BY A PRIEST OR DEACON OF EPIPHANY OF THE LORD PARISH AND UNTIL THE WEDDING FACILITY FEE HAS BEEN PAID AND THE MARRIAGE INFORMATION FORM COMPLETED BY THE COUPLE AND SIGNED & RETURNED.** Because Lent and Advent are penitential seasons and weddings are festive occasions, weddings are ordinarily not celebrated in these seasons. Also, weddings during the Christmas Season or on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation may not be permissible depending on parish schedules and other circumstances.

PLACE OF THE WEDDING

According to the Canon Law (Church Law), ordinarily either the bride or the groom must be a registered parishioner and/or residing within the parish boundaries to be married at any of the Epiphany of the Lord Parish churches. If the bride or groom is not Catholic and the couple wishes to be married in a non-Catholic church of one of them, the priest who handles the arrangements for the wedding will need to secure permission from the Bishop. In these cases, it is assumed that the officiant will be the minister of the church where the wedding is to take place. In some cases, marriages of non-parishioners may be permitted.

Marriage is a sacrament of the Church, joining not only two as one, but also binding a new family to a community in God. That is the reason Catholic weddings are set in the community's assembly place, distinguishing it as holy and public. The Diocese of Toledo, therefore, does not permit weddings to be celebrated out of doors, in civic sites, or in the chapels of high schools, colleges, or hospitals.

SIX-MONTH PREPARATION PERIOD

Diocesan Guidelines require that couples make these arrangements *at least* six months ahead of the wedding date. In the course of this preparation period, couples can expect to meet with the Priest or Deacon on 3 – 4 occasions. The final meeting will be dedicated to planning of the wedding. **The Diocese of Toledo also requires all couples to make an ENGAGED COUPLE RETREAT prior to the wedding.** There are several dates scheduled for this throughout the Diocese of Toledo. Couples should check with the Priest or Deacon overseeing their marriage preparation for a roster of scheduled retreat dates, or view an updated lists at the Diocese of Toledo website at www.toledodiocese.org.

THE OFFICIANT OF YOUR WEDDING

Ordinarily, the Priest or Deacon who guides the couple in its marriage preparations will officiate the wedding. However, for good reasons, the Priest or Deacon may delegate a visiting priest or deacon as principal officiant. Visiting priests are certainly welcome. In these cases, the visiting officiant ordinarily is responsible for the pre-marriage preparation process when this is possible.

INTERFAITH WEDDINGS

In the case of an interfaith marriage celebrated here rather than in the protestant church, the minister of the non-Catholic party is welcome to participate in the wedding. For such marriages the pastor here is the official witness. Appropriate roles for the minister to exercise during the ceremony will be worked out at the time the ceremony is planned.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

CIVIL REQUIREMENTS

State laws change from time to time, and make what is printed here inaccurate. It is best to check early at the courthouse for current requirements. You may encounter delays if you need to produce birth certificates or residency statements from other counties, states, or countries. However, bring the license with you for the wedding rehearsal, usually the day before. ***The priest must have the license at this time, otherwise he will be unable to perform the wedding.***

OTHER DOCUMENTS

Catholics and baptized Christians need to present a baptismal certificate. For Catholics, the certificate needs to have been issued within the last six months.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

The Priest or Deacon assigned to oversee your marriage preparation will discuss a marriage preparation plan in his first meeting with the couple. This preparation will include 3 – 4 meetings as well as an **Engaged Couple Conference**.

This conference, also known as pre-Cana Day, is an event held on Saturdays approximately every other month. At the conference, you will meet other engaged couples and host couples to cover topics important in creating successful marriages. These topics include communications in marriage, sexuality, finances, in-law influences, children, holiness in marriage, and other matters. Seating at the conference is limited. The conferences are in high demand at peak times of the year. Call early to secure a date. This conference or one similar is mandatory.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATIONS

Faith and religious support is a major factor in having a happy, life-long marriage. Your entire life changes once you commit to marriage. And since you've decided to marry in a church—a house of God—it is good to explore your relationship with God. What direction is God taking you? How will God open your life hereafter? How will God challenge your values every day after marriage? It takes an adult to commit to marriage. An adult commitment includes acknowledging God whose Providence has brought you to this point. With this understanding, every Catholic is strongly recommended to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before the wedding. This act clearly expresses your marriage as serving the Lord in an effort to fulfill God's plan. It is an expectation that if you are going to be married in Epiphany of the Lord Parish, that you are actively worshipping at Sunday Mass.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

TEENAGE MARRIAGES

Special concern must be given to young people who desire to marry because of the difficulties which marriages between people in this age group experience today. Therefore if either party is not yet nineteen years of age, the Marriage Policy of the Diocese of Toledo requires that as a part of the marriage preparation the couple meet with an approved Diocesan Counselor for three sessions in order to evaluate various aspects of their readiness for marriage. The Policy also requires that the priest consult the parents or guardians of the young people regarding the step they are about to take.

SECOND MARRIAGES

Catholics take Jesus' command, "What God has joined together, no human being may set apart" (Mk 10:9) very seriously. This rules out remarriage after a valid first marriage. On the other hand, the crucial word is "valid." Not every case of a couple saying "I do" is the kind of marriage Jesus was talking about.

So, marriages are presumed valid until proven otherwise. Consequently, if either party was previously married, the Diocesan Tribunal may need to investigate whether the marriage was valid. Depending on circumstances, some Tribunal cases take longer than others. However, no new marriage date can be set until the Tribunal issues its finding on the first marriage.

Couples, who have been married before, whether that previous marriage ended by death or divorce, may find a special form of the Engaged Couple Conference helpful. This particular Conference is more helpful for people in these circumstances. Information regarding where and when these special programs are offered may be obtained from the Family Life Office of the Diocese of Toledo (419-244-6711)

COHABITING COUPLES

First, the Catholic Church—along with most Christian denominations—is opposed to cohabitation, so it is not appropriate to celebrate Eucharist in conjunction with the wedding for a cohabiting couple. In the last forty years, this country has seen an increase in the number of couples who live together before marriage. It has become one of those "everyone does it" things. The Catholic Church has not seen it that way, and recent scientific study confirms the Church's wisdom.

Though couples will argue that they need to give the married life a test run to "see if it works" for them, sociology studies show two things: 1) divorce rates for cohabiting couples are significantly higher, and 2) infidelity after marriage is more likely. Other troubles are likely to occur; for example, cohabiting couples report less satisfaction in marriage and more stress over financial issues. The Christian vision of marriage is a union based on self-giving commitment and fidelity rather than on mutual self-interest. It is a view that promotes promise, hope, forgiveness, and acceptance.

Nevertheless, the Church seeks to reduce the risks of marriage breakups, regardless of your choices. To that end, your preparation will explore the reasons that a couple who decided to cohabit originally may be seeking marriage now. This gives them tools to understand and deal with the stresses they may experience later on. Open discussion of the situation should thereby strengthen the marriage they are now about to undertake.

INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

Couples in interfaith marriages may have extra sessions with the Priest or Deacon in their marriage preparation. These sessions help each one understand and respect the faith and religious practices of their partner. For the same reason, the couple is also invited to visit with the clergy of the other faith tradition. If the other denomination has its own requirements for marriage preparation, these requirements can be considered at the couple's first meeting with the priest.

Permission to marry non-Catholics is readily given, provided the Catholic party promises to strive to continue practicing the faith and to raise children born of the union as Catholics. If the couple wishes to be married in a non-Catholic church, your priest will also secure the Bishop's dispensation to do so. In this case, that church's minister becomes the witness of their vows. No Priest or Deacon need be present at such a ceremony, though if the couple desires it, a Priest or Deacon would be happy to participate when possible. Ordinarily, interfaith couples should not use the Nuptial Mass, using instead the Wedding Ceremony (without Eucharist) designed for these situations. This second form of liturgy allows the celebrant of the sacrament without drawing attention to traditions where we yet seek agreement. These weddings are normally overseen by the Deacons of Epiphany of the Lord Parish.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

LITURGY PLAN

The wedding liturgy plan is devised by the couple in consultation with the Priest or Deacon officiant and the Director of Liturgical Music. Mr. Tony Zsigray, the Director of Liturgical Music will work with the couple in selecting appropriate music. There is a separate fee for the services of the Director of Liturgical Music.

THE REHEARSAL

The rehearsal is usually held the evening before the wedding but can be scheduled any convenient time. The rehearsal time should consider work schedules of the wedding party and perhaps traffic construction or rush hours. In any event, the couple should make sure that all members of the wedding party realize the need to be **on time**. The church will be open and available fifteen minutes before the reserved time.

If all is done and everyone is on time, experience shows that the rehearsal can then be concluded in 35-45 minutes or so, allowing plenty of time for rehearsal dinner and other last-minute preparations. Repeating from an earlier paragraph, **the Priest or Deacon must have the wedding license at the time of rehearsal.**

Family members and friends whom you may want to read scripture and petitions, distribute communion, or serve a Nuptial mass are also expected to attend. For readers, the usual challenge is microphone sensitivity and sound reverberation. For distributors and servers, it is a matter of knowing where things are. Music rehearsals are not scheduled during wedding rehearsals but at another time as arranged with the music minister of the parish (See separate section below.)

EATING, DRINKING, AND SMOKING

Before the wedding rehearsal, please inform your families and wedding party that **no smoking** is permitted inside or outside the church, on its steps, its step approach, or its parking lots. Similarly, **no intoxicating beverages** are permitted in these areas. This is a solemn, religious occasion at a house of worship, and there are other places more suitable for intoxicating beverages. **No food, no drinks, and no gum** may be brought into the church or the basement dressing areas; if it is necessary, lunch should be eaten before coming to the church for dressing. It is the **couple's responsibility to make sure** that the wedding party observes these prohibitions.

USE OF THE CHURCH

On the day of the wedding, the church will be open and available to the wedding party guests **two hours before** the appointed time. It will remain open an additional **hour after** the wedding ceremony is concluded. This shortness of time following the ceremony requires that most wedding pictures are to be taken before the ceremony as possible. After the ceremony, the couple should complete their pictures in the church immediately and only then leave the building for the traditional drive or to make their way to the place of the reception, etc.

DRESSING ROOMS

The groom and groomsmen customarily dress at home; the bride and bridesmaids are welcome to use the dressing areas of the church.

- For St. Stephen's, the basement of the church and/or the cry room is used for this purpose. There is also a restroom located at the back of the church, to the right of the main entrance.
- For Sacred Heart, the area used is the downstairs women's restroom.
- For St. Thomas Aquinas, the area used is in the parish office basement.

No one should be chewing gum during the ceremony. No one should bring personal or boom-box CD players with them. Securing valuables—wallets, purses, cameras, medications, and the like—are the party's responsibility; the church cannot be held responsible for dressing room items that come up missing. Cleaning up the dressing rooms and the gathering space are the responsibility of the couple. All materials should be removed to the sacristy, so that our custodian can remove them. **It is essential that you leave the church and dressing rooms as you found them.**

MUSIC FOR THE WEDDING

Mr. Tony Zsigray serves as the Director of Liturgical Music. It is imperative that you contact him as soon as possible after confirming your wedding date. His email is musicdirector@epiphanyofthelord.org, or he can be reached by calling the Parish Office at 419-698-1519. Once again, it is imperative that you contact Mr. Zsigray as soon as possible. If a scheduling conflict occurs, Mr. Zsigray will assist you in suggesting other musicians. Please note: there is a separate fee for the services of Mr. Tony Zsigray.

Your wedding ceremony is the effecting of a sacrament, Matrimony. As such, all music performed at this solemn celebration—a liturgy of the Catholic Church—must conform to Church guidelines for liturgical music. All music to be used must be approved by the musicians listed above.

Generally speaking, musical selections, contemporary or classical, ought to retain a spiritual perspective. Musical texts should assist us as prayer, directing us to God. Consequently, popular music from the secular sphere usually does not meet these standards. Instead, such music ought to find its place at the wedding reception, either as a first dance or some other point of prominence.

Mr. Tony Zsigray is able to suggest a variety of musical resources for your wedding—organ, piano, guitar, vocal music. He can also recommend additional vocalists or instrumentalist should you desire them. In general, for both legal and aesthetic reasons, the use of taped music is highly discouraged.

SERVERS

Ordinarily, servers are not necessary for weddings at Epiphany of the Lord Parish. If the couple intends to use family servers, please inform the Priest or Deacon and he will be happy to assist with this.

PICTURES

While not a studio, the church admits limited and tasteful photography before and after weddings. **During the wedding ceremony itself, however, only video and non-flash pictures are permitted.** Experience shows that flash pictures and photographers who come close to the front distract the congregation and invade the sacred character of the ceremony. Therefore, photographers are required to remain in the side aisles and to be unobtrusive at all times. If closer pictures of various parts of the ceremony are desired, they can be posed afterwards. It should be remembered, however, that the couple has the use of the church for only a half-hour after the wedding (see above). Therefore, couples should be advised that it is almost impossible to have both a receiving line and picture-taking session at the church.

- Pictures may be taken during the processional and recessional, but these parts of the liturgy should not be slowed down or stopped for photos.
- Couples, families, and wedding party should not forget that the church remains a sacred place, a place for prayer, and all should conduct themselves during the post-ceremony picture-taking with reverence.

FLOWERS AND CANDLES, FLORAL DELIVERIES

Floral arrangements may be placed in front of the altar or at its sides. No flowers are to be placed on the altar. Flowers may also be placed in other appropriate areas of the sanctuary. Nothing preset in the sanctuary may be removed or replaced for a wedding. Wedding flowers are usually left in the church as a gift.

Florists should deliver directly to the church no sooner than two hours before the ceremony when the doors of the church are already unlocked. After the ceremony, the florist should retrieve all rented items immediately following the ceremony/mass. The parish cannot be responsible for items that need to be returned to the florist.

AISLE RUNNER, PEW FLOWERS, UNITY CANDLE

Aisle runners are not permitted. Decorations, such as bows, may be placed on the ends of the pews, **but not taped.** Many florists can secure bows with rubber bands. There are 13 pews on each side at Sacred Heart, 22 pews on each side at St. Stephen, 28 pews on each side at St. Thomas Aquinas. Netting should **never** be stretched between pews, limiting entrance and exit to the pews. This creates a fire escape hazard. As of December 1, 2016, the Wedding Mass/Rite of Marriage in the Roman Catholic Church does not allow for the use of the **Unity Candle** during the Wedding Mass/Rite. If one is considered, it should be done during the reception or at the rehearsal dinner, but is no longer permitted at the Wedding Mass/Rite.

RICE, BIRD SEED, CONFETTI THROWING, FLOWER PETAL DROPPING

Throwing rice, birdseed, confetti, and other similar materials after the ceremony is strictly forbidden, both inside and outside the church, including sidewalks and parking lots. First, the parishes are trying to discourage, not encourage, pigeons; second, there are safety concerns, both eye injuries and possibly falls. If you must have this tradition, do it at the reception hall. Flower Petals that are dyed are not permitted. In some cases, faux flower petals may be dropped by flower girls. It is the responsibility of the couple to appoint someone to gather up all dropped petals and such immediately following the wedding.

CHILDREN IN THE WEDDING PARTY

All children with any active part in the ceremony must be approved by the Priest or Deacon. Please discuss this issue with him.

FEES

Church fee must be paid at the time the church is reserved. If the wedding is cancelled in writing all fees will be returned. The church fee goes to the parish to cover the upkeep, maintenance, and utilities on the building. The fee for the preparation time, wedding and rehearsal:

For parishioners the fee is \$200.00

For non-parishioners the fee is \$400.00.

Please discuss musician fees with Mr. Tony Zsigray, Director of Liturgical Music.

AFTER YOUR WEDDING

The wedding and its festivities, as glorious as they may be, last only a day; marriage lasts a lifetime. It's important that wherever your residence is, you register with the local parish, get involved in parish activities, and attend Mass there regularly. Statistically, couples who try to put God first in their lives have much more successful marriages.

**MAY OUR MERCIFUL LORD BLESS YOU ABUNDANTLY, AND MAY OUR HOLY MOTHER MARY
PRAY FOR YOU IN YOUR NEW LIFE TOGETHER!**