

The Celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony



St. Leo the Great Church

Congratulations on your Engagement!

On behalf of the Parishioners of St. Leo the Great Catholic Parish, I extend our prayerful support for both of you as you plan your married life together. Marriage is one of the seven sacraments of the Church and is a special relationship between Christ and the bride and groom. The covenant between the bride and groom mirrors the sacred covenant between God and His People. Therefore, a couple deserves thoughtful preparation before entering into this holy union that is a sacramental and lifelong commitment to one another. Included here is information that will help you plan for your upcoming marriage in the Church.

SCHEDULING YOUR WEDDING

Once you have become engaged, please call the Rectory Office (216-661-1006) to schedule an initial appointment with the priest. Normally this should be at least 6 months prior to the desired wedding date. A date can only be set after he has checked his availability and that of the church. Please note that by diocesan law, no marriage date can be set if there is an annulment that is needed from a previous marriage.

CATHOLIC MARRIAGE PREPARATION

In order to receive a sacrament devoutly, a person needs to be properly disposed and prepared. This is especially true of the life-long union of husband and wife in the sacrament of Matrimony. Therefore, it is expected that there be an active faith life on the part of any Catholic who is preparing for marriage. At minimum, this would include registration in a parish, regular Mass attendance, and a life of morality in line with the teaching of the Church, especially with regards to living separate, chaste lives before marriage.

Prepare-Enrich is a true & false questionnaire that is used by the Diocese of Cleveland as a tool which allows the priest or deacon to have a conversation about your relationship and the various issues of marriage and family life. There are no right or wrong answers; the survey compares and contrasts the answers of each person and thus allows for observations for future growth. There is usually one or two meetings with the priest following the completion of this online questionnaire.

The Pre-Cana Day is an experience for engaged couples who are preparing to be married in the Catholic Church. It allows those who have many years of married life to share with you their experiences of married and family life.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

It is the responsibility of the couple to provide the following documentation before the wedding date:

Baptism Record: Catholic parties are to obtain a baptismal certificate from the church in which their baptism was celebrated. The documents are to be dated within the last six months of giving them to the priest. Others who are baptized in another Christian Tradition can obtain a copy of their baptismal certificate from their church.

Previous Marriages: If a person has been married before it is necessary to provide the following: Death Certificate of Former Spouse (if a widow or widower) or Declaration of Nullity (record of annulment).

Civil Marriage License: It is necessary to obtain a civil license within sixty (60) days of the wedding date. It is obtained at the probate court of the county in which the couple resides.

Please submit the license to the priest, no later than the week before rehearsal. The rehearsal cannot take place without the License.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

The priest and musicians have much experience in planning wedding celebrations and will help you to focus on what is most important as you plan for your ceremony.

When you meet with the priest, you will discuss whether to have a wedding Mass or a wedding Service, and this is usually determined by the religious backgrounds of the couple. The decisions you make about the readings, music, prayers and participants will be made with resources given to you by the priest you are working with.

A wedding within the context of Mass is generally permitted only between two practicing Catholics. A wedding Service follows the same order, omitting the “Liturgy of the Eucharist” or the Eucharistic Prayer and the Rite of Communion that is always part of a Mass. A wedding Service is generally the only option when one party is not of the Catholic Tradition. It is always the only option when one party is not baptized.

READINGS

The Lectionary, the book of readings for Mass, contains several sets of readings that you may choose from for your wedding celebration. The priest always reads the Gospel. The first and second readings and the Prayers of the Faithful (Petitions) are often read by family members or friends of the couple. The musician will help you choose the sung Responsorial Psalm from among the musical settings they are familiar with. Generally, the readings help focus the music and other prayers for the Mass or Service.

MUSIC

The music for a wedding Mass or Service is carefully chosen to meet the needs of the liturgy itself. For instance, the processional and recessional music is usually stately and joyful, the Psalm and communion songs are easy enough for the assembly to quickly join in, and any music for meditation has words that are worthy of the dignity and sacredness of the rite. The parish music director (Mickey Stitt) or Associate Musician (Mary Piechowski) will meet with you to plan the music choices. You should contact one of them at least two to three months before the ceremony to schedule this appointment.

CHILDREN IN YOUR CEREMONY

If you include children as ring bearers or flower bearers, please consider the age and temperament of the child. You may want to arrange to have an adult, with whom the child is comfortable, to assist the child to be in the correct place at the correct time. Generally, children under the age of 6 are discouraged from being in the opening procession.

CUSTOMS

There are sometimes friends and family members who put pressure on a bridal couple to observe particular ethnic or religious customs at weddings. While the bride and groom should consider these ideas, we encourage you to choose only those customs which are personally meaningful to you, which you can say are truly expressions of your own faith. You should be sure to discuss these customs with the priest and other participants well before the wedding.

FLOWERS

Fresh floral arrangements are welcomed as an accent for your wedding ceremony. During seasons of the church year when the church is fully decorated, especially the Advent/Christmas and Easter seasons, you are discouraged from adding other flowers. You may not re-arrange any of the church’s existing floral arrangements or other furniture for your ceremony. Fresh flowers from your ceremony may continue to decorate the church after your wedding.

OTHER DECORATIONS

If you plan to use an aisle runner, the length of the church’s main aisle is 100 feet. We recommend using at least a 110 foot long runner to comfortably reach out to the vestibule. Only cloth runners are permitted.

Please do not use any kind of tape or other adhesives, and take care not to mar the finish of the furnishings when planning decorations. Please be sure to have someone assigned to removing the runner and all decorations after the wedding.

The parish discourages, but does not prohibit, the use of the Unity Candle. In a Catholic ceremony, the rings are blessed and exchanged as symbols of unity in Christ; the Eucharistic Prayer includes petitions for the unity of all people in Christ; and the Eucharist itself is an actual sign of our unity in Christ. Since the wedding liturgy already has so many rich symbols of unity, the addition of the Unity Candle is redundant and unnecessary.

The parish does not allow the throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals or any other substances, primarily because of safety and maintenance concerns. We do not permit the use of helium balloons out of concern for the environment but bubbles may be used outside of the church only.

WEDDING REHEARSAL

Rehearsals are usually held in the late afternoon or early evening prior to the wedding day. Prompt attendance by all participants in the wedding ceremony is required. You will have scheduled the date and time with the priest. Be sure to schedule with him before committing your party to dinner reservations.

Proper reverence in the sacred space of the church should be observed at all times before and after the rehearsal and wedding. It is highly inappropriate for any of the wedding party to be under the influence of alcohol during the wedding rehearsal or ceremony. Such behavior will not be tolerated and the guest, whoever it is, will be asked to leave the premises. Please remember to ask the guests to silence their cell phones during the rehearsal. The chewing of gum is not appropriate in the church.

THE WEDDING DAY

You are welcomed to arrive at the church an hour or so before the wedding. The best man & groom will be asked to stay in the sacristy (where the priest gets ready for Mass) and the bride and bridesmaids may use the private room off the vestibule in the back of the church on the pulpit side. Since we have confessions and Mass on Saturdays beginning at 2:45pm, all wedding guests will need to be out of the church by 2:30pm at the latest.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Those you hire as professional photographers or videographers are guests in our church. We provide the setting for their pictures and do not charge for them to use our space for their business. Hence they must be willing to follow our strict rules or they will not be welcomed back to our church for future weddings. Be sure to have the photographer/ videographer speak to the Wedding Coordinator prior to the ceremony, preferably at the rehearsal. Pictures, as well as videos, may be taken during the ceremony. However the photographer is not permitted to use any extra lighting, including camera flash. The photographer is not permitted in the center aisle during the ceremony except during the marriage rite. It is not permitted for the photographer to be in the sanctuary (altar area) at any time before or during the ceremony. Photographers should always speak briefly with the presider before the ceremony. The priest will not use any microphone brought by the videographer. At no time should the photographer stop the flow of the procession or Liturgy. Posed pictures can be taken after the ceremony.

FEES & CONTACT INFORMATION

The stipend for weddings is \$200, not including the musician(s) or altar servers. Altar servers generally receive a stipend of ten dollars each. The music director will speak to you concerning her fee.