



# CELEBRATING MARRIAGE

GUIDELINES FOR THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE AT THE  
BASILICA OF ST. ADALBERT

BASILICA OF ST. ADALBERT  
654 Davis Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
*Revised July 2022*

Introduction.....	1
Preparation.....	1
Marriage Preparation Period.....	1
Age Requirements.....	2
Inter-Denominational and Inter-Faith Marriages.....	2
Dates and Times .....	2
Reserving the Church.....	2
The Time of Year .....	2
Confirming the Time for the Wedding Liturgy .....	3
Choosing the Time for the Rehearsal.....	3
Wedding Fees .....	3
Parishioner Requirements .....	3
Necessary Documents.....	1
Sacrament of Reconciliation.....	1
The Wedding Liturgy .....	1
Expectations – A Reality Check .....	2
Not a Part of a Catholic Wedding .....	2
What is Not Required? .....	2
The People in your Wedding Liturgy .....	3
The Assembly.....	3
The Couple .....	3
The Wedding Party.....	3
Children in the Wedding Party.....	4
Assistants .....	4
Lectors (Readers).....	4
Gift Bearers ( <i>weddings within Mass only</i> ).....	5
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion ( <i>weddings within Mass only</i> ).....	5
Wedding Music and Musicians .....	5
Restrictions and Other Information .....	5
Use of the Church .....	5
The Wedding Rehearsal.....	6
Photography / Videography for Wedding Liturgies.....	7
Decoration Suggestions and Restrictions for Wedding Liturgies .....	8
Appendix 1: The Catholic Wedding Procession.....	9
So what about the Opening Song?.....	1

Appendix 2: Adding Elements to the Wedding Liturgy.....	2
Wedding (Unity) Candle .....	2
Prayer to the Blessed Mother.....	2
Military Traditions .....	2
Appendix 3: Preparing a Printed Program/Order of Service.....	3
Elements You May Wish to Include.....	3
Other possible details.....	3
Appendix 4: Obtaining a State of Michigan Wedding License.....	4
How To Apply For a Marriage License .....	4
Picking up the License .....	4
Appendix 5: Wedding Fees .....	5
Other Considerations.....	5
Appendix 6: Checklist .....	6
Appendix 7: Examples of Unity Candle Ceremony .....	8
Resources: .....	9

## **How to Contact Us**

Basilica of St. Adalbert  
654 Davis Ave. NW  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504-5277

These guidelines, along with other useful marriage preparation information are found on our parish website:  
[www.basilicagr.org](http://www.basilicagr.org) | Click on “Weddings”

### **Parish Offices:**

Rector-Pastor: Fr. Ron Hutchinson (616) 278-1175  
Parochial Vicar: Fr. David Sacha (616) 278-1174  
Administrative Assistant: Martha Bellamy (616) 278-1171  
Hours: Monday - Friday 8:30am – 4:00pm (Closed for Lunch 12:00pm – 1:00pm)

### **Wedding Liturgy Preparations** *(to be contacted after speaking with the Parish Office)*

Wedding Coordinator:  
Judy Streng, [judithstreng@gmail.com](mailto:judithstreng@gmail.com) (616) 446-9249

Director of Music: Dr. Peter Kurdziel, [music@basilicagr.org](mailto:music@basilicagr.org), (616) 278-1177

# **MARRIAGE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

## **Introduction**

Congratulations on your engagement! You will be glad to know that we give personal attention to the preparation and celebration of wedding liturgies here at the Basilica of St. Adalbert.

We have put together the following guidelines to inform and assist you in your marriage and wedding preparations and the answers to many common questions are gathered here for you.

**Understanding these policies and guidelines is very important.** If, after reading through this booklet, you have any questions or concerns that are not addressed, please contact our parish staff as soon as possible.

A Catholic wedding is not a private event, but a public liturgy celebrated with certain expectations and boundaries. By choosing to celebrate this sacrament at the Basilica of St. Adalbert, you are choosing to respect the form and purpose of the liturgy and act within the boundaries set by these guidelines.

## **Preparation**

The Catholic Church takes marriage very seriously. Requirements for your marriage preparation are not arbitrary, but come from the Code of Canon Law, the Roman Catholic Province of Michigan, the State of Michigan, and the Diocese of Grand Rapids. A couple is expected to demonstrate evidence of our Catholic Christian faith being present and practiced in their lives and must show a willingness to take the time and make the necessary effort for proper religious preparation for the reception of the sacrament.

There are many dimensions to preparing for this sacrament. Spiritual preparation for the sacrament of Christian Matrimony demands more time, thought, prayer and discussion than the material preparations for the wedding day itself. While these material things must be arranged, they have little effect on the outcome of the marriage. They are merely incidental to it.

The Roman Catholic wedding is rich in tradition and meaning. Since a wedding is a liturgical worship service, great thoughtfulness and care should go into preparing the liturgy.

If your marriage preparation is taking place at a parish other than the Basilica of St. Adalbert, but in the Diocese of Grand Rapids, the priest or deacon doing your preparation needs to have the file sent to the parish office no later than one (1) month before the wedding. If your preparation is happening outside of the Diocese of Grand Rapids, the file must first be sent to the Office of the Bishop of the diocese in which your marriage preparations are taking place. From there it will be forwarded to the Diocese of Grand Rapids, and then to the Basilica of St. Adalbert.

## **Marriage Preparation Period**

The Catholic Province of Michigan requires a minimum of six (6) months preparation time for all marriages. At St. Adalbert, this preparation includes:

1. a pre-marital questionnaire
2. an approved Pre-Cana program which includes a communication inventory. Details of upcoming marriage preparation sessions are available from the parish staff.
3. fulfillment of all other preparation responsibilities, as outlined in this booklet.

## Age Requirements

If one or both persons are under the age of 18, or if there is a pregnancy involved, a longer and more careful assessment will be made, which will minimally include professional counseling, parental interviews, and pastoral judgment. This may lengthen the necessary preparation period.

## Inter-Denominational and Inter-Faith Marriages

The marriage of a Catholic to a non-Catholic is permitted if certain requirements are fulfilled and proper permission is obtained from the Church. When these weddings are celebrated at St. Adalbert, the Rite of Marriage is celebrated within a Liturgy of the Word service, and not within Mass. It is possible for the wedding of a Catholic and a non-Catholic to take place in the church of the non-Catholic with the permission of the Bishop. Talk with the priest doing your marriage preparation to request this permission.

## Dates and Times

### Reserving the Church

To reserve a date at St. Adalbert, please contact the parish office as soon as possible after you are engaged. While there is a minimum of six (6) months preparation time for all marriages, we strongly advise couples to contact the parish one year or more before the proposed wedding date.

The following details must fall into place before the proposed date will be reserved on the parish calendar:

1. **PREVIOUS MARRIAGES:** Both Catholic and non-Catholic people who have ever been married previously must consult with the Pastor or Parochial Vicar of the Basilica of St. Adalbert to see what special documentation will be necessary in their specific cases to ensure that they are free to marry. Contact the parish at least 18 months in advance of the tentative wedding date. Dates cannot be held for couples waiting for a declaration of nullity from the Tribunal confirming their freedom to marry. The date will be set after the declaration is obtained, a process that sometimes takes 12 months or more.
2. The Wedding Information Sheet is to be filled out completely, signed, and turned in to the parish office.
3. The required deposit must be paid.
4. The date is not booked until we have confirmation that you are both free to marry in the Catholic Church. If you are a parishioner, this confirmation is received at your first meeting with the Pastor or the Parochial Vicar. If you are not a parishioner, you must meet with the priest at the parish you are registered at and have him email or call the Basilica parish office to confirm that he has met with you and you are free to marry. You must also find a priest or deacon to preside at your wedding and he must confirm with the parish office through email or phone that he will be presiding. *(Please refer to page 5 for the requirements that must be met to be considered a parishioner.)*

Please wait to book other venues and services, such as a reception venue, until your date has been confirmed and is in the calendar; your first choice of a date may not be available.

## The Time of Year

The liturgical seasons of Advent (*which starts four Sundays before Christmas*) and Lent (*which starts seven Wednesdays before Easter*) are not as well suited for weddings. In Advent, restraints are placed on music and decorations that may not match your expectations. The same applies to Lent, with the additional restriction that neither flowers nor instrumental music are permitted during the season's liturgies. Weddings are strongly discouraged during Lent for these reasons. Please be aware that there are some weekends of the year for which no

weddings will be scheduled to accommodate other parish activities. **No weddings will be scheduled during Holy Week or on the first Saturday of June (Diocese of Grand Rapids Priesthood Ordinations).**

## **Confirming the Time for the Wedding Liturgy**

Weddings at St. Adalbert take place on:

- Fridays** 7:00pm
- Saturdays:** 1:00pm

It is also possible to celebrate the sacrament of marriage at:

- a) a regularly parish Saturday (Vigil) Mass, or
- b) a regular parish Sunday Mass.

These options have influence on the wedding liturgy preparations and should be decided upon only after speaking with the parish priest or staff.

The church will be open for wedding preparations no more than 2½ hours before the scheduled wedding time. After a Saturday wedding liturgy, the church must be clean and empty no later than 2:45pm (see pg. 10 for more explanation). **Please inform your florist and photographer of these times and plan deliveries and photography times accordingly.**

## **Choosing the Time for the Rehearsal**

Rehearsals for Saturday weddings take place most commonly on the Friday evening before the wedding liturgy at 6:15pm. If there is a Friday wedding, the rehearsal may need to be earlier to accommodate the wedding that is scheduled.

## **Wedding Fees**

To help defray costs associated with weddings, our parish has set fee levels for parishioners and non-parishioners. *Please see Appendix 5, p.17 of this booklet, the current “Wedding Fees” information sheet.*

Because a wedding is a celebration of our Christian community, wedding liturgies are most naturally celebrated in the parish where one, or both, of the engaged is a member. Most of the cost of a wedding liturgy at St. Adalbert for established, active parishioners is absorbed by the parish.

## **Parishioner Requirements**

The membership of a parent or other relative does not constitute membership for the one seeking marriage.

To be considered a parishioner, either one or both of you must:

1. be registered **under your own name** for a minimum of six (6) months before your first meeting with one of the priests or the deacon at the Parish.
2. have been attending Mass here **regularly** on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.
3. have demonstrated **a consistent pattern** of contributing to the financial support of the parish, and/or have volunteered their time and talent to parish activities.

Anyone not meeting all three criteria is considered a non-parishioner.

The use of the church is not considered a “rental” of the building. By getting married at the Basilica, you are agreeing to act cooperatively with our parish guidelines, even if a guest priest or deacon is leading the liturgy.

## **Necessary Documents**

### **Baptismal Record**

For Catholics, this is **different** than the certificate given to the family at the time of baptism. Both the bride and the groom must contact the parish of your baptism and request that your baptismal record be sent to the Basilica (within six (6) months of the wedding date). If you were baptized here at the Basilica of St. Adalbert or St. James Church, just let us know. While it is not required that a person have received the Sacrament of Confirmation to enter marriage, it is fitting since it is one of the three Sacraments of Initiation. It makes sense to receive all Sacraments of Initiation before entering the Sacrament of Marriage.

\*\*A Non-Catholic person's requirements are a bit different—ask the priest or deacon doing your marriage prep about what is needed. \*\*

### **Marriage License**

The couple must procure and submit to the parish office a State of Michigan Marriage License, no later than one week before the wedding. *Please refer to Appendix 4, p. 16 in this booklet, "Obtaining a State of Michigan Wedding License."*

### **Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) is an important step in the spiritual preparation for receiving any Sacrament. This is so that a person can approach God and enter into Marriage with a clean heart, free of sin. We strongly encourage Catholic brides and grooms to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation within a week of their wedding to spiritually prepare for the Sacrament of Marriage. Confession times can be found on the homepage of our website, [www.basilicagr.com](http://www.basilicagr.com), under "Weekly Schedules." Arrangements can also be made to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation after/before the rehearsal or the morning of the wedding itself with the priest who will be officiating at your wedding. You can also find confession times on the websites of other parishes if you desire to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at another parish.

### **The Wedding Liturgy**

Although beginning a marriage is a very special event for an engaged couple, it is much more than the personal exchange of vows and rings. **Weddings are public rituals of the community**, celebrated with family, friends and the rich traditions of our faith. By choosing to be married in the Catholic Church you are seeking a particular celebration in a particular spirit.

Wedding celebrations within the Catholic Church are much like Sunday Mass. They are celebrated in the community prayer space (the church building, not outdoors) and encourage those who have gathered not only to witness the vows of the couple, but also to participate fully in the liturgy. As on Sundays, the communal atmosphere of prayer colors all aspects of the wedding celebration. You are inviting people to experience God's presence in your wedding celebration and your marriage. The following notes will help you make choices about ministries, music and the worship environment of your wedding liturgy. For a marriage between a Catholic and a person who is not Catholic, the Rite of Marriage without Mass is used. For a marriage between two Catholics, the Rite of Marriage with Mass is used, unless there is good reason to celebrate without Mass.

## Expectations – A Reality Check

These guidelines are filled with a variety of expectations for you, but it is also worthwhile to examine what is not expected.

### Not a Part of a Catholic Wedding

For carefully considered reasons, the following are some things that are *not* a part of our Catholic wedding liturgies at the Basilica of St. Adalbert and St. James Church. Please read the explanations carefully and bring any questions you have to the parish pastoral staff.

- **perfection**: there is no such thing as a perfect wedding! Couples who insist on a perfect wedding are inevitably disappointed. Be flexible, rather, and strive for a **prayerful** wedding.
- **a procession for the bride that is separate** from the groom and the rest of the wedding party (see p. 12, Appendix 1: The Catholic Wedding Procession)
- **the men** in the wedding party standing in front, instead of participating in the procession (see p. 12)
- **giving away the bride** (see p. 12)
- **“Here Comes the Bride”/ “Bridal Chorus”** [by Wagner], and other non-sacred music (see p. 8)
- **an aisle runner** (see p. 12)
- **flower petals being dropped** by a “flower girl” (see p. 11)
- **rice**, balloon launches, birdseed or confetti (see p. 11)
- **decorative fencing**, arches, tall plant stands, and/or extra candelabra (see p. 11)
- **seating guests by “bride’s side”/“groom’s side”** (see p. 6, *The Assembly*)
- **a photographer up close to the sanctuary during the liturgy** (see p. 10)
- a military arch of swords or sabers (see p. 14, *Military Traditions*)
- the influence of a professional wedding planner on the liturgy (see p. 9)

### What is Not Required?

It may surprise you to learn some of the things that are not required, but are optional at a wedding liturgy:

- **seating grandparents last**, just before the liturgy begins (optional)
- **a flower girl or ring bearer** (children in the wedding party are possible with some restrictions) (see p. 7)
- **lighting a unity candle**, (see p. 14)
- **a prayer to our Blessed Mother** (an option if both the bride and groom have a strong devotion) (see p. 14)
- **hiding the bride and groom from each other** before the liturgy (we strongly discourage this practice)
- **an abundance of decorations** (our church interior doesn’t require a lot of decorations) (see p. 11)
- **a large wedding party** (only the two witnesses are required; the rest are extra)
- **Introducing the couple at the end, example: “Mr. and Mrs. Smith”.**

## The People in your Wedding Liturgy

### Who does what?

You have probably considered the people you would like to participate in the wedding with you. As you know from Sunday Mass, there are a variety of ministry roles in the liturgy. Since secular wedding planners and etiquette books are not adequate guides in this area, this information will help you get an overall picture of the various ministries involved.

### **The Assembly**

The goal of your liturgy preparation is to encourage the full and active participation of all who will gather to celebrate your marriage. Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations belonging to the Church community. At any liturgy, the primary ministry belongs to the assembly of people who gather to celebrate. (When this is overlooked, most of the people at a wedding may feel like spectators at a show.)

When celebrating this sacrament of unity, designating one side of the church “for the bride” and the other “for the groom” is a counter-productive practice and should be avoided. Beyond seating immediate family together, the assembly will be seated equally and indiscriminately on both sides of the church.

How can we encourage everyone to participate? Many things contribute to people’s participation. Hospitality, a printed program, and familiar music for all to sing are some of the ways that help people to feel welcome and a part of the celebration. *The way that you and the other people with special roles in the liturgy conduct yourselves is also a key influence!*

### **The Couple**

In the Roman Catholic wedding liturgy, the bride and groom are the ministers of the Sacrament. The priest or deacon serves as the Church’s official witness but does not “pronounce you husband and wife.” Since a great deal of attention is focused on you during the wedding, you also set the tone for the assembly by your own attitudes and behavior. If, for example, you are at ease before the liturgy and taking the time to greet people as they arrive, people will feel welcome and relaxed. If you enter into the prayers and singing during the liturgy, others in the assembly will be inclined to follow your lead.

### **The Wedding Party**

Two witnesses are required to be present for the legality of the wedding according to the laws of both the State of Michigan and the Catholic Church. They must be at least 18 years of age and be competent to attest to the events as they have transpired. They may be men or women.

The size and makeup of the wedding party is a personal decision of the couple. It is our experience that **smaller wedding parties contribute to a smoother, more elegant and less confusing celebration.**

**Hospitality** is a wonderful way to show people how much you appreciate their presence at your wedding. It also encourages their active participation in the liturgy. The members of your wedding party (men *and* women) can be of tremendous help here as **greeters and ushers**. Ask them to cordially greet people arriving at the church, hand out any printed program for the wedding, and lead people to a seat near the front of the church. We encourage both the men and women in your wedding party to assist with this hospitality. It is an option to assign the role of ushers to people who are not in the wedding party.

People serving as ushers, assistants, and/or master/mistress of ceremony are also expected to assist **after the liturgy** by going throughout the church to collect loose programs (if any), clean up the pews and lift up the kneelers.

## Children in the Wedding Party

Caution is necessary if you are considering the inclusion of children in your wedding party. The sometimes-seen social roles of “flower girl” or “ring bearer” are not needed nor expected.

Any children participating must be old enough to rehearse, remember and carry out their roles in a respectful and reverent manner. Children under the **age of five (5)** should not be in the procession unless walking with an adult. Even then, have a backup plan of who will care for them if they don't cooperate with the wedding plans.

Designating people to be junior/miniature bride & groom is strongly discouraged. It would be appropriate for any children in the party be dressed like the other members of the wedding party, but not to appear dressed as a bride and groom.

## Assistants

It is important to assign one or more people of hospitality to act as assistants. (The title “master or mistress of ceremonies” doesn't really reflect their role.) These helpers provide a valuable service by:

- helping with setup and cleanup
- gathering people together for the photographer
- distributing corsages and boutonnieres
- serving as greeters before the liturgy
- acting as “go-fers”
- assisting as needed with anything and everything

The parish wedding coordinator performs the traditional duties of a “master or mistress of ceremonies” during the rehearsal and on the day of the wedding:

- opening the building
- serving as the host
- leading the rehearsal
- directing the wedding party and liturgical ministers
- preparing any items needed for the liturgy (readings, prayers, candelabra, etc.)
- assisting the presider
- giving cues
- answering questions

## Lectors (Readers)

You will want to select readers from among the people who will be at the wedding. One or two people may be asked to proclaim the scriptures. One of these readers also leads the Prayer of the Faithful, or these prayers may be led by a third reader. People who serve as lectors at the Basilica, or St. James, or in their home parishes are good choices because of their familiarity with the role. Otherwise, look for people with clear voices and good public speaking skills. (They do not need to be Catholic.)

### **Gift Bearers** (*weddings within Mass only*)

If both of you are Catholic and your wedding will be celebrated within Mass, you will need to assign at least two people to be gift bearers to bring the bread and wine for the Eucharist to the altar.

You may also choose to **present gifts for the poor** at this time. Friends and relatives are often exceedingly generous at weddings. You may already be overwhelmed by the outpouring of gifts. Some couples choose to express their gratitude to this outpouring of gifts by making a gift of their own to the needy in their area, perhaps in the form of a basket of food items that can be brought up with the bread and wine and placed before the altar.

### **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion** (*weddings within Mass only*)

These ministers (usually one person) assist the priest with the distribution of the Eucharist.

As with lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion from the Basilica are the logical first choice since they are familiar with our routine. Otherwise, think of people who will be at your wedding who are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion in their home parishes. Of course, with the permission of our pastor, Catholic members of the assembly who are not commissioned may be able to serve in this role for this special event.

It is a beautiful expression of faith for the bride and groom to assist with the distribution of Communion.

### **Wedding Music and Musicians**

Music is a key and integral element of any liturgy. Our Director of Music is responsible for guiding all music selections and musicians for wedding liturgies. The Director of Music will assist you with any music related questions. Please contact the Director of Music **at least three (3) months in advance of your wedding**. Please do not make any arrangements for music until you have communicated with the Director of Music. His contact information is as follows:

Dr. Peter Kurdziel: [music@basilicagr.org](mailto:music@basilicagr.org) / 616-278-1177

### **Restrictions and Other Information**

*The couple to be married is responsible for communicating this information to their family, wedding party, assistants, photographers, videographers, florist, and guests.*

### **Use of the Church**

We have a **zero-tolerance** policy for alcohol. Alcohol is not allowed in the Church buildings or on the grounds. If any of the parish staff discover evidence of alcohol consumption by the bride, groom or wedding party, the wedding liturgy can be cancelled. Don't even risk it. The wedding day is too important! The building of the Basilica of St. Adalbert, as well as areas nearby any doors or windows are entirely no-smoking areas.

The wedding coordinator will open the church, prepare the church space for the wedding, run the wedding rehearsal and help with the wedding liturgy.

If you happen to hire a professional wedding planner, please note: **a professional wedding planner does not have any authority with the wedding liturgy**. Their assistance is allowed before and after the liturgy,

but not during. While sharing these guidelines with them may be helpful, they do not have any authority concerning the liturgy.

The choir loft may be used as an excellent vantage point for photography and videography during the liturgy. The choir loft is not open to guests.

As a courtesy, **a room in the lower level of St. Adalbert**, will be available for the women of the wedding party to use for dressing, and then for the entire wedding party to use as a “staging area” before the liturgy. Ironing gowns and personal hygiene should be taken care of before you arrive. This room must be cleaned after the wedding liturgy.

We strongly discourage the practice of “hiding” the bride from the groom before the wedding liturgy. Long gone are the days when a groom met his bride for perhaps the first time at the wedding. In our time, to pretend that they are meeting each other for the first time as the bride enters the church contradicts the work that goes into a relationship to prepare for marriage.

**Please remember that the Basilica of St. Adalbert is not air conditioned.**

### **The Wedding Rehearsal**

Except for the musicians, **ANY MEMBER OF THE ASSEMBLY WHO HAS A SPECIAL ROLE TO PLAY IN YOUR WEDDING LITURGY IS EXPECTED TO BE AT THE REHEARSAL.** This includes ushers, groomsmen, bridesmaids, witnesses, readers/lectors, ministers of the Eucharist, assistants (master/mistress of ceremony), people bringing up the gifts of bread and wine, altar servers, etc. It is very important that these people participate in the rehearsal because they need to see the specifics of the flow and expectations for weddings in this church. This will allow them to receive instructions, ask questions and familiarize themselves with what they will be doing at the liturgy.

## Photography / Videography for Wedding Liturgies

SHARE THIS PAGE WITH YOUR PHOTOGRAPHERS AND VIDEOGRAPHERS IN ADVANCE.

A balancing act is necessary to respect the wedding liturgy and the worship space, record the event, and take photos or video that are artistic, creative and beautiful. Above all, photographers and videographers are expected to be both **reverent** and **discreet** during the liturgy.

The use of the church for pictures is a **privilege**, not a right of either the couple or the photographer. All photography or video before, during or after the liturgy must respect the sacredness of the Sacrament and of the church. As a guest of our parish, do not move any existing flowers, furnishings, candles, plants, or seasonal decorations.

**The church will be open no sooner than 2½ hours before the wedding.** On Saturday afternoons, all photos must be completed, and the church empty of equipment no later than 2:45pm. Confessions begin at 3:00pm at St. James and at 3:30pm at St. Adalbert. The church needs to be quiet and prayerful during this time. It is very important that you plan accordingly and communicate this in advance to all who need to know. Photo sessions may be held in the church before the liturgy and immediately after, within the set time boundaries.

We strongly discourage separating or “hiding” the bride from the groom before the wedding liturgy. Such a practice is incongruous with this Sacrament. Please keep this in mind when scheduling photographs.

It is necessary to **avoid any movement** or action during the liturgy that will distract from or interrupt our worship. Therefore, photographers and video operators will not be allowed to operate in front of the pews during the liturgy. Movement up the side aisles should be minimal. Please remain behind the assembly as much as possible and work as discreetly as possible.

The choir loft is an excellent vantage point for photography and videography during the liturgy. Keep in mind that the traffic path of the organist to and from the south side of the organ console must not be obstructed.

During the entrance procession, flash may be used. There is only one procession, and it includes everyone—the wedding party, parents, and the bride and groom. The photographer may place themselves down the center aisle at that time but *may not slow or stop the procession in any way.*

**During the rest of the liturgy, only non-flash photography is permitted.** Please plan ahead to bring the equipment you may need.

Please be aware that there are times during the liturgy at which the assembly stands. During those times, the lines of sight are most clear down the main aisle or from the choir loft.

Every moment of our worship—word, song and silence—is intentional and significant. This fact is especially important to anyone recording the liturgy with video. Consider continuous video footage of the entire liturgy to honor the spirit of our liturgy.

Photographers and videographers are encouraged to be familiar with the Roman Catholic Order of Celebrating Matrimony as part of their preparation.

You are welcome to take pictures in the courtyard at the Basilica, **but if you move the tables and chairs, please move them back when you are finished.**

## Decoration Suggestions and Restrictions for Wedding Liturgies

### SHARE THIS PAGE WITH YOUR FLORIST IN ADVANCE

**The church will be open no sooner than 2½ hours before the wedding liturgy.** On Saturday afternoons, any rented items must be removed no later than 2:45pm. It is very important to plan floral deliveries and pickups accordingly.

Because of the style of our church building, we encourage those responsible for flowers and decorations at weddings to strive for beauty in **simple, rather than extravagant**, ways. The church is ornate and does not require much for decorations to achieve the desired effect. One should be able to sense something special, or sacred, in everything that is seen, heard, touched, smelled and tasted in our liturgy. When this is overlooked, the people at a wedding liturgy may feel like spectators at a show.

As a guest of our parish, do not move any existing flowers, furnishings, candles, plants, seasonal decorations, etc. without explicit permission from our staff. **The church environment—especially during the Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter seasons—takes priority over any other décor, including decorations for a wedding.** The church is the place where the parish faith community gathers for prayer, and existing church decorations for the regular liturgies may not be removed.

Decorations or arrangements may not be placed on the altar. (The *altar* is the sacred table, not to be confused with the sanctuary, which is the raised area at the front of the church.) Decorations may not be so large as to **obstruct the view** of the sanctuary furnishings from anyone in the church, nor should they ever **hinder any ritual movement and action**. Specifically, no decorations in the sanctuary should be taller than the height of the altar. Decorations on the main floor level should be no taller than 60". Plant stands may be used to raise smaller decorations within the height limits. The use of arches, decorative fencing and/or extra candelabra are not allowed. (As a general rule, anything artificial is less than appropriate for worship, including artificial flowers.)

**Aisle runners are a safety hazard and are not allowed.**

Possible decorations (flowers or bows, for example) placed on the pews should be used to offer hospitality to the entire assembly, not to emphasize the aisle or to set apart special seating. If used, flowers or bows used on the center ends of the pews may also be matched by decorations on the outside ends of the pews. There are 25 pews on each side of the main aisle at St. Adalbert. Although placing decorations on each pew appears excessive in our space. **No tape, tacks, or wire are to be used.** Chenille wire stems (pipe cleaners) are suggested.

For reasons of safety and cleanliness, we cannot allow balloon launches, or allow flower petals (fresh or artificial), rice, birdseed or confetti to be thrown or scattered, inside or outside the church.

## Appendix 1: The Catholic Wedding Procession

Weddings are very meaningful occasions in our worship life. Because you will be customizing the form of the procession to your wedding party and family, you will need to consider the following to guide your choices.

There are many customs involved with wedding processions. These customs are not necessarily religious, and they often don't reflect contemporary attitudes toward marriage. The Church does not require such social customs, and not all of them are appropriate for a Christian wedding.

Catholic wedding processions don't look like TV wedding processions. **There is no separate procession for the bride in the ritual, for instance.** The entrance procession is a liturgical action, the ritual entrance of the ministers for the liturgy.

**The bride & groom, as the ministers for this sacrament of unity, are (both) included in a unified procession.** You both enter from the same door, avoiding any visual suggestion that one is more important than the other. You are even **encouraged** to enter together. Separation of the men & women in the procession sends mixed messages, clouds the symbolism of the ritual, unnecessarily lengthens the procession, and may seem more like a fashion show.

**The entrance procession at a wedding is an extended form of the regular entrance of the priest and other ministers at Sunday Mass.** If the bride and groom will not be walking down together, consider each walking with both of your parents in the procession.

**Why doesn't the ritual mention just the father walking the bride down the aisle?** While that is an option, such a practice is not ideal, and falls short of embracing the symbolism for this Sacrament.

**Doesn't the father of the bride give her away?** Whether or not the father walks with the bride down the aisle, giving the bride away is not a part of the liturgy. Besides, that practice of former years loses much of its attractiveness when its original purpose is known, namely, one man handing over a woman to another man. It dates to a time when women were considered as property and was indeed a father giving away his daughter. Even though that is not what is now intended, we have a directive and a responsibility to do better. The way in which we worship both manifests our faith & affects our faith, although not always consciously.

To embody the spirit of the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, **here are three suggested forms for the procession.** Please look them over and choose how you will use or adapt these suggestions to order the procession for this liturgy. At the recessional, a similar order (in reverse) will be taken...

<b>Form 1:</b>	<b>Form 2:</b>	<b>Form 3:</b>
Lector(s)	Wedding Party Members	
Wedding Party Members	Witnesses	Wedding Party Members
Witnesses	Bride and Groom	Witnesses
Parents of the Groom		Mother – Groom – Father
Parents of the Bride		Mother – Bride – Father
Bride and Groom		

Other variations in this spirit are possible, of course. Couples who want this moment to be a deeply meaningful part of the liturgy will keep this spirit in mind when customizing the procession to their wedding party and family.

[Please note that, for couples who choose the option to light a wedding (unity) candle during the liturgy, the side candles would be lit five minutes before the liturgy procession begins. Check out the notes in *Appendix 2: Adding Elements to the Wedding Liturgy*, p.16.]

**Will the doors be closed before the bride enters, to give her a grand entrance?** No. Anything that separates the bride from the rest of the liturgical procession is out of step with the spirit of the Sacrament.

**Will the music be changed when the bride enters?** No (for the same reason).

### **So, what about the Opening Song?**

The introductory rites of Catholic liturgies are there to bring the people together as a community and prepare them to listen to God's word. An opening song combines the voices of those assembled and intensifies the unity of those gathered. Together, we become more conscious of ourselves as a worshipping community, not just individuals! The Church points out the importance of this simple but powerful action.

At wedding liturgies, an instrumental processional can be beautiful and serve to accompany the procession, but, if alone, fails to recognize the role and needs of the assembly. The assembly at a wedding is just as important as at any other liturgy, and there is still the need for an opening song sung by everyone together. You are strongly encouraged to choose such a song to be sung either during the procession or immediately after it.

## **Appendix 2: Adding Elements to the Wedding Liturgy**

Additional rituals and symbols, including ethnically derived traditions, may be admitted to the wedding liturgy after discussion with the wedding coordinator and priest/deacon as to their appropriate inclusion. These customs are not a part of the Rite of Marriage, may be redundant expressions of the sacramental action, and are not required. These are secondary to the central ritual actions of the wedding liturgy. Any such additions take place in the liturgy **after the blessing and giving of rings**, and before the universal prayer.

### **Wedding (Unity) Candle**

The unity candle is not part of the Catholic celebration of matrimony. The symbolism of “two becoming one” that the unity candle is meant to signify is already present with your exchange of vows and the blessing and exchange of rings. Here at the Basilica of St. Adalbert, we ask that if you desire a unity candle, it be used at the rehearsal dinner or the reception instead. This allows those who are not able to be present at the wedding to witness a symbol of what happened earlier that day and avoids adding symbol upon symbol in the wedding ceremony itself. Please see Appendix 7 (pg. 20) for two examples of what this would look like.

### **Prayer to the Blessed Mother**

If both the bride *and* the groom have a genuine devotion to Mary in their prayer life, it is possible for them to say a prayer (together) in front of the image of the Blessed Mother, offering flowers, a lit candle or some other appropriate symbol.

### **Military Traditions**

Please speak with the Pastor or Parochial Vicar if you desire to incorporate a military tradition into your wedding.

### **Appendix 3: Preparing a Printed Program/Order of Service**

Some couples may wish to prepare an order of service to be distributed to guests at the wedding liturgy (not a requirement but strongly encouraged). A computer template for a wedding worship aid which you can adapt and change to fit your needs is available on the wedding music listening page.

The printed program is **primarily** a gesture of hospitality for those who gather to celebrate the sacrament. This sign might be especially important when a significant number of the assembly will not be familiar with the Roman Catholic liturgy and Rite of Marriage. A secondary function of a printed program is as a record of the event.

So, if you are going to list the **order of service**, of course you want to do it well. Using the template, you receive from the wedding music listening page (found at [basilicagrmusic.org](http://basilicagrmusic.org)) will help you with the liturgical jargon and other details. When listing **key participants**, consider including in addition to the wedding party readers, liturgical ministers, witnesses, etc. *How* you do that is up to your creativity.

Some general principles:

- quality counts
- should be easily readable
- should show consistency of formatting
- spelling and grammar count.

There are some things that are not set in stone:

- formal/informal style
- simple/complex design
- size
- shape
- color.

Following is some guidance to get you started.

#### **Elements You May Wish to Include**

Basic, essential details (who, what, where, when) might show up on the front, or at the top of an inside page if the paper to be used includes a pre-printed cover.

An **outline** of the liturgy / order of service should be included to invite and encourage the participation of the assembly. The vocabulary (jargon) of a Catholic liturgy is particular and important, so **samples** of the contents of the two outlines are included here. (NOTE: such an outline would be customized for your particular wedding, and items printed in italics would be replaced with the actual information in a finished version.)

The names of the parents, the members of the wedding party and others who contribute to this special occasion (lectors, presider, special ministers of Holy Communion, musicians, etc.) are commonly noted after the order of service.

**Other possible details** you may consider including:

- The assembly's responses may be included in the appropriate places. (For example: "The Lord be with you." — "AND WITH YOUR SPIRIT.")
- Your new address and phone number.
- A personal message from you to your guests.
- The music that will be sung by all may be printed for the assembly to make it easier for them. When music or lyrics are printed, copyright permission must be secured. The director of music ministries can help you with this task.
- It is recommended that scripture texts not be printed in their entirety, but merely the citations, perhaps with a summary phrase.

## Appendix 4: Obtaining a State of Michigan Wedding License

### How to Apply for a Marriage License in Kent County

Apply on line: For Kent County, please visit:

[https://www.accesskent.com/Departments/CountyClerk/marriage\\_app.htm](https://www.accesskent.com/Departments/CountyClerk/marriage_app.htm)

The fee to apply online is \$3.

Apply in person at:

Kent County Clerk County Administration Building, 1st floor

300 Monroe Avenue NW

Grand Rapids, MI 49503-2288

Tel.: 616-336-3550

- Before applying, arrange for wedding ceremony and date.
- One applicant must apply in person or online.
- Proof of age is required for both applicants. Bring in a birth certificate, along with driver's license, state ID, or passport at time of application. (Documents must be in English.)
- One applicant must be a resident of Kent or both be non-Michigan residents marrying in Kent. (Proof of address required such as current, valid driver's license.)
- \$20.00 fee for county residents, \$30.00 for Out-of-State applicants.
- 16 - 17-year-old need parental or guardian consent. (One parent must be present with their ID to sign consent form.)
- Note: if ceremony is to be in English, then both parties must understand English.
- Social security numbers required of both parties (or legal reason why none).

### Picking up the License

- The license may be picked up at the County Clerk's office no sooner than three (3) days after applying by the applicant.
- The license is good for 33 days from and including the date of application.
- The license may be used in any of Michigan's counties.
- The bottom portion of the marriage license document is the marriage certificate. It is filled out by the presiding magistrate or clergy and signed by him/her, as well as by the two witnesses, and the bride and groom. Witnesses must be 18 years of age or older.
- There are two or three copies of the license/certificate. The presiding celebrant will present one copy to the couple after the marriage ceremony. The Basilica staff will mail the other one, or two, to the office of the County Clerk.
- **The License needs to be dropped off at the parish office no later than one (1) week before the wedding.**

## **Appendix 5: Wedding Fees**

*Updated: August 2022*

To help defray costs associated with weddings, as well as to maintain our beautiful buildings, our parish has set the following fees:

<b>PARISHIONER</b>		<b>NON-PARISHIONER</b>	
Donation to Parish	Free will offering	Donation to Parish	\$2000 (\$800 down)
Wedding Coordinator	\$300	Wedding Coordinator	\$300
PMI Fees*	\$100	PMI Fees*	\$100
Organist	\$350	Organist	\$350
Cantor	\$150	Cantor	\$150
Additional Musicians	TBA	Additional Musicians	TBA
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$900</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2900</b>

**Please note:** It is customary to give a monetary gift to the priest or deacon who has witnessed your vows. Feel free to ask your wedding coordinator what amount would be appropriate.

*The “donation to the Basilica” as well as the PMI fee must be paid in full at least one (1) month prior to the wedding. \$800 is due as a down payment to reserve your date. Fees for the Organist, Wedding Coordinator, Cantor, and any other musicians should be received at the wedding rehearsal by the wedding coordinator. They should **not** be mailed to the parish office.*

*\*The “PMI Fees” are only included if your marriage preparation is taking place at the Basilica of St. Adalbert Parish.*

### **Other Considerations**

At least one member of the engaged couple must be a practicing Catholic in order to have their wedding liturgy celebrated at the Basilica of St. Adalbert. This is a requirement of both the State of Michigan as well as Canon Law.

Weddings must be scheduled a minimum of six (6) months prior to the wedding date. We recommend one year or more.

*Please refer to page 1 of our wedding guidelines for further information.*

## **Appendix 6: Checklist**

This list is provided to help you organize the tasks that go into preparing for the wedding day. It is our experience that completing these tasks early allows the final weeks or months before the wedding to be far less stressful.

### **Eighteen months or more ahead:**

- If either of you (Catholic or not) have ever been married before, contact the parish as far in advance of the proposed wedding date as possible. **Dates cannot be held for couples waiting for a declaration of nullity from the Tribunal confirming their freedom to marry.** *Please refer to the "Reserving the Church" section of these guidelines, p.4.*

### **Six or more months ahead: (a full year is recommended)**

- You should wait to schedule other facilities or services until after your wedding date has been confirmed.
- Call the parish to request a wedding date and begin the marriage preparation process. We will mail a Wedding Information sheet to you along with other information.
- Promptly fill out and return the Wedding Information sheet with your deposit.
- If you are a parishioner, schedule a meeting with our pastor or associate pastor to fill out necessary Church paperwork. If you are not a parishioner, contact the parish you are registered at to have this meeting with the priest or deacon at that parish.
- Make sure the priest(s) doing your wedding preparations and presiding at the ceremony have contacted the parish office.
- Contact the Director of Music for a wedding music consultation.

### **At least five months ahead:**

- Make sure that the priest doing your marriage preparations has copies of your baptismal records in your file.
- Choose scripture readings for the wedding liturgy with the assistance of the wedding coordinator.
- Confirm the date and time of the wedding rehearsal with the wedding coordinator **and** with Denise in the parish office.
- Schedule a meeting with the pastor or associate pastor, if necessary, to follow up on any forms/dispensations that may need to be filled out, etc.

### **At least four months ahead:**

- Choose liturgical ministers for the wedding liturgy (lector(s), ushers; possibly extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, people bringing up the gifts of bread and wine, altar servers, etc.)
- Participate in an appropriate "Pre-Cana" marriage preparation program and provide confirmation of your participation to the parish office. Contact the parish office for the current schedule.

**At least three months ahead:**

- If applicable, collect the information necessary, download a template, and create a printed worship aid.

**At least two months ahead:**

- Provide a copy of the Photography/Videography page of these guidelines to any photographer or videographer that will be recording your wedding. (Available from the parish office and at [www.basilicagr.org](http://www.basilicagr.org).)
- Provide a copy of the Decoration Suggestions and Restrictions page of these guidelines to anyone who is preparing flowers or decorations for your wedding. (Available from the parish office and at [www.basilicagr.org](http://www.basilicagr.org).)
- Decide on the details of the wedding procession with the assistance of our wedding coordinator.
- If you will be printing a worship aid for the wedding, finalize and proofread the details, names, spellings, and layout. The Director of Music can help you with this.

**At least one month ahead:**

- If your marriage preparations are taking place at a parish other than St. Adalbert, check with the priest or deacon preparing you and make sure the file has been sent to St. Adalbert. Check with the parish office at St. Adalbert to ensure that the file has been received.
- Be certain all paperwork and choices for the liturgy have been received by the wedding coordinator.
- Pay any remaining balance of the “donation to parish” or PMI fees to the parish office.
- If applicable, arrange for the program to be printed at least two weeks before the wedding.
- Discuss the rehearsal time and date with all people who have special roles in the wedding liturgy such as ushers, groomsmen, bridesmaids, witnesses, readers/lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, assistants (master or mistress of ceremony), people bringing up the gifts of bread and wine, altar servers, etc. Musicians are not involved in the wedding rehearsal.

**Within the last month:**

- Turn in any remaining “donation to parish” balance to the parish office no later than three weeks before the wedding.
- Obtain the State of Michigan marriage license within 33 days of the wedding date.
- Remind any photographers or florists that the church will not be open sooner than 2½ hours before the wedding, and to plan accordingly.
- Remind the following to all be at the rehearsal: witnesses, all men & women of the wedding party, ushers, assistants and any liturgical ministers (readers, gift bearers, ministers of Holy Communion).
- At least one week before the wedding, turn in the marriage license to the parish office.

**At the Rehearsal:**

- Deliver Musician fees to the wedding coordinator.

## Appendix 7: Examples of Unity Candle Ceremony

### Example 1:

#### **A Parent's Prayer.**

*The groom's parent(s) light one taper and the bride's parent(s) the other.  
The following blessing prayer is prayed by one or more of your parents.  
It is divided into sections to accommodate more than one prayer leader.*

**Dear friends,  
let us prayer together for N. and N.  
and for God's blessing on this meal  
we are about to share.**

*pause briefly for silent prayer.*

**All-loving God,  
you have joined our children N. and N. in marriage.  
For this we praise and thank you.**

**May their joy be abundant and their sorrows few.  
May they embrace the challenge  
and beauty of Christian marriage  
and gratefully welcome children, should they be so  
blessed.**

**May they know the comfort of loving friends  
and enduring faith. And may they grow old together,  
secure in your friendship and tender care.**

**May this candle that they light,  
remind them of the  
unbreakable bond they now share.**

*Bride and Groom then takes a taper candle and together light the unity  
candle.*

**Gracious Lord,  
we ask you to pour out your blessing  
on this meal we are about to share.  
May it nourish our bodies  
and strengthen the bonds of love  
that we now share because of this happy day.**

*All join in praying.*

**Bless us, O Lord,  
and these thy gifts,  
which we are about to receive  
from thy bounty,  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

### Example 2:

#### **A Couple's Prayer**

*The two tapers may be lit ahead of time  
as your guests are entering  
or you might ask your best man and maid/ matron of honor,  
or one/ both of your parents,  
to light these just before the prayer begins.  
One or both of you lead the prayer.*

**O God,  
you have joined us together in marriage  
and surrounded us with loving friends.  
We now light this candle  
to remind us of our unbreakable bond.**

*Each takes a taper and from them light the unity candle.  
Then continue the prayer.*

**Pour out your blessings upon those we love  
and upon this meal we are about to share.  
Fill our hearts with gratitude and enduring confidence.  
And may the joy of this day sustain us,  
comfort us, and bring us hope  
all the days of our married life.  
We pray through Christ Jesus, our Lord.  
Amen.**

## **Resources:**

[www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org) is a beautiful website from the USCCB with many helpful tips for all aspects of Married Life, including the dating process, marriage/wedding preparations, as well as married life and parenting.

The following resources were used in the creation of these guidelines. Some of them may be of interest for your further reading.

*Celebrating Marriage: Preparing the Wedding Liturgy — a Workbook for Engaged Couples*, third edition, revised, Paul Covino, ed., Pastoral Press, Portland, OR, 2011.

*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Second Vatican Council, 1963.

*Don y Promesa: Costumbres y Tradiciones en los Ritos Matrimoniales Hispanos*, segunda edición, Instituto de Liturgia Hispania y Oregon Catholic Press, 2005.

*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, Congregation for Divine Worship, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002.

*Guidelines for the Liturgical Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage*, Province of Michigan, 1999, esp. p.4.

*Lectionary (Introduction)*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

**Order of Celebrating Matrimony, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2016.**

*Parish Weddings*, Austin Fleming, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, Illinois, 1987.

*Preaching About the Mass*, Gabe Huck, Liturgy Training Publications, Archdiocese of Chicago, 1992.

*Rite of Marriage*, Congregation for Divine Worship, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1969.

*Sacramental Handbook*, Diocese of Grand Rapids, 2001.

*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007.

*Together for Life (sixth edition)*, Joseph Champlin, Ave Maria Press, 2016.

***United in Christ: Preparing the Liturgy of the Word at Catholic Weddings*, Liturgy Training Publications, 2016**

Wedding policies of the Diocese of San Diego, Texas, 2000.

Wedding policies of Holy Family Parish, Sparta, 2002.

Wedding policies of St. Anthony Parish, Grand Rapids.

Wedding policies of St. Clement Church, Chicago, Illinois.

Wedding policies of St. James Parish, Grand Rapids.

Wedding policies of St. Patrick Church, Troy, Ohio.

Wedding policies of St. Mary Catholic Church, Grand Rapids

rev.: 7/2021