

*Celebrating Your  
Marriage at*

*St. Francis Xavier Church  
LaGrange, IL*



Weddings are special and joyful times for brides and grooms, their families and friends, and for the parish community. A wedding is a new beginning, a grace-filled time of celebration of the love, promise and hope shared by a man and woman who have chosen a commitment to each other for the rest of their lives.

So important is this grace-filled celebration in the life of the Church that it is recognized as a sacrament and solemnized in the context of our prayer as a Christian community. Great care is taken to see that the prayer for this special moment is reverent, graceful, beautiful and open to the movement of God's Spirit among us.

Our celebrations of the sacraments, marriage included, are rooted in listening to the scriptures so that we can be nourished and strengthened by God's Word. And we always celebrate the sacraments as a community. We gather our sisters and brothers in faith and ask for their prayerful support. These celebrations are incomplete unless they are filled with song, with prayerful gestures and with silence in which we hear the voice of God in our lives. In this spirit, St. Francis Xavier Parish provides the following information and guidelines for celebrating weddings in the building that shelters the prayer of our community.

#### **Who May Marry in our Parish Church?**

Generally speaking, both members and non-members of the parish may celebrate their weddings at St. Francis Xavier Church. However, in order to accommodate parishioners, we are not able to schedule weddings for non-parishioners earlier than nine months in advance, and it may be necessary for you to arrange for your own presider.

Normally, couples marry in the church of the bride. But, the parish of the groom is equally appropriate for the marriage celebration.

#### **Setting the Date of the Wedding**

To request dates for your wedding, please contact the rectory office at 708/352-0168. At this time, someone in the front office will fill out a Wedding Request Form with some pertinent information such as name, address, etc., as well as the dates you are requesting. Your form will then be given to Maureen Pipal. She will return your call and assist you in choosing your date.

#### **Scheduling the Time of Your Wedding**

We will try to accommodate the dates you request for your wedding, taking into consideration availability of the church as well as parish ministers. Weddings are *usually* scheduled on **Fridays at 4:00 pm or later; and Saturdays at 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm**. These times have been arranged to allow for other regularly scheduled events in church, such as Reconciliation, baptisms and weekend masses. As a result, weddings must begin at the scheduled time. Parking lots need to be cleared between services to allow for adequate parking for the next service. On Saturday, the parking lot needs to be cleared by 4:30 pm.

The church is available to you for **TWO** hours, beginning 30 minutes before your wedding. For example, if your wedding is at 3:00, the church is available to you from 2:30 until 4:30.

There are a few days in the liturgical year when a wedding cannot be celebrated. There are also times in the Church year when the liturgical calendar is less conducive to the celebration of weddings. For example, the season of Lent is a time of penance in the life of the church community; that spirit touches and colors all parish liturgies between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Therefore, we do not perform weddings during the Lenten season.

### **MAKING THE PLANS**

We will work with you in this process of preparation. Some of these preparations include the gathering of certain documents, the completion of a pre-marital questionnaire, and your participating in a pre-marriage preparation program.

#### **Necessary Documents You Will Need**

Each Catholic Party is requested to provide a *Baptismal Certificate* dated within six months of the wedding. In the marriage of a Catholic and a non-Catholic Christian, the non-Catholic is also asked to present a record of baptism if that is possible. These certificates are easily obtained by calling the church in which the baptism took place. A *Confirmation Certificate* is also requested for all Catholics.

A civil *Marriage License* is requested for the marriage to take place in church. This can be obtained at the office of the Cook County Clerk, 188 North Clark Street, Chicago, or at the Maybrook Center, First Avenue and the Eisenhower Expressway in Maywood.

Be sure to check with the Clerk's Office in plenty of time before you will need the license. The license cannot be used on the day it is obtained, but then is good for sixty days.

#### **Filling Out Church Documents**

A statement of intention by both bride and groom, called a *Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire* is required. Your priest will provide this document during one of your meetings.

In cases where the priest preparing you for marriage does not know you or your family, two affidavits for each of you may be required. These affidavits are completed by adults who know you well. Close family members (parents, sisters, brothers) are most acceptable since they can easily answer the questions asked. They need not be Catholic, but should be at least 18 years of age.

In case of a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, a dispensation is needed from the Chancery Office of the Archdiocese before the wedding. Because of the time involved in such a procedure, it is advisable to complete all of the necessary paperwork as soon as possible. Wedding Banns were once part of the official documents for weddings in the Catholic Church, but are no longer required. Your wedding will be announced in the Parish Bulletin.

## **Marriage Preparation and Pre-Cana**

St. Francis works with a marriage preparation program called Prepare/Enrich which provides the engaged couple an online assessment in areas including communication, conflict resolution, money management, spiritual beliefs, and more. Results are sent to the marriage Mentor Supervisors who match the engaged couple with a Marriage Mentor Couple to meet 2-3 times to review and discuss the results using a workbook. The meetings can take place in the Marriage Mentors' home or a mutually agreed upon location. To register for the Prepare/Enrich program, please contact Maureen Pipal at the rectory at least 6-9 months prior to the wedding date to begin the process. There is a \$35 fee per engaged couple.

**OR**

The Archdiocese of Chicago provides the Pre-Cana program that offers you the time and setting to consider your life as a married couple. You are asked to make your own arrangements for the program you choose. Reservations should be made at least three months in advance. You can learn more about the program and register by visiting [familyministries.org](http://familyministries.org).

### **PLANNING THE LITURGY The Ministers of the Celebration**

In the Roman Catholic Tradition, the bride and groom minister the sacrament to one another; they are the celebrants of the ceremony. A priest or deacon and at least two witnesses are also required to be present as formal witnesses to your marriage.

#### **Presider**

Ordinarily, one of the priests on the parish staff will preside at weddings celebrated in the parish. If you have a special relationship with one of the priests, you are free to ask him to preside.

You may have a priest or deacon friend or relative whom you want to invite to preside at the wedding. In this case, a parish priest from St. Francis will meet with you to complete all paperwork and he will host the visiting priest for the rehearsal and for the ceremony. He will provide resources and guidelines to assist you in planning the ceremony with the visiting priest. The involvement of a friend or relative in your preparation for marriage can be important to you and to him. Visiting priests are asked to observe local parish customs regarding the celebration of the weddings. For marriages between Roman Catholics and members of other church, ministers of other churches are welcome to participate in the ceremony.

If one of you is not a member of the Catholic Church, do you want to include something in this celebration in which only one of you will be able to take part? Who will be your guests? Is the celebration of the Eucharist the best way to help them to be with you and pray with you at your wedding? If many of your guests are not from the Catholic community, you may want to consider celebrating your wedding with the Liturgy of the Word. You should make your decision in consultation with the priest who is assisting in the preparation for your marriage.

### **Lectors/Readers**

The marriage celebration includes selections from scripture and general intercessions. We encourage you to ask family members or friends to serve in your weddings as Lector or Reader. When choosing family members or friends, please select those who are accustomed to public speaking and have a familiarity with this type of reading.

### **Ministers of Communion**

If a wedding is celebrated during Mass, there may be a need for the service of Ministers of Communion for the distribution of Communion. Family members or friends who participate in this ministry here or in another parish are welcome to assist with the distribution of Communion at your wedding.

### **Ushers**

The groom's attendants usually function as ushers and ministers of hospitality. The bride's attendants, and, indeed, the bride and groom and their families may also act as minister of hospitality. It is a gracious gesture for all members of the wedding party to greet members of the assembly as they gather to celebrate.

### **Altar Servers**

Two altar servers from the parish will be scheduled for your wedding celebration. If you have specific servers you would like, or have members of your family who fulfill this ministry here or in another parish, please let us know.

### **Wedding Ministry Support & Sacristans**

Members of our parish Wedding Ministry volunteer their time to be in attendance on the day of your wedding. In addition to preparing the altar space before the wedding, these women will be available to assist you in any last minute details that need attention.

### **MUSIC PREPARATIONS**

In order to make your sacred wedding liturgy a true reflection of your love and commitment, you are encouraged to participate in the selection of music for your wedding. After your first meeting with the priest, you are asked to schedule an appointment to meet with our Music Director, Allen Sterwalt. Please call the rectory at 708/352-0168 and ask for Maureen Pipal to schedule your appointment. These appointments are scheduled for Monday evenings.

Allen Sterwalt is also the organist and pianist for most weddings held at St. Francis Xavier. During your meeting with Allen, guidance will be given in choosing the most appropriate music for your sacred day. Selecting a cantor (leader of song) and any extra instrumentalists such as strings or brass will also be discussed. Hiring extra instrumentalists beyond the organist/pianist is optional. PLEASE DO NOT HIRE MUSICIANS ON YOUR OWN BEFORE YOUR FIRST MEETING WITH ALLEN.

## **GENERAL CONCERNS**

### **Church Address**

For the purpose of printing your wedding invitation, the church addressed used is:

St. Francis Xavier Church  
Ogden and Spring Avenues  
LaGrange, Illinois 60525

If you need to include directions for your guests, Spring Avenue is 5 blocks west of LaGrange (or Mannheim) Road or 1.8 miles east of the Tri-State Tollway (I-294). The phone number is 708/352-0168.

### **Rehearsal**

Most couples choose to hold a rehearsal a day before their wedding. The rehearsal time can be set with the priest when you are meeting with him, or by calling Maureen Pipal. The rehearsal takes about 45 minutes.

In addition to the bride, groom and members of the wedding party, you may want to have your readers present in order to learn where they will sit, when they will read, and (if they would like) to go through their reading at the rehearsal. Parents and any of your guests are always welcome at the rehearsal.

Please ask everyone who will be attending the rehearsal to be at the church 15 minutes before the scheduled starting time. Often there will be another rehearsal before or after yours. A late starting rehearsal will usually be briefer than desirable.

### **Offerings for Church and Ministers**

It is customary to make an offering to the church on the occasion of the celebration of a marriage. This offering is for the costs associated with the operation of the church building and the salaries of office staff members who assist in scheduling and routine paperwork associated with your wedding. Keep in mind the total cost of your wedding.

A minimum donation of \$450 is requested for parishioners, and \$750 for non-parishioners.

Please consider making a small offering to the altar servers (suggested gift: \$10 per server).

The offering for musicians will vary from wedding to wedding depending upon selections. The organist and additional musicians have their own fees, which are usually arranged through the Music Director.

### **Flowers**

It has been traditional for wedding couples to provide floral decorations for church on the day of their wedding. We encourage you to use fresh flowers with strong colors, as arrangements of white flowers and greenery tend to “disappear” in this large space. Usually two

large arrangements placed on either side of the altar will serve as beautiful and dignified decorations. They will be placed so that they will not interfere in any of the movements of the wedding party. Please do not order any flowers to be placed upon the altar itself. The altar is meant to be kept very simple.

Be sure to let your florist know if you are choosing to make a floral tribute to the Blessed Virgin Mary or are presenting flowers to members of your family.

#### **Aisle Runner**

If you wish to have a runner for the center aisle, this can be arranged through your florist. The center aisle is approximately 85 feet long.

#### **Pew Decorations**

If you choose to have bows or other decorations placed upon pews in the center aisle, please inform your florist that they may not use tape on the wooden pews (it removes the finish). Also, please inform your florist that access to the pews should not be blocked with any type of decoration.

#### **Photography and Videography**

There is available to you a wide selection of possibilities for recording your wedding day. We respect your desire to obtain a remembrance of this most important day. However, we do ask that the photographer and/or videographer be unobtrusive and not distract attention from the primary focus of your celebration. If they have any specific questions, please have them check with the presider before the ceremony.

There is adequate lighting in the church for all contemporary photographic equipment. No additional lighting should be used.

#### **Rice, Balloons, Rose Pedals, etc.**

Because of the danger it poses to elderly and handicapped parishioners, we ask that nothing be thrown on church grounds. This includes rice, birdseed, and other items such as confetti. We appreciate your concern for the safety of others.

Please do not bring balloons into the church. If you wish to release them after your wedding, we ask you to keep them outside the clear from the porch, where they can easily become entangled in the portico.

If you are going to use rose pedals, **please use only synthetic ones**, as real ones stain the floor. Also, please have someone clean up the synthetic rose pedals after the wedding, as our maintenance personnel is not present on Saturdays.

**No alcohol is allowed in the church or anywhere on church property.**

#### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

We look forward to sharing this time of preparation and celebration with you. The commitment you make to one another in the presence of God and the community is of great importance to the ongoing life of this parish, and the life of the church at large.