



CELEBRATING YOUR MARRIAGE AT ST. FRANCIS CHURCH

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.

St. Francis Xavier Parish provides the following information and guidelines for celebrating weddings:

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 can only schedule a wedding of a non-parishioner within 9 months of their request, and they must provide their own presider.

Setting the Date of the Wedding

To request dates for your wedding please email Missy Westerhoff at mwesterhoff@sfxlg.org or call the rectory office at 708/352-0168.

Scheduling the Time of Your Wedding

Weddings are *usually* scheduled on **Saturdays at 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm** (and occasionally on Fridays at 4:30 or later). These times have been arranged to allow for other regularly scheduled events in church, such as Reconciliation, baptisms and weekend masses. Parking lots need to be cleared by 4:30pm on Saturday to allow for adequate parking for our 5:00pm mass.

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.

We do not perform weddings during the Lenten season.

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 not longer required. Your wedding will be announced in the Parish Bulletin.

Marriage Preparation and Pre-Cana

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 clicking [here](#).

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 churches, 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

Allen Sterwalt is our Music Director. Approximately 4-5 months before your wedding Allen will send you a link and documents that will provide you an opportunity to listen to music and fill out a form with your selections, which then gets returned to Allen.

Allen Sterwalt is also the organist and pianist for most weddings held at St. Francis Xavier. Selecting a cantor (leader of song) and any extra instrumentalists such as strings or brass will need to be discussed with Allen. Hiring extra instrumentalists beyond the organist/pianist is optional. PLEASE DO NOT HIRE MUSICIANS ON YOUR OWN BEFORE FIRST SPEAKING 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 \$750 is requested for parishioners, and \$900 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.