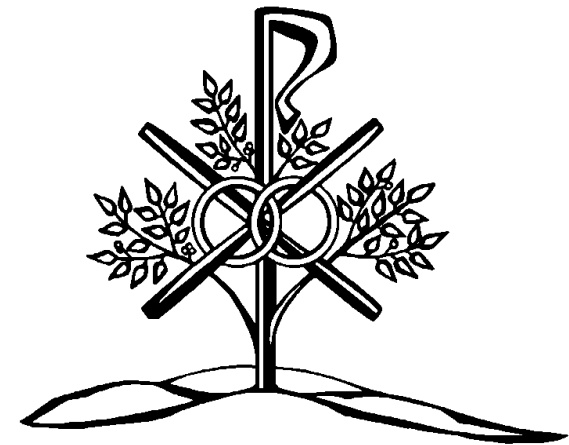
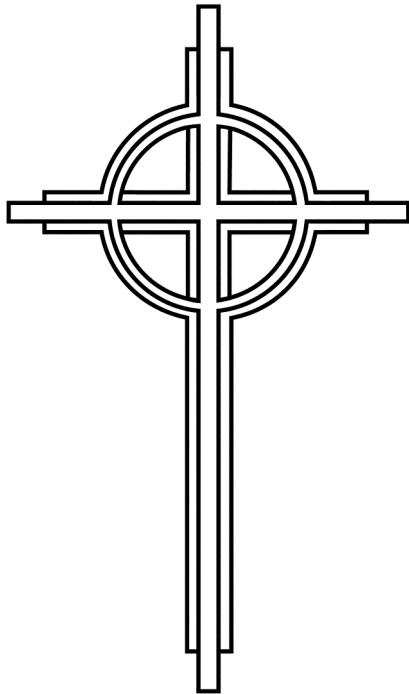


Bride's copy _____
Parent copy _____
Organizer _____

Your Wedding



at
Saint James

Access this booklet at www.stjamescatholicchurch.org. Click on "Sacraments".

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A Quick “Practical Checklist”



Have You

- ___ Assigned someone to meet the florist at the church? What time?

- ___ Asked someone to help clean up the bride’s and groom’s dressing rooms after the wedding?

- ___ Asked an usher to straighten up the church after the ceremony?

- ___ Packed a care-pack with Kleenex, bottled water, throat lozenges, etc.?

- ___ Asked someone to remove the flowers you would like to take with you at the end of the ceremony?

If you have done all of these things, you have done well. May God bless you both in your life together!

**The Community of St. James Church
Omaha, Nebraska**

A dressing room (the Nursery) is provided both for the bride and bridesmaids, and for the groom and groomsmen (Parish Center Family Room). The priest or liturgist will show you where these are.

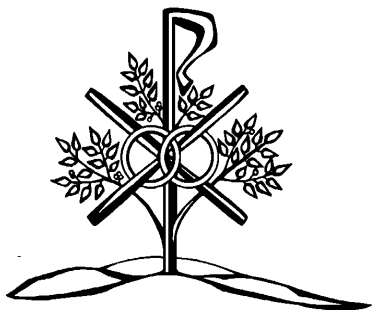
Please make sure you select someone to clean up after yourself when you use these rooms. All boxes, papers, bags and hangers should be removed **immediately after the wedding**. **NO** gifts, money, etc., should be left in these rooms at any time as the church is not responsible for lost items.

All rental items must be removed from the church immediately after the wedding. We do not store your rental decorations for you.

If you plan to invite the priest-celebrant to your rehearsal dinner, be sure to invite him while you are taking your marriage preparation sessions. This enables him to schedule the event in his appointment calendar.

Questions???

If you have any questions about your wedding liturgy, please contact our Liturgy Coordinator, Sr. Donna Marie, OSM, at 402-572-0499, ext. 22, or donnamarie@stjamescatholicchurch.org.



- Introduction -

Congratulations! You are about to begin a very important chapter in your life. “Matrimonial consent is an act of the will by which a man and woman, through an irrevocable covenant, mutually hand over and accept each other in order to establish matrimony.” In other words, your love for one another is bound in a lifetime commitment to the sacred union of Christian marriage.

With this in mind, the parish family of St. James wants your wedding day to be a truly beautiful and prayerful event for you, your family and friends. And we hope above all that your wedding day is the beginning of a long and joy-filled life together lived out among the Christian community. We need your love and faith; in fact, we all need each other in order to continue growing in the Lord as one community.

We hope to help you prepare for these commitments by providing you with sound teaching, basic information, and a little “TLC” along the way.

- Preliminaries -

Setting the date, time and place—It is the policy of this Archdiocese that engaged couples contact their parish priest at least 6 months in advance of the anticipated date of the marriage sacrament. This is to allow sufficient time for the FOCCUS study, (which facilitates communication and understanding) and for various marriage preparation programs.

Weddings may take place on any weekday evening between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. On Saturdays, weddings may be celebrated between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Marriages **NEVER** are permitted on Sundays. Weddings during the time of Lent are not prohibited; however, since this is a penitential season, the festivities should be subdued. Friday evening weddings cannot be scheduled due to Lenten services held on the Fridays of Lent.

Marriages celebrated in a non-Catholic church—Canon Law binds a baptized Catholic to marry according to the rite and form of the Catholic Church, meaning in a Catholic church by a Catholic priest. However, a dispensation from this law may be granted by the Archbishop for valid reasons. Your priest will help you gain this dispensation if necessary.

You also may want to include your priest in this sacrament if you choose to marry outside of the Catholic Church. For a priest to witness the marriage, thus making it “officially” Catholic, he must use the prayers and blessings of the Catholic ritual in its entirety.

The non-Catholic minister may offer additional prayers and blessings. If you choose to use a non-Catholic minister as the official witness and your priest is not invited to bless the marriage, you must request a dispensation from the Archbishop. Your priest will help you if this is necessary.

There are some special circumstances that may be present in your relationship. The following paragraphs outline some possibilities and their solutions :

Inter-faith marriages—Special instructions are necessary for those entering a marriage with someone of a different religious affiliation. Common attitudes concerning permanence, goals, children, prayer and worship make it easier for the couple to approach situations that will arise in their life together. *Through these sessions*, the priest will help both parties reach an understanding of their faith similarities and differences, and share a basic knowledge of the Catholic faith, always respecting the faith of the non-Catholic party.

When planning your ceremony, the inter-faith couple may not desire to have a nuptial Mass. Please inform your priest if you choose this option. In addition, the Catholic party needs to publicly commit him/herself by means of a signed statement of two promises: first, to continue living his/her Catholic faith, and secondly, to do all in his/her power to share the faith with their children by having them baptized and raised as Catholics.

Marriages that cross diocesan or state lines—If the marriage is to take place in a diocese other than the Omaha Archdiocese, permissions, delegations and dispensations must be obtained from that diocese. Your priest will assist you in obtaining these and in answering any questions about this. If the mar-

6. **Unity Candle**—Following the exchange of vows, the ceremony provides for a time of symbolism as the bride and groom together light the Unity Candle, symbolizing that the two have become one. This candle consists of one large central pillar and two tapers. You also will need a small stand on which the candles rest. You may obtain these through your florist, or from raft stores, or bridal shops.
7. **Receiving line**—In some cases, it is advisable to have a receiving line at your reception rather than in the narthex following the ceremony. This allows for more time to take pictures and clean up the church space.

Special Notes

1. **Bells, Bubbles, Balloons and Butterflies** : The throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, flowers, etc, is **PROHIBITED**. Also, no sparklers. Please inform all members of your wedding party and family. All of these are safety problems and a maintenance problems. If someone ignores this rule, your ushers will be expected to clean up afterwards. Balloons *must remain outside of the church space* due to our high ceiling and the possibility of a rogue balloon getting away. Bells, bubbles and butterflies are nice contemporary possibilities.
2. **Alcoholic beverages NEVER are permitted on church premises—including in the church parking lot—before or after your rehearsal, ceremony, etc.** If drinking were to take place on church property, the celebrant might consider canceling the ceremony since questions would arise about the participants’ ability to clearly and knowingly express solemn vows.

- The Rehearsal -

A wedding rehearsal usually is scheduled the night prior to your ceremony; however, it may take place as much as one week in advance if there are special circumstances. Please inform your wedding party to be prompt as another rehearsal may be following yours on the same night.

Your rehearsal will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. This rehearsal does not include musicians. We ask that all who are present pay attention to the person running the rehearsal. Children should not be brought to the rehearsal unless they are part of the ceremony.

Optional Elements

1. **Pictures**—The entire wedding ceremony may be photographed, providing it is done in good taste. Your photographer’s role is to record the action rather than become a part of it; therefore, no flash may be used during the ceremony. Also, no photographer will be allowed in the sanctuary area during the ceremony.
 2. **Flowers**—It is the policy of the Catholic Church, and of this parish and Archdiocese, that all flowers, plants etc., must be of genuine nature and the aim should be to enhance the space, not cover it up. With that said, your florist may contact our Liturgy Coordinator to arrange for colorings and a tour of the interior to coordinate your wedding flowers.
If you are having flowers delivered to the church, you must arrange with the parish office to have the church unlocked. The church does not provide flower stands. You may bring your own stands, or flowers may be placed *on the corner steps of the sanctuary, or in other appropriate places*. A diagram of the sanctuary indicating appropriate placements for flowers is available through the Liturgy Coordinator or Admin. Assistant.
- NOTE : NO ONE (florists, family, bridal party, photographers, etc.) may rearrange ANY existing environmental elements in the church. This means you may NOT move any plants, candle stands, flowers, etc., already in place in the church. To do so is a violation of church policy.**
3. **Pew Bows**—Only **plastic pew bow clips** may be used. Because of the structure of our new pews, pew bows may not be attached to the ends by any means that include adhesive, “sticky-tack,” tape, glue, nails, thumb tacks, wire, etc. Pew bow clips can be obtained at most floral shops. The Liturgy Coordinator or Administrative Assistant can provide you with a sample.
 4. **Candles**—St. James provides free of charge the use of our candlesticks; however, because of the finish of the wood on the candlesticks, nothing may be attached to them such as flowers, bows, etc. If you bring additional candles, they must be of a votive-type (enclosed in glass) and have a drop cloth under them to protect the floor from wax. Use of our candle sconces also is a possibility.
 5. **Runner**—A runner is *not allowed*. The church is carpeted and clean and a runner is not necessary.

riage is to take place in a state other than Nebraska, please check with the priest about the guidelines of the diocese in which your marriage will take place.

Teenage marriages—The legal age for marriage in Nebraska, with the written consent of parents, is 17 years. No one under 17 will be accepted into the Teen Program. If either the bride or groom will be only 17 or 18 years of age at the time of marriage, it is Archdiocesan policy that **both** participate in the Teenage Marriage Program. This series, which requires a minimum of 4 months and a maximum of 6 months of counseling must be totally completed and permission received from the diocese **before a date can be set for the wedding**. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Pre-Marriage Education and Preparation

Pre-marriage educational programs—Couples first must complete the FOCCUS Inventory. All couples also are expected to participate in a preparation program for the engaged, either “When Families Marry,” an Engaged Encounter Weekend, Evenings for the Engaged, Afternoons for the Engaged, Remarriage Program, or Convalidation Program. More information and a brochure explaining these programs will be given to you by your priest. The cost of diocesan-sponsored programs is from \$85.00, up to an additional charge of \$115.00, depending on the program.

- Necessary Documents -

1. **Baptismal records**—Each baptized person approaching marriage must supply an official baptismal record. Catholics may request one from the parish in which you were baptized.
2. **Freedom to marry**—Freedom from any previous bonds or impediments is essential for a valid marriage. Verification of freedom to marry must be obtained if the priest cannot vouch for this personally. Documentation forms are provided by your priest if necessary.
3. **Second Marriages**—If this is your second marriage, be sure to supply necessary documents, i.e., death certificate, annulment papers, or release from religious vows or priesthood.

4. **Unusual circumstances**—in the event you are marrying :
 - a. An adopted brother or sister;
 - b. A blood relative closer than second cousin,
 - c. An in-law of a previous spouse,
 a dispensation must be obtained from the Archbishop.

5. **Civil requirements**—Every church wedding also must conform to the civil laws of the State of Nebraska; therefore, each couple must apply for and obtain a marriage license through any county courthouse. When applying, both persons must appear together and, if one of the parties is between the ages of 17 and 19, he/she must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Copies of each person's birth certificate are necessary. After the preliminary form is notarized for both persons, they may pick up the license.

Without a license in the priest's hands, there can be no ceremony. The couple should bring the license to the rehearsal and give it to the priest at that time.

- The Ceremony -

Who is involved.....

1. **Priest-celebrant**—Preparing you for your lifetime together and witnessing your vows are considered an honor and a privilege for your priest.

Because of the number of weddings at St. James, if you prefer a particular priest, it would be best to contact him no less than 8 months in advance. You are welcome to invite a priest who is a relative or close friend to celebrate your wedding. If this is the case, it is beneficial for all concerned to have him give you the premarital instructions because, during this time, a relationship is formed which can lead to a more personal ceremony. Another option may be to invite your priest friend/relative to concelebrate with one of the St. James priests.

2. **Deacons**—In this Archdiocese, permanent deacons have the faculties to perform the wedding ceremony for members of their family. When this is the case, please inform the priest working with you. Deacons also may assist liturgically at a celebration led by the priest.

3. **Witnesses**—The requirements are simple: two (2) witnesses, one male and one female, both over the age of 17 years, and capable of testifying to the ceremony. The religion of the witnesses is immaterial.

4. **Lectors**—Readers may be men or women who are mandated by the Archdiocese or their local diocese. They must be able to convey the meaning of the readings and have been trained properly. If there is no one to fulfill this ministry, your priest will help you in selecting a lector.

5. **Eucharistic Ministers**—If communion is to be shared under both species with the entire assembly, at least two ministers will be necessary to share the cup. They must be mandated by this Archdiocese to function as a Eucharistic Minister.

6. **Gift Bearers**—Members of your family or friends may be chosen to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine to be used at your Mass.

7. **Altar Servers**—St. James uses two altar servers at wedding liturgies. Relatives or friends who are trained as altar servers may assist at the wedding; however, if no one is available, the parish can provide two servers, in which case a monetary offering of \$5.00 each is appropriate.

8. **Musicians and music**—Because the music selected at your wedding has so much to do with creating an atmosphere of prayer and joy for your special day, we ask you to contact our parish Liturgy Coordinator, at 572-0499 at least 6 months prior to your wedding. The liturgist will discuss liturgical readings, music, musicians and vocalists with you. He or she can provide a list of parish music ministers for you at this time and also may be consulted about anything regarding the church space, environment, etc. All musical selections must be approved by the Liturgy Coordinator. The use of taped music is not allowed.

9. **Stipends**—Offerings, at best, are difficult things to discuss. For your convenience, we offer the following considerations:

Musicians and vocalists are “freelance” professionals. You are entering into a contract with them for the use of their time and talents. While the fees of many musicians vary, a usual stipend might be about \$150 for a pianist / organist, and \$150 for a soloist.

The stipend a couple chooses to give the priest/parish may vary since there never can be any set charge regarding the sacraments.

The suggested stipend is a token of appreciation for the time spent conducting marriage preparation, use of the church for rehearsal and the ceremony, pictures before and after the wedding, as well as a stipend for the priest or deacon performing the wedding. We ask a stipend of \$250.00 for parishioners and \$400.00 for non-parishioners who have obtained permission to marry at St. James.