

CHRIST THE KING CATHOLIC CHURCH
MANDAN, NORTH DAKOTA

**GENERAL POLICY ON MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND THE
CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY**

Statement on Marriage

Marriage is a sacrament in the Catholic Church, which Jesus Christ established to unite a man and a woman for life. It is both an exciting time in your life as well as one that is most serious. There is no church that works harder to prepare couples for marriage than the Catholic Church. We rejoice with you as you anticipate your marriage and we will do everything we can to help you understand the profound meaning of marriage as well as to deepen your knowledge of each other.

We believe it is important to make sure we set for you a proper foundation for marriage. There are six essential characteristics of marriage in the Catholic tradition:

- Unity = In Christian marriage, a man and woman become one physically and spiritually.
- Fidelity = In Christian marriage, the couple promises to be faithful to each other in all circumstances throughout their life together.
- Permanence = A Christian marriage is indissoluble; it lasts until the death of one of the spouses.
- Fruitfulness = One of the purposes of marriage in God's eyes is children. Couples must be open to having children to be married in the Church.
- Grace that unites a couple to Christ = In the Catholic faith, marriage is not simply a uniting of a man and woman with each other but also uniting both of them to Christ. It is Christ who will continue to grant them the grace necessary to live their commitment with fidelity.
- Mission = Marriage forms the basis of family life which is the fundamental unit of every society. A married couple has duties and responsibilities beyond themselves—to their children first, and then to all of society.

Understanding these six essential characteristics should help you to realize what a holy and wonderful step you are taking with your lives.

Marriage Preparation

There are a number of aspects to our marriage preparation program at Christ the King. I do not want you to see these as hoops to be jumped through but as an essential part of preparation for one of the biggest steps in a person's life. I trust that you understand the importance of each of these steps.

Here is a brief outline of our marriage preparation program:

If either person has been married before, please do not set a date for your marriage until you have spoken with the priest about the prior marriage.

First Meeting

- With priest at least nine months before wedding date
- Marriage policies of parish discussed
- Church forms completed
- FOCCUS instrument administered

Pre-marriage weekend

- The couple will be required to attend a pre-marriage weekend in Minot, Dickinson, or Bismarck and will have a cost (this may be waived if age or marital status of couple dictates with the Bishop's permission).
- Couple is **required** to take a Natural Family Planning (NFP) course offered in Bismarck/Mandan. There is a cost. (This can be waived by the Bishop depending on circumstances.)

Other Meetings

- Review of FOCCUS instrument with couple and financial planning
- Discussions of the couple's faith and practice with priest or couple
- Finalization of liturgical plans for the wedding with priest

Final Meeting

- Rehearsal for wedding

N.B. For Catholics, the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be celebrated within a week of the marriage ceremony.

Liturgical Planning

I am here to help you make the wedding ceremony something beautiful indeed. There are guidelines which will be important that you keep in mind as you begin to prepare for your wedding day.

- Whether to have a Mass or not

The general rule is that if both the groom and the bride are Catholic, a Mass is strongly recommended. If one party is not Catholic, the marriage ceremony without Mass is recommended.

- Vows

The choices of vows are provided by the Church and the couple is not to write their own.

- Place of the wedding

The law of the Church indicates that Catholic weddings should take place in the parish church or a church recognized as a parish in the Diocese. Exceptions to this rule are extremely rare and there must be unusual circumstances to justify the request; which are only granted by the Office of the Bishop of the Diocese.

- Time

Marriages on Saturdays must start by 1:30 with a Mass and 2:00 p.m. without Mass, as the normal operating schedule of the Church is not to be changed and thus the buildings need to be cleared and cleaned by 3 p.m. in time for Confessions before Mass on Saturday evening.

- Attendants

I believe that weddings at Christ the King should not lose the focus on the dignity of the Sacrament that is being celebrated. If the wedding party is too large, it creates a distraction from what is truly important. Therefore, the number of bridesmaids and groomsmen should be limited to five each (including the matron of honor and the best man). There is also a limit of one flower girl and one ring bearer, preferably age 5 and older. **(If the couple is living together and do not move apart prior to the date of the wedding, it is expected that the number of attendants is limited even further and the ceremony will be much more simple, this will be discussed when you meet with the priest.)**

- Music

1. Try to choose a musician who has some understanding of Catholic ritual. It makes it so much easier and less confusing for everyone involved. The parish does have musicians available.
2. It is important to have only sacred music played during the ceremony itself. The music should be played live and not come off of CDs. If non-sacred music is requested, it must not be offensive in any way and should be used as a prelude just before the beginning of the procession; your favorite song may be best used at the reception.
3. In the Catholic tradition, most of the music in a wedding ceremony should be congregational. There are times for solos (i. e., after the exchange of rings, after communion), but solos should not be used exclusively.
4. The parts of the Mass (Gloria, the Gospel Acclamation, the “Holy, Holy”, the Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, Lamb of God) should be sung (whenever possible), when there is Mass for the ceremony.
5. The priest must approve all music.
6. It is important that you meet or talk with the Liturgy/Music person at the parish as he/she can help you with these arrangements.

- Readings, Prayers, Ministers
 1. The couple should select the readings and prayers from the book given to you at the pre-marriage weekend or by the priest who is preparing them. They should fill out the detachable sheet in the book or have it written out on other paper.
 2. The couple is also responsible for choosing readers, servers, and Eucharistic ministers. (Servers are not necessary but will help with a Mass and are not necessarily needed for a ceremony without Mass.) The couple is encouraged to involve as many in their wedding ceremony as possible. There are usually two readers so you may choose two. The readers should be present for the wedding rehearsal. When asking a person to read, please consider if the person is comfortable reading in public. The Scriptures and liturgy are sacred, it is important you ask people who have faith to assist in celebrating this sacred time and event. Eucharistic ministers should be approved in the parish or at the least within the Diocese.

- Photography and videos
 1. Pictures may be taken before or after the ceremony for a *reasonable* amount of time (preferably before if a Saturday afternoon wedding). It is important to let the priest know of your intentions to make sure the church is available and for lighting to be on within the church proper.
 2. If pictures or videos are taken during the ceremony, the photographer should never be in the sanctuary or on the steps to the sanctuary. Also, the photographer should remain stationary—otherwise, it is too distracting. Video cameras can be set up in the balcony for easy filming.
 3. For the same reason, there should be no flash or flood lights used during the ceremony.

- Decorations

The seasonal decorations in the church are the result of many hours of work by our parish volunteers. The decorations are

not to be moved or taken down by the wedding party or the photographer.

The couple is responsible for seeing that whatever decorations are brought in for the wedding should in no way damage the flooring, pews, or other structures. Therefore, all candelabras should have something under them to prevent damage to the flooring by melting wax (Dripless candles do drip!!). Anything attached to the pews should not leave any marks.

Once the ceremony is completed, the couple will see to it that the church is left as it was found (this includes cleaning up anything brought in and removing extra programs and garbage from the pews).

- Scattering of flower petals, rice, birdseed, bubbles, pets/animals, etc.

Because of the difficulty of cleaning the church after the wedding, the scattering of flower petals, rice, seed, or other things is not allowed inside or outside of the church. Also pets are not allowed to be a part of the ceremony or in the buildings nor is the releasing or presence of any other type of animals or birds allowed inside the buildings. Wagons are not allowed to be used in the ceremony.

- Unity Candle/Sand

The Unity Candle/Sand IS NOT a part of the Liturgical ceremony but has become an added “other” to the ceremony through the years. This addition to the rite within the liturgy is **No Longer** an option in the Diocese of Bismarck. **It is a nice option to have at the reception on the head table.**

Other items:

- 1) It is important that we start the wedding on time. Have the guestbook closed at least five (5) minutes before the beginning of the ceremony so that all of your guests may be seated on time.
- 2) Proper Dress: The focus of your wedding is your relationship with each other and with the Lord. Strapless, off-the-shoulder gowns, or low –cut revealing dresses are inappropriate attire for Church. If your dresses are designed in this fashion please

wear a jacket or shawl over the shoulder when in the Church for the wedding ceremony.

- 3) Alcohol/Smoking: It is unacceptable for anyone in the wedding party including the bride and groom to have alcohol on their breath at the time the wedding ceremony begins, thus NO Drinking before the ceremony. Those who have alcohol on their breath will not take part in the ceremony. There is no smoking allowed in the church or parish buildings, so please keep that outside. Absolutely NO alcohol is allowed in or on the property.
- 4) Food & Drink: You are inside a church in the presence of our Lord and that should be remembered at all times. Food and drink should be kept only in the entryway/gathering space of the church or outside, it just adds to the clean up problems.
- 5) COSTS: The church building and property is for the use of all contributing and active members of the Christ the King parish community. There **IS a \$250.00 Facility Use/Marriage Prep** fee (paid at the time the date of marriage is set) for the use of the buildings for those who ARE registered parishioners, and **\$350.00** fee for those who ARE NOT registered members, actively participating or regularly contributing services or funds to the parish of Christ the King. This Fee helps to defray the expenses of heating, cooling, lighting, and cleaning the buildings during and after their use.

Remember to pay a gratuity to the organist and the soloist, for their time and work; especially if the Christ the King staff is supplying them. A gratuity is also encouraged to be given to the Priest/Deacon for the time spent preparing you and for the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage.

Conclusion

I hope that this brief policy statement will help you in preparing for your marriage. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call us. I am honored to work with you and am here to help in any way I can.

May God bless you with his abundant graces as you prepare for the great Sacrament of Matrimony.

Policy revised and effective: 1 March 2021