

GUIDELINES FOR WEDDINGS
at
EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD CHURCH

Congratulations from all the parishioners at Epiphany of Our Lord Church on your approaching wedding. We share your enthusiasm and happiness and are here to assist you throughout your preparation period. There are a few basic guidelines we want you to become familiar with, and we are confident that by following these basic instructions your celebration of the sacrament of marriage will be enhanced and enriched.

YOUR WEDDING PARTY

The bride and groom are naturally the center of attention at any wedding. This means, of course, that you will be playing the major role. There are, though, others who are equally important and these are (1) the priest performing the ceremony, (2) the best man, and (3) the maid-of-honor. These are the official, recorded witnesses of your marriage: they are necessary both for the legality of the wedding (in the state of Pennsylvania, any wedding performed by a priest, rabbi or recognized Protestant minister carries the weight of law), but also for the sacramental validity. Your best man and maid-of-honor, then, should be, chosen with care and thought. They **should** also be Roman Catholic, even though it is not Church law that they be so.

THE NUPTIAL MASS AND RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

It is always expected that two Roman Catholics will be married at a Nuptial Mass. A mixed-marriage (the marriage between a Roman Catholic and a non-Catholic) may be celebrated within a Nuptial Mass or in a marriage ceremony outside of Mass. This decision is made by the priest handling your wedding in consultation with the couple and sometimes their families. In any case, ALL weddings take place in the church (there are no "rectory" weddings or weddings "not at the altar"). The Roman Catholic partner(s) is (are) expected to receive Holy Communion at the Nuptial Mass. In the case of a mixed-marriage, the priest handling your wedding will make the final decision as to whether a Mass or ceremony will be provided. He will also speak to you concerning the necessary dispensation that **must** be obtained from the Chancery of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to perform the wedding. Your priest will advise you of these details at the time of your meeting. All Roman Catholics who are present may receive Holy Communion as well, provided they are disposed to do so. Holy Communion is not distributed at a marriage ceremony outside of Mass. Please understand that non-Catholics may not receive Holy Communion at a Catholic Mass, including non-Catholic members of the bridal party. The Catholic Church does not permit the simulation of the sacrament for the sake of "uniformity" in the ceremony by non-Catholics. If this is understood beforehand there will not be any misunderstandings or confusion on the night of the rehearsal or at the wedding itself. The priest handling your wedding will be glad to explain this further to you. Members of the bridal party, including the bride and groom, should make every effort to make a good confession before the wedding day. It may not always be possible for the priest to hear all the confessions of the bridal party on the rehearsal night.

NECESSARY DOCUMENTS

The priest handling your wedding will let you know what documents you will need and when they are due. Among those that are necessary will be the certificate from the pre-marital classes you attended; also, a **baptismal certificate recently issued (it cannot be older than six months and it must be a signed and sealed original, not a photocopy) for each person getting married.** If one of the parties is a non-Catholic Christian, a document stating the person was baptized in a Trinitarian formula might be necessary. In addition, the person not from St. Monica Church will need a *Letter of Freedom to Marry* which is given by the priest of the home parish. +In the case of a mixed-marriage, other documents may be required; your priest will direct you if this is the case. **It is necessary to obtain from the State a Marriage License.** The license is valid for sixty days, so it cannot be obtained prior to sixty days before the Marriage. The license is given, as you receive it, to the priest or on the night of the rehearsal. He will give the groom the marriage certificate in the sacristy before the wedding or it will be obtained in the sacristy after the wedding by the best man. Any questions concerning Marriage License, call the Marriage License Bureau at 215-686-1776.

WEDDING TIMES

Weddings at Epiphany are on Saturdays at 2:00 p.m. **There are no Sunday weddings.** Whatever time is chosen for your wedding, **it is important that it begin on time.** The groom, best man and ushers must be in the church sacristy at least thirty minutes before the wedding starts. Please remember that there are probably other weddings on the same day as yours. They, too, want to start on time. Due to the multiple number of weddings on any given day, it is not always possible to have a receiving line in the vestibule of the church or on the church steps. When you leave the church please go right to your cars.

WEDDING REHEARSAL

Rehearsals are usually scheduled on the Wednesday, Thursday or Friday evening before your wedding. The exact date and time will depend on your schedule and the priest's. The entire wedding party should be present for the rehearsal, including any readers. Remember, the rehearsal does take place in the church so everyone should act and dress appropriately. Please come right to the upper church and take a seat in the front pews. More times than not there are other rehearsals scheduled for the same night as your own. For this reason, being on time is not only courteous but very important.

MUSICAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Nuptial Mass is a religious rite of which the Church has the responsibility to see that it conforms to the patterns of Roman Catholic liturgy and worship. Words and music must unite in such a way as to convey to all present the true spirit of Catholic worship. The most important thing to remember if your choice is for a church wedding is that it is a **SOLEMN** and **PUBLIC CATHOLIC** ceremony (no matter how small the gathering may be) which celebrates the covenant between two people in the presence of God. As such, the nuptial liturgy requires the same careful planning as any of the Sunday liturgies or other rites of the Roman Catholic Church.

You have chosen a wedding in Epiphany of Our Lord Catholic Church. Therefore, the music at your wedding must conform to the norms of good liturgy and music as defined by:

- (a) The universal Roman Catholic Church
- (b) The guidelines and directives of the Philadelphia Archdiocesan Liturgical and Music Commissions
- (c) The policies of Epiphany of Our Lord as set down in this policy by the pastor, the clergy and the music director.

When planning your wedding music kindly remember the following points:

- (a) **The music must be SACRED music which specifically refers to God**, to the sanctity of the day, to the holiness of the marriage, or has a Scriptural text and is generally used in the repertoire of music here at Epiphany of Our Lord.
- (b) The music must have been written for Church usage. This will exclude many pieces which may have religious references but are considered by the Church to be unsuitable for weddings or other liturgies. This also excludes those pieces which refer only to the couple who are getting married and are considered highly personal and subjective.

If you wish for the organ to be played for your wedding, please contact Sr. Alexa at the rectory at 215-334-1035. Visiting organists are **NOT** permitted. Epiphany will supply you with a well-trained, professional soloist who may be hired by contacting the organist. Visiting soloists are permitted; however, they must be approved by in advance. They may choose a maximum of three (3) pieces to be sung and **must provide their own copies of music in the proper keys.** While many couples may have a friend or relative who sings, please remember that weak, untrained or inexperienced voices, regardless of how dear to you and your families, have sometimes ruined a wedding and been a grave embarrassment to the families and a major discomfort to those in attendance.

To begin planning the music for your wedding; please contact Sr. Alexa to set up an appointment. **Please do not contract other singers or musicians or plan any programs until you have met with Sr. Alexa. This may be done at about three (3) months before the wedding or at about six (6) months if you are including instrumentalists or printing a program booklet.** Please make sure your home phone number is kept up to date in the rectory so Sister Alexa may be able to contact you.

DECORATIONS

The use of the wedding candle is strictly prohibited. Flowers for the altar may be provided by the couple and should be delivered to the church on the day of the wedding. The flowers should be left to decorate the church after the wedding. Sometimes the bride's split the cost of the flowers; this is entirely up to the couple. Make it a point to tell your florist (or show him these guidelines) that it is **absolutely forbidden to use any tacks, tape or staples** on any pews or anywhere in the church. There is no moving of sanctuary furniture by any florist to enhance decorations; archways of flowers at the entrance of the church are not permitted. Remember, the Epiphany of Our Lord Church is naturally beautiful and the simpler the decorations the better the church looks. Over decorating is not only an added, sometimes unnecessary expense, but often detracts from the beauty of the sanctuary. Please do not distribute corsages, carnations or other

honorary flowers in the church please use the vestibule. Please be courteous enough to properly dispose of Kleenex, film wrappers, empty boxes and other trash. Consideration for the wedding after yours is a sign of genuine charity and thoughtfulness.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOGRAPHY

If you have a professional photographer, please ask that he see the priest in the sacristy before the wedding begins. He may take as many photographs as he likes provided he remains out of the sanctuary, or the choir loft (it is always locked). He may not block the aisles or himself become the center of attention. Likewise, if someone is videotaping your wedding, he may not go into the choir loft or sanctuary. It is especially important that the videotaping remain out of the way and discreet. The dignity and reverence of the sacred church and respect for the sacrament must always be the priority. The church is not a studio.

RICE, CONFETTI AND BALLOONS

Thankfully, the practice of throwing rice at a wedding has all but disappeared. But just as a reminder, no rice, confetti, balloons, petals or other materials may be thrown or brought into the church or the steps outside. The floors of the church become treacherous with rice scattered on them.

VISITING PRIESTS

Sometimes a couple may have a priest relative or friend who wishes to perform the marriage. Any priest in good standing is welcome at the Epiphany of Our Lord Church to marry you. When you set up your initial appointment with the priest from Epiphany of Our Lord who will be handling your wedding and paper work, inform him at that time that there will be a visiting priest coming in, as well as his name and where he is stationed.

CHANGING OR CANCELLING YOUR WEDDING DATE

If, for some reason, you need to cancel or postpone your wedding date once it has been put into the church book, please **(1) notify the rectory, and (2) send a written letter addressed to the priest handling your wedding indicating that you have cancelled or postponed your wedding and the reason why.** If you wish to change your date and/or time, you must speak to the priest handling your wedding. The priest who sets up your initial meeting (to set your wedding date) is the priest who handles all the paperwork on your wedding, and it is to him that you must address any questions or changes. Sometimes when a couple requests a particular priest of the house it may not always be possible to honor this due to priest scheduling and other commitments. When possible, however, we will try and honor this request.

IN CONCLUSION.....

It is truly the hope of the priests at Epiphany of Our Lord Church that your wedding day be memorable and happy. We have tried to answer most of the questions you might have with this set of guidelines. If you do, however, have a question, please do not hesitate to call the rectory at **215-334-1035** and ask for your priest.

May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain forever.