

Immaculate Conception Church

MARRIAGE GUIDELINES

A QUICK REFERENCE CHECKLIST

SIX to TWELVE MONTHS PRIOR:

- Contact parish priest for appointment
- Set time and date of wedding and rehearsal
- Register, with help of preparing priest, for required program
- Contact musicians, reception hall, florist, and photographer

FOUR MONTHS PRIOR:

- Meet with Sponsor couple, Engaged Encounter or Pre-Cana

ONE MONTH PRIOR:

- Get the rings
- Complete the liturgy preparation
- If you choose to print a program, have the priest proof-read it with you before it is printed
- Have all forms collected
- Pick up your Civil Marriage license

THE WEEK BEFORE:

- Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Wedding rehearsal

Welcome!

Immaculate Conception Parish welcomes you. We rejoice in the mutual love you have discovered and commend you for your desire to declare and seal it publicly and permanently, in the Sacrament of Matrimony. In this way your love and life together will serve those around you as a sign that Jesus Christ is alive and present to the world.

This sacred covenant of marriage is a symbol of the union between Christ and the Church. (Ephesians 5:21-32) In Christ, God has made a Covenant with us, sealed by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Preparation for marriage is a time of spiritual growth together with God.

Pre-Marriage Arrangements

PARISH REGISTRATION:

Marriage involves the couple and the parish. Either the bride or groom must be registered in a parish, faithfully practicing the Catholic Faith, and supporting the parish. If both are living elsewhere you need delegation (permission) from your pastor.

MARRIAGE INSTRUCTION:

One Marriage Preparation Program is required: Pre-Cana or Engaged Encounter or Sponsor Couple Program.

The **Pre-Cana** schedule and registration materials are available from the preparing priest or parish office. Pre-Cana registration is done through the Archdiocese website. www.arch.pvt.k12.ia.us Use the Events Registration tab

The **Sponsor Couple Program** information and registration can be obtained from the preparing priest.

Engaged Encounter participation is encouraged. If you so choose, Engaged Encounter registration is also done through the Archdiocesan website. www.arch.pvt.k12.ia.us Use the Events Registration tab.

Couples under the age of 20 may be required to participate in the Intensive Marriage Preparation Program.

MARRIAGE DOCUMENTS:

The prospective bride and groom will fill out the marriage papers with the preparing priest.

You will need to provide the priest with baptismal certificates issued within the last six (6) months, unless you were baptized in the church in which the wedding will take place. Certificates may be obtained from the church of baptism.

The Catholic Church usually requires two (2) witnesses for each person (preferably parents) to meet with a priest to testify concerning the couple's freedom to marry.

The Pre-Cana, Engaged Encounter, or sponsor Couple certificates must be given to the priest shortly after completion.

A marriage license from the State of Iowa is required for the marriage and should be given to the priest at the rehearsal or before.

USUAL TIMES FOR WEDDINGS:

The usual times for weddings at Immaculate Conception are:

5:00 PM or 7:00 PM on Friday evenings

1:00 PM on Saturday afternoon

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION:

As individuals and as a couple, you need to be spiritually prepared for two to become ONE. Disciples of Jesus Christ are persons of prayer. Learning to pray together is important in growing in love, forgiveness and fidelity, and in becoming a sacrament and sign of God's love to others.

- ❖ pray together
- ❖ attend Mass together, (if possible)
- ❖ go to confession
- ❖ reflect upon the Scriptures for you wedding
- ❖ pray at your wedding rehearsal

Wedding Liturgy

THE MARRIAGE RITE:

Remember, a wedding in the Catholic Church is the reception of a Sacrament. Excessive ostentation is in poor taste and should be avoided.

The TOGETHER FOR LIFE booklet is provided at the Pre-Cana, Sponsor Couple Program or parish office and contains a systematic review of the options involved and the order of the Marriage Rite within or outside of Mass. Your choice of readings, prayers and blessings should be reviewed by the preparing priest.

It is important to select an experienced lector. The readings are always taken from the Sacred Scriptures.

The Unity Candle, if used, should be a single candle with candle holder provided by the couple. The church does not provide candle holders.

Parents, Godparents or Grandparents, are usually honored to present the offertory gifts.

The presentation of a flower to Our Lady, if desired, takes place immediately after Holy Communion at a wedding Mass.

For the rehearsal and the wedding, please emphasize to the wedding party the necessity for starting on time as a courtesy to all those involved.

Non-Catholics may not receive Holy Communion because the fullness of Christian unity is not yet present.

WEDDING MUSIC:

Only religious music is allowed during the Marriage Rite. Musical selections during the wedding should not be so long that they distract from the smooth flow of the ceremony. Music before and after the Marriage Rite is meant to complement the sacred reality of Sacramental Marriage and should therefore be religious in nature. There are hundreds of songs to choose from so you are not limited by anything other than your taste for religious music. Please contact the preparing priest or Sue Reiter, Parish Music Director, (296-1925) for approved wedding music.

DECORATIONS:

Appropriate decorations are fine, such as flowers on the high altar. However, no flowers are allowed on the altar of sacrifice and none of the sanctuary furniture is to be moved to accommodate flowers or other decorations.

If you do choose to use a rented candelabra, dripless candles must be used, and a plastic covering must be placed on the floor beneath the candelabra. Due to the forced air of the air-conditioning/heating system in the church votive lights work best.

Curtains are available to provide privacy in the Heritage Room. If you would like to use the curtains please indicate so to the Sacristan at the wedding rehearsal or call the parish office.

Please have your ushers remove the flower boxes, and personal marriage booklets and do the necessary clean up of the church after the ceremony. The family is also responsible for removing any waste/garbage left in the Heritage Room.

CONDUCT:

The wedding couple is responsible for the conduct of their guests. The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is to be respected at all times by everyone present regardless of religion.

Alcoholic beverages or drugs are not allowed in the church and are not to be consumed in the parking lot before, during or after the wedding or rehearsal. Breaking this rule will result in immediate canceling of photographic privileges in the church, and the possible cancellation of the wedding.

The throwing of rice, bird seed, confetti, flower petals, blowing bubbles etc. is forbidden because they do not have place in a Sacramental Marriage, and no aisle runner may be used, they are dangerous for people who may slip and fall because of them. *(Save this for the reception, if you want it.)*

PHOTOGRAPHY:

The photographer is a paid person of your choice entrusted with the use of the church to record your wedding. The photographer is a **guest** of the church.

Pictures may be taken at any time during the wedding by the official photographer, but from the main floor of the church, not the Sanctuary.

Pictures may be taken one and one-half (1 ½) hours either before or after the wedding, but not both times. The Sanctuary may be used for these photos, but we ask all to maintain proper respect for the Blessed Sacrament.

Videotaping is allowed. However, before the ceremony the person doing the videotaping should see the officiating priest for guidelines

VISITING CLERGY:

Visiting priests, ministers and rabbis are welcome to participate. The preparing priest should approve their involvement.

Wedding Fees

PRE-CANA REGISTRATION: \$45.00

ENGAGED ENCOUNTER: \$230.00

SPONSOR COUPLE PROGRAM: Provided by the parish plus \$40.00 for materials.

USE OF CHURCH FACILITIES: Payable at time of scheduling.

Parishioner \$300.00

Non-Parishioner \$600.00

Non-Parishioners may not schedule a wedding more than six months prior to date.

ORGANISTS – SINGERS: Paid directly by the couple

ALTAR SERVERS: \$10.00 each

(You may either provide your own altar servers or the parish will provide them for you.)

PRIEST: No fee is required. You may give something if you wish.

COHABITATION and THE WEDDING LITURGY

The priest may choose to discuss the following comments with the couple in a way that attempts to communicate personal acceptance and regard for them, without skirting or glossing over the seriousness of a choice to cohabit:

A man and woman who are publicly living together may sincerely and authentically love one another. Yet their mutual witness is to a kind of love which is tentative, self-directed, and independent of the eternal, other-directed and sacrificial love of Christ for those He calls his own. The couple who chooses to live together has compromised their ability to reveal the love of Christ to others at a time when their love is the center of the Church's attention.

In addition, a man and woman living together unwittingly limit their ability to freely develop all aspects of their relationship. They also hamper their potential to make a responsible and enduring commitment at the time of their wedding. In fact, statistics now show that couples who cohabit prior to their marriage have a significantly higher divorce rate than non-cohabiting couples.

We strongly urge any couple who has made the decision to live together to prayerfully reconsider their decision, searching their hearts in the light of God's revealed truth made known through the scriptures and the Church. Christ Jesus calls every couple whom he wills to be married to a deeper and holier form of love. Apart from a permanent commitment, this love necessarily implies abstinence from sexual relations, and stepping away from a life situation which makes honest self-reflection more difficult to realize.