

St. John the Evangelist Parish  
Spencerport, New York

***WEDDING GUIDELINES***

**Introduction**

The celebration of a wedding is a sacred, joyful time for the bride and groom, for their families and friends, and for our parish. This celebration of love, of new beginnings, and of promise and hope for the future, makes this a grace-filled time in the lives of all those involved in the celebration. The Catholic Church celebrates the sacramental union of its members in the context of prayerful liturgy. This important sacrament draws us more deeply into the mystery of God's love for us.

In this spirit, St. John the Evangelist Parish provides these guidelines for celebrating weddings. It is important to note that celebrating a wedding does not mean that you have rented a church for personal use; rather St. John the Evangelist Parish is sharing its worship space with you for your special day. For this reason we expect that you will respectfully comply with these guidelines. These guidelines are intended to insure a reverent and joyful marriage celebration within the context of the Church's prayer.

It is our sincere desire to assist you in planning a meaningful and memorable celebration of your marriage. May God bless you as you begin your preparations and may your happiness together know no limits.

**What is marriage?**

At first hand, marriage might seem self-evident. Two people fall in love and make a decision to formalize their relationship. Yet, in the Roman Catholic Church, marriage has a much richer depth to it. Christ made marriage a sacrament – a visible, effective sign of invisible grace that comes from God – so that a man and woman are directed towards the salvation of others as well as their own personal salvation. Marriage is a sacrament of service to build up the people of God.

As you approach marriage, this becomes a period of discernment: To understand what marriage is in Christ and in the Church, who you are in Christ, and how Christ is calling married couples to live out their lives.

Marriage is a mutual self-giving grounded in the grace of Baptism, which establishes the foundational covenant of every person with Christ in the Church. In accepting each other, and with Christ's grace, the engaged couple promise each other total self-giving, faithfulness, and openness to new life. ~*Amoris Laetitia*, 73

### **Who may marry at St. John the Evangelist Church?**

Marriage is to be celebrated in a parish church where either the bride or groom reside or has a partial residence. Parish registration is not a pre-requisite for marriage in the Catholic Church. However, at least, the bride or the groom must be Roman Catholic.

Transient parishioners (parish members who have left the area for careers or education within the last three years) are also welcome to celebrate their weddings here. They should contact the pastor of their local parish to complete all necessary paperwork and steps in preparation for marriage. They will need to secure written permission from the pastor of their local church to be married at St. John the Evangelist Church. Military personnel are to contact the Archdiocese of the United States Military.

### **Can I still get married at St. John the Evangelist Church, if my fiancé is not Roman Catholic?**

Yes, Roman Catholics marrying people from other faith traditions are welcome to celebrate their wedding in our parish.

It's important to know that Roman Catholics who marry people from other faith traditions make a vow to raise their children in the Roman Catholic faith.

Also, it's important to know that the Catholic Church understands the reception of Holy Communion to be the preeminent sign of unity among Christians. Sadly, divisions still exist within the church, and as a result of these divisions, inter-communion is not permitted. If the bride or groom is not Catholic and if you will have a large number of non-Catholic guests, it is suggested that you do not have a Mass so that the issue of who may receive Holy Communion does not become a source of disunity at your celebration.

### **Setting the date of the wedding**

A date cannot be set for your wedding until it is determined that you are free to get married in the Roman Catholic Church. This is done in an initial pastoral meeting. Please call St. John the Evangelist Parish office (585-352-5481) to set up a meeting.

A minimum of six months of preparation is necessary to properly ensure the pastoral care of the couple, to prepare spiritually for matrimony and to help them to understand and accept the blessings and demands of married life.

A deposit of \$100 is required when the wedding is scheduled. The balance must be paid two weeks prior to the wedding. Checks should be made payable to "St. John the Evangelist Church"

**What times are available for weddings and rehearsals?**

Weddings are normally scheduled as follows:

Fridays at 3:00 PM

OR

Saturdays at 2:00 PM

Rehearsals are scheduled with the priest or deacon from St. John the Evangelist Parish who is handling your paperwork usually between 5:00 and 8:00 PM on the Thursday or Friday prior to the wedding. Please allow one hour for a rehearsal.

**We allot two hours of time per wedding** – roughly 30 minutes for set-up and arrival of guests; 60 minutes for the ceremony including the entrance processional and recessional; and 30 minutes for pictures and clean-up. A ceremony that starts 20 to 30 minutes late will cut into the time that your wedding party will be able to use the church following the ceremony.

**What is the fee for a wedding?**

The Church does not charge for the administration of the sacraments. However, it is proper that a fee be charged to cover the costs of the organist, a cantor or leader of congregational singing, use of the church, planning meetings, planning materials and the presence of a priest, deacon or parish-designated wedding coordinator at the rehearsal and the wedding, and any janitorial services.

Church Fee (\$100 deposit due at time of booking)	\$150.00
Organist (inc. 1 hr. practice fee)	\$150.00
Cantor (inc. 1 hr. practice fee)	\$150.00
Music Planning	\$80.00
<b>Min. Total for wedding</b>	<b>\$530.00</b>

**Note: Payment for music practice for the organist and cantor is \$50.00 per hour. Additional practices necessary due to unusual music and/or additional instrumentalists or musicians will be subject to an additional \$50.00 fee per individual per session.**

**Note: Couples are required to attend a Pre-Cana retreat or an online video based Pre-Cana retreat. The cost of the retreat is a separate charge and not included with the parish fee for your wedding.**

**\*Please note** – If your financial means are limited, please speak with the pastor or deacon from St. John the Evangelist Parish who is handling your paperwork.

### **Marriage License**

It is the responsibility of the engaged couple to obtain a New York State Marriage License. The license should be received by the priest/deacon officiating at the ceremony no later than the wedding rehearsal, the day prior to the wedding day.

A couple who intends to be married in the Diocese of Rochester must apply in person to any town or city clerk in the state. The application for a license must be signed by both applicants in the presence of the town/city clerk.

The marriage ceremony cannot take place within 24 hours from the exact time that the license was issued. A license costs \$60 and is valid for 60 calendar days, beginning the day after it is issued. This is not part of the church's wedding fee. Please refer to: [www.health.ny.gov/publications/4210](http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/4210)

### **The Environment**

Respect for the prayerful nature of this celebration guides the way in which flowers, pictures and music are involved. In celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage the Church looks to Sunday celebration of the Eucharist as its model. Nothing that distracts from the atmosphere of worship and prayer should be included. The primary focus in the celebration of marriage is always the couple's deepening love and commitment to Christ.

### **Furniture and furnishings**

As a general rule, none of the furniture or furnishings in the church can be moved or removed. All aisles and exits must remain clear to allow safe entrance and egress to and from the church.

### **Flowers**

Floral arrangements have long been a significant part of the decor of the Church's worship environment. Flowers should be used as they would be on Sunday. Flowers and other decorations must not inhibit the movements required of the presider, the wedding couple, the attendants or guests, nor block sightlines especially around the altar and ambo (pulpit).

St. John the Evangelist Parish does not allow the excessive use of flowers in the sanctuary or aisles of the Church. The attractive decorative qualities of our church reduce the need for additional floral decorations. Simple and elegant arrangements, however, can enhance the worship environment of the church. Artificial flowers are generally not permitted. Flower arrangements may be placed on the steps to the sanctuary at each end near but not blocking the hand rails or in front of the altar, ambo, baptismal font, or on either side of the processional cross at the back wall of the sanctuary.

Please note - if a couple chooses to have a wedding during Advent or Lent, they must realize that floral decorations will be prohibited as they are not in keeping with the penitential character of the season.

Weddings are celebrated in the context of ongoing parish life. Therefore, the normal environmental decorations of the parish cannot be removed to accommodate wedding color schemes, etc. Wedding couples should be especially mindful of this when selecting a wedding date that falls within certain liturgical seasons (e.g. Advent, Christmas, Easter etc).

Aisle runners are not used in St. John the Evangelist Parish. Rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, sparklers, or the like are not allowed on church property; they are a safety hazard to your guests and a liability to our church. It is your responsibility to inform those invited to your wedding of this limitation.

No tacks, nails, tape, or other means may be used to secure flowers, palms or other decorations to church walls, fixtures, chairs/pews or other furniture. Any decorations attached to the chairs/pews must be attached with string, pipe cleaners or rubber bands. These must not inhibit the movement of your wedding guests as they can be a hazard in an emergency. Single-candle torches at the ends of the pews or rows of chairs can be used if they have hurricane-type covers and are attached to the pew or row of chairs. Only dripless candles are permitted.

Because of multiple weddings and other parish events and due to limitations in parish staffing, florists must remove all wedding apparatus (e.g. ribbons, boxes, etc.), inside and outside of the church within 30 minutes of the conclusion of the wedding. Couples are invited to leave floral arrangements in the church after the celebration. The florist is asked to place the altar flowers 30-60 minutes before the wedding. St. John the Evangelist Parish cannot be responsible for property left before or after a wedding celebration by florists, family members, etc.

### **Unity Candles and Unity Sand**

The use of a “Unity Candle” or “Unity Sand” is not contained in the Order of Celebrating Matrimony, and is not a component of Catholic liturgy. If the couple wishes to incorporate a unity candle or unity sand into their wedding day, it is most suitable to incorporate it as part of the “Grace Before Meals” at their wedding reception. ~ *Order of Celebrating Matrimony: 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 2016*

### **Photographers & Videographers**

St. John the Evangelist Parish requires responsible activity on the part of all photographers and videographers, both professional and amateur. The number of weddings and other activities on a given day will determine how soon the photographer and bridal party may arrive before the liturgy and how long they may remain afterward. Photo sessions must be completed and all people out of the church at least forty-five minutes prior to the scheduled starting time of the next wedding or event and no longer than forty-five minutes after the completion of the ceremony.

To insure that the sacred character of the sacramental celebration is not disrupted, St. John the Evangelist Parish discourages the use of flash photography during the ceremony. Photographers and Videographers are not permitted to roam the church during the ceremony nor are they to interrupt or delay the flow of processions. If there are questions about the use or placement of equipment, your photographer should consult the priest or deacon officiating.

During photographic sessions before or after the ceremony, no furniture of the church may be moved. Video lights are not permitted. Please discuss video plans with the priest or deacon handling your paperwork at St. John the Evangelist church before signing a contract.

### **Refreshments**

Under no circumstances are refreshments allowed in the church

### **The Wedding Liturgy**

Together with your presider, you will choose Scripture readings, prayers, blessings and the appropriate vow formula, and Universal Prayer (also called “Prayers of the Faithful” or “General Intercessions”). In addition, the presider will help you plan the order of your procession and recession and the placement of the wedding party in the worship space.

Your presider will also assist you in determining whether your wedding should take place within the context of the Eucharist (Mass) or Liturgy of the Word. Some things to consider in determining which is more appropriate include: The prospective bride and grooms attitude toward the Eucharist? Is it part of your regular worship practice? Will everyone who attends be able to participate fully and actively in the celebration? With these considerations in mind, the Church encourages that the wedding between a baptized Catholic and baptized non-Catholic take place within the context of the Liturgy of the Word. As regards the wedding between a baptized Catholic and a non-baptized person, the Church requires that such a celebration take place within the context of the Liturgy of the Word.

It should be noted that normally, a wedding ceremony within the context of the Liturgy of the Word is celebrated by a deacon.

Please note: If kneelers are needed for the bride and bridegroom, they will be placed in consultation with the priest, deacon or parish-designated wedding coordinator.

In addition, the presider will guide you as to where and how Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and Presenters of the Gifts can participate. They or anyone else with a role in the ceremony will be expected to attend the rehearsal.

### **Professional Wedding Consultants**

A priest, deacon, or parish-designated wedding coordinator will conduct your rehearsal and assist in the celebration of your wedding. While a professional wedding consultant may prove helpful to you in arranging the details of your wedding day, which are not directly related to the liturgical celebration, his/her responsibilities cease at the church's door and begin again at your reception.

### **Music**

Music at a Catholic wedding must be sacred music, that is, music that reflects the joy of the Christian community. Although human, social and dramatic aspects have a real place in the wedding ceremony, the liturgical dimension of marriage takes precedence and blends those other aspects. Selecting appropriate music for a Catholic wedding requires careful planning. Music is needed in various categories such as Psalms, acclamations, service music, entrance procession and recessional, and possible instrumental and vocal solos.

All of the music used for your wedding must make it clear that it is Christian love, a reflection of God's love for God's people, which is celebrated in the sacrament of matrimony. Any music associated with situations and activities that contradict Christian values is not permitted because it would offend the Christian community gathered around the couple in faith.

Therefore, even when popular/secular music has a special meaning to a couple, or those in attendance, such works are inappropriate for use in liturgical celebrations. Music which appeals to the couple personally, and which is of a nonreligious nature, may best be incorporated into another part of the day (i.e. wedding reception). Songs of secular origin include those from Broadway musicals, movies and television shows (i.e. "The Bridal Chorus" or any pieces that were composed for secular rather than liturgical purposes.).

The music minister at St. John the Evangelist Parish will work with you on your musical selections to finalize the selection of music for your ceremony.

As you begin to make music selections, we encourage you to read the texts carefully. Do the words of the song speak of your love as a sign and reflection of God's love? Will they remind the congregation that you believe marriage involves the two of you and God?

Certain "traditional" organ selections (e.g. the "Wedding March" by Wagner, known as "Here Comes the Bride" and the "Wedding March" by Mendelssohn) have inappropriate secular roots and have taken on trite associations through the years. We hear these selections used for soap-opera weddings and in television commercials. Hence, we discourage these selections at the Rite of Christian Marriage.

### Musicians

One of the keyboardists in St. John the Evangelist Parish, and a cantor provide musical leadership for all weddings celebrated at our church. A cantor and accompanist are needed to lead the music required by the wedding liturgy (either Mass or Liturgy of the Word).

**If you wish to invite an ensemble, friend, relative or outside musician to sing or play an instrument at your wedding, please discuss it with the music minister of St. John the Evangelist Parish, assigned by the priest or deacon handling your paperwork at St. John the Evangelist parish.**

The following music is sung at every wedding celebrated in St. John the Evangelist Parish and is led by a cantor: the responsorial psalm (sung after the first reading); and the Alleluia (sung after the second reading).

If your wedding is celebrated within a Mass, the following acclamations will also be led by the cantor: The Gloria; the Holy, Holy; the Memorial Acclamation; and the Great Amen.

Although not required, the following music can be added:

- a gathering song (sung by the congregation during the entrance procession or immediately after the entrance procession);
- an acclamation after the exchange of vows and rings.

If you wish to have additional vocal or instrumental music before or during the wedding liturgy, a vocal soloist or instrumentalist is required. **Please do not hire a vocalist or instrumentalist until you have talked with the priest or deacon handling your paperwork at St. John the Evangelist parish.**

Please note: Only one selection is used for the opening wedding procession. Special music for the entrance of the bride is not permitted. This procession should include the priest/deacon who presides, other liturgical ministers, the groomsmen and groom, the bridesmaids, bride and her escorts. All music must be "live" - previously recorded and digitally sequenced music may not be used.

(All music used in St. John the Evangelist Parish, whether vocal or instrumental, must be approved by the priest or deacon handling your paperwork at St. John the Evangelist parish at least one month prior to your wedding ceremony.)



St. John the Evangelist Parish  
Spencerport, New York

## Wedding Preparation Checklist

### Paperwork

- \_\_\_\_\_ Baptismal Certificate(s) – prospective Catholic bride and/or groom contacts the parish church at which she or he was baptized, and requests that they send a recent (issued within 6 months of wedding) copy of her or his baptismal certificate to: St. John the Evangelist Parish, 55 Martha Street, Spencerport, New York 14559
- Baptized non-Catholic's should present satisfactory proof of baptism to the priest or deacon preparing them for marriage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Preuptial Witness Affidavit (Freedom to Marry) – A form, usually signed by a parent, testifying that the prospective groom/bride has not been married before and is free to get married, and officially witnessed by priest, deacon, pastoral minister, or notary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Preuptial Investigation Form – formal questionnaire required by the Diocese of Rochester and filled out by the priest or deacon wherein the prospective bride and groom are interviewed separately.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Marriage License – obtained from City or Town Clerk's office. Note: Marriage Licenses are not valid until 24 hours after they are issued, but are valid for about two months. So, get the license a few weeks prior to the wedding and bring it to the rehearsal. Without the license in hand, a priest or deacon will not be able to officiate at your marriage. No license – no wedding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (priest or deacon will indicate if additional paperwork is required): \_\_\_\_\_

### Marriage Preparation

- \_\_\_\_\_ Pre-Cana – one day-long session or multiple sessions usually on a Saturday or Sunday put on by the Diocese of Rochester and individual parishes where married couples assist engaged couples in preparing for marriage in any number of areas, including: Marriage as a Sacrament and the Spirituality of Marriage. A schedule of sessions in the Diocese of Rochester can be found at:  
<http://www.dor.org/index.cfm/evangelization-catechesis/sacraments/marriage/precana-schedule/>
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fully Engaged – A reflective inventory of the couple  
Both engaged persons take an inventory responding to approximately 150 statements about marriage. Contact Dcn. Bill Rabjohn ([brabjohn@dor.org](mailto:brabjohn@dor.org) or 352-5481 x206) to make arrangements to complete the Fully Engaged questionnaire online. When the results are processed, the priest or deacon will contact you to set up a time(s) to review the results. The couples spend several sessions with a priest or deacon reviewing the results.

### Liturgy Preparation

- \_\_\_\_\_ Together for Life – The engaged couple uses this booklet to help plan their ceremony by selecting the various readings, prayers and blessings. Six weeks prior to the wedding, the couple should make an appointment with the priest or deacon who will be conducting the ceremony to review the completed Wedding Liturgy Planning Form. The priest or deacon will then share the completed form with the music ministers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Music – The engaged couple contacts Laura Mance ([lmance@spencerportschools.org](mailto:lmance@spencerportschools.org) or 585-281-6693) and arranges to meet with the keyboardist about planning the music for the ceremony. Final selections of musician(s) and music should be completed no later than six weeks prior to the wedding before the wedding liturgy planning form is reviewed with the priest or deacon who will be conducting the ceremony.