

Sharing Wedding Guide

By Catholic Digest

Demure Wedding Gown

Fortunately of late, Catholic brides have had some good examples of classy and modest bridal gowns. There was Duchess Kate's lovely, long-sleeved gown, and more recently the flattering gown of Her Imperial and Royal Highness Kathleen of Habsbourg-Lorraine, Archduchess of Austria. Catholic Digest asked Archduchess Kathleen about why she decided on a modest, three-quarter-sleeved wedding gown with a feminine, lace bateau neck "Like any bride, I choose my gown because I thought it was beautiful and reflected what we wanted our Nuptial Mass and our marriage to be about. The bride, all in white symbolizes the beauty of the Church as she walks down the aisle with her eyes toward her groom – a symbol of Christ."

She discovered the basic pieces at a Cincinnati boutique while wandering around one day with her mother and sisters. "We never expected to find my wedding dress! Over the next months, we worked with a wonderfully talented and patient seamstress who added the top and lengthened the train to nine feet so that it would accommodate the antique lace veil belonging to my husband's family."

Like Archduchess Kathleen, brides are taking their dresses to seamstresses to have tops sewn onto their strapless dresses, or they are opting to wear lace jackets, boleros and caplets over their dresses for the ceremony. David's Bridal will add sleeves to any of its dresses. Designs created exclusively for online store BHLDN have a variety of dresses featuring higher necklines and short or long sleeves. ForHer andForHim.com and RainingBlossoms.com have some affordable, lovely, and modest gowns. Wedding gown designers known for having demure gowns in their 2013 collection include UK designers Jenny Packham and Augusta Jones; in the United States, high-end designers such as Marchesa and Monique Lhuillier offer gowns with beautiful lace sleeves in their collections. Brides on a budget can buy designer dresses (both new and used) on OnceWed.com and PreOwnedWeddingDresses.com for greatly discounted prices. For wedding gown inspiration, check out Pinterest.com/lorichaplin.

Brides, don't forget to choose classy dresses for the bridal party!

Father Francisco Flores, pastor at Our Lady of the Valley in Caldwell, Idaho, told Catholic Digest about a bridesmaid dress debacle.

Presiding over this first wedding after he arrived at his new parish, Fr. Flores happened to see the maid of honor before she walked down the aisle. The young priest was scandalized to see the woman in a dress with revealing cutouts. Only a jewel kept the plunging V-neck from completely exposing the young lady's chest, and below the jewel was a peek-a-boo cutout that bared her belly button. To top it off, the length of her skirt hardly covered her bottom. He told the wedding party that there was no way he was performing the ceremony with a nearly naked girl on the altar.

Pleased with her look, the bridesmaid did not take this news well. She belligerently asked him, "Who do you think you are?" Fr. Flores replied, "You see that young man? Put his suit jacket on over your dress and only then will we get started." The maid of honor begrudgingly agreed, and the wedding ceremony commenced. Right after, Fr. Flores hired a parish wedding coordinator that each bride must meet with to prevent this kind of thing from happening again. Finding classy looking bridesmaid's dresses can be a challenge. Websites such as: ModCloth.

com, ForHerandFor Him.com and Nordstrom. Both carry some demure styles. Like the bride, the wedding party can opt for pretty cover-ups or shawls to keep the ceremony modest.

Choosing the Date

When choosing your wedding date, don't forget to consider feast days. When my husband, David and I were trying to decide on a date, we looked at a liturgical calendar. When we saw that October 2 was the Feast of the Guardian Angels, we knew that was the perfect date for us. When we celebrate our anniversary, it always seems extra special because we are honoring our guardian angels at the same as me. For a liturgical calendar go to usccb.org/about/divine-worship/liturgical-calendar.

Holy Occasion, Holy Wedding Invitations

The look of the wedding invitations sets the mood for your wedding. Choosing wedding invitations that feature religious symbolism will let your guests know that Christ will be playing a prominent role in your wedding. A growing number of companies sell invitations with religious symbols. Among them are: InvitationsbyDawn.com features filigree doves, damask crosses, and other ornate crosses. Zazzle.com has an awesome full-color wedding invitation with the depiction of the Wedding at Cana by German painter, Julius Schnorr Von Carolsfeld. WeddingPaperDivas.com has some classy looking cross designs in black and white. Looking for an ethnic vibe? Minted.com sells a festive design that includes a rosary.

Sacred Music

If you are considering Bitter Sweet Symphony by The Verve or I will be Here by Steven Curtis Chapman, you may want to save these wedding favorites for the dance. For the wedding ceremony, it's important that the music be sacred music, not commercial.

Monsignor Thomas Cook explains, "Sacred music sets a tone that this ceremony is about God. A wedding should be God-centered, not couple-centered. The wedding ceremony is about Jesus and how the couple is going to unite their love to the love of Christ." He goes on to say, "The purpose of worship is to give honor and glory to God, and there actually is a way that God wishes to be worshipped. This is clear from a Biblical perspective Christ told us, 'Do this in memory of me.' The Catholic Mass is about worshipping God the way he wants to be worshipped."

St. Clement's Catholic Church in Chicago, Illinois, reminds couples of the true purpose of the wedding ceremony on its website. "It is important for couples to remember the celebration of the sacrament of marriage is not a private family function, nor is it merely a social affair or a personal expression of their love for one another. Rather, it is an action of the entire Church in whose presence they commit themselves to one another."

If a couple is unfamiliar with sacred music, a good Church musician can guide them and introduce them to music that will make their wedding beautiful and holy. May Ann Anderson, from Crystal Lake, Iowa, has been a Church organist for over 50 years and has played for numerous weddings. She told Catholic Digest, "When I meet with a couple, I give them a printed copy of the Archdiocesan Wedding Guidelines and a list of appropriate wedding music/congregational hymn choices. I go over the guidelines of music list with them, playing whatever pieces they want to hear. These days, more and more Churches are providing examples of wedding music options on the Internet, via MP3 files or YouTube. This is a great help for couples," explains Anderson.