



# Immaculate Conception Church

## Wedding Guide

### **MARRIAGE POLICY AND GUIDELINES**

Congratulations on your engagement to be married!

Marriage is the deepest way that the two of you will show your love for and commitment to each other. For those of us who are Christians, your marriage is a sign not only of your life, but of God's also.

The Catholic Church believes it is a great privilege and responsibility to be married in the Sacrament of Matrimony; a most serious and sacred sacrament.

These guidelines are meant to assist you in preparing well for your marriage. We assume that you want your wedding to reflect your Christian commitment.

#### **How soon can the Date and Time for the wedding be set?**

The date will be confirmed by the priest or deacon only after he has had sufficient opportunity to meet with you, to review the initial screening instrument (Fully Engaged), and to assess your readiness for marriage.

The priest or deacon assisting you will explain the various steps in your preparation for marriage. This process takes at least SIX MONTHS to complete. During this process, the primary emphasis is on marriage, which is a lifetime vocation. Only after you are prepared for marriage is it appropriate to focus on the wedding. If either party has been previously married, an annulment from the Catholic Church may be necessary. Please note....a date for your wedding **may not be scheduled** until the annulment process is completed.

### **Steps toward Christian Marriage**

#### ***Step 1 - Meet with your priest or deacon***

**When: SIX to TWELVE months prior to your wedding**

As soon as possible after your engagement, contact your priest or deacon to assist you with your marriage preparation.

After the parish priest or deacon has had an initial interview with the engaged couple, he will schedule the couple to take the assessment tool, **Fully Engaged** (a premarital inventory designed to reflect a couple's communication and compatibility).

#### ***Step 2 - Marriage Preparation Inventory***

**When: As soon as possible after meeting with your priest or deacon**

**Fully Engaged** is a Catholic catechetical premarital inventory designed to help engaged couples solidify the foundation upon which they, together with Christ, will build their Sacrament of Marriage. Grounded in Church teaching and loaded with catechetical content, this dynamic premarital inventory is a trustworthy guide that meets the real challenges today's couples face. Reviewing the results of this inventory and conversations between the couple and the priest or deacon around a variety of issues essentially helps to determine the couple's readiness for the Sacrament of Marriage.

### ***Step 3 - The Marriage Preparation Course***

**When: Ideally, six to twelve months before your wedding**

Following the successful completion of this phase, the priest or deacon will review the various options for a formal Marriage Preparation Program. Diocesan regulations require a couple to participate in such a program. They may choose which program they want to participate in from among those listed on the Archdiocese of St. Louis website: <http://archstl.org/laityandfamilylife/page/engaged-couples>

- **Examples:** God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage (see here for class schedule: <http://archstl.org/laityandfamilylife/page/marriage-preparation-class-schedule>, Engaged Encounter Weekends of St. Louis, Marriage Preparation Workshop - St. Charles Lwanga Center, AGAPE Catholic Ministries, Parish-Based Sponsor Couple Experience (not available at all parishes).

### ***Step 4 - Natural Family Planning Intro Course***

**When: Six to twelve months before your wedding**

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is not only effective for planning your family it is also highly effective in overcoming obstacles that compromise your ability to become parents. See here for class schedule: <http://archstl.org/naturalfamilyplanning/page/nfp-introductory-sessions>

### ***Step 5 - Sacrament of Reconciliation***

**When: Before the wedding as necessary**

- The Church invites all Catholics to prepare themselves spiritually prior to their marriage by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Even if you are not of the Catholic faith, you still would benefit from spiritual direction.
- The regular practice of the sacrament of reconciliation keeps marriages healthy and strong.

Confessions are heard at Immaculate Conception on Saturdays from 4:00-4:30 p.m. or you may make an appointment.

### ***Step 6 - Liturgy Planning***

**When: Before the wedding**

The priest or deacon will provide a booklet to help you plan your wedding ceremony. Watching the USCCB video “*Say I Do...What Happens at a Catholic Wedding*” is very helpful for this process. Link to view the video: [archstl.org/marriageprep](http://archstl.org/marriageprep). More on celebrating your Wedding Liturgy will follow later in this document.

### **What documents are needed?**

**Baptismal Record** - A recent (within the last six months) copy of your Baptismal Record, for Catholics and non-Catholics.

**Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire** - The Archdiocese of St. Louis requires that the assisting priest or deacon fill out the official Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire with the bridegroom and bride. The purpose of this is to establish that there are no obstacles to the couple marrying in the Catholic Church.

**Civil Marriage License** - **MUST be given to the priest or deacon at the time of the rehearsal.** This can be secured at any county courthouse in Missouri. In Lincoln County this can be obtained at the Recorder of Deed, Lincoln County, 201 Main Street #103, Troy, MO 63379. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday except legal holidays. The license **MUST** be used within 30 days of the issuance of the license. The license must be paid for in CASH at the time of application.

### **Will the Wedding be announced in church?**

The parish will automatically include an announcement of the forthcoming wedding in the Immaculate Conception bulletin. If one party is from another parish, he/she is responsible for notifying their own parish concerning the publication of the Marriage Banns at least one month prior to the wedding.

## **Celebrating Your Wedding Liturgy at Immaculate Conception Parish**

### **How to decide what kind of ceremony to have?**

If both parties are Catholic and have been regular churchgoers, the Church recommends that you celebrate your marriage in the context of a Mass.

If both parties are Catholic, but have not been regular churchgoers, or, if one party is not Catholic (and thus cannot participate in Holy Communion), the Church recommends that the exchange of vows take place in the context of a Scripture service along with prayers and blessings, but not a Mass.

In each case the service will reflect the real situation of the couple, and in each case there is a Catholic wedding ceremony. The expectation of the Catholic Church is that your wedding ceremony will promote the active participation of you, your family, friends, and guests.

### **Are there any special problems if a Catholic wants to marry a Non-Catholic?**

Catholics are encouraged to marry Catholics, because we believe that sharing religious convictions and church practice supports and strengthens a couple's commitment to each other. However, with the approval of the Archbishop, a Catholic may marry another Christian, Non-Christian or even someone with no religious affiliation.

In these circumstances the Catholic party is asked to affirm his/her intention to continue living as a Catholic and to all in their power to raise any children in the Catholic faith.

### **May a couple have a priest other than one from our parish to witness our exchange of vows?**

Yes, another priest or deacon is quite acceptable. Of course, he should also be willing to take on the additional responsibilities of assessing the couple's readiness for marriage, guiding them in the selection of a marriage preparation program, and completing the Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire.

### **Are there any directions regarding the wedding party?**

Since your wedding is going to be a religious ceremony, you may want to consider whether the people you plan to have in your wedding party are comfortable with and do value the faith dimension that will be expressed in this celebration. If you have a ring bearer or flower girl, they must be able to walk down the aisle or be assisted by an adult.

### **If one party is not Catholic, may his/her Minister participate in the wedding service?**

Yes, very definitely. We would welcome the other party's celebrant of wedding and work out with him/her a role in the service.

## **How to go about planning the wedding ceremony?**

The priest or deacon with whom you are working with will provide you with a planning book and guidance for planning your wedding liturgy. A final meeting/conversation is usually set to put together the scripture readings, music, participation, and all the details of the wedding ceremony.

## **What other ministers are needed for the wedding service?**

First of all, we remind ourselves that the bride and groom are the actual ministers of the sacrament of marriage. They begin their life-long celebration of the sacrament through the exchange of vows in the presence of the official witnesses (the priest/deacon and two other Catholics) and of the Church community.

**Lectors** - You will need one to three lectors for the selections from Holy Scripture and intercession (petitions). You may ask family or friends, even members of the wedding party. They should be people who have the necessary gifts for proclaiming God's word effectively and reverently. People who are not accustomed to reading or speaking in public usually do not make good readers for occasions like this. The readers should attend the rehearsal.

**Extraordinary Ministers** - If any of your family or friends serve in this capacity in their own parishes, they would be welcome to serve here. They should contact the presiding priest in the sacristy before the wedding Mass, so that he can familiarize them with the procedures to be followed.

**Ushers** - Members of the wedding party and the families of the bride and groom may consider being at church early enough to greet the guests as they gather for the celebration. In doing this they exercise the ministry of hospitality. Ushers may also be chosen to assist with seating the guests.

**Altar Servers** - Altar servers will be needed, especially for the celebration of Mass. Usually these are selected by the priest from among the parish servers. If the couple wants any of their family or friends to serve, they should have had some prior experience. If parish servers are used, there is a customary offering of \$10 to \$20 for each server placed in an envelope for proper decorum.

**Musicians/Cantors** - It is recommended to have a musician as well as a cantor to lead the singing. Music for the ceremony is the responsibility of the couple. More information regarding music selection, contacts, and fees can be found later in this document.

## **Are there any parts of the service that need special attention?**

**Readings** - You may select the readings for your wedding from the book provided. You may also select from the same book the version of the marriage vows you want to use, the blessing for the rings, the prayer of the couple, and the blessing for the couple.

**Prayers of the Faithful** - The couple should be involved in preparing the Prayers of the Faithful.

**Presentation of the Gifts** - Member of the family or friends may be chosen to present the bread and wine, if there is a mass. You may want to consider making a gift of food for the poor to be presented with the gifts for Mass.

**Visit to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary** - While a visit to the shrine is customary, this is clearly an expression of personal or individual piety. It is not necessary to include this in the ceremony.

**Unity Candle** - The symbolism of the "Two becoming One" has already taken place in the exchange of the vows and the blessing of the rings. This is no longer considered to be part of the Rite of

Marriage. Couples who want to continue this custom may consider doing this at the rehearsal dinner or during the wedding reception.

Since all of the above involve various options, these need to be discussed and decided with the presiding priest or deacon at some point during the preparation process.

### **What about scheduling the wedding and rehearsal times?**

The times and dates of the wedding and rehearsal should be coordinated with the priest or deacon assisting with your wedding. The latest wedding time available at Immaculate Conception is 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays. No receiving line is permitted on Saturday weddings beginning after 1:30 p.m. to allow the church to be ready for Saturday confessions by 3:45 p.m.

### **What decorations are permitted in the church?**

**Flowers** - These are appropriate for a wedding though not essential. You may bring your own flowers or choose from the silk flower selection available here. There is a photo album available to view selections.

**Decorations** - If you have decoration, bows on the pews, or aisle candles, please instruct the florist NOT to use any adhesive tape on the pews. There are 17 pews on each side of the center aisle.

**Aisle Runner** - This is NOT allowed.

**Rose Petals** - Real rose petals are NOT allowed due to oil and staining pigments of the flowers. Fake roses may be used only if they are cleaned up within 30 minutes of the ceremony.

**Rice, Confetti, Helium balloons** - These are NOT permitted. This is due to safety and environmental reasons.

**Banners** - There are banners for your use if interested. See selection and contact information on the form at the end of this document.

The throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, etc. is not permitted at Immaculate Conception church. This is due to safety issues and is required by our insurance carrier.

### **Are there any directions for Photographing and Videotaping?**

- Still pictures may unobtrusively be taken during the ceremony but should not distract from the reverence of the celebration or the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.
- **Flash photography is not permitted during the ceremony**, but is allowed during the opening procession and after the wedding is over. Please notify your photographer that they will be **limited to 30 minutes** at the conclusion of the wedding. This should be considered when deciding whether to have a “receiving line” at church. Your photographer should be instructed to see the presiding priest or deacon prior to the ceremony.
- Video cameras may be located on the side, outside the sanctuary. No cameras are allowed in the sanctuary (textured carpet).

### **Where will the Wedding Party dress?**

Our church was built in 1904, in a day when “cry rooms” and “bridal rooms” were not considered. There is a small lavatory near the front entrance; it is certainly not adequate as a dressing room. The bridal party may use the school cafeteria to dress. Please make arrangements with the presiding priest or deacon at least one month in advance. The expectation is that the wedding party will arrive at

church already dressed. The groomsmen should gather in the chapel (room directly to the right of the altar).

### **What about food and drink?**

The Catholic Church is a most sacred space, therefore there is no food or beverages permitted. In addition, alcohol and tobacco use are not allowed on the church premises before, during, or after the ceremony.

### **What are the Clean-Up directives?**

The couple should make arrangements for the church proper, gathering area, and choir loft to be cleared of all debris (programs, tissues, florist boxes, aisle runner, etc.) within a half-hour of the wedding.

### **What is the cost of the wedding at Immaculate Conception?**

It is customary to make an offering to the parish on the occasion of a wedding. The amount of this offering should be commensurate with the total amount you are planning to spend for the wedding. For most couples, the offering will be between \$100 and \$200. If neither the bride nor groom are members of Immaculate Conception Parish a minimum of \$500 is required.

### **Are there any clergy costs?**

Should you wish to give an honorarium to the clergyman who has assisted in preparing you for marriage, please use a separate envelope clearly indicating the offering is intended for the priest or the deacon.

### **Will our Wedding Program need approval?**

The wedding liturgy or service is a communal celebration, and participation of the congregation is encouraged. A printed worship aid (Wedding Program) may facilitate better participation and a sense of welcome. Please have your program ready for review by your priest or deacon one month before the event.

### **What about Music selection? Musicians / Cantors?**

- Planning music for your wedding ceremony is the responsibility of the couple.
- All music selections must be approved by the presiding Priest or Deacon of your wedding.
- Secular (non-sacred) music is prohibited. Exceptions must be approved by your presider and are only permitted BEFORE the ceremony itself; as prelude music. Generally, “canned” music (CDs, cassettes, etc.) is not permitted.

If you have requests that are not listed, please ask your accompanist.

It is recommended to have a musician as well as a cantor to lead the singing. Musicians are paid directly by the couple who hires them. These women and men who serve in this Church ministry consistently give much of themselves on a weekly basis throughout the year. They are talented professionals, who are dedicated to this ministry. For these reasons, the following fees are customarily expected for their services:

- Accompanist (Required-Organist, or pianist) \$150.00
- Cantor (Required-Song leader) \$ 75.00

Please contact Paula Vail (665-5159) if a musician is used outside of the parish musicians.

## Music Selection Suggestions

**Prelude Suggestions:** (suggested to sing at least one song as a hint for those downstairs)

Companions on a Journey  
Grow Old We Me  
I Have Loved You  
The Wedding Song  
Walk Hand in Hand

### **Processional**

Canon in D  
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring  
Ode to Joy  
Trumpet Voluntary  
Bridal Marche  
Wedding Marche

### **Responsorial Psalm**

Ps 33 The Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord  
Ps 103 Loving and Forgiving  
Ps 103 The Lord is Kind and Merciful  
Ps 34 Taste and See  
Ps 118 This Day Was made by the Lord

### **Hymn and Song Suggestions**

Ave Maria  
Christ Be Our Light  
Companions on a Journey  
Eye Has Not Seen  
Glory and Praise to Our God  
Hail Mary, Gentle Woman  
Here I Am  
Holy Is His Name  
I Have Loved You  
Immaculate Mary  
Morning Has Broken  
Now Thank We All Our God

On Eagle's Wings  
On This Day O Beautiful Mother  
One Bread One Body  
Only A Shadow  
Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow  
Prayer of St. Francis  
Sing A New Song  
Sing to the Mountains  
Table of Plenty  
Taste and See  
The Supper of the Lord  
Ubi Caritas  
When Love is Found  
Wherever You Go

**Please complete this form and return to Father:**

Name of Bride and Bridegroom:

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Date of Wedding:

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Contact number (bride or groom):

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Please fill out the following information and return this form to Father.

**Contact Betty Westhoff (636)566-8444 to view banners, flowers, and altar decorations if interested.**

Will you provide altar servers for the ceremony?  Yes  No

There are different banners available for display. Is there one you are interested in using:

“I Am the Bread of Life”  Yes

“Make Us One Father”  Yes

“United in Love”  Yes

“Hail Mary”  Yes

Would you like to view the floral arrangements provided by church?  Yes  No

Is a table needed for a guest book at the entrance of church?  Yes  No

Does a vase need to be at Mary’s altar?  Yes  No

Would you like the antependium?  Yes  No

*(Antependium is a white patterned silk cloth on back altar, covering marble front of altar)*