



# St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church Wedding Guidelines

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## Preparation

The Catholic Church cherishes Sacraments, as the external signs of the inner life of God's grace active in our lives. In preparing for the Sacrament of Matrimony, as in the other sacraments, reflection and preparation are essential. One does not celebrate the initiation Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist without having first prayerfully and conscientiously reflected on their meaning, with the hope of coming to a deeper understanding of their significance,

Likewise, marriage, as the special intimate bond between husband and wife and the mirror of God's divine love, requires time and reflection to fully appreciate its truly sacred and life-giving character.

## Required Documents

Since marriage celebrates the unbreakable commitment between a man and a woman who are free to make this mature decision in the community of believers, certain documents are required to establish your sacramental status within the Church, your freedom from any previous unions, as well as sworn statements attesting to your clear understanding of the nature and responsibilities of Christian Marriage. When a Catholic prepares to marry someone from another faith tradition, a specific document or "dispensation" is also required.

The following are required documents:

- **Baptismal Certificate**  
A new copy of your baptismal certificate is required for those who are Catholic. This can be obtained by contacting the Church where you were baptized and requesting a new certificate. Why does the Church request a new certificate? Whenever a marriage takes place in the Catholic Church, notification of that marriage is sent to the Church of Baptism of the Catholic party. A marginal note indicating the date and place of marriage is placed in the Baptismal register. A new baptismal certificate for the Catholic party without notations is consequently verification that there has not been a previous marriage in the Catholic Church. For those baptized in another

Christian faith, a copy of the original baptismal certificate is sufficient. If the bride or groom is not baptized, no certificate is required.

- **Testimony of Freedom**  
This is a sworn statement, witnessed by a priest, a deacon, or a public notary, attesting that you have never been married before, in either a Church or civil ceremony, and that there is no known impediment to the marriage. This is normally filed out by parents, or it may be completed by others who have known you most or all of your lives. If you have previously been married civilly, we welcome you and ask you to share that up front as the ceremony is slightly different.
- **Civil License**  
The County Court registers all civil documents. Therefore, any questions you have regarding the procurement of the civil license, or other civil concerns should be addressed to the Court. Licenses are valid for ten (10) days from the date they are issued. This must be given to the wedding coordinator, priest, or deacon no later than the day of the rehearsal. Please note that it is against the law for the ceremony to take place without a civil license. The address of the Payne County Clerk is 315 W. 6<sup>th</sup>, Stillwater, Oklahoma. There is a discount for completion of pre-cana classes or Catholic Engaged Encounter Weekend.
- **Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire**  
This takes place with the priest or deacon and is for the purpose of determining your freedom and appropriate intentions in your preparation for marriage. You must meet with the priest or the deacon at least six (6) months prior to the wedding.

Preparation for Christian Marriage is far more than just the gathering of required documents. At the heart of responsible marriage preparation stands the opportunity for you to seriously reflect in a comprehensive and challenging way on the meaning of this important step in your lives. While reflection and in-depth sharing of your future together has undoubtedly already begun, the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Tulsa offers further opportunities for you to reflect on your life long journey with each other.

In addition to the private preparation conducted by the priest or deacon who will officiate at your ceremony, the Diocese of Tulsa requires completion of one of the of the following programs:

- Catholic Engaged Encounter Weekend
- Pre-Cana

Information about these programs is enclosed. Please read it carefully, select the one program which best suits your particular needs. Pre-Cana classes are available twice a year in Stillwater (a series of two classes), and monthly in

Tulsa and Oklahoma City. For additional information, please contact the parish office. Upon completion of the program, you will receive a certificate stating such. A copy will need to be submitted to St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church.

## Setting the Date and Time for your Celebration

Wedding liturgies are celebrated at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church on Saturdays at 11:00 am, 2:00 pm, and 7:00 pm. Times for validations or “Blessings” of civil marriages are arranged at the discretion of the parish priest or deacon. Rehearsals are held at 5:00 pm on Friday evenings and are conducted by our parish wedding coordinator. Weddings and Rehearsals are scheduled through the wedding coordinator.

While the scheduling of the date and time of your marriage is obviously a very important part of your preparation, it is the serious responsibility of the priest or deacon to discern mature readiness on the part of the couple wishing to take this important step in the Church. Please note that weddings are typically not celebrated during the season of Lent, Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation.

## Use of Church

The church will be opened one (1) hour prior to the wedding start time. A bridal parlor is available for the bridal party to dress, however it will not be available until one hour prior to the wedding. If the bridal parlor is used, please note alcoholic beverages, including champagne are not allowed. You are responsible for removal of all personal items prior to the start of the wedding. St. Francis Xavier is *not responsible* for any items left in the bridal parlor.

A damage deposit is due upon scheduling your wedding. This deposit will secure your chosen date and time of the wedding. The remaining church fees are due 30 days prior to the wedding or the date may be removed from the church calendar. Please note that financial limitations will not preclude a wedding at St. Francis Xavier.

### **Fees:**

**Couple or their parents: Parishioner (registered, contributing/active) for over one year at time of scheduling:**

\$250 damage deposit (refunded if no damage found and all policies followed)

\$500 (non-refundable, includes clean-up)

**Couple or their parents: Non-contributing member or registered less than one year at time of scheduling:**

\$250 damage deposit (refunded if no damage found and all policies followed)

\$1000 (non-refundable, includes clean-up)

**Couple or their parents: Non-parishioner (only with Pastor's permission)**

\$250 damage deposit (refunded if no damage found and all policies followed)

\$1500 (nonrefundable, includes clean-up fee)

In the event the wedding is cancelled within three (3) months of the scheduled date, St. Francis Xavier will retain the \$250 Damage Deposit, and will not ask for the remaining wedding fees. If any of the remaining fees have already been paid, they will be refunded by St. Francis Xavier.

**Additional information:**

We do not recommend children under the age of three (3) serving as a flower girl, junior bridesmaid, and/ or ring bearer.

In keeping with Christian modesty that is appropriate for the Church, bridal and maid's gowns must be modest and befitting of a consecrated place of worship. Low cut dress (front and/or back) are inappropriate for the wedding and should not be worn.

## **Wedding Program**

If a wedding program will be used, a proof copy must be made available to the wedding coordinator one month prior to the wedding for approval. The couple is responsible for the creation/printing of the program. The Order of Worship is slightly different for Mass. The following is the only Order of Worship to follow.

### **The Order of Worship Outside of Mass (Simple Ceremony)**

**Prelude**

**Seating of the Family**

**Procession of the Wedding Party**

**Procession of the Bride**

**Opening Prayer**

**Gloria**

**Liturgy of the Word**

**Old Testament**

**Responsorial Psalm**

**New Testament**

Gospel Acclamation (sung)  
Gospel  
Homily  
Rite of Marriage  
Exchange of Vows  
Blessing and Exchange of Rings  
Prayer of the Faithful (response- "Lord, hear our prayer")  
Lord's Prayer  
Nuptial Blessing  
Concluding Rite  
Final Blessing  
Recessional

Order of Worship with Mass

Prelude  
Seating of the Family  
Procession of the Wedding Party  
Procession of the Bride  
Opening Prayer  
Gloria  
Liturgy of the Word  
Old Testament  
Responsorial Psalm  
New Testament  
Gospel Acclamation (sung)  
Gospel  
Homily  
Rite of Marriage  
Exchange of Vows  
Blessing and Exchange of Rings  
Prayer of the Faithful (response- "Lord, hear our prayer")  
Liturgy of the Eucharist  
Presentation of the Gifts  
The Lord's Prayer  
Nuptial Blessing  
Sign of Peace  
Communion  
Prayer after Communion  
Concluding Rite  
Final Blessing  
Recessional

## Reception Space

Please contact the Parish office regarding use of reception space.

## Beginning your Journey in Christ

Our ministry at the parish is to assist you as an engaged couple not so much for the wedding day, but for the lifetime celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage. You are encouraged, therefore, to pray for the graces and strength to respond generously to God's call to the vocation of Christian Marriage. The required steps of marriage preparation should be viewed not so much as goals to be accomplished but as challenges to growth in the practice of your faith.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) is highly recommended for all who share in the Catholic faith as part of your spiritual preparation for Christian Marriage. Confessions are regularly scheduled. We encourage you to celebrate this wonderful Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to your wedding.

If either the Bride or Groom has been previously married, a declaration of nullity (think annulment) from the Catholic Church is necessary. Ask the wedding coordinator or priest for more details if you think this may apply to you. If an annulment is required, please note that it can be a lengthy process. As such, weddings at St. Francis Xavier will not be scheduled until the annulment process is completed. For more information on annulments, log on to <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/annulment> or to <https://dioceseoftulsa.org/tribunal>.

## The Wedding Liturgy

The liturgy of Christian Marriage is rightly a moment of joy and celebration. In our Catholic tradition, we hold that the couples themselves minister this sacrament to one another. While it is necessary that an official witness of the Church preside over the celebration, normally this is a priest or deacon together with two witnesses; nevertheless, the active involvement of the couple in every aspect of planning the memorable moment is encouraged. If you would like a priest or deacon from another parish to preside at the wedding, the couple must have this priest submit a request to the Pastor of St. Francis Xavier. To preside at a wedding at SFX, a priest or deacon must be in good standing with his parish and provide proper documentation to the Pastor.

The planning of your wedding should always keep in mind that the ceremony is first and foremost a moment of prayer for all who are present. All aspects for the celebration should reflect the noble simplicity befitting Christian worship.

### *Planning*

Together with the priest or deacon who will be presiding at your liturgy, you will have a part in planning your ceremony. Enclosed you will find a guide to planning your wedding. On your final meeting with the priest, you will discuss the specific readings from the Scripture and liturgical options that you have chosen. He will help clarify any further questions you may have regarding the ceremony at that time.

Families of engaged couples often enjoy participating in the planning process. Please note that Church staff cannot make arrangements with the families of the engaged couple, but only with the couple in concert with the priest.

The use of readings which are not taken from Scripture or the use of so-called “original vows” composed by the couple are not permitted by Church law. Downloading Scripture from the internet is not recommended since it often includes translations that are not approved for liturgical use. The priest or deacon working with you can advise on appropriate scriptures.

### *Mass or Ceremony?*

Should you celebrate your marriage in the context of a Mass or a non-Eucharistic service? First, let’s understand the difference. Every celebration of Mass consists of a Liturgy of the Word, (entrance rite, readings, homily, prayers of the faithful) and a Liturgy of the Eucharist (presentation of bread and wine, the Eucharistic Prayer and Holy Communion). When a wedding is celebrated during Mass, the Rite of Marriage takes place after the homily and before the Prayers of the Faithful; the Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows. When a wedding is celebrated outside of Mass, it is celebrated outside of Mass; it is celebrated in a Liturgy of the Word in which the Rite of Marriage takes place after the homily and before the Prayers of the Faithful. This rite concludes with prayers and blessings.

You should make your decision in consultation with the priest or deacon who is assisting in the preparation of your marriage. You will want to consider:

- What is our relationship to the Sunday Eucharist?
- Are we faithful to the church’s Sunday prayer?
- Have we been away from the community’s prayer?
- Have we committed ourselves to returning?

In light of your answers to these questions: Is Mass or Liturgy of the Word the better context for the celebration of your marriage?

If one of you is from another faith tradition and so will be unable to share Holy Communion if the wedding is celebrated during Mass, you may want to consider what this means. Do you want to include something in this celebration in which only one of you will be able to take part? Normally the Eucharist is not celebrated at an interfaith marriage. Consider the following:

- Who will your guests be?
- Is the celebration of the Eucharist the best way to help them to be with you and pray with you at your wedding?

If many of your guests are from outside the Catholic community, you may want to consider celebrating your wedding in a Liturgy of the Word. This ceremony may be officiated by a deacon or a priest.

Some people seem to think that a couple is not really married unless the wedding takes place at Mass. This is not true. Be open and honest with the priest or deacon with whom you are preparing your wedding and make the decision, which will provide the best context for prayer and celebration.

### *Rehearsal*

An important part of the ritual preparation for the wedding celebration is the rehearsal. The wedding rehearsal is normally scheduled with the wedding coordinator at the time when the date for the marriage is determined. Wedding rehearsals are conducted by our parish wedding coordinator and are scheduled at 5:00 pm for the evening before the wedding.

The wedding rehearsal is not the rehearsal for musicians. Any necessary rehearsal should take place at another time arranged through the Music Director.

Please ask all who have a specific role in the wedding to arrive fifteen (15) minutes before the rehearsal is to begin. Rehearsals generally take one hour. It will start and end on time, so please plan accordingly. Out of respect for both the wedding coordinator as well as any other rehearsal that may be planned, please make sure that your entire wedding party arrives on time.

Please note the rehearsal is not a social event. Its purpose is to assist the wedding party with understanding their role at the ceremony, so that on the wedding day, all can fully participate. Those who attend the rehearsal are those who have a role in the wedding celebration. They are: The Bride and Groom, Maid of Honor and Best Man, Bridesmaids, Groomsmen, Ring Bearer and Flower Girl (if used), Parents (who will be in the procession or the wedding ceremony), Ushers, Readers, Gift Bearers (if used), and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (if needed). All others (spouses, significant others, family members who do not have a role in the ceremony, out of town guests, etc.) should meet the couple at rehearsal dinner rather than attend the rehearsal.

Please help us maintain the reverence and dignity of the Lord's house by informing members of the wedding party to refrain from chewing gum or eating/drinking within the church. It is also important that the members of the wedding party not imbibe in alcoholic beverages prior to the rehearsal and wedding ceremony. Anyone coming to the church intoxicated will not be allowed to participate in the ceremony. If the Bride or Groom has been drinking, the wedding will not take place. Under the influence of alcohol, they would lack the proper freedom to truly say "yes" to marriage.

Please bring the marriage license to the rehearsal. In the event the license is forgotten, the couple must designate a volunteer to retrieve it during the rehearsal, and it must be delivered before the end of the rehearsal hour.

### *Ministers of the Celebration*

Together with you and the priest or deacon who will have important ministerial roles in the wedding celebration, there are others who will take part in the moment of prayer and commitment. Members of your wedding party, usually ushers, will greet the invited guests in a spirit of hospitality and welcome. Our parish pastoral musicians will provide a musical setting which respects the dignity of this moment and will support sung prayer by all who gather. Beyond these ministries, we ask you to consider individuals who might function in the following special roles in your wedding:

#### ***Lectors***

Whether or not your celebration takes place in the context of a Mass, the proclamation of God's Word in the Scriptures is an integral part of the wedding celebration. You may select one or two individuals, depending on the number of readings you select, to proclaim God's Word to the community gathered. Those whom you select should first and foremost be persons of faith who actively participate in the liturgy of their church.

#### ***Gift Bearers***

For those who choose to celebrate Mass, you may invite two people from the assembly to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine, which will be placed upon the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It is often the practice that the mothers of the bride and groom be asked to share this function, but others may be chosen. Again, the fullest form of participation is best served by inviting active, practicing Christians to act as gift bearers.

### *Other Elements*

Signs symbols and gestures are intrinsic to worship, but an overabundance of them tends to become superfluous and redundant. The primary symbols of your marriage covenant are the exchange of vows and the rings, and if a Nuptial Mass is celebrated, then the sharing the in the one bread and one cup as a sign of unity and love. Together with these essential signs, others of a secondary nature are sometimes used.

### ***Flowers to Mary, the Mother of God***

This is a gesture of prayer and petition that normally takes place toward the end of the wedding celebration. The newly married couple (never the bride alone) asks Mary, as Mother of the Church and a model of discipleship, to remember them in her unceasing prayer.

### ***Other Elements***

When including any additional elements (i.e. ethnic customs) into the ritual of Christian marriage, couples should be aware that where liturgy is concerned, “less is more.” Carefully focusing on the key elements will be much more rewarding for both the couple and the assembly as opposed to trying to include too many things at once. Please feel free to discuss these elements carefully with the priest or deacon arranging your wedding before making a decision.

### ***Decorum in the House of God***

Because we reverence the place in which the community of the Church gathers for worship, we ask that all your friends and relatives, particularly the wedding party, be aware of the sacredness of the Church building. In each Catholic Church there is reserved the Sacrament of the Lord’s body and Blood in the Tabernacle so that the Eucharist can be taken to the sick and worshipped in prayer. For these reasons, we ask that all who enter the church at any time, whether before, during, or after the rehearsal or during the wedding celebration itself observe these basic principles:

- Silence, respect, and reverence while in the Sanctuary
- No food, drink, or chewing gum

## **Music for your Wedding**

How can the bride and groom themselves help create a good wedding liturgy and good music? First, by regarding those who gather not as guests, who need to be entertained but as participants in prayer, blessing, and praise.

Even more basic is the couple's view of themselves. They are active participants not passive recipients. This aspect should be at the heart of how you plan the liturgy of marriage, including the music.

Marriage is celebrated in the context of worship and therefore should reflect the musical styles incorporated into sacramental celebrations of the Catholic Church. With this in mind, music chosen for the wedding liturgy must be religious in nature, so that a spirit of prayer and celebration can be established to strengthen the expression of faith. No matter how personally meaningful love songs and secular ballads may be to the couple, these are best left to the reception where other dimensions of the wedding celebration prevail.

Selection of music for your wedding may be arranged by contacting our Music Ministry. A brief consultation will be planned and at this time you can arrange for vocalists and additional instrumentalists if desired. In order to meet your needs in the best way possible, please contact our Music Ministry as soon as possible and no later than two (2) months in advance of your wedding. The name and contact information for our Music Ministry is enclosed.

The St. Francis organist should be the organist for all weddings. If unavailable, the Music Ministry will recommend other organists. Please note that musicians from outside St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church music staff will need to contact our Music Ministry in order to coordinate the proper timing and function that music stays liturgically within St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church.

## Environment

Of utmost importance on the day of your wedding is your spiritual readiness to begin the task of deepening your bonds of love within the context of a truly Christian relationship. Celebrating this moment of decision far outweighs concerns over pictures, flowers, or decorations. Because of the beautiful, highly decorated architecture of St. Francis Xavier, it is not necessary to have elaborate decorations.

Please note if you plan your wedding during a special liturgical season, the church sanctuary may be enhanced with seasonal arrangements that may not be altered or removed.

It is often the case that couples have questions regarding the use of enhancements to the liturgical environment, hence the following guidelines:

### *Aisle Runners*

It is our experience that aisle runners can cause several problems at the wedding ceremony, one of which is falls. Therefore, *aisle runners are not permitted.*

## *Flowers*

Floral arrangements enhance the beauty of any environment, and we welcome your creativity with regard to this area. Please be mindful of the fact that as a sacramental celebration, the principal goal of the liturgical environment is to help convey the mysteries of God's saving love and not merely to decorate space.

The beautiful, well-appointed sanctuary requires very little decoration. The use of greenery is discouraged except in the decorating of the candelabra. No decoration should be used which will hide from clear view the Altar and/or the Sanctuary's normal beauty.

The following is a list of expectations in order to give guidance in planning:

- The florist *must* call the church office a week in advance (at minimum) to set a time for decorating and discuss planned decorations.
- Nails, tacks, staples, pins or anything that could mar the woodwork or wall are prohibited.
- It is assumed that no decorations will be displayed outside of the sanctuary, except pew ribbons with or without fern and/or flower décor. No candles, please.
- The florist must remove all decorations and equipment immediately after the ceremony, unless other arrangements have previously been made. Removal of decorations are the responsibility of the wedding party unless arrangements are made with the wedding coordinator.
- Church properties should be left in the same manner they were found.

The florist will be allowed one (1) hour prior to the ceremony for decorating and one (1) hour after the ceremony to clean up. The florist must come with all needed assistance, manpower and equipment needed to decorate.

## *Pew Decorations*

Pew decorations are discouraged; however, pew bows may be attached to the tops of the pews. Ribbon or soft tulle that will not mar woodwork should be used to fasten bows. No tape, including removable hooks, please. No pew clips are allowed. All attachments must be pre-approved by the Parish Wedding Coordinator. If unapproved pew attachments are used, they will be removed prior to the ceremony and any deposit will be forfeited. All decorations must be approved *prior* to the wedding day.

## *Photography and Videography*

Photography by your hired professional and video recordings are permitted during the ceremony. Photographs and pictures are not permitted from the center aisle of the sanctuary while the wedding ceremony is in progress. The photographer may

take pictures before or after the ceremony. Flash photography is allowed only during the processional and recessional.

The photographer may take pictures in the foyer of the church before the processional or as the wedding party approaches the foyer at the time of the recessional. The wedding party may reassemble in the sanctuary after the ceremony to pose for any other pictures that may be desired.

Amateur photographers are expected to follow the same rules as professional photographers. Note: Any photographer or videographer who become disruptive or in any way violates the guidelines will be invited to leave.

All photographers and videographers must meet with the wedding coordinator at least two (2) weeks prior to the wedding. We ask that all movement be discreet so as not to intrude on or draw attention away from the experience or mood of the ceremony.

It is the responsibility of the photographer to help the wedding party keep a sense of reverence during picture taking. In order to facilitate the flow of pictures after the ceremony, once the newly married couple arrives at the rear of the church in the recessional, the wedding coordinator will direct the bride and groom and the bridal party back to the sanctuary to immediately begin taking pictures. Because of the time sensitive nature of the weekend schedule in the church, we ask that you wait to greet your guests until after the pictures are taken.

Photography sessions are allowed inside the Church (1) hour before the wedding. Photos may be taken outside the Church before and after the wedding. Photos inside the sanctuary following the wedding are limited to twenty-five (25) minutes.

### *Rice, Confetti, Bird Seed, Rose Petals, and Bubbles*

The surfaces outside the church building are prone to become dangerous when rice, confetti, or birdseed is used. For safety's sake, the use of these items in or around the church is not permitted.

Real rose petals are not allowed in any area of the church.

Bubbles may be used outside only. The wedding party or their representative must dispose of containers properly.

## **Protocol**

For your convenience, envelopes have been included in your packet that are properly marked to facilitate the distribution of fees and donations. The following is a brief summary of those fees.

### ***Wedding Coordinator***

Our wedding coordinator is provided to confer with you regarding any questions about the ceremony and the day of the wedding itself. The coordinator will also manage the rehearsal and be present prior to the wedding ceremony to attend to the bridal party, open doors, assist the florists, photographers and ushers. Questions regarding the wedding ceremony should be directed to the wedding coordinator whose number is listed in the directory.

The envelopes addressed to the Wedding Coordinator can be used to send in your deposit for the wedding as well as the balance.

### ***Priest/Deacon***

It is customary for the couple to give a discretionary offering to the priest or deacon. There is no charge for any sacrament of the Church. This offering may be predicated on the amount of time spent counseling, preparation of paperwork necessary for marriage, and your ability to pay.

### ***Musicians***

The Music Ministry works individually with each couple preparing for the wedding liturgy. All questions regarding music for your wedding should be directed to the Music Ministry.

The typical fee schedule for the musicians and cantors is as follows and should be paid to the individual musicians no later than the wedding rehearsal:

#### **For Parish Members:**

***Organist or Pianist:*** \$150-\$175 depending on the complexity of the music involved.

***Cantor:*** \$75-\$150. For simple ceremonies, the fee is typically \$75, if singing only the Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation. Again, more complex music increases the fee.

#### **For Non-Parish Members:**

***Organist or Pianist:*** \$175-\$225 depending on the complexity of the music involved.

***Cantor:*** \$100-\$175. For simple ceremonies, the fee is typically \$100, if singing only the Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation. Again, more complex music increases the fee.

## **Checklist**

Because of the many details that must be attended to in preparation for the celebration of a Christian Marriage, we have included a checklist that hopefully will be a helpful guide in organizing your planning for this special time in your life.

## Conclusion

“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated. It is not rude, it does not seek its own interest, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury. It does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

As you begin this journey of preparation for a lifetime of love and commitment in Christian Marriage, may the Lord bless you with peace all the days of your lives.