

WEDDING GUIDELINES

Sacred Heart Parish

Spencer, Iowa

October 2014

Listed below are some guidelines that the Parish Staff at Sacred Heart has established so that the wedding ceremony at Sacred Heart Church is a true religious experience. They don't cover every aspect of a wedding. They do try to guide a couple as they come to Sacred Heart to be married. We realize there are many facets and many options that a bride / and groom- to-be need to consider, but the ceremony that takes place at Sacred Heart Church is the realization of the covenant that is established between a couple and the Lord Jesus during the Sacrament of Marriage. **The ceremony at Sacred Heart is the religious ceremony** of all that takes place from the announcement of the couple's engagement through their wedding reception. If a couple asks the Church (Sacred Heart Parish) to enable and assist them to enter the marriage covenant, then the Church has the right and obligation to challenge the couple and prepare them to enter this life-long covenant/relationship.

1. The couple should contact the Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish at least six months before the proposed date of the marriage. This allows for paperwork and preparation to be completed.
2. All diocesan preparation programs will be followed – initial interview with the Pastor; taking the Pre-Marriage Inventory; taking both Diocesan Programs, “Walking In Love” and “Called To The Wedding Feast”. The couple needs to make sure there is sufficient time to complete the preparation. If the couple puts off the preparation which needs to take place until the “last minute” or when its “convenient” for them, then the wedding date will be re-negotiated until the preparation is completed. The time(s) with the Pastor will be determined once he has met with the couple. It certainly is permissible for a couple to do their preparation in another parish or on the college campus in which they are attending. Paper work would then be forwarded to Sacred Heart.
3. Music selections for the wedding Mass or wedding ceremony will be determined by the couple AND the Music Director of Sacred Heart. The wedding ceremony is a religious ceremony and therefore should reflect the religious nature of this part of their lives. Just because a particular song might mention God, doesn't make it appropriate to be sung at a Catholic wedding! A booklet is given to the couple with their first session with the Pastor which explains this. The active participation of the entire assembly gathered for the wedding is encouraged. That is why, if there is a Mass celebrated, all parts are sung and a cantor must be present to lead the congregation.
4. Some things are essential in a wedding ceremony, others are not. The exchange of vows and rings; music; the nuptial blessing; the reading of sacred scripture are all required for the wedding ceremony. Other things such as the unity candle are not considered essential. Although not necessarily sanctioned by the liturgy, the unity candle is an accepted part of the ceremony. Having unity sand or bringing trees from different families together are not acceptable part of

the wedding ceremony. (Read Matthew 7:24 – the man building his house on sand to have it collapse). ONLY the unity candle may be used if the couple wishes something like this after their vows. Also, wagon's carrying the flower girl or boy in the processional is not an accepted part of the ceremony.

5. When planning their wedding liturgy, the couple is expected to follow all liturgical norms that we at Sacred Heart must follow when planning weekend liturgies and special liturgies throughout the year. THEMES are not acceptable at a liturgy. This is something for the reception.

Weddings are graced moments. The Rite of Marriage in the Church is counter-cultural. Couples asking to be married in the Catholic Church need to keep this in mind. What a couple does at a reception and what takes place during the religious ceremony are two totally different things.

Some simple things to keep in mind.....

- A wedding liturgy is an activity of the Church.
- A wedding liturgy is not just a celebration of love; it is the establishment of a covenant relationship.
- The minister of the sacrament of marriage is the couple.
- The bride and groom enter marriage as equal and complementary partners.
- The active participation of the entire assembly is the goal of all preparations for the wedding liturgy.
- The tone of the wedding is usually set before the procession even comes down the aisle.
- There is a variety of ministries within the wedding liturgy.
- Some things are essential to a Catholic wedding liturgy, others are not.
- The non-verbal elements of the wedding liturgy are at least as important as the verbal elements.
- The wedding liturgy is not the only place for religious expressions of prayer.

“The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify people, to build up the body of Christ and finally to give worship to God. Because they are signs, they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen and express it.”

{The Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy}