

Policies and Procedures for the

Sacrament of Marriage:

Marriage Preparation Process and Wedding Guidelines

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THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Congratulations on your engagement! The staff at Church of the Epiphany is glad for the opportunity to assist you in your preparation for and celebration of the Sacrament of Christian Marriage. In his Pastoral Letter on Marriage and the Family (2.8.1998) Archbishop Harry Flynn explores the beauty of Christian Marriage and the importance of preparing for this great Sacrament saying:

Following the command and example of Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church proclaims that "by (God's) plan man and woman are united, and married life is established as the one blessing not forfeited by original sin nor washed away in the flood." (Nuptial Blessing from Marriage Ceremony) The very life of God is manifested in marriage, for He "has made the union of man and woman so holy a mystery that it symbolizes the marriage of Christ and His Church." In such powerful language the Church thus announces God's intention that marriage play a crucial role in His plan for human happiness. It has been the strong and constant teaching of the Catholic Church that the family is the foundation of all human society and the irreplaceable institution for the education and formation of children.

The preparation for a fruitful sacramental marriage begins early in life. Children daily experience the relationship between their parents; the love, care, and consideration that husbands and wives display for each other; and the way in which they welcome and nurture children. These experiences leave a lasting impression on the consciousness of those children and affect their attitudes toward marriage and family life. Gradually, as the children mature, they are provided with a careful catechesis regarding the nature of marriage, the mystery of human sexuality, the inherent value of human life, and the practice of virtue. The manner in which both Jesus and St. Paul speak about marriage and celibacy in tandem suggest that the virtue of chastity is the context in which both states of life are best understood, for it is in purity of heart that we shall see God. This general, family-oriented preparation will flourish in an atmosphere of fidelity to the life of Christ and His commands, in which prayer and spiritual sacrifice are central.

In addition to the general preparation for marriage and family life just described, a couple also needs to participate in an intense, very personal preparation during the 12 months immediately prior to the actual celebration of the sacrament. (Excerpts from Archbishop Harry Flynn's Pastoral Letter on Marriage and the Family.)

Realizing that beauty of the Sacrament and desiring to help couples celebrate this Sacrament, Epiphany Catholic Church will help you prepare for the celebration of this Sacrament in your lives.

Always keep in mind the sacramental nature of your wedding as you prepare for its celebration. Together with the Christian community, you will be celebrating your love and commitment in Christ.

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ELIGIBLE WEDDING COUPLES:

To be married at Epiphany Catholic Church, either the bride or the groom must be a practicing Catholic, and registered at our parish or have immediate family who are active in the parish. Additionally, both parties must be free to marry in the Catholic Church, which will be established by the priest or deacon assigned to your wedding at your first meeting.

PREVIOUS MARRIAGE:

If either of the engaged persons have been married previously (civilly or religiously), notification of a final declaration of nullity or certificate of death must be given to the priest or deacon prior to any preparation beginning.

Because the annulment process is used to establish a person's freedom to marry, no future marriage may be scheduled in any Catholic Parish until the annulment procedure is completed. While awaiting the outcome of the Tribunal's actions, no further wedding preparation will take place with the priest or deacon, yet couples are advised to deepen their lives of faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ.

SCHEDULING A WEDDING:

When a couple gets engaged they should contact Teresa McCarthy at the parish office (763-862-4363) as soon as possible to begin the wedding preparation process. Weddings cannot be scheduled through families of the couple or with a wedding consultant. This contact with the parish should take place prior to making any plans or reservations regarding the reception -- a reception hall should only be booked after the initial meeting with the priest or deacon.

Teresa McCarthy will see what dates the church is available in consultation with the couple. The minimal period of preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage is six months, but a full year of preparation is preferred. Once a date is reserved, the date will be confirmed by the priest or deacon at his first meeting with the couple.

A scheduled wedding secures the use of the church for two hours prior and thirty minutes after the ceremony. Other events may be scheduled on your wedding date. If no other events are scheduled, the couple may request to use the church one hour earlier than their scheduled time through their wedding coordinator. **Pictures are to be taken prior to the ceremony.**

Typically, weddings do not take place during the Seasons of Advent or Lent.

WEDDING TIMES:

Wedding celebrations are scheduled as follows:

- Between 4:00 – 6:00 PM Friday
- 1:30 PM Saturday (or earlier)

Wedding celebrations during the week are rare, but are permitted in special circumstances. Requests may be made to the pastor.

WEDDING FEES:

The fees* are as follows:

\$300.00 (\$100 of which is non-refundable) which includes use of the church, bride’s room and meeting rooms (**available no earlier than two (2) hours before the start of the ceremony**), costs associated with marriage preparation, parish maintenance staffing, assignment of a wedding coordinator, and an organist or pianist. This fee is payable as soon as the priest or deacon has met with the couple for the first time and established their freedom to marry.

The Wedding Fees do not include a stipend for the priest or deacon working with the couple and performing the ceremony (\$200 is customary, but not obligatory), nor does it cover the fee that must be paid to a cantor (\$150), nor does it cover the required Archdiocesan Marriage Retreat. These expenses are all paid by the bridal couple. The cantor fee may be waived only if you provide a cantor who is approved by Epiphany’s Director of Music.

In addition, an expense will be incurred for Fertility Awareness classes (commonly known as NFP, or Natural Family Planning classes.) The fee varies according to practitioner and is NOT paid by the bridal couple. The Church of the Epiphany requests that the couple submit the bill to their health insurance company, as it is often covered. If the classes are not covered by your insurance, please submit your bill to Teresa McCarthy, and it will be paid by The Church of the Epiphany.

Once a couple has met with the priest/deacon to establish their freedom to marry and paid the \$300 fee, the couple has a reserved date on the calendar, so other wedding requests for that day will not be accepted. In addition, by reserving a wedding date at Epiphany, the couple agrees to the marriage preparation requirements set forth at their meeting with the priest/deacon.

**Fees are subject to change*

PAYMENT:

The fees are payable in full as soon as the priest or deacon has met with the couple for the first time and established their freedom to marry. Making this payment confirms the reservation. Payment by check or cash is acceptable. When filling out your check, please put the names of the engaged couple and the wedding date on the memo line of the check.

CANCELLATION POLICY:

If a couple cancels their wedding ceremony at Epiphany they will forfeit \$100 of the \$300 fee, but the remainder (\$200) will be refunded.

If it is determined by the couple, in consultation with the priest or deacon assigned to work with them, that they need to postpone or cancel their wedding ceremony, the \$100 reservation fee will be refunded as well.

WEDDING PRESIDERS [OFFICIANT]:

Once a couple has spoken with Teresa McCarthy and reserved a date (still not confirmed), a priest or deacon will be assigned to do the marriage preparation with the couple. In general, a priest will be assigned to the weddings that have a full Mass, which is the norm for a wedding between two practicing Catholics. In general, a deacon will be assigned to weddings that are not celebrated within a Mass, which is the norm for inter-faith couples (the bride or the groom is not Catholic) or couples with one non-practicing Catholic.

If the couple would like a priest and/or a deacon from another parish to preside at their wedding, the couple may submit their request to the Pastor or through the Epiphany clergy with whom they are meeting for pre-marriage preparation.

GUEST PRESIDERS AND THE WEDDING CELEBRATION:**GENERAL NORMS:**

Though a couple might invite a guest priest or deacon to preside at their wedding, all marriage preparation will be conducted through Epiphany Catholic Church.

When a guest priest or deacon presides at a Catholic wedding, the Mass or ceremony must comply with the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, and must be in keeping with the Epiphany's wedding policies and celebration format. Requests for ceremony adaptations, however minor, must be made in writing to the Pastor no less than one month prior to the wedding date. All final decisions regarding weddings at Epiphany Catholic Church are the responsibility of the Pastor.

The wedding coordinator, along with the visiting Presider, will conduct the rehearsal; guest presiders are respectfully requested to comply with the directions of the Epiphany staff.

CHECK LIST FOR GUEST PRESIDERS:

Guest presiders must contact the Pastor to receive written permission to celebrate a wedding at The Church of the Epiphany.

GUEST PRESIDERS FROM OUTSIDE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL/MINNEAPOLIS:

Guest presiders must provide documentation from his diocese that confirms he is a priest or deacon in good standing.

Guest presiders must be civilly registered in the state of Minnesota. He is responsible for contacting the Archdiocese at 651-291-4400 for further information.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Because the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage is such an important event in the lives of those who are celebrating it, and because the validity of the marriage depends upon the intentions of the couple, the marriage preparation process is vitally important to the celebration of the Sacrament.

To ensure that couples are adequately instructed on the rights, duties, obligations, and understanding of Christian Marriage, Epiphany Catholic Church has a multi-step process of preparation, which includes: meetings with the priest or deacon, the use of a pre-marriage inventory and mentor couples, a marriage retreat, a Natural Family Planning course, spiritual formation, and, in cases where an annulment has been granted and counseling has been mandated by the tribunal, marriage counseling. This process of marriage preparation will take, at minimum, six months to complete, but in practice a full year should be given to this process.

MEETINGS WITH THE PRIEST OR DEACON

The couple will typically meet three times for one hour each with the parish priest or deacon scheduled to preside at the wedding. Sessions will include teachings on the Roman Catholic understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage, the planning of the wedding ceremony, and any other areas as determined by the priest, deacon or the couple themselves.

The first meeting with the priest or deacon will establish the couple's freedom to marry and confirm the wedding date.

Due to the length of time between this initial meeting and the wedding date, the presider at the wedding may be different than the priest or deacon who makes initial contact with the couple. If this happens, the new presider will make contact with the couple.

A second and third meeting with the priest or deacon will take place two and three months prior to the wedding. It is the couple's responsibility to contact the priest or deacon presiding at their wedding to schedule these final two meetings.

More meetings with the priest or deacon can be schedule at his discretion if serious issues arise during the marriage preparation process.

FULLY ENGAGED INVENTORY

The Fully Engaged Inventory indicates both the areas of strength in the relationship and areas where more discussion and growth in understanding would be recommended. The results of this inventory will be discussed with a Mentor Couple who will generally meet with the engaged couple three or four times to get to know them, go over the results of the inventory, and help them through the marriage preparation process.

LIVING GOD’S LOVE MARRIAGE RETREAT

Engaged Couples are required to attend the “Living God’s Love Marriage Retreat” put on by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. For couples living outside of the metro area, alternatives may be discussed with the priest or deacon at the initial meeting. Retreat registration may be completed at: <http://www.archspm.org/sections/marriage-preparation/> or by contacting the Marriage and Family Life Office at the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis by calling 651-291-4488. Couples may attend any of the dates that this retreat is offered and should return the certificate of completion to the priest or deacon who is preparing them.

FERTILITY AWARENESS

Artificial Contraception is not an option for Catholics; it is dishonest and immoral. Natural Family Planning offers a scientific, moral, and healthy means to delay or achieve pregnancy therefore couples are expected to take a full NFP course. A full schedule of NFP courses may be found at: <http://www.archspm.org/departments/natural-family-planning/> or by contacting the Marriage and Family Life Office at the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis by calling 651-291-4488.

When couples have completed the NFP course, please send the certificate indicating completion of the program to the priest or deacon who is preparing the couple. The invoice should be submitted to health insurance first and then, if it is not covered, to The Church of the Epiphany for payment.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT:

The period between becoming engaged and being married is a great opportunity for the bride and the groom to grow in their faith and to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ. At the very least, the bride or the groom must actively participate in the Catholic Church in order to be married in the Catholic Church.

The Church of the Epiphany Mass and Reconciliation schedule is as follows:

MASSES:

- Monday-Saturday: 8:00 AM
- Tuesday: 6:00 PM
- Saturday 4:30 PM (anticipatory for Sunday)
- Sunday: 7:30, 9:00 and 11:00 AM

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

- Monday - Saturday: 7:30 AM
- Tuesday: 5:30 PM
- Saturday 3:00 PM

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION HOURS:

The Adoration Chapel is open throughout the entire week.

COHABITATING PRIOR TO MARRIAGE:

Prior to marriage, it is not appropriate to live together and engaged couples will be strongly encouraged to live separately. Sexual intercourse, as a beautiful and sacred gift from God expresses the total gift of self to the other, which is lifelong, exclusive, faithful, and open to new life. This is a gift of self that unmarried couples have not pledged to each other and therefore sexual intercourse is intended for marriage and outside the context of a committed sacramental union, it is sinful. Living together before marriage is also scandalous, which means it could cause another to fall into sin, by following this example. Sociologically, numerous studies show that cohabitation increases the chances that a marriage will end in divorce. Therefore, it is extremely important that the couple find a way of returning to living a single life style until their wedding day.

PORNOGRAPHY

In today's culture we also need to address the question of pornography. With the increase of high speed internet and smart phones the problem of pornography has dramatically increased. Some treat the use of pornography with indifference, others with horror, but its effect on a marriage is devastating. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that "Chastity is the integration of sexuality into our personality. It requires prayer and self-denial, the frequent use of the sacraments,

In the words of Pope John Paul II, pornography violates the intimacy of the persons revealing that which belongs only between a husband and wife. It uses another human being for one's own gratification. The addictive cycle created by pornography reduces the freedom needed to enter into marriage freely, and can even inhibit freedom altogether. Its use within marriage constitutes an act of infidelity to one's spouse and wounds the love of spouses which must be a total gift of self to the other. Pornography is a marriage destroyer.

Marriage preparation is a good time to rid ourselves of pornography. We begin with an examination of conscience for all the sins we have committed in this area as well as our whole life. We resolve never to give in to them again; we make a good confession to a priest and receive absolution which is the forgiveness of our sins. By prayer and sacraments, together with self-denial avoiding the occasions of sin, we begin to regain our inner freedom and joy, and the door opens to real love. Men's support groups can also be helpful for accountability, holding the passwords for internet filters, and friendship as we grow in purity of heart and discipleship.

Pornography, which passes for freedom of speech today, is in fact a form of bondage that weakens and even destroys love. We offer these thoughts in the hopes that you will take them to heart and be blessed in your marriage.

WEDDING PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- Be registered with the parish prior to scheduling the wedding date.
- Reserve a date by speaking with Teresa McCarthy
- Teresa McCarthy will set up the initial appointment with a priest or deacon to start marriage preparation. At this first meeting the priest or deacon will establish the couple's freedom to marry and confirm the reserved wedding date with the couple.
- After the priest or deacon has established a couple's freedom to marry, they should secure their reserved date with a \$300 fee (in the event of a cancellation, \$100 is non-refundable.)
- Each couple will also meet with Suzanne Lewis, Epiphany's Marriage Ministry Coordinator. Suzanne will administer the Fully Engaged premarital inventory and give a brief introduction to Natural Family Planning.

WITHIN ONE MONTH OF RESERVING A WEDDING DATE AND SUBMITTING THE \$300 FEE:

- Register for "Living God's Love Marriage Retreat" run by the Office of Marriage and Family Life of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.
- Read the "Guidelines for the Sacrament of Marriage" booklet you received as it is your responsibility to know and be aware of the information provided.
- Register for an NFP course.

THE FOLLOWING MUST BE COMPLETED AT LEAST THREE MONTHS PRIOR TO WEDDING DATE:

- Contact Director of Music, Liz Grefsheim to make sure your wedding date is on her calendar and to schedule a meeting with her to (it is also mandatory that she reviews/approves all music and programs)
- Complete marriage preparation, which includes the following:
 - Fully Engaged Inventory and complete their meetings with the Mentor Couple
 - Attend the Living God's Love Marriage Preparation Retreat
 - Finish NFP classes
 - Gather required marriage documents and give to priest/deacon

TWO MONTHS OR MORE PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- Contact the priest or deacon to schedule meetings two and three to ensure all ceremony details are in order, to process the final paperwork, and review the theology of marriage. Set appointments accordingly.
Provided that all the requirements listed above are completed, the priest or deacon will provide the couple with an affidavit attesting to their completion of marriage preparation requirements that give the couple a significant reduction on their Marriage License Fee.
- Apply for your marriage license at any Minnesota county courthouse if you haven't already done so.
- Communicate the dates/times for rehearsal, pictures, and the ceremony to the wedding party.

1 MONTH PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- Contact wedding coordinator if you haven't already connected.
- Turn in the Wedding Planning Worksheet – received at the meeting with Liz Grefsheim

TWO WEEKS OR MORE PRIOR TO YOUR WEDDING

- Have Liz Grefsheim approve your wedding program.

WEEK OF YOUR WEDDING

- Contact your wedding coordinator to review ceremony details and to confirm everything is in order.
- Bring your Marriage License to the priest or deacon officiating at your wedding.
- Connect with wedding party- remind them of the date/time of rehearsal, pictures & ceremony.
- Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

DOCUMENT CHECKLIST FOR COUPLES:

Couples marrying at Epiphany Catholic Church are required to have the following documentation on file with the Priest/Deacon at least three months prior to their wedding date:

Baptismal certificate

Catholics: You must contact your parish of baptism to obtain a recent copy of your baptismal certificate. The copy must be issued within the last 6 months. Other Christian faiths: You may provide any copy of your baptismal certificate.

Certificate of Completion from Living God's Love Marriage Retreat

Certificate of Completion for NFP Course

Freedom to Marry (Form 2)

An affidavit may be required testifying to the freedom to marry, this would need to be signed by a parent or other close relative, in the presence of priest or deacon.

Marriage license:

All couples, who are not already civilly married, are required to have a valid marriage license issued by the state of Minnesota. The marriage license is valid for a period of 6 months from the date of issuance.

You may apply for a marriage license at any county office in Minnesota. Along with payment for the license, you must have proof of citizenship; a drivers license is sufficient. No blood tests are required in Minnesota. There is a 5 to 10 day waiting period after applying for the license. The state of Minnesota gives a reduced [Marriage License] fee to couples who have completed certain requirements that are met through the marriage preparation program offered at Epiphany Catholic Church. The affidavit, which attests to the completion of all state requirements, will be given to the couple when the necessary certificates of completion for the NFP classes, marriage mentor meetings and Living God's Love Marriage Retreat are given to the priest or deacon.

PLANNING YOUR WEDDING CEREMONY CELEBRATION

The staff of the Epiphany Catholic Church will work with the couple to plan a wedding celebration that is meaningful, beautiful, and in keeping with the best of Catholic liturgy, theology, and spirituality. A couple's wedding ceremony celebrates the love they have for one another; the ceremony also celebrates the love they have for God, for their families, and for the community. A Catholic worship service is communal and so a couple's choices must invite and make it possible for their families and friends to fully enter the celebration.

DECISIONS TO BE MADE BY THE COUPLE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PRESIDERS AND LITURGIST/MUSIC DIRECTOR:

Engaged couples are to take an active role in discussing and choosing the Scripture readings, music and other aspects of the wedding celebration.

WEDDING MASS OR WORD SERVICE:

In general, a priest will be assigned to the weddings that have a full Mass, which is the norm for a wedding between two practicing Catholics. In general, a deacon will be assigned to weddings that are not celebrated within a Mass, which is the norm for inter-faith couples (the bride or the groom is not Catholic) or couples with one non-practicing Catholic. Though this decision was made at the time marriage preparation began, couples may speak to the priest or deacon preparing them for marriage if circumstances have changed.

Since communion is a union of those that share the same faith, Catholic practice allows Holy Communion only to those who are of the Catholic faith community. Inter-faith communion is not allowed.

READINGS:

Couples are asked to prayerfully review the Old Testament, Responsorial Psalm, New Testament, and Gospel readings in the wedding preparation booklet, *Together for Life* (that they received at the initial meeting with their presider.) The choice of readings expresses the faith of the couple and conveys their values and the meaning of marriage. It is never allowed to choose non-Scriptural readings.

MUSIC:

Couples will meet with Liz Grefsheim, Music Director, **at least** one month before the wedding. Liz will play samples of a variety of songs that the couples may select from for their wedding. Questions regarding music used at weddings can also be directed to her at 763-862-4369 or by email lgrefsheim@epiphanymn.org. At this meeting, each couple will receive a worksheet to be filled out with music selections, readings and a number of other items. The completed worksheet must be returned to Liz **no later** than one month before the wedding.

Please note that wedding music serves as an expression of faith, giving all glory to God. Pre-recorded music is not allowed and Liz must review and approve your music selections.

The couple may ask Liz for suggestions of area vocalists and optional instruments (flute, violin, trumpet, guitar, etc.) who are familiar with Catholic liturgy. Generally, fees range from \$50-\$150 and are paid directly to the individual you select. All musicians must conform to Epiphany liturgy and music policies.

If the wedding will have more than a total of three vocalists/instruments, the couple will be required to schedule and pay a trained Sound Technician from Epiphany. The fee is \$75.00.

FLOWERS:

FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS IN THE CHURCH:

Epiphany's church is very beautiful and does not need to be overly decorated. All seasonal environments (banners & church furnishings & flowers) are to remain in place. Please schedule someone to receive delivery of your flowers on the day of the wedding. Flowers may not be delivered prior to the wedding date. Please coordinate, with the wedding coordinator, the time the florists plans to deliver the wedding flowers to the church to ensure the church is unlocked.

Again, please keep in mind that a couple is only guaranteed the use of the church two hours prior and thirty minutes after the ceremony. Other events may be scheduled on that same day.

Flowers are not to be placed in front of the altar. They may be placed on either side of the altar or in front of the Ambo (pulpit). All plants and flower arrangements not in a ceramic or glass container must be placed on a water catcher.

USE OF FLOWERS IN THE CEREMONY:

- The Bride and Groom may place flowers by Mary or other statues during the ceremony. Typically, the couple would place flowers by Mary/other statues after the lighting of the Unity Candle (if used).
- The Bride and Groom may give flowers to their parents. Typically, this is done after the lighting of the unity candle or at the Sign of Peace.
- Flower petals may not be strewn on the floor in the church.

AISLE RUNNER:

The use of an aisle runner is permitted and should be 100 ft. long.

UNITY CANDLE:

The lighting of a unity candle during the ceremony is permitted, but not recommended since it tends to overwhelm the exchange of vows between the bride and the groom. Couples who choose to include this ritual, must provide the candles. A table is available to use for this purpose.

PEW DECORATIONS AND AISLE DECORATIONS:

If pew decorations are to be used, they are to be attached to the pew using pew clips or rubber bands -- no tape of any kind is permitted on the pews. Aisle decorations must not obstruct your guests from entering and exiting the pews, and must be removed immediately after the celebration. Pew bows must be approved, prior to the wedding day, by the wedding coordinator or the ministry coordinator.

WEDDING COORDINATOR

Epiphany Catholic Church requires that a wedding coordinator be assigned to each scheduled wedding to ensure that everything runs smoothly and to act as a parish liaison to the wedding couple. The wedding coordinator's role is to be available to you to answer any questions the couple may have prior to the wedding ceremony. The wedding coordinators will be assigned approximately 6 weeks prior to the wedding date and will contact the couple two weeks prior to the wedding to review the ceremony details.

The wedding coordinator will be present at the rehearsal to unlock the doors, turn on the lights and to help direct the participants in your wedding. The coordinator will provide instruction of how the wedding ceremonies are handled in our church. On the day of the wedding, the wedding coordinator will unlock the church, turn on the lights, prepare the sanctuary for the ceremony, will help facilitate the procession, and will oversee other details during the ceremony. After the ceremony, the coordinator will check that the church is in order and will lock up the church properly.

WEDDING PARTY AND CEREMONY PARTICIPANTS:

WEDDING ATTIRE:

When choosing wedding attire, the choices made must reflect the dignity of Christian marriage. Some styles are more appropriate for evening wear than they are for a sacred event held in a holy place. All wedding attire worn must be modest. Low necklines and high slit dress are not in keeping with appropriate guidelines for a religious service.

Suits or tuxedos worn by groomsmen must be appropriate for a religious service as well, and not detract from it. "Costume" style tuxedos or accessories are not appropriate for a sacred event held in a holy place.

BEST MAN AND MAID OF HONOR [WITNESSES]:

Minnesota state law dictates that the official witnesses, the Best Man and Maid of Honor, must be at least sixteen years of age. Please choose a man to serve as Best Man and a woman to serve as Maid [Matron] of Honor. Immediately after the ceremony, the two official witnesses (Best Man/Matron of Honor) will sign legal papers with the priest or deacon. Other wedding party members may be any age.

BRIDESMAIDS AND GROOMSMEN:

The bridal party ought to be comprised of family and friends who love the couple and will support them as husband and wife. They should be chosen with much thought and care. Four to five attendants (bridesmaid/groomsmen) is an average in our church, but only two witnesses are required, and no more than seven attendants are allowed.

FLOWER GIRL AND RING BEARER:

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers may be part of the wedding party. It is strongly encouraged that they be over the age of five. If younger children are going to be used, it is strongly encouraged that they be escorted by an older sibling or cousins.

Please note that flower petals may not be strewn on the floor in the church.

Please do not put the wedding rings on the pillow carried by the ring bearer. The best man and/or maid of honor should be responsible for the rings.

Wagons, strollers, and/or other props are not allowed.

USHERS:

The bride/groom should choose two ushers to help escort family/friends into church, as well as dismissing guests after the ceremony. Ushers should be able to give direction and be outgoing to inform guests that it is time to be seated. Ushers must make sure all of the kneelers are up after Mass, that programs and other items are not left in the pews. Ushers should attend rehearsal.

Guests will be escorted to their pews by the center aisle. If the couple has other requests, please check with your wedding coordinator in advance.

READERS:

The wedding celebration can include up to three readers at the liturgy. The couple has the following options for readers:

- One person for the first reading, one for the second reading and one for the Prayers of the Faithful
- One person reads the first and second readings and the Prayers of the Faithful
- One person reads the first reading, one person reads the second reading, and the Presider reads the Prayers of the Faithful.

When choosing readers, please choose people who have had experience with reading in their own parish or church, and can confidently proclaim the Word of God. Please keep in mind that they should have a loud, clear voice and should speak slowly and should feel somewhat comfortable. Please give the readers a copy of their reading before the wedding day so they can prepare. We strongly encourage that the readers attend the wedding rehearsal.

GIFT BEARERS:

If a couple is celebrating with a wedding Mass, there is opportunity to include two people or a family to bring up the gifts [bread and wine] at the Preparation of the Altar. Many couples choose their godparents.

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION:

If there is a wedding Mass, typically, the priest and one extraordinary minister distribute Holy Communion at the wedding. The couple may ask one person to assist with distributing Holy Communion, if they are trained and serve as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in their own parish (A Letter of Recommendation is required from his or her pastor attesting to his or her good standing). If they are not a member of our parish, they will need to meet with the priest ten minutes prior to the ceremony in the vesting sacristy to be commissioned to serve in our parish and to get brief instructions on our procedures. The wedding coordinator is trained and commissioned to serve as an extraordinary minister too. If the couple is having a small wedding (less than 100 people), the priest will be the only one to distribute Holy Communion. Please discuss with your wedding coordinator.

ALTAR SERVERS:

Altar servers are not needed at a wedding unless the couple knows an altar server at Epiphany who they would like to participate at the wedding Mass. Please discuss altar servers with the priest prior to asking someone to serve. With his approval, one to three altar servers may be used. Also, the couple will need to inform the wedding coordinator if they choose to have altar servers.

GREETER/PROGRAMS:

Couples may choose to have someone to hand out wedding programs to the guests as they arrive. Otherwise programs can be placed on a table.

PERSONAL ATTENDANTS:

Epiphany strongly encourages couples to have at least one person designated for the collecting of items from the church after the ceremony and one person responsible for the bride's belongings. Personal attendants usually assist the bride in getting ready for the ceremony, along with pinning flowers on family/ wedding party attendants.

ADDITIONAL CATHOLIC CLERGY:

Should the engaged couple have Catholic priests or deacons among their family and friends, the couple is most welcome to invite the clergyman to participate in the ceremony. Please discuss with the presider.

WEDDING PROGRAM:

Creating and producing wedding programs are the responsibility of the wedding couple. Epiphany Catholic Church retains the right to edit all materials distributed at the church. Please be sure to provide Liz Grefsheim with a copy of your wedding program at least two weeks before it is sent to print for review and approval.

Suggestions of what should be included in the wedding program include:

Within Mass	Outside of Mass
OPENING RITE Prelude, Processional, Greeting, Gloria, Prayer <i>Copyrighted music given to you by Epiphany for publication in the wedding program is covered by permission license.</i>	OPENING RITE Prelude, Processional, Greeting, Prayer <i>Copyrighted music given to you by Epiphany for publication in the wedding program is covered by permission license.</i>
LITURGY OF THE WORD First and Second Reading, Gospel, Homily	LITURGY OF THE WORD First and Second Reading, Gospel, Homily
SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE Exchange of vows/rings, unity candle	SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE Exchange of vows/rings, (unity candle)
PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL	PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL
LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST Offertory Rite, Eucharistic Prayer, Lord’s Prayer, and Nuptial Blessing	NUPTIAL BLESSING
SIGN OF PEACE	LORD’S PRAYER
COMMUNION	PRESENTATION OF THE COUPLE
PRESENTATION OF THE COUPLE	FINAL BLESSING
FINAL BLESSING	RECESSIONAL
RECESSIONAL	
THINGS INCLUDED IN ALL WEDDINGS	
Inform guests that there is no flash photography during the ceremony.	
Inform guests to turn off their cellular phones, or put them in vibration mode, during the ceremony.	
Names of parents, grandparents, wedding party, and celebrant.	
Address for the couple.	

WEDDING REHEARSAL

REHEARSAL:

Teresa McCarthy will schedule the date and time of the wedding rehearsal in consultation with the wedding couple. Typically, it's the evening prior to the wedding date. The wedding coordinator and occasionally the presider will be present at the rehearsal. Rehearsal will take approximately one hour; it will start and end on time, so please plan accordingly. The rehearsal is not a social event, but 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:

- Bride and Groom
- Maid of Honor and Best Man
- Bridesmaids/Groomsmen
- Ring Bearer and Flower Girl
- Parents of the Couple
- Ushers
- Readers
- Gift Bearers (optional)
- Extraordinary Ministers (optional)

***We do not rehearse music during the wedding rehearsal.

All others [spouses, significant others, family members who do not have a role in the ceremony, out of town guests, etc] are encouraged to meet the couple at the rehearsal dinner site rather than attend the rehearsal.

Please speak in advance to all that will be present at the rehearsal about the respect and reverence we have in our church. Please ask them to add their personal respect by speaking softly and in a dignified way while at our church. Also, remind them that there is No Smoking, Alcohol or Drugs allowed on the church premises.

Please remember to bring the following to rehearsal:

- Unity candle, other candles, and candle holders (if using)
- Two wedding programs to the rehearsal.

All programs may be brought to rehearsal and stored until the wedding day. Please do NOT bring the wedding and bridesmaids gowns to the rehearsal, as Epiphany does not have a place to store them and will not be responsible for them.

- The Marriage License and all materials that came with it (if it has not already been brought to the Church).

The Wedding Day

When the wedding party arrives at Epiphany Catholic Church on the wedding day, please remember this is a sacred space and that people are praying in the daily Mass chapel attached to the main sanctuary. Please remember that activity before, during, and after the wedding should be in keeping with the peaceful and prayerful environment and please be courteous to other people who may be present at the Parish for various reasons.

The couple will need to coordinate with the wedding coordinator regarding the time they plan on arriving at church on the wedding date to ensure the church is open. **The Church and bride's room are only guaranteed for use by the couple two hours prior and thirty minutes after the ceremony.** The "groom's rooms (meeting rooms) must be emptied of all belongings prior to the start of the ceremony. Please be aware that other events (including funerals) may be scheduled on the wedding date.

BRIDE'S ROOM:

A room for the use of the bride and her attendants is available in the foyer. Hair and make-up must be done elsewhere; this room is for dressing, and for "touch-ups." Please keep food and drink out of the bride's room, with the exception of water. All personal belongings and trash must be removed from the Bride's Room immediately after the ceremony. Please assign someone to ensure that this room is clean and clear of all personal belongings after your ceremony.

BUBBLES, RICE, BIRDSEED, CONFETTI, ETC.:

Throwing rice, birdseed, "environmentally friendly" confetti, bird release, or any other after ceremony "extras" are not permitted at Epiphany Catholic Church.

DISMISSAL OF GUESTS/RECEIVING LINE:

We recommend that the ushers dismiss the guests starting with the front pews. The couple may choose to have a receiving line in the gathering space or may choose to do that at the reception site. Please inform the wedding coordinator on these plans. Please keep in mind that receiving lines typically will take 30 to 45 minutes for an average size wedding.

GUEST BOOK

If the couple would like their guest book to be set up at church, Epiphany recommends that the wedding coordinator set it up during the ceremony and that guests sign the book after the ceremony. Otherwise, it often delays people from being seated in a timely manner.

FOOD AND DRINK:

If the wedding party has chosen to have refreshments available, please keep them to a minimum [e.g. simple snacks and bottled water], the wedding coordinator can make arrangements to use the meeting rooms across from the Bride's Room for this purpose. Food and drink (including water) in the worship area is not permitted. Please be mindful that those who will be receiving Holy Communion at the Wedding Mass, are required to fast 60 minutes prior to doing so.

NO ALCOHOL OR DRUGS POLICY:

No alcoholic beverages or drugs are permitted on church premises before, during or after the wedding or rehearsal. This includes the parking area. Should alcohol be discovered, or if any member of the wedding party is under the influence of alcohol, **the wedding may be cancelled.** The laws of the church require that for a couple to give a life-long consent, they must be totally free and aware of their actions and decisions. Visiting the local bars prior to the rehearsal and wedding ceremony is not allowed. Again, **any member of the wedding party under the influence will not be tolerated and may result in a wedding cancellation.**

NO SMOKING POLICY:

Smoking is not permitted in Epiphany Catholic Church.

CELLULAR TELEPHONES:

All cellular telephones should be turned off or placed in vibration mode during the ceremony. It is a good idea to include this information in the wedding program so that the guests are informed.

SECURITY:

Please do not leave any unsupervised valuables anywhere in the church, including the Bride's Room and do not leave valuables in cars where they can be seen. Epiphany Catholic Church is not responsible for the loss or theft of any personal belongings.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOGRAPHY:

Please coordinate the time the photographer plans to set up in church with the wedding coordinator. Please keep in mind the time frame in which the Church is reserved for this purpose. Pictures are to be taken prior to the wedding ceremony. Every effort should be made to let wedding guests know that picture taking and filming is limited to the professionals hired by the bride and groom. If no professionals have been hired, these guidelines in the still apply to all photography and videography:

Before the Wedding Ceremony:

The Church is a sacred space and its use (especially during wedding pictures) should respect this reality through reverential silence and the refraining from any food, beverages, or gum being consumed within the Church.

- Photos in the Church may begin 2 hours prior to the wedding and must be completed 30 minutes prior to the ceremony.
- No church furnishings or accessories may be moved.

The sanctuary (raised altar area) is a sacred space

- Photographers may pose the wedding party and families on the sanctuary steps and in front of the altar.
- Nothing may be placed upon the altar.

During the Ceremony:

- Flashes may be used during the processional and recessional.
- Flash photography during the ceremony is prohibited.
- During the ceremony, the photographer(s) must either remain behind the seated guests, or on the side pews/aisle. They will not be allowed in the Sanctuary or the main aisle during the ceremony and are asked to refrain from obtrusive or disruptive movement during the wedding.
- Videographers are asked to remain stationary during the wedding. They will not be allowed in the Sanctuary, but must either remain behind the seated guests, or on the side pews/aisle. No video lights are permitted during the ceremony.

Additional notes for photographer/videographer:

The Church respectfully requests that the photographer:

- Cooperate with the spiritual nature of the wedding celebration.
- Remain respectful of the sacred environment.
- Work within the guidelines presented to them.
- The wedding coordinator and the priest or deacon presiding at the wedding have the final say on what is appropriate and what is not appropriate according to their judgment of any situation or circumstance not covered in this policy and in the application of this policy.**

AFTER THE CEREMONY:

We ask all congregants to depart within 30 minutes of the conclusion of the wedding so the church can be prepared for other ritual activity.

Please assign a friend or family member to ensure that the Church is left in good order.

- Bride's room emptied and cleaned immediately following the ceremony.
- Wedding programs collected from the pews.
- Floral boxes, floral paper, and debris removed.
- Decorations removed.
- Floral arrangements removed
- Food /drink in the Meeting Rooms is removed or placed in garbage.
- Any items left behind picked up.
- Unity Candle picked up in gathering space after Mass.

CONTACTS:

Questions regarding your wedding ceremony should be directed to the priest, deacon, or wedding coordinator assigned to your wedding. Please note that the wedding coordinators, unless otherwise indicated, are not staff members. They are parishioners who have been selected and are paid to coordinate weddings at Epiphany Catholic Church. Wedding Coordinators will contact the engaged couple approximately six weeks prior to the wedding date and provide contact information at that time.

Questions regarding scheduling should be directed to Teresa McCarthy (763-862-4363).

Questions regarding music can be directed to Liz Grefsheim (763-862-4369).

AFTER YOUR WEDDING DAY

PARISH REGISTRATION:

Please remember to re-register as a couple at Epiphany (So that we can be sure to update our files with your correct information) so that you can live out the responsibilities of your united commitment to God as an enrolled family of our parish community. If you are moving from the area, please let Epiphany know so that we can update our files, and be sure to register at your new parish.

In our society, one out of every two marriages ends in a divorce. However, for couples who attend church weekly together, the percentage is substantially less. Keep your marriage together with God's help, by keeping God in the center of your lives and an important part of your relationship. If you are struggling with your marriage, please talk with one of the priests and either we can help you or refer you to a trained marriage counselor.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

We are very excited and look forward to helping you prepare and receive this Sacrament! The staff hopes that these suggestions and guidelines will be helpful in planning the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage here at Epiphany.

If you have any questions/concerns, please contact the priest or deacon with whom you are working with or the parish office. Couples are reminded that Sunday Mass, sharing prayer with each other, and celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation are powerful in having a blessed marriage. As you prepare yourselves for Christian marriage, may you be strengthened by God's blessings, grow in respect for one another, and cherish each other with a sincere love in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. May this time of preparation, as well as the wedding itself, be an experience of love, prayer, and holiness for both of you. Please know that you, as an engaged couple of our parish, are remembered in the prayers of the parishioners and staff of Epiphany Catholic Church.

Best Wishes and God Bless You!