

St. Thomas More University Parish, Indiana

Marriage Guidelines

Introduction

Weddings are special and joyful times for couples, their families and friends, and for the parish community. Wedding celebrations are a special and graced-filled time in our lives as they are a sign of hope and promise, new beginnings, and love. The church welcomes its members to celebrate and solemnize their weddings in the context of our prayer as Christians. Indeed, so important is marriage in Christian life that it is called a sacrament.

Great care is taken to see that the prayer for this special moment is reverent, graceful, beautiful and open to the movement of God's Spirit among us. Our celebrations of the sacraments, marriage included, are always rooted in listening to the Scripture so that we can be nourished and strengthened by God's word. Always we celebrate the sacraments as a community. We gather our brothers and sisters in faith and ask for their prayerful support. These celebrations are incomplete unless they are filled with song, with prayerful gestures and with the silence in which we hear the voice of God in our lives.

In this spirit, St. Thomas More University Parish provides the following guidelines for celebrating weddings in the building that shelters the prayer of our community.

Who may marry in our parish church?

The answer to this question is governed, in part, by the Code of Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church. Generally speaking, resident members of our parish and Catholic students enrolled at IUP who are free to marry in the Catholic Church may celebrate their weddings at St. Thomas More University Parish. Alumni of IUP need to speak both to their present pastor and to the pastor of St. Thomas More University Parish if they wish to solemnize their marriage in this church.

Setting the date of the wedding

Following diocesan policy, couples are expected to contact the pastor a year in advance of the date on which they hope to celebrate their wedding. Dates will be booked only after freedom to marry in the Catholic Church has been established. It is the responsibility of the engaged couple to secure the date with the church before making commitments with caterers, reception halls, etc.

Scheduling the time of the celebration

Weddings are scheduled with respect to the couple's wishes and the availability of the church building and parish ministers.

Weddings are usually scheduled on Saturdays, from 10 a.m. through 1 p.m. To allow sufficient time for the 4 p.m. Mass on Saturday, the church and parking lot need to be cleared by 3 p.m. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays. Weddings may also be celebrated on a weekday.

There are occasions in the church year when the liturgical calendar discourages or prohibits the celebration of weddings. For example, the season of Lent is a time of penance in the life of the church community and that spirit touches and colors all parish liturgies between Ash Wednesday and Easter.

Ministers for the celebration

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the bride and groom minister the sacrament of marriage to one another. A priest or deacon and at least two witnesses are also required to be present.

St. Thomas More University Parish, Indiana

Marriage Guidelines

Ordinarily, the pastor will officiate at weddings celebrated in the parish. On occasion, a couple may have a priest friend or priest relative whom they want to invite to officiate at the wedding. In this case, the couple must mention this to the pastor in the process. Once the appropriate civil and ecclesial delegation has been secured, the pastor will communicate to the visiting priest with regard to parish policy on the celebration of liturgy in general and of weddings in particular. Visiting priests will be asked to observe church law and parish customs regarding the celebration of the sacraments.

The music ministers of the parish will provide the music for weddings celebrated in the parish. Engaged couples will speak with the director of liturgy and music.

If the couple wishes to have a music minister other than the St. Thomas More minister provide the music for the wedding, they should speak with the director of liturgy and music about their specific request.

Those who serve in the parish as lectors are available to serve in this ministry at wedding celebrations. They may be contacted through the wedding coordinator.

If the couple wishes to ask friends or family members to serve as lectors for their wedding, we ask that they have the necessary gifts for proclaiming God's word effectively and reverently. These same persons are required to be at the wedding rehearsal so that they may practice in the worship space with the sound system.

Lectors for a wedding Mass must be Catholic. Lectors for a wedding ceremony outside of Mass must be Christian.

If a wedding is to be celebrated during Mass, there will be a need for the service of ministers of the Eucharist for the bread and for the cup. Those who already serve in this ministry in the parish will be available to serve at weddings. If friends or family members of the bride and groom are ministers of the Eucharist in their home parishes, they may be invited, with the pastor's permission, to serve at weddings celebrated here provided they attend the wedding rehearsal so that they are familiar with the worship space and its demands.

The groom's attendants usually function as ushers and thus fulfill part of the ministry of hospitality familiar to members of St. Thomas More University Parish community. The bride's attendants, and indeed the bride and groom and their families, may also act as ministers of hospitality. It is a mature, gracious gesture for all members of the wedding party to greet members of the assembly as they gather to celebrate. The person who directs the rehearsal will also address this issue when working with ushers and greeters.

The ministry of acolyte (server) may be filled from the servers in the parish. If others are asked to serve in this ministry, they are required to be present at the wedding rehearsal.

Ring bearers and flower girls are not ministers, nor are their services required for the celebration of marriage. Couples will be asked to consider the age of children involved in these roles and whether their presence will add to or detract from the joyful solemnity of the celebration.

St. Thomas More University Parish, Indiana

Marriage Guidelines

Marriage Preparation Process

An appointment will be made for the couple will fill out the FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study) questionnaire. They will choose one of the following Marriage Preparation Programs:

- ✝ Parish Sponsor Couple.
- ✝ Engaged Encounter Weekend in Greensburg.
- ✝ Approved Marriage Preparation in another Catholic diocese.

What paperwork must be done?

Each engaged couple must meet with a priest to fill out various papers. This is part of the process of determining your freedom to marry in the church and of recording your marriage in the parish archives.

The paperwork consists mostly of the gathering of biographical information and your testimony, under oath, of your intentions to enter into a Christian marriage according to the teaching of our church.

If one party to the marriage is not a member of our faith and/or church, other forms will be required. Any and all questions in this regard can be answered in consultation with the priest officiating at your wedding.

Preparing for the liturgy

In consultation with the priest or deacon who will officiate at the wedding, the couple will determine if the marriage is to be celebrated at Mass or in a celebration without Communion. The determining criteria will center around what form of liturgy will best enable a particular wedding assembly to celebrate with the bride and groom. In situations where either the bride or groom is not Catholic, Mass is normally not celebrated.

The couple will be provided with copies of scripture readings most appropriate for use at weddings. In consultation with the priest who will officiate at the wedding, the engaged couple will select two or three passages from Scripture. Non-scriptural passages are never used in place of the Scripture.

The staff member who helps the couple prepare the wedding liturgy will be available to respond to particular requests they might make regarding the celebration of their wedding. In general and in particular, weddings celebrated at St. Thomas More University Parish are celebrated according to the worship books of the Roman Catholic Church: the Roman Missal, the lectionary and the Rite of Marriage.

In the case of weddings where ministers of other Christian denominations or other faiths are taking part, the appropriate adaptations will be made after consultation with that minister and the engaged couple.

The order for the procession at the beginning of the wedding celebration takes that form noted in the Rite of Marriage. The priest and other ministers (cross bearer, acolytes) go to the door of the church to greet and welcome the couple.

The priest and ministers then lead the procession into the church, followed by the bride and groom, along with their parents (if that is the couple's desire), the two witnesses, and other special friends (bridesmaids and groomsmen). The text for the consent ("the vows") is taken from one of the options provided in the Rite of Marriage.

St. Thomas More University Parish, Indiana

Marriage Guidelines

In preparing the wedding liturgy, couples will be urged to incorporate elements which will encourage the active participation of those who gather for the celebration. This will include participation through song and spoken prayer.

Assistance will be provided from the director of liturgy and music so that the couple may prepare an appropriate worship aid to help wedding guests in their participation.

Environment of the worship space

To avoid any hazard to safety and to minimize custodial work, the throwing of rice, rose petals or any other flowers, confetti, etc. on parish property or in the church, is not allowed. Also, we do not permit the use of an aisle runner.

Rehearsal

A rehearsal will be scheduled for the evening prior to the wedding day. It allows the members of the immediate wedding party to become familiar with the environment of our church building and with the public roles they will assume as part of the liturgy. The person directing the rehearsal will give a brief overview of the liturgy to help all concerned understand the prayerful nature of the celebration. To this end, the rehearsal will begin with a short prayer.

We ask that you make sure that all members of the wedding party and all ministers of the liturgy be present for the rehearsal and that they arrive on time and behave in an appropriate manner.

The form on which you have indicated your selections of readings, prayers, songs, etc., should be left at the office no later than one month prior to the date of the rehearsal. The rehearsal itself is not the time for discussion and decision making.

Why no "unity candle?"

The so-called "unity candle" is a commercial product of which no mention is made in the liturgical books of our church. The product is usually sold as a trio of candles, two small and one large with the expectation that the bride and groom share in lighting the larger candle with the light of the two smaller ones.

The unity candle has no real history of tradition in the Catholic faith. For this reason, we do not include it in weddings celebrated in our parish. We do encourage you to prepare carefully the many signs and symbols of unity already available in the Rite of Marriage: worship aids designed to encourage participation; musical selections that invite the participation of all present; careful preparation and rehearsal of the exchange of vows and rings; the celebration of the word and of the Eucharist itself.

Wedding Flowers

In addition to corsages, boutonnieres and bouquets, many desire to place floral arrangements in the church. Artificial flowers are not permitted as decoration in the liturgical space. Please observe the following when making arrangements with your florist:

1. "Flowers, plants and trees—genuine, of course—are particularly apt for the decoration of liturgical space, since they are of nature, always discreet in their message, never cheap or tawdry or ill-made."
(Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, #102)

St. Thomas More University Parish, Indiana

Marriage Guidelines

2. Floral "decoration should never impede the approach to or the encircling of the altar or any of the ritual movement and action, but there are places in most liturgical spaces where it is appropriate and where it can be enhancing." A floral arrangement may be placed in front of but never upon the altar. A floral arrangement may be placed in front of the ambo (lectern). The setting up of stands and vases elsewhere in the area near the altar and ambo should be discussed with the wedding coordinator prior to the wedding.
3. "The whole space is to be considered the arena of decoration, not merely the sanctuary." A floral arrangement may be placed on a table in the gathering space at the front doors of the church. These flowers, especially if they are fragrant, would be a gracious sign of welcome.
4. We are grateful for floral arrangements left in the church after the celebration of the wedding. Your flowers will continue to enhance parish worship and be a fine gift to St. Thomas More University Parish.

Music Guidelines

1. The music director should be contacted through the parish office at least six weeks prior to the wedding. At that time, a meeting will be scheduled to discuss the music for the wedding liturgy.
2. After the initial contact with the priest and before the first meeting with the music director, the couple should have selected the readings for the liturgy so they can use them to guide their choice of music. The music director will provide musical suggestions, as well as help the couple understand the importance and role of music in the wedding liturgy.
3. An accompanist and cantor from the parish are provided for a fee. In general, we do not allow the use of cantors from outside the parish but a guest soloist may sing at your wedding. Other instrumentalists such as trumpet, guitar, flute and violin may be used. Please discuss this with the music director. Additional fees will apply.
4. All musical choices should be reviewed by the music director. With regards to the choice of music, the church has always insisted that the music used in worship have artistic integrity. Generally, music appropriate to the liturgy is music found in Catholic hymnals. All songs should be tasteful and conducive to a prayerful atmosphere. Regardless of the special significance a song may hold for the couple, love songs and popular ballads most often are inappropriate and are best left to the reception.
5. We encourage couples to prepare a program for their wedding liturgy. A program should include the order of the service, hymn numbers, and any other information which will help the assembly participate.

Copyrighted material may not be used without written permission from the publisher or copyright holder. Acknowledgment of the permission to copy and the copyright owner's name must appear in the program. The music director will assist you with this program.

St. Thomas More University Parish, Indiana

Marriage Guidelines

Parishioner Wedding Fees	
Marriage Preparation (marriage preparation materials, sacristan, diocesan paperwork, processing fees, etc.)	\$100
Church & Clergy	\$250
Altar Servers (Two)	\$20 (\$10 for each)
Musicians:	
Accompanist	\$75
Cantor	\$75
Total *Additional fees for other instrumentalists may apply.	\$520