

Preparing for your  
**WEDDING**



St. Columbkille Catholic Church  
Papillion, Nebraska

## A Note from the Pastor



Dear Friends,

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding! Your wedding will be a joy-filled celebration of your love for each other. While your wedding celebrates the wonder of your love for each other, it is also the Church's celebration of your love bearing witness to God's presence in our world. It is private *and* public, personal *and* communal, unique *and* universal, belonging only to you *and* belonging only to the Church.

I know that what I just wrote may seem contradictory, but it is true. Your celebration belongs to you and to the Church. This is something we will plan and celebrate together. I know you thought it was only your parents who were struggling to plan this with you. But now the whole parish is getting involved? Yes. Such is the nature of this sacrament and all the sacraments.

I encourage you to take a few minutes to read through this booklet. It supplements the planning booklet provided by the Archdiocese of Omaha with our parish policies and recommendations. Please share it with those who are assisting you with your wedding: family members, professional wedding planners, photographers, etc.

St. Columbkille is a large parish with more than 2,800 families. Consequently, the building is the site of many activities. There may be other meetings or events happening in other parts of the building or the parish campus during your rehearsal or wedding. All who use the facility are expected to cooperate with one another so that everyone's needs are respected and the building kept in good condition.

We want your wedding to be a day you remember as filled with love and joy. Even more so we want your marriage to last a lifetime. For this reason we offer our parishioners a thorough marriage preparation process. No process is foolproof, but we hope that you will find it helpful to your relationship now and in the future of your marriage.

We do this as a gift for you. As we say in the ceremony, "Christ has already consecrated you in baptism and now he enriches and strengthens you by a special sacrament so that you may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity."

Best wishes in all your planning,

Fr. Damian Zuerlein

## Introduction

The bond of Christian marriage is a holy mystery and living symbol of Christ's love for his Church. The marriage vows establish a unique covenant of unbreakable unity and total fidelity raised to the dignity of sacrament by Christ, modeled on his own nuptial bond with the Church. In their married life together, the bride and groom help each other to attain holiness. They nourish their marriage with undivided affection, which wells up from the fountain of divine love. In a merging of the human and divine, the couple remains faithful in body and mind in good times and in bad.

The wedding ceremony is not only a liturgy for the bridal couple, but for the gathered assembly and the greater church as well. The wedding vows are not merely private promises made between the bride and groom. Rather, they are a public proclamation before Christ and the Church. Having witnessed the marriage vows, the Christian community is strengthened in the Lord's promise of faithfulness to his people. The community commits to support the newly wedded couple in their vows as they strive, with God's help, to make their bond more perfect and holy each day.

The decision to be married in the church is significant and is much more than choosing a picturesque setting and photos. You want to make your wedding a meaningful and memorable experience. You also want to express in a clear and beautiful way the hopes you have for your married life. Thoughtful, prayerful planning and participation in your wedding ceremony is a decision that will bring many blessings to your married life long after you've forgotten all the other decisions you made about flowers, photos and the reception.

## Preparation Overview

The Archdiocese of Omaha requires a preparation period of at least six months for couples who wish to be married in the Church. The first thing to do is contact Deacon Eldon Lauber at the Parish Office (339-3285) to enter the proposed date on the parish calendar. He will also answer any questions you may have. Deacon Lauber will set a date to meet with you as a couple and give you the necessary information you need to start the preparation process and plan your ceremony. The marriage preparation begins with a Pre-Session that is conducted by the Family Life Office of the Archdiocese at various sites, times and dates in the metro area. There you will take a marriage preparation inventory titled *FOCCUS*; this is not a test but rather a discussion-starter to assess which issues you already agree on and which you might need to discuss further. At the Pre-Session you will be given the opportunity to choose which educational program required by the Archdiocese you will attend. At your initial meeting with Deacon Lauber, a priest or deacon will be assigned to facilitate your *FOCCUS* results and preparation for marriage. When you have completed the pre-session please contact the priest or deacon who will be preparing you

for marriage to set a time to meet. Whoever facilitates your *FOCCUS* process will usually preside at your wedding.

Priest and Deacon facilitators for *FOCCUS* are:

Fr. Damian Zuerlein 339-3285  
Fr. Damien Wee 339-3285  
Deacon Lauber 339-3285  
Deacon Overkamp 339-2998  
Deacon Hill 596-1572

### *Liturgical Planning*

The parish Director of Music and Liturgy is David Batter (339-3285). We have appointed qualified and trained parish music coordinators to assist you in the planning of music for your wedding liturgy. You will need to select and contact one of them early in the planning process. Keep in mind that the music coordinator could also serve as one of your musicians for the wedding liturgy. Additional information regarding musicians is contained in the section titled “Music Coordinator, Liturgical Musicians, and Music.” The wedding music coordinators are:  
Sylvia Black 592-4820  
Nicole Chambers 290-7859  
Karen Conoan 339-0260

The parish Wedding Coordinator, Michelle Grzywa (689-3536) will assist you with planning the details of your ceremony. She will coordinate the rehearsal and wedding ceremony so that all proceeds smoothly.

### *Take advantage of Options*

There are options within the wedding rite. For example, you may select scripture readings, blessings and prayers from the approved texts. You can select friends or family members for different roles in the ceremony, such as readers and gift bearers at the Offertory. Making these choices with your future spouse and with the priest or deacon can help you learn more about the Catholic understanding of marriage and to become more deeply involved in your celebration of it.

## Spiritual Preparation

The spiritual preparation for your wedding is just as important, if not more important, than the physical preparation of planning for the celebration. Here are a few simple suggestions to help you prepare spiritually for your wedding during these months of preparation:

Pray together as a couple at least once a week.  
Read Scripture together and share your thoughts with each other.  
Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once before the wedding.  
Attend Mass together on Sundays.  
Pray for the success of your marriage, asking for God’s help.

## Scheduling

Weddings are an important sacrament in our parish. It is vital that all scheduling issues are coordinated between Deacon Lauber, the Wedding Coordinator and yourselves far in advance so that misunderstandings do not occur on either the rehearsal or wedding days. All activities in our church facilities need to be reserved on the parish calendar. With the ongoing and busy activities of such a large parish, we want to ensure that all parties know the time and space expectations of one another. Normally, in addition to the rehearsal itself, the wedding party has use of the church facilities for two hours before of the start of the wedding and one half-hour after the liturgy has finished. Rehearsals are scheduled based upon the availability of the church. The parish frequently has a wedding on Friday evening and two on Saturday, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. On Saturdays, the sanctuary needs to be vacated by 3:30 p.m., as the Sacrament of Reconciliation begins at that time.

## Church Documents Needed

Each party is to acquire an official baptismal certificate from the Church in which they were baptized. For Catholics, the certificate should be dated within six months of the wedding; it can easily be obtained from the parish of your baptism. Photocopies are not acceptable. Baptized non-Catholics are asked to provide a photocopy of the original document.

## Civil Requirements

All weddings planned for St. Columbkille require a valid Nebraska Marriage License issued from any Nebraska County Clerks Office. *The license must be presented to the wedding coordinator at the rehearsal.* The priest/deacon, by law, cannot witness the wedding in the absence of a valid Nebraska Marriage License.

The Maid/Matron of Honor and Best Man normally serve as legal witnesses to the marriage. One or both witnesses to the marriage may be non-Catholic.

## Wedding Coordinator

A portion of your wedding planning is coordinated by a trained Wedding Coordinator at St. Columbkille Parish. This person assists the wedding party on specific practical issues regarding the rehearsal, wedding liturgy and coordinates decisions to ensure that the ceremony and decor are appropriate, beautiful, and tasteful. The wedding coordinator's responsibilities are:

- Assisting the couple with issues regarding the church building once the wedding and rehearsal have been scheduled with the parish office. The coordinator will ensure that the facility is prepared and that necessary arrangements are made. Questions regarding the church, what is available, and its usage should be directed to the coordinator.
- Acting as the parish host to welcome guests and make their presence comfortable on the days of rehearsal and wedding liturgy.
- Answering questions from the photographer, videographer, florist, and personal attendants.
- Preparing the worship space for the liturgy and assists the presider.
- Guiding readers and ushers with their duties and appropriate liturgical movement. The coordinator will have copies of readings and Prayers of the Faithful and assist the lectors.
- Assisting with the liturgical movement of the wedding party and families at both the rehearsal and wedding liturgy.
- Ensuring that the wedding party has vacated the church proper by 3:30 p.m. for wedding that began at 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays or within one hour after the wedding liturgy has concluded on other days.
- Leading the entire rehearsal if the priest or deacon is unavailable.

The coordinator or an associate will contact you at least three weeks prior to the wedding to go over final arrangements regarding the above items for the wedding day.

## Music Coordinator, Liturgical Musicians, and Music

Music is a major element for the joyous celebration of the sacrament of marriage. The Roman Catholic rite is normally a *sung* liturgy. It is expected that the service music (psalm, gospel acclamation and Eucharistic acclamations, for example) will be sung. The musicians for the

Catholic liturgy are more than people providing music. They are ministers of the liturgy, leading the gathered assembly in sung prayer.

Music for weddings at St. Columbkille is coordinated and planned with one of the designated parish wedding music coordinators. Before any musical decisions are made, the wedding couple should meet with one of our designated music coordinators. All of the music coordinators are competent and experienced liturgical musicians. The coordinator will discuss musical options available and help coordinate the musical personnel. The coordinators are aware of both the general policies of the Catholic Church as well as the specific music protocols of the parish. Once the music is selected, the wedding music coordinator forwards the list to the Director of Music and Liturgy for final approval.

The parish requires that at least one of the wedding musicians is a regular parish musician to serve as the "host" musician, assisting with sound equipment, music stands, etc. When selecting a music coordinator, it is suggested that this person also serves as the parish musician at the wedding ceremony. This ensures a smooth coordination of music from the initial planning stages through the wedding ceremony itself.

A list of musicians is provided by the music coordinator. Musicians not listed may also serve as liturgical musicians with approval of the Director of Music and Liturgy.

## Other Liturgical Ministers

The wedding ceremony requires additional liturgical ministers. Generally, these other liturgical ministers are Catholics who have been formally trained (and mandated by the archbishop, in some ministries). These include the ministries of Lector (readers) and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. If a family member or friend attending the wedding has been mandated in the Archdiocese of Omaha as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion or Lector, they may serve at the wedding as needed. If needed, the parish community is also able to provide competent lectors and ministers of Holy Communion. All liturgical ministers are asked to attend the wedding rehearsal to ensure a smooth and prayerful wedding liturgy.

## Prayers and Readings for the Wedding Liturgy

Couples select scripture readings from among those listed in the book *Marriage: A Journey for Life*. The psalm will be sung and should be coordinated when planning the music. Prayers and blessings are selected from the wedding ritual. Permission for prayers or readings other than those listed must be approved by the priest or deacon.

## Rehearsals

A wedding rehearsal in the sanctuary will be scheduled with the wedding couple and the marriage preparer to practice the physical and ritual action of the ceremony. Those attending this rehearsal would include the bridal couple, their parents, the wedding party, lectors, and ushers. The rehearsal is usually scheduled the day before the wedding, depending upon the availability of the church. Musicians do not normally attend this rehearsal. Music rehearsals are scheduled independently with the wedding music coordinator and the parish secretary.

## Stipends/Fees

Stipend/fee checks should be brought to the wedding rehearsal and given to the wedding coordinator. The wedding coordinator will make sure the appropriate checks are given to the appropriate parties. Providing the stipend/fee checks at this time alleviates any awkwardness on the wedding day.

Appropriate stipends for the services of the ministers are:

Marriage Preparer (Priest/Deacon)	\$150
Wedding Coordinator	\$100
Music Coordinator	\$75
Musicians	<i>as contracted</i>

St. Columbkille Parish is committed to the concept of stewardship. We believe everything we have is a gift from God. As an acknowledgment of that, we believe we are to share our first fruits with God in thanksgiving. This gift of our self and our treasure is used by the local community for the building up of the Kingdom of God here in our midst. For those couples who are active and generous members of our parish, there is no expectation that any more need be given on your wedding day beyond that which you give to the parish every Sunday in the offering. However, for those couples who are not very involved in our parish, we remind them that the use of the church and parish facilities incurs maintenance and energy costs. A donation to the parish to help offset these expenses would be appreciated.

## Printed Programs

A printed program is appropriate for the wedding liturgy. This primary purpose of this program is to provide an outlined order of the service with the necessary information to foster congregational participation. Music titles and location of songs in the missal/hymnal should be included. The roster of ministers and wedding party may also be included in this program.

Samples of appropriate wedding programs for the Catholic wedding are available from the wedding coordinator.

## Etiquette for the Use of the Church Building

The church is a House of Prayer for the People of God. We welcome all of God's children. We ask everyone to respect the sacred nature of the space. Appropriate conversation should be kept to normal speaking volume levels, avoiding loud outbursts and yelling. Children should be supervised at all times and not allowed to run freely. Appropriate attire should be worn while in the church.

**The Eucharistic Chapel.** The purpose of the Eucharistic Chapel is for devotional prayer before the reserved Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. As Catholics we believe that Jesus is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore, the Chapel should not to be used for photos or any purpose other than quiet prayer. Please respect the purpose of the Chapel and not interrupt those praying quietly.

**Sanctuary Furnishings.** The altar, ambo, presidential chair, candles, processional cross, plants/flowers, and other liturgical and environment items are an integral part of the Roman Catholic liturgy. They are a permanent part of the church environment. Respecting their sacred function, items should not be placed on or near any of these objects. It may be appropriate to tastefully adorn spaces with minimal flowers or plants, but church guidelines do exist pertaining to this. In general, the overall liturgical environment within the worship space is determined for the particular liturgical season. The wedding liturgy takes place within the context of the liturgical season and calendar of the church. Any additional decoration needs to coordinate with existing elements within the worship space. The Wedding Coordinator can assist with any possible options and should be contacted early with any concerns or questions.

**Dressing Rooms.** The bride and her attendants may dress in the Bride's Room in the Social Level. The Groom and his attendants may use the Groom's Room in the Social Level. Restrooms are available. We ask that someone within the wedding family or party be assigned to ensure these rooms are left in a neat condition when vacating. All boxes, hangers, personal belongings, or trash need to be taken or thrown away. (A large dumpster is located behind the church.)

**Post-wedding Clean-up.** To ensure that the church and all other areas used by the wedding party are left clean and ready for others' use, someone should be appointed to be responsible for removal of all wedding and personal items. This would include all remaining printed programs, pieces of dropped flowers or leaves, pew bows, candelabra, or anything other items the wedding party brought into both the church and other spaces. Reminder: the church will need to be completely vacated by 3:30 p.m. after Saturday weddings, as the Sacrament of Reconciliation

begins at that time.

**Food and Drink.** All food and (non-alcoholic) drink are to remain in the Social Level of the church. Respecting the sacred nature of the sanctuary and surrounding areas, please keep all food and drink from the upper level. *Alcoholic beverages are prohibited on church property before, during, and after wedding rehearsals and liturgies.* The entire church is gum and smoke-free.

## Wedding Environment

**Aisle Runners.** We ask that aisle runners not be used in the sanctuary. With the carpeted aisle and the slope of the floor, they are unnecessary and dangerous.

**Aisle Bows or Flowers on Pews.** If used, these items need to be attached to the pews with plastic bow-hooks, available from florists or hobby/craft stores at a minimal cost. Tape, tacky substances or other adhesive may not be used on the church furniture. The Wedding Coordinator can be of assistance to offer suggestions, if needed.

**Candelabra.** The sanctuary is furnished with candles necessary for the liturgy. Additional candles and candelabra can create problems within the sanctuary. Please discuss these options with the wedding coordinator.

**Rice, Confetti, Birdseed, Bubbles, and Balloons.** Due to their messy character, we ask that rice, confetti, birdseed, soap bubbles, and balloons not be used either inside or outside of the building. These items are difficult to remove, track into the carpet of the church, and create a safety hazard on the stairs and sidewalk approaches. Balloons are also environmentally hazardous.

**Unity Candle.** Lighting a unity (wedding) candle after the Exchange of Vows and Rings is an option within the Catholic wedding rite. Since it is not appropriate to place this candle on the Eucharistic altar, a separate table or location can be provided. The parish does not provide the unity candles or candle holders. It is the responsibility of the couple to provide the candles, tapers and candle holder.

The small taper candles that accompany the Unity Candle – which the bride and groom use to light the wedding candle – may either be lit by the couple’s mothers just before the wedding liturgy begins or can be lit with the other liturgical candles before the liturgy begins. The topic of the wedding candle, location, and lighting procedure should be discussed with the Wedding Coordinator before the rehearsal.

**Presentation of Flowers to the Virgin Mary Shrine.** The presentation of flowers to the image

of the Blessed Virgin Mary is an option within the Catholic wedding rite and takes place after Communion. The couple walks to the shrine, places the flowers and pauses for a moment of prayer. Traditionally, a single rose or small bouquet of flowers are placed before the shrine. The flowers are either laid directly on the pedestal provided or placed in a vase.

**Photography.** Since the Rite of Marriage is a sacrament occurring within sacred liturgy, photography and videography must never detract from the sacred character of the ritual. Although one may want to catch the “Kodak moment,” the atmosphere created with camera flashes and people stepping into the ritual action is counter to the primary purpose of the liturgy. We discourage flash photography and ask that people not leave their places to take photographs. With some forethought, discreet and well-placed cameras without flash can be acceptably located. Couples and wedding parties can also “re-create” the moment for photography purposes during the scheduled photography time. We encourage the couple to hire a professional photographer who would then be the only one taking pictures during the wedding ceremony.

The wedding coordinator will be available on the wedding day to review the procedure and be of assistance to the photographers.

**Flowers and Sanctuary Décor.** Our sanctuary area is relatively small and not able to accommodate extensive additional décor. Additionally, the church environment will already be set according to the current liturgical season of the church. It is important that the florist is aware of the parish policies and that the wedding coordinator is consulted before the finalization of floral plans with the florist. If the florist needs additional time for onsite installation, they will need to contact the wedding coordinator to set a time when she or a representative from our parish can be present. All rented and personal items (flowers, stands, ect.) should be removed from the sanctuary within one hour after the ceremony concludes (and by 3:30 PM on Saturday afternoons). The parish is unable to safeguard any rented or personal items after this time.