

## **Marriage at St. John Chrysostom**

For most people, marriage is the most important decision in their lives. In our Catholic tradition, marriage is also a sacrament and as such is a celebration of God's presence in the relationship between the two persons who unite themselves to each other for life. We thus take this sacrament most seriously and strive to surround its celebration with dignity and religious significance. This is certainly contrary to our society that seems to be making marriage more and more an exercise of material excess and wealth.

The following orientation will let you know some of what is involved in receiving this sacrament.

### Meeting the Priest and Practising the Faith

In order for us to celebrate your marriage at St. John's, at least one of the parties must be a practising Catholic and a member of St. John's parish community. The couple will need to meet the priest at least twice prior to the wedding, once to set the date and secondly to complete the necessary paper work.

### Marriage Preparation Course

A Marriage Preparation Course is required for all couples considering marriage at St. John's. At the initial interview the priest will explain the options available in order to fulfil this requirement.

### Mixed Religion Marriages

Marriage with a person of another faith or no faith is common in our society and there is no requirement that the other person become a Catholic. But we do ask the Catholic party in such a situation to promise to continue to practice the faith and also to try to have any children of the marriage baptised and raised in the Catholic Church. Regarding Mass at mixed religion ceremonies, please see the notes regarding the wedding ceremony.

### Baptismal Certificates

A new copy of the baptismal certificate is required for all Catholics. This is easily obtained by phoning or writing the church of baptism. This is a world wide policy and so regardless of the country of baptism there should be very few problems in this matter. Any certificate, or a photocopy of a certificate is all that is required for non-catholic Christians.

### Marriage Licence

A marriage licence is required by the law of Ontario for most marriages. This can be obtained at most municipal offices in Ontario. There is a fee for this and some proof of identity is required. In Newmarket, the office is located at 395 Mulock Drive. Check their office hours and what documentation is required. Some marriages may be performed by Banns form, essentially the same as a licence, but issued by the church. Check with the priest regarding this option. The marriage must take place within 90 days of obtaining the licence, thus do not try to get it too early. Nonetheless, bring the licence to the church well before the marriage date.

### Wedding Ceremony

The Eucharist(mass), is celebrated only when both parties are Catholic. To have the Mass with only one of the couple receiving communion would be contrary to the whole theology of the unity of the couple and would make the non-catholic appear as a spectator at his or her own marriage. This would not be appropriate.

All couples will be given a choice of the scripture readings for their own ceremony. These choices should be brought to the wedding rehearsal. The couple should choose two people to read the first and second readings. The priest always reads the gospel. The readers should come to the rehearsal to become familiar with the sound system in the church.

All the liturgical books now recommend that both the bride and the groom should greet the guests as they come into the church and that the bride and groom process to the altar **together**. The practice of having the groom appear from the front of the church is contrary to our understanding of the sacrament of marriage. Both the bride and the groom are the principal celebrants of this sacrament and thus should enter together. The practice of giving the bride away as some sort of commodity because the groom has paid a dowry belongs to the past ages. And the idea that the bride and groom should not see each other on the day of the wedding is hocus-pocus and has nothing to do with faith. It is silly superstition. It is also recommended that both the parents of the groom and of the bride should join the procession.

We strongly recommend only two principal witnesses, the maid of honour and the best man. Extra bridesmaids or extra virgins in case the groom tires of the bride is really not appropriate. Nonetheless no more than four bridesmaids and ushers. Any more than this tends to make the wedding more of a theatrical production than a religious ceremony. Flower girls and ring bearers should be at least four years old. Otherwise they disrupt the ceremony and this is not cute. Weddings are not about cute. Take Ann Landers advice and eliminate these small people altogether.

### Music

David Jafelice is the Minister of music in the parish and he should be consulted regarding appropriate music for your wedding. He will also assist you in the planning of the liturgy for this most important date in your life. His phone number is 416-696-1228. Please also see the document “Music for the Sacrament of Marriage” that David has prepared.

### Flowers

These are up to the couple, we only ask that you do not over do it. You may feel free to take the flowers to the reception if you wish. If there is more than one wedding on your day and you wish to share the flowers with another bride. Ask the priest for the appropriate phone number to contact the other bride. If you order an arch of flowers, it must be placed at the back of the church. No large displays of flowers may be placed in the aisles. Both these and the arches, restrict the view of your guests and make a meaningful liturgy almost impossible. Pew bows with flowers are quite acceptable.

### Photography

The photographer should check with the priest prior to the wedding for any necessary instructions. Guest may take all the pictures they like as long as they remain in their pews. Video is permitted but this should be done from a fixed position using a tripod.

### Confetti and Rice

Absolutely forbidden in the church itself. Out side we suggest grass seed.

### Rehearsals

Arranged with Erin Wrightson – phone 830-9827. Erin will do the rehearsal and return for the wedding itself to co-ordinate the ceremony. There is a fee of \$100.00 for Erin for the service she provides.

### Fees – Stipends

There are no set fees or charges for the church, but it is customary to make a donation to the church and to give a cash gift to the priest. The usual donation to the church is \$300.00. The easiest way to do this, as well as the organist fee, is to bring appropriate envelopes to the rehearsal and give them to Erin.