

Marriage Guidelines

*~And Two
Shall Become
One~*



*Saint Cecilia Church
2900 Hoover Avenue
515-233-3092
(2020)*

***Saint Cecilia Catholic Community
2900 Hoover Ave
Ames, IA 50010***

E-mail: msderks@stceciliaparish.org

Phone: 515-233-3092

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Congratulations on your upcoming wedding!

We know this is a special time. You have now come to the Church to request assistance, preparation and prayers for the sacrament you are about to celebrate.

We are eager to assist you as you plan the wedding ceremony and reflect what it means to living out marriage in today's world. If you have questions as you move through the planning process, please contact the church office and we will direct you to the proper person who will then address your questions or concerns.

The marriage preparation guidelines in this booklet are based on Canon law (Church law), Archdiocesan policy, and on Church liturgical guidelines. These guidelines are meant to help you plan a wedding liturgy that reflects your love for one another.

This booklet has been created to assist you. It contains information, checklists and time-lines to aid you in your wedding planning.

Again, congratulations! We wish you God's blessing as you prepare for your marriage.

***The pastor, parish staff and
members of the marriage
preparation ministry team***

_____ Set Initial Meeting with Pastor at least 12 months before desired wedding date.

Date:_____ Time:_____ Parish phone number: 515-233-3092
Parish e-mail: msderks@stceciliaparish.org
Parish fax #: 515-233-6423

_____ 1. Setting/booking a wedding date, rehearsal date, and turning in the payment for facility rental/use. (Refer also to: Documents Annulments*/ Invalidations*, Dispensations*, Forms, Records. Father will have forms)
Your wedding date will be arranged by making a personal appointment with the parish pastor. Wedding dates will NOT be arranged by phone or e-mail and should be made one year prior to the anticipated date. Weddings may be celebrated on Saturday and are to begin no later than 2 p.m. to accommodate the normal weekend mass schedule. Friday evenings are an optional time for a wedding. Weddings are not celebrated on Sunday, Holy Days or normally during Advent and Lent, except in special circumstances.

Wedding rehearsal times are usually set the day before the wedding but can be modified to accommodate the members/family of the wedding party.

Payment for the facility rental use is paid at the time you book your wedding.

_____ 2. Place of the Wedding
For a marriage to be celebrated at St. Cecilia it is required that either the bride and/or groom or the bride's/groom's parents be members of St. Cecilia. If the parties are not members they must present a letter from the pastor of the parish where they are registered giving permission for the marriage to be held at St. Cecilia. If one of the parties is not Catholic, under special circumstances the wedding may be held in the church, synagogue or temple of the non-Catholic party with a dispensation* that may be granted by the Archbishop.

_____ 3. Presider:
Because of the parish relationship to the Sacrament of Marriage, usually only priests and deacons assigned to St. Cecilia may preside at weddings; however, exceptions may be made in special circumstances. In a mixed religions ceremony or a ceremony between two Catholics that choose to be married without Mass, the normal practice is that one of the parish Deacons will preside at the liturgy. The minister of the non-Catholic party is welcome to participate in the ceremony. If you desire to have a particular priest or deacon act as the Church's witness for your wedding, be sure you have already talked to him and secured his agreement. If desired, an honorarium may be given to the Presider at the discretion of the couple.

_____ 4. Parish Wedding Liturgy Coordinator.
The Sacrament of Marriage whether celebrated within the context of a Mass or without the Liturgy of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is the official rite of the Church. As such it is governed by the liturgical laws of the church and local parish policy.

If the parish priest or an approved visiting priest will be officiating at your wedding, you will be working with either of the parish wedding coordinators listed elsewhere on page 8. **Please contact one of them at least 6 months before the ceremony.** These coordinators are familiar with both the liturgy and the specific local policies and practices of the parish and have the approval of the pastor to exercise their role.

If one of the parish deacons will be presiding at your wedding usually that deacon's wife serves as the wedding coordinator. The same familiarity with parish policy and practices mentioned in the preceding paragraph along with the approval of the pastor to exercise their role apply.

If you choose to hire a professional coordinator to assist you with the details of your wedding please note: The wedding liturgy, policies and practices regarding church decoration and any other matters that take place in the parish church are under the direction of the Parish Wedding Coordinators solely.

5. “Together for Life” booklets

These booklets will assist you in planning the liturgy for your wedding ceremony. They contain options for the readings and prayers used throughout the liturgy. You will receive a copy at the initial meeting with the Pastor.

6. Register with the parish

If you are planning on living in the Ames, St. Cecilia area after you are married, please register with the secretary when you turn in your wedding contract. It is expected that couples are engaged in the life of the parish as follows:

- Actively participate at weekend Masses.
- Actively participate in the sacraments.
- Actively participate in the service projects of the parish.
- Participate with financial support of the church’s ministries.

The Registration Form is included in this packet.

7. Engaged couples’ Original Information Form

A. This will cover your relationship, family backgrounds, religious beliefs and practices. The Pastor will go over this in your initial meeting.

B. Marriage in the Catholic Church (see documents). Page 4

a. Sacramental marriage between two baptized Christians:

When both spouses are baptized (either Catholic or in another Christian denomination) the bond of marriage formed between them takes on the nature of a sacrament. This sacred covenant then becomes a symbol of the union between Jesus Christ and his Church.

OR

b. Marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person:

When any man and woman, one of whom is not baptized, offer their mutual consent to become permanent and exclusive partners for the whole of life, a true and valid bond is formed. The marriage bond is directed towards their personal good and the benefit of any children born into this union. When one party is not baptized there is a need to obtain a special dispensation* that allows the Catholic to enter into an interfaith marriage.

c. Previous Marriage (or Second Marriage)

If a previous marriage has not already been invalidated by the Church, you will be asked to get in touch with a priest or deacon at St. Cecilia who is qualified to aid you in seeking invalidation* (annulment). **The wedding date may not be set until an invalidation has been secured and final authority has been granted to marry in the Catholic Church.**

C. Active Life of Faith

The Sacrament of Marriage is celebrated and lived within the context of a parish community and is a declaration by the Catholic spouse(s) that he and/or she intend to be part of the parish. This includes faithfully worshiping at weekend Mass, regularly celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance/Confession), evidential faith by contribution of time, talent and finances to the work of the parish, and respecting the teaching of the church in both conscience and in sharing of faith with any children born/adopted into this union. It is assumed that Catholics preparing for marriage have already received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Catholics who have not been confirmed should receive this sacrament prior to the wedding, if they can do so without serious inconvenience.

D. Cohabitation/Living Together

*Cohabitation is commonly understood as the situation where a couple has been living together for an extended period of time, and there is recognition by family, friends, and those who know them that they share a household. Some in our society accept these arrangements as “a sign of the times,” due to uncertainty of relationships, economic factors, and in the desire to establish sexual compatibility.

*When a man and a woman live together publicly before marriage, they are representing certain values contrary to the teachings of the Church. Sexual relations are a sign and symbol of a total gift of one person to another. That total gift is made in the marriage vows in which two people give themselves publicly and irrevocably to each other for life. To engage in sexual

relations and cohabitation before making that formal, public, permanent gift and commitment in marriage is to falsify the sacred symbol that sexual intercourse is. God's laws recognize the profound sacredness of our sexuality and are directly opposed to the attitudes and societal norms that compromise this great gift of sexuality.

* Any couple who has made the decision to live together is urged to prayerfully reconsider their decision, searching their hearts in the light of God's revealed truth made known through the Church. The couple who chooses to live together has significantly compromised their ability to witness to the love of Christ at a time when their love is the center of the Church's attention. **St. Cecilia Parish asks couples who are living together to respect the fundamental values of our community by a non-Mass ceremony.**

_____ Set a 2nd meeting with the Pastor of your wedding ceremony.

Date:_____ Time:_____ Parish phone number: 515-233-3092
Parish e-mail:
Parish fax #: 515-233-6423

- _____ 1. Bring your completed **"Together for Life"** form (selection fold-out form at the end of the book). This will be passed on to Bob Hauser, St. Cecilia Director of Music and Liturgy.
- _____ 2. Talk over the readings you have chosen for your wedding service and why.
- _____ 3. Finalize the wedding details with the Presider who will act as the witness to the marriage.
- _____ 4. Official church record forms will be completed at this time.

**_____ Documents (Annulments*/ Invalidations*, Dispensations*, Forms, and Records)
The following are required to complete your wedding process:**

- _____ 1. Baptismal certificates issued within 6 months prior to the wedding:
 - _____ a. Catholic party or parties: appropriate notations regarding the other sacraments received by the person.
 - _____ b. Christians of other traditions need only provide a simple proof of baptism
- _____ 2. Dispensations or validations
Documents must be presented for any of the following venues:
 - 1) previous/second marriage (if applicable, no wedding date will be set until this is resolved.)
 - 2) no baptism record of either bride or groom
 - 3) place of wedding
 - 4) marriage preparation requirements fulfilled in another parish

*Should there be any need of this type of document, it should have been requested at your initial meeting with the Pastor. Make sure these are in alignment to be received before your wedding date.

_____ Preparation for Marriage- Sponsor Couple Process

After you have had your initial meeting with the Pastor, a staff member from St. Cecilia Parish will then make contact with you. He/she will provide you with the name & contact information for the sponsor couple who will help you go through a practical & spiritual preparation for your marriage. It will be your responsibility to contact your sponsor couple to set up your initial meeting.

_____ Relationship Communication Inventory – *FACET* or *Fully Engaged*
This process addresses your spiritual life together and will be facilitated by your Sponsor Couple. This is required! All couples preparing for marriage in the Archdiocese of Dubuque will complete a survey which is an inventory of attitudes, values, beliefs and habits which surround your relationship as a couple.

Meetings with your sponsor couple will assist you in identifying the strengths and potential weaknesses and possible conflicts that may influence your relationship. Data collected from the survey will provide you and the sponsor couple the information needed for meaningful dialogue.

Preparation for Marriage- Retreat.

Attendance at ONE of the following options is required. You must schedule this yourself and provide a certificate upon completion.

PRE-CANA CONFERENCE

Pre-Cana is a traditional workshop held in several locations throughout the Archdiocese. One of the locations is St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Ames. A team of presenters speaks on a wide variety of subjects designed to help you experience the realities of marriage. The cost is approximately \$40 per couple and is not included in the wedding fee. Please contact the parish office at 515-232-3514 for the dates of upcoming Pre-Cana conferences. Present your certificate of attendance to the parish office after you have completed the Pre-Cana Conference.

Engaged Encounter

Engaged Encounter gives you the opportunity to get away for a weekend so you can concentrate on building a more successful relationship. The process is headed by married couples and a priest. The Engaged Encounter weekend will focus on communication skills. Your pastor or the Sponsor Couple will be able to get you the information for these weekends. Present your certificate of attendance to the parish office after you have completed the Engaged Encounter retreat.

The Wedding Ceremony

Wedding Fee Structure for the Church

The cost of the relationship inventory, planning book, Parish wedding director, church and dressing rooms is included in the Wedding Fee. The payment of the wedding fee is required at the time the wedding is scheduled. Fifty per cent of this fee will be refunded if a cancellation notice is given to the presider at least 3 months before the scheduled wedding date. Payments to the musicians and any stipend for the priest or deacon should be given the evening of the rehearsal. **If the fee is not received within 30 days of meeting with the Pastor, the church reservation will be cancelled.**

Wedding Fee Structure for the Church – make out to St. Cecilia Church (add name of both people and date of wedding on the check)

\$500 for Members

\$700 for Non-Members

Honorarium to the Clergy

Although not required, a priest or deacon is usually given an honorarium at weddings. An honorarium given to the presider is usually between \$100.00-\$150.00.

Contact the parish music coordinator.

You must set up a meeting with St. Cecilia music/liturgy coordinator, for information regarding the choice of music, accompanists, soloists and cantors for your wedding service at least 1 month before the ceremony. The liturgist/music coordinator can help you select appropriate music and will provide you with a list of suggested music. Your choices of music should reflect a sacred and liturgical character plus reflect the scriptures you have chosen.

_____ Plan your wedding service

_____ Choose your mass/wedding service liturgy from the "Together For Life" booklet.

_____ Contact cantor/soloist: Honorium: \$ _____

_____ Contact organist/accompanist: Honorium: \$ _____

_____ Invite someone to be your Lector

It is best to ask someone who lectures in their own parish so they are familiar with proclaiming the scripture and can read clearly and slowly to make the word come alive. The church will contact a lector, if needed.

_____ Attendants

Two witnesses are the minimal requirement. The witnesses of record are normally the maid or matron-of-honor and the best man. The girls and ring bearers, if used, must be of an age to be able to walk down the aisle unaccompanied.

_____ Ushers

You need to be conscious of the number of guests at your wedding and provide enough ushers to seat that amount. Groomsmen may also be used to usher.

_____ Guest Book

The parish will provide a table you may wish to use for the guest book. The guest book will be placed in the Narthex. If you wish to set up an arrangement using something other than the table, it is then the couple's responsibility to provide the things they need. The guestbook is to be closed **five** minutes before the wedding ceremony begins to assure everyone is seated and so the wedding may begin on time.

_____ Wedding Program

Before printing the wedding program, you need to have it approved by the parish music coordinator or Parish Wedding Coordinator at least 2 weeks before the ceremony.

_____ Stewardship Offering (optional) \$ _____

This is separate and is NOT to be confused with the Church Stipend. Being generous to the poor and to the faith community is an important part of Christian life. It's not unusual for a portion of the wedding expense to be set aside by the couple for the poor. Some couples actually specify how that donation is to be used.

_____ Rehearsal

_____ ***BRING YOUR IOWA CIVIL MARRIAGE LICENSE to rehearsal.***

This is **mandatory** so it can be completed and signed!

_____ Sacrament of Reconciliation (penance, confession)

Arrangements may be made for the couple and anyone else in the wedding party who wishes to celebrate reconciliation with a priest. Normally it is done just before or after the rehearsal or before the wedding.

_____ Church Etiquette

_____ Church Decorations: All weddings scheduled during seasonal times of the Church year must respect the use of the seasonal decorations in the worship space. The sanctuary may NOT be re-arranged for the wedding (this includes furniture, linens, candles and flowers, etc..)

- A wedding, while a special celebration, takes place within the framework of the liturgical (Church) year. When planning the decorations for a wedding liturgy it is well to keep a few good liturgical principles in mind. Consider first the liturgical season in which the wedding will take place. Your wedding decorations should be planned to work with the seasonal decorations already in place in the church. **Under no circumstances are the decorations in the church to be moved or removed.** The church has a notebook of pictures you can ask to look through with seasonal/yearly decorations so you will know more as to how the Church will look on your particular wedding day.
- NO adhesive may be used on the ends of the pews to hold pew bows. Clips should be purchased for this purpose

- Decorations, such as pew bows or other items may be installed the afternoon or evening before the wedding, provided a Funeral Mass is not scheduled for the next morning. The parish is not responsible for any loss or damage of these decorations.

Photography/Video Taping

Because a wedding is a sacred event, participation of the couple and the assembly is of utmost importance, so the photography or videotaping should in no way hinder or detract from the worship experience.

- Photographing/videotaping of only the processional and the recessional may be done from within a pew along the center aisle and must not stop, hinder or interfere with these events.
- Photographing/videotaping the rest of the service must be done from along the side aisles and not further forward than the front pew.
- All formal wedding pictures must be taken and the wedding party out of the sanctuary within 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony. You are guaranteed access to the church for pictures at least two hours before the wedding. **NO PICTURES ARE TO BE TAKEN IN THE CHURCH AFTER THE CEREMONY!**
- **IT'S THE COUPLE'S RESPONSIBILITY to communicate guidelines to the photographer/videotaper at the time of enlisting their service.**

Aisle Runner:

The use of an aisle runner is forbidden at St. Cecilia due to insurance reasons.

Floral arrangements:

No floral arrangements nor any other non-sacramental items are to be placed on the altar, in front of the altar, nor immediately adjacent to it. It is important to not obstruct the view of the main elements of bread and wine nor hinder the movement of the ministers of the liturgy.

Candles: Other than the candles normally used in the sanctuary area, additional candles and candelabras are forbidden.

Scattering flower petals, rice, bird seed, & confetti: These practices are forbidden.

They create a major cleaning task and are forbidden due to insurance reasons.

Points of Interest

- **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE MAY ALCOHOL BE CONSUMED ON CHURCH PREMISES!** We must be conscious and respectful of the nature of the Sacrament of Marriage rite to take place within this space.
- Please respect the Church space; the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle located in the sanctuary. Keep conversation and decorum in appropriate check. **NO FOOD OR DRINK IS ALLOWED WITHIN THE SANCTUARY.** **Cell phone calls** are **NOT** to be placed or received in the church space proper. Such calls, if necessary, are to take place outside the church.
- **WEDDING ITEMS/PERSONAL PROPERTY NOT TO BE STORED AT CHURCH**
Due to Archdiocesan insurance policy guidelines, wedding items such as bride & bridesmaid's dresses, tuxedos, decorations, programs and other personal items may not be left on the church property the night before the wedding. The Church, St. Louis and New Ushers Rooms will be available 4 hours before the wedding.
- **Church clean-up:** Everything that was brought into the church or used must be removed and returned to its place immediately following the service. Since there is no cleaning staff present on weekends, the church needs to be left in "good order" for the weekend liturgies or other liturgies that will follow. **The wedding party needs to assign a host or hostess to assume this responsibility.**

WEDDING DATE CHANGE OR CANCELLATION/TIME CONCERNS

- It is a simple courtesy if you find a need to:
 - change the date of the wedding once it is scheduled or
 - delay or cancel the wedding

Please contact the pastor at the parish office so the date can be freed up on the parish calendar. If you are going to reschedule or delay the wedding, please contact the parish as quickly as possible since there are periods during the church year when there are weddings nearly every weekend.

- **Funeral on the day of the wedding:** the church building is a public space. Occasionally due to the date and time of death, travel and/or burial arrangements, or other family issues, it will be necessary to schedule a Funeral Mass or Funeral Liturgy Outside of Mass in the church either before (if an afternoon wedding) or after (if a morning wedding). In such a case, the parish will contact you as soon as possible after the funeral arrangements have been completed. Every attempt will be made (in the case of an afternoon wedding) to schedule the funeral to allow a 2-hour minimum between its conclusion and the time of the wedding to allow for set up and pictures. In such an instance, the policy of NO PICTURES IN THE CHURCH AFTER THE WEDDING still is in force.

PLEASE CONTACT THE PARISH OFFICE IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS

Saint Cecilia Church
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Fax: 515-233-6423

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